

Best Forgotten

by Alley_B

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Fracture

Chapter 1 of 8

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Written for the HP_mhealth fest at LJ. This story deals with the topic of mental illness. It is strictly angst/drama, no romance. It contains allusions to child abuse, implied torture, implied D/s and implied male slash. Many thanks to my beta, Chloe (from Perfect Imagination).

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Harry sat in the office with the cheery, pale-yellow walls and the picture of blurry water lilies that didn't move. His forearms itched under the bandages, there was a strange buzzing in his ears, and the arm of the chair felt clammy under his fingers.

"It should be safe to take him home now. Just keep a close eye on him and make sure he takes his medication as prescribed," the man in the white coat was saying.

Harry could not remember his name, maybe because it was not important. The man was just the latest in a long line of Healers and Muggle doctors who were hard-pressed to diagnose his condition but would not admit it, so they just kept slapping labels on it, hoping that the right one would stick.

"Will he get any better?" Hermione asked.

"There is no cure for Schizophrenia, Miss Granger, but you should see some improvement. It all depends on him staying on his medications."

Harry clenched his fists to still the trembling of his hands. His body was cold and his heart racing.

"But he's not going to do it again, right?" Ginny's voice sounded small and pleading.

"He's stable now. Make sure he continues to take his medication."

Ginny wanted guarantees; Harry and the doctor knew there were none.

The gloomy weather outside suited his mood, and after a week spent inside a building with thick glass windows that didn't open, Harry welcomed the blast of cold air across his face.

"Where is my wand?" he asked.

The two women exchanged uncomfortable glances.

"I don't think it's such a good idea for you to have a wand yet, Harry. I'm sure you understand," Hermione finally said.

"Maybe when you're feeling better," Ginny added in that small voice she had taken on lately.

"I'll feel better when I have my wand," Harry muttered under his breath, but he knew it was a lie that was all lies.

Their small cottage in the outskirts of Muggle London looked strange to Harry, even though it had been their home for the past six years. The flowers in the front lawn had wilted, and the bushes had shed their leaves during the time he had spent at hospital. The white shutters seemed brighter somehow, and the heavy cast-iron doorknocker in the shape of a griffin looked familiar but out of place. Few things seemed real to him anymore, not even his own wife and friends.

"I'll be upstairs in the bedroom," Harry said the moment he stepped into the house.

"Call if you need anything," Ginny chirped after him.

Harry paused at the top of the stairs and sank against the wall, his eyes closed. The voices of the two women drifted up to him from somewhere in the house.

"I don't know what to do for him," Ginny cried.

"I'm not sure there's anything you can do, other than to give it time and hope things get better."

"That's what everyone keeps telling me, but the truth is, I'm afraid of him."

"If things get to be too much, Ron and I will be delighted to have you come stay with us for a while. I'm sure we can find someone to take care of Harry."

An odd feeling settled in Harry's gut, like his insides had suddenly been flipped and shaken hard. Ginny was leaving, because she was afraid of him. He marched to the bedroom and slammed the door shut behind him.

Harry found himself on a narrow and dimly-lit street. He recognized the place as the seldom-used road that wound its way between two empty lots behind the Dursleys' house. Just over the hill and down a steep embankment was the park that had become his childhood refuge when he needed to escape his relatives' incessant taunts.

The coppery taste of blood filled his mouth, and a brilliant pain that knocked him to his knees flared upward from his ribcage and into his chest. A black boot connected with his jaw and sent him sprawling onto the damp pavement; before Harry could find his bearings, a hailstorm of blows rained down on his body. His fingers frantically felt the waistband of his jeans for his wand and came up empty. The thought occurred to Harry that he was going to die on a dark and empty Muggle street and he didn't even know how he had gotten there.

A flash of light exploded above Harry's head and suddenly his assailant was gone. Taking advantage of the reprise, Harry rolled on his side and tried to scramble away, only to be stopped by a gentle pressure on his forearm.

"Potter, don't move," someone said, and Harry froze.

A hooded shadow leaned over him, its features obscured but its voice distantly familiar. The voice was the echo behind Harry's worst moments of adolescent ire and humiliation, but before he could wrap his mind around a name, there was a slight movement to the side of him. Harry reached for the wand that floated inches in front of him and fired a stunning spell in the direction of the movement. A soft thud and muttered curse later, the wand was snatched from his hand.

"Damn it, Potter. It appears after all this time you're still determined to be the death of me."

Harry drifted into unconsciousness before he could let Professor Snape know that it had never been his intention to cause the wizard's death.

Harry awoke at St. Mungo's, his torso wrapped in bandages, and the taste of Skele-Gro on his tongue. Ginny sat on a chair by the foot of his bed, a trail of tears on her ruddy cheeks. An anxious-looking Molly Weasley hovered nearby.

Fresh moisture flooded Ginny's eyes when they met his.

"What happened?" Harry croaked. His throat felt parched.

"We were hoping you could tell us, mate." Ron was leaning against the door frame, a strange mixture of annoyance and pity on his face.

"I was attacked." It was the one thing about which Harry was certain.

Ron nodded. "By two Muggles, near Privet Drive; the Aurors found them still unconscious next to you. The question is: what were you doing there?"

"I don't know," Harry whispered.

Ginny jumped to her feet and started to leave the room.

Molly stopped her. "He received at least one blow to his head, dear; I'm sure it will come back to him after a while."

"What is the last thing you do remember, Harry?" Molly coaxed.

Harry tried hard to think above the roar in his head. "I had just gotten home from the hospital and overheard Ginny talking to Hermione about moving in with her and Ron. I went to my room, and the next thing I knew I was on that street getting my guts beaten out of me." Harry could not keep the bitterness out of his voice.

"You were gone for five days!" Ginny spat.

Harry was stunned. He ran his hand over the thick stubble of beard that covered his chin. He had shaven the morning before leaving the hospital. The silence that filled the room was nearly as painful as his injuries, and Harry grappled for a way to dispel it; then it came to him.

"Snape!" he blurted out. "Snape was there... He has something to do with this. I know it!"

This time there was no stopping Ginny when she ran out of the room. Molly threw her hands up in the air and glared at Harry before she followed her daughter.

Harry turned imploring eyes to his friend. "Ron, you have to believe me. You're my best mate; you know I wouldn't make up something like this."

Ron's eyes mirrored Molly's dismay. "Harry, Snape is dead."

"I know that. I mean, I thought so too, but he's not... he was there!"

"Mate, you have to stop talking like this. Everyone thinks you're crazy," Ron admonished. The wary look in his eyes said that he tended to agree with the consensus.

Sometimes, so did Harry.

Mirage

Chapter 2 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Harry left St. Mungo's against the Healers' advice. He hitched a ride home on the Knight Bus and packed a few robes and a couple of casual Muggle outfits into a trunk. He was surprised to find his wand sitting on the nightstand next to his bed. Still bruised and sore, but convinced that he had to find Snape, Harry Apparated to the narrow road off Privet Drive.

It was early afternoon, and the road was characteristically deserted. A few brown spots that could have been blood stained the pavement; other than that, there was no evidence of his attack. Harry was not certain what he had hoped to find. He wandered down the road to the park where he had spent so many hours as a child and sat on one of the swings. It was growing dark when he Apparated to Spinner's End.

Harry had never visited the small, dilapidated house before, but he knew well where it was located. After the end of the war, Harry had taken it upon himself to find out all he could about Severus Snape. The place was even more depressing than he had imagined it: with peeling paint and hanging shutters, it reeked of abandonment with a hint of despair. Harry knew before he entered the house that he would not find Snape inside...the thick mantle of dust that covered the floor and the cobwebs that hung from the rafters had not been disturbed in a very long time. He suddenly felt lost and stupid. The boy who had defeated the Dark Lord had become the man who could not even hold his own life together. There in the dark, amidst the abandoned books and crumbling furniture, Harry sank to his knees and wept.

The voice came out of the darkness like a disembodied whisper. "Self-pity, Potter? How dreadfully unbecoming."

Harry jumped to his feet and whirled around in the direction of the voice, his wand drawn, his free hand furiously swatting at the tears on his cheeks.

"It was you. I knew it," he accused.

Snape's eyebrow shot up in a way that Harry knew only too well. "I made no effort to conceal my identity."

Harry's confidence wavered...why had Snape revealed himself to him after allowing everyone to think he was dead for so long? Harry felt like a fool for not having thought about it earlier.

Harry's uncertainty must have shown on his face, because Snape added, "It became painfully obvious you could use my help."

"You know what's happening to me, then?"

"No, but I think we should discuss it...at a more comfortable location, perhaps."

Harry sheathed his wand, and Snape withdrew his.

"Where are we going?" Harry asked nervously as he allowed Snape to take his arm.

"My home," Snape said casually.

"You don't live here?"

"No, but I had a feeling you would come looking for me."

Before Harry could ask any more questions, his stomach dropped and he was whisked away into the vortex of Disapparition.

They came to a stop on a quiet street lined with small cottages and neatly pruned trees. Snape's home was unassuming but tidy, set at the end of the road in a shaded cul-de-sac.

"This is a Muggle neighbourhood," Harry observed as they entered the house.

"Does that surprise you?" Snape asked over his shoulder as he flicked on an electric light-switch and removed his cloak.

"No," Harry conceded after a moment. It did not seem strange when he considered that Snape had grown up in a Muggle district, if not one as nice as this one.

The living room was small and cosy, furnished with soft chairs, a large sofa, a few end-tables and the inevitable bookshelves. A piano pushed against the far corner seemed strangely out of place.

"Tea?"

Harry dismissed Snape's offer with a terse shake of his head. "Where have you been?"

Snape sank into a stuffed chair and motioned for Harry to take a seat on the sofa across from him. "I've been right here."

"Why didn't you...?"

Snape halted Harry's inquiry with a raised hand. "We're not here to talk about me."

Fair enough, Harry thought. "How did you find me, then?"

"I followed you... from Malfoy Manor."

Harry was confused. "I haven't been to Malfoy Manor in years, since before the end of the war."

"Mr Potter, I can't help you if you're going to lie to me." Snape's voice was soft, but there was no sympathy in his steely gaze.

An uncomfortable warmth spread through Harry's body, the same way it had during his school days each time Snape had accused him of lying when he was actually telling the truth.

"I'm not lying," he ground out.

Snape's lips narrowed into an angry slash and his eyes glinted. "I saw you leave Lucius' home not three days ago, the same day of your attack, in fact."

Harry could not think of a single reason why he would visit Lucius Malfoy...Snape had to be lying. His anger flared. "You're the one who's lying! I don't know what you're playing at, Snape, but I'm going to figure it out, and when I do, I will kill you for it!"

Snape's warning to stop came too late. Harry had jumped to his feet and tried to Disapparate. Pain ripped through his insides and his body was hurled into the air before it landed on the carpeted floor with a muted thud.

He didn't know how much time had passed when he awoke on a soft bed. The room was dark except for a thin sliver of light that filtered in through the partially open door. There was a moment of panic at not recognizing his surroundings before Harry heard Snape's voice.

"How do you feel?" Snape asked from a chair across the room.

"Like I've been splinched and put together wrong. What happened?" Harry groaned.

"You tried to Disapparate, and the Anti-Apparition wards stopped you."

Harry cautiously raised his arms and wiggled his legs; everything seemed to be attached and in place.

"You could have warned me," he muttered.

"I tried, but as usual, your impulsivity became your downfall, Mr Potter."

"I wasn't lying," Harry argued.

"I believe you. Trouble is, neither was I." Snape left his chair to pace around the room.

"If I've been to Malfoy Manor recently, I don't remember it."

"Does that happen to you often, not remembering where you've been?"

Harry nodded, afraid Snape would ask him more about it. It was the one thing he dreaded talking about, the thing he could not explain.

"Do you know why you didn't have your wand with you the night of your attack?" Snape asked next, and Harry tried hard not to let his relief show.

"Ginny took it. She doesn't think it's safe for me to carry one. Maybe she's right."

"It seems to me it isn't safe for you *not* to carry one. Have you sought help for your amnesia?"

Harry nodded. "I've been examined by every healer, curse-breaker and mediwizard in the Wizarding world, along with several 'well-respected' Muggle doctors; they all agree I'm crazy."

Snape stopped pacing and tilted his head to glance at Harry. "Then maybe you are...all the more reason to find out what your connection is to Lucius Malfoy."

"I already told you, Snape; I don't remember being at Malfoy Manor. Maybe someone is using Polyjuice."

But Snape did not look convinced.

"The answer is hidden in your mind, and there's a way to extract it," Snape said softly, and Harry couldn't believe that Snape was suggesting it, or that he himself was considering it.

The Healers at St. Mungo's had said that the use of Legilimency was too risky in his condition and would most likely only yield marginal results given the fact that Harry had no conscious recollection of the events in question. Bile rose to Harry's throat when he remembered what it had been like back in his fourth year, to have Snape rip into his mind and rifle through his most intimate memories like so much accumulated baggage. Yet, the lure of answers was too strong where all else had failed.

Harry pushed himself up on the bed and braced his head against the headboard.

"Do it."

Snape hesitated. "You should get some sleep tonight. Perhaps tomorrow, when you're more rested and have had time to consider my offer."

Harry shook his head. "No. Do it now, before I change my mind."

There was no intrusive jolt or flutter of panic this time. Snape had not asked him to, but Harry thought of Lucius Malfoy as he had seen him the last time, dressed in his royal-blue robes, standing smug and pleased as he and his family received a full pardon from the Wizengamot.

"Don't do that," Snape reprimanded.

"Do what?"

"Impel a specific memory forward and exclude others. Just let your thoughts wander; that shouldn't be too difficult for you."

A snide retort occurred to Harry and Snape sneered. "That's more like it," he whispered.

Harry could feel Snape riffling through his thoughts; the process felt intrusive, but not invasive, and after a few minutes, it suddenly stopped. Snape was staring down at Harry with a perplexed expression on his face.

"What happened?" Harry asked.

"We are both tired; we should have waited," Snape said after a moment. "You will be safe here; get some sleep and we'll try again in the morning."

Harry tried to get some sleep as Snape had suggested, but sleep was a nightmare. Often, it seemed as if he were sleeping all the time. Other times, there seemed to be no dividing line between the time of going to bed at night and waking up in the morning. Sometimes he would wake up without going to sleep, and many times he had gone to sleep only to wake up not the next morning, but at some undefined time in an unrecognisable place.

These things were not new. All his life Harry had been accused of doing things he knew he had not done, had been recognised by people he was certain he had never met, had heard things no one else could hear. When it had been revealed to him at the age of eleven that he was a wizard, Harry had clung to that fact as a logical explanation

for the early strange occurrences. But the incidents had become not only more frequent, but more menacing over the years, especially after Voldemort's death, until they could no longer be justified by magic or hidden away.

He lay restless and wakeful, knowing that in the morning he would have to tell this to Snape if he wanted the wizard's help. Yet Harry was not certain he could bring himself to tell. He was still awake in the sunless moments before dawn. His eyes darted around the bedroom at shapes indistinct in the semi-darkness, and he became overwhelmed by a strange stirring inside him that made it impossible for him to remain in the room even for the extra moment required for him to put on his coat and grab his wand.

He bolted from the bed and found his way down the stairs. He was in Snape's living room; then he was standing by the front door, his hand on the doorknob. He stepped out into the frigid night. The door closed softly behind him, and Harry looked around, trying to orient himself.

It looked like his street. The house just down the way, with white shutters and a griffin knocker looked like his house. It was ridiculous. How could he have gotten home in the split second between walking out of Snape's door and now, without a wand?

The door with the griffin knocker swung open, and Hermione ran out.

"Harry! Thank God. We were so worried." She threw her arms around him and then stepped back to carefully appraise his appearance.

He allowed her to guide him into the quiet house. Ron hovered nervously by the kitchen door.

"You found him! Is he all right? Where was he?" Ginny asked when she entered the room.

"I don't know. I saw him through the window, wandering the street just outside. He seems unharmed."

They were talking around him, like he wasn't even there; and Harry wondered if he was there at all or if it was all a dream.

This time there was a phone call to the Muggle doctor, and blue, orange and white pills...an 'adjustment,' the doctor had called it, since the blue, green, white combination of pills didn't seem to be working as well as expected. Hermione was bustling around the bedroom, laying out a clean change of clothes for Harry and assuring him that there was a logical explanation, and that it was going to be all right. *Someone should force a dose of reality down that woman's throat* Harry thought bitterly as he stared at the pills in his hand.

"It all seemed so real," he said.

"The doctor said delusions often seem that way, but what you did was dangerous, Harry. We were lucky you stayed close to the house this time," Hermione explained

"I just thought... He believed me, Hermione, and he was willing to help me."

Hermione smiled sadly at him. "But it wasn't real, Harry. You and I both know Snape is dead...we saw him die," she said softly.

"I know," he conceded. It was the mistrust that got him worse than the pity. Sometimes it seemed easier to go along with the notion that he was crazy than to see the look of disbelief in others' eyes when he tried to convince them otherwise.

Harry swallowed the pills and gingerly removed his t-shirt. He heard a gasp from the bedroom door.

"What have you done to yourself?"

Ginny was staring at his chest, and Harry looked down to see two small, silver rings dangling from his nipples, which explained the soreness he had felt with every brush of the cotton fabric over his chest.

Harry shrugged. "It's no big deal; I thought it would look cool," he lied.

Apparently the lies were easier to swallow than the truth, because Ginny wriggled her nose and smiled hesitantly at him.

"It is kind of sexy," she purred after a moment.

Harry chuckled...a mirthless sound that seemed ripped from his vocal cords. "I'm going to take a shower; call me when dinner is ready."

He escaped into the bathroom and locked the door behind him. A stranger stared back at him from the mirror above the bathroom sink: a stranger with beard stubble, pale skin, hollow eyes and pierced nipples that he did not remember getting pierced. A closer examination of the nipple-rings revealed that they were each crafted in the shape of a coiled snake encrusted with diminutive diamond eyes. Bile rose into Harry's throat and the room went black. In a fit of anger, he grabbed one of the rings and yanked: hard. Metal ripped through pink flesh, and Harry cried out.

There was a loud bang on the door.

"Harry, are you alright?" Ginny's voice asked.

"I'm fine!" Harry snapped, reaching for a towel with which to staunch the flow of blood.

When he had calmed his breathing, Harry carefully removed both rings and set them down by the sink before discarding the rest of his clothes and climbing into the shower. The spray of warm water stung his battered body, and Harry wondered how much more he could take.

Dreamland

Chapter 3 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Dinner was a sombre affair filled with patchy conversation and uncomfortable glances. Harry begged off early and retired to his bedroom. A bone-deep weariness that had nothing to do with the events of the day overcame him; he collapsed on the soft bed and was soon asleep.

The room felt overly warm despite his lack of clothing; thin rivulets of sweat travelled down his temples and bare torso. Harry's arms were stretched high above his head, his muscles taut, his toes barely brushing the luxurious carpet beneath his feet as his body gently swayed.

The orange glow of a fireplace made strange shadows on the walls, and the scents of brandy, flowers and sex filled his nostrils.

Strong fingers dug into his hips, and Harry gasped at the jolt of pleasure that travelled down his spine to settle low in his groin. A wet, warm tongue caressed his chest.

Harry looked down to see a blonde mane of hair. The blond wizard smirked and stepped back.

"I have a gift for you," Lucius whispered.

Harry watched Lucius walk across the room, mourning the loss of those pale hands and raspy tongue on his body. When Lucius returned, he held a small, red velvet box in his hand; two matching silver rings in the shape of snakes laid against a blood-red, velvet backdrop.

"Will you wear them for me?" Lucius asked, and his voice was like a cool caress.

Harry nodded without hesitation, without thought, without considering the implication, wanting only to be touched again, to be desired, to please...to be loved by the wizard standing in front of him.

"Anything for you," Harry breathed.

Lucius smiled...a cold smile, but a smile none the less. He set the box aside and picked up a long, silver needle; its sharp point glinted in the firelight.

Harry's heart raced and his cock hardened...his cock always hardened when Lucius smiled at him. Then those pale, cruel fingers were touching him again, and Harry forgot to be scared. They pinched and pulled at his nipples in a slow, lazy rhythm. Harry gasped, groaned, whimpered and almost cried. Lucius' hands never faltered, his gaze never wavered, not even when he pushed the long needle through the delicate skin made all the more sensitive by his ministrations, and Harry screamed.

Harry awoke in a pool of sweat, his chest sore and his heart racing. He shoved the covers aside and ambled to the bathroom.

The splash of cold water against his face, and the bright lights of the room dispelled some of the feeling of dread that still lingered at the edge of Harry's consciousness. He braced himself against the sink and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, a glint of silver caught his eye: the rings. Harry grabbed the offending jewellery and threw it inside a drawer before slamming it shut.

Two days later he sat alone in the kitchen, his breakfast untouched on the plate, a cup of tepid tea held between his trembling fingers. A rapid tapping on the window shattered the quiet. Harry looked up to see a large owl hovering just outside the dusty pane. The owl held a folded piece of parchment in its talons, and Harry rushed to throw the window open. The owl swooped into the room and circled twice before it perched itself on the back of a chair.

The missive was brief:

We have to talk. Meet me at the oak tree across the churchyard, one hour after sunset.

S.S.

Harry absently tossed a piece of toast to the owl and shoved the crumpled parchment into his pocket.

All day he continued to finger the bit of parchment to ascertain it was real, that he hadn't imagined it. There was no point in telling the others where he was going; they would just try to stop him. Or worse, they would follow him. When the sun set, Harry threw a cloak over his shoulders, slipped one of the bottles of pills inside the pocket (just in case) and was about to slip out the back door when he noticed the pair of rings he had hidden in the bathroom sitting on the kitchen counter, in plain sight. Horrified, Harry shoved the rings into his pocket and stepped out into the night.

The churchyard appeared deserted. The massive oak tree loomed across the street, and its outstretched branches cast a shadow that swallowed the light from the nearby streetlamp. Harry dragged his feet to the edge of the shadow and stopped.

"Snape, are you there?" he whispered into the darkness.

There was no answer for the space of a heartbeat, and then Harry saw movement.

"Over here, Potter."

Harry breathed a sigh of relief at the sound of the familiar voice.

"I wasn't sure. They said that you weren't real, that you were dead."

"I assure you I am quite real...and alive."

"What happened at your house? I was..."

"Not here," Snape interrupted.

Harry nodded. They were standing on an open expanse of road in a Muggle neighbourhood, only blocks from his home. Harry felt inexplicably relieved when they reached Snape's home. He took a seat without being asked and accepted the cup of tea that Snape offered him.

"Hermione found me wandering the street just outside our home...I don't remember how I got there," Harry said once they were settled in the study.

"I left you there," Snape stated.

"Why?"

"I thought it was best in your condition until I could better ascertain the situation."

"And have you?"

"Unfortunately, no, but I have a couple of theories. Do you mind drinking this?"

Snape held out a glass phial filled with an innocuous-looking, clear liquid that could have been water, but Harry knew from prior experience there was nothing innocent when it came to Snape and potions.

"What is it, Veritaserum?" he asked uncertainly.

"Nothing so dramatic. It's a simple potion of my own device that will reveal any spells or curses on your person."

Harry was not yet convinced. He eyed the potion warily. "The curse-breakers couldn't find anything."

Snape huffed. "If you don't mind, Mr Potter, I would like to draw my own conclusions."

He thrust the potion into Harry's trembling fingers and frowned. "Potter, you're shaking. Are you cold, or scared?"

Harry shook his head. "I'm just nervous."

Snape furrowed his brow but did not comment.

Harry removed the stopper from the phial and squeezed his eyes shut in anticipation of its foul taste. All worthy potions tasted horrible, and this one must have been especially effective. He coughed and sputtered as the liquid slid down his throat.

"Kindly stand up," Snape instructed.

Harry obeyed and tried not to fidget while Snape's wand hovered over his body.

Snape furrowed his brow, tilted his head, raised and lowered his eyebrows, all the while murmuring a spell that Harry could not quite make out. Finally, his shoulders slumped in defeat.

"Told you," Harry said smugly.

"I fail to see what you have to be so self-satisfied about, Potter. You do realize that this narrows our options significantly and further complicates matters. A curse, I can break; an enemy, I can fight; but I can not fix what I can't understand," Snape ground out.

His brief moment of satisfaction effectively squashed by Snape's logic, Harry lifted teary eyes to the older wizard.

"Now you know how I feel," he muttered.

Snape grunted and turned on his heel. "I didn't say your situation was hopeless, just more complicated than I first anticipated. Follow me."

The stairs creaked loudly under Harry's footsteps as they ascended to the second level, or maybe it just seemed that way because the house was so quiet. They entered a room that Harry deduced could only be Snape's bedroom. His gaze travelled over the dark, heavy curtains, the four-poster bed that looked big enough for Snape to drown in, and the rickety shelves laden with thick books. His eyes settled on an old, wooden cabinet shoved in a corner. Snape opened it and carefully withdrew a heavy Pensieve.

Harry took an unconscious step back.

"There's something I want you to see," Snape explained.

He produced a small bottle from the pocket of his robes and carefully poured the silvery contents into the Pensieve. When the vial was empty, he motioned for Harry to go ahead.

"Whose memories are they?" Harry asked.

"They are mine," Snape responded.

"Then I want you to watch them with me...in case I have any questions."

Snape's eyes flickered to a spot near the ceiling. "Very well," he said after a moment.

Harry leaned over the Pensieve and found himself in an unfamiliar room. Piano music was playing, and Lucius Malfoy sat on a chair across from Snape. Harry's eyes narrowed when he caught sight of himself sitting at the piano.

"When did this happen?" he asked.

"Three nights ago. Does any of it look familiar?" Snape said from beside him.

Harry shook his head. "Wait! The music, I think. I've heard it before, but can't remember where."

"I did some research at the Muggle library; it's the third movement of Chopin's Sonata No. 2 the Funeral March. Does that particular piece hold any significance to you?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know anything about classical music; I don't even know how to play the piano."

Harry could see that Lucius and the Snape in the memory were talking, and he focused his attention on them.

"I didn't know you owned a piano, Lucius," Snape was saying.

"I didn't," Lucius answered, motioning toward the Harry in the memory. "He begged so prettily when he saw it at the store window that I couldn't help myself. Tea?"

The teapot rose from the table and a stream of dark liquid flowed into a china cup. Snape swallowed the steaming liquid in one gulp.

Lucius chuckled. "Something stronger, perhaps?"

Snape's eyes flicked to a row of crystal decanters that sat on a nearby table, but he shook his head.

"How long has this been going on?" he asked instead.

"I ran into him one night a little over three months ago, at a club in Muggle London."

What Lucius had been doing one night in a Muggle neighbourhood was left unsaid, but the blonde wizard derived great pleasure from telling Snape the story of his chance encounter with Harry Potter, particularly the part about Harry pretending to be a Muggle named Richard and claiming not to know Lucius, or have any understanding of magic or the Wizarding world.

"He is quite convincing...and delightful, I must say," Lucius concluded.

"He's obviously ill," Snape responded.

"Ill? He's a bit battered, but other than that he seems in perfect health to me. If you would have me send for a Healer...?"

"The Healers have been unable to do anything for him..."

"Spare me the dramatics, Severus. Potter is not my prisoner; he is free to come and go as he pleases; and he always...comes...back."

"And were you planning on ever telling me?"

"I didn't want to brag. Besides, we both have our secrets. You'll do well to remember that, Severus. I'm a married man with a good standing in the Wizarding community..."

Snape leaned forward in his chair. "Don't threaten me, Lucius. He's your son's age for God's sake!" he hissed.

Harry's gut tightened and the bitter taste of bile filled his mouth. "It's not what you think!" Harry said, but he couldn't push away the images in his dream...the dream of Lucius and the rings.

It was just a dream... But if the rings were real, did that mean it was a memory and not a dream? Warmth suffused Harry's face. How much had Snape seen? He was suddenly very aware of Snape's presence next to him, and he regretted having asked the wizard to join him.

"Richard!"

Lucius' commanding voice pulled Harry out of his reverie. "Who's Richard?" he asked.

"Richard is *you*," Snape said. "Watch."

Harry watched the image of himself leave the piano and walk to stand next to Lucius. He shuddered when the blonde wizard's arm snaked around 'Richard's' waist and pulled him down on his lap.

"I don't want to see anymore," he begged.

"Just a little bit more," Snape assured him.

Lucius' voice drifted to him as if from a great distance.

"Is that what's bothering you, Severus, or do I detect a hint of jealousy?" Lucius stared into Snape's eyes and his lips twisted into a grin that made Harry's stomach recoil. "You know I can be a very generous man."

Harry wanted to look away, but he was mesmerised by Lucius' pale hand travelling over the young man's all-too-familiar midriff...Harry's midriff. The hand travelled downward and disappeared beneath the waistband of his pants.

"I'm going to be sick," Harry whispered, a moment before the room spun around him and he found himself suddenly on the floor of Snape's bedroom.

He emptied the measly contents of his stomach on the thick carpet. He retched until the muscles of his abdomen ached and his throat contracted into spasms that gave way to sobs. He remained on his knees, unwilling to look up and face the other wizard he knew was somewhere in the room.

The fear of not knowing had been replaced by an even greater fear...knowing. He wanted to be mad: raving, certifiable, irrefutably insane, if it would only make the memory of what he had just witnessed go away. Some things were best forgotten.

"Drink this," Snape said softly from above him.

Harry took the offered glass and brought it to his lip, not caring what it contained. "Is this just water?" he asked after he had tasted it.

"You sound disappointed, Mr Potter. Were you hoping for something else?" Snape drawled.

Poison, Harry thought. Poison would have been a most welcome offering at that moment. He sank against the cabinet and kept his eyes fixed on the intricate pattern of the wallpaper.

"What else did you see?" a morbid sense of curiosity forced him to ask.

"Nothing, I left shortly after that and waited outside the manor until early morning, when you exited. I took you home by Side-Apparation."

"I can't go back there," Harry said.

"It's not my plan that you should return to Malfoy Manor," Snape said softly, misunderstanding Harry's meaning.

"There too, but I meant home. I can't go home... I can't face Ginny."

"Understandable," Snape said after a while. "Perhaps it would be best if you remained somewhere safe..."

Harry's eyes snapped to meet Snape's. "I'm not going back to hospital either," he hissed.

Snape's features remained impassive. "I meant here, Mr Potter. Now that I have a better understanding of your condition, I can take better measures against you leaving the house without my noticing."

"Oh," Harry said.

The truth was there was nowhere else for him to go. Nowhere Harry could escape to get away from himself, not even inside his own mind.

He allowed Snape to help him to his feet and lead him to the bed.

"I don't keep many potions in store these days, but I can offer you a mild sedative."

"Dreamless Sleep?" Harry asked.

Snape's lips contorted into a bitter sneer. "That I always have on hand."

Harry had removed his shoes and settled under the covers by the time Snape returned with the potion.

"Drink this and get some rest; I have a lot of work to do," he said as he handed Harry the small flask.

Harry drank the liquid uncomplainingly, although he did grimace at the taste.

"I feel safe here," Harry whispered as his eyes drifted shut and was surprised to find that he meant it.

"Then you truly are mad," Harry thought he heard Snape mutter as the wizard extinguished the lights and left the room, softly closing the door behind him.

The Others

Chapter 4 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Harry awoke feeling rested for the first time in years. The events of the previous night seemed like a distant nightmare...until reality set in. He was in Snape's house, on Snape's bed. Harry was not sure how he felt about placing his trust in a man he had spent seven years hating and the next seven trying to forget. He left the bed and wandered around the room, taking in the utilitarian surroundings: a bed, a lamp, a desk and chair, a wardrobe and the cabinet that concealed the Pensieve...no photographs, no bric-a-brac, no paintings of landscapes or still-lives on the walls, no mementos unless Harry counted the weathered books. The room could have belonged to anyone, yet it was distinctly Snape's. He ran his hand over the crinkled leather of a book and wondered what it was like to be Snape, to have no physical anchor to the past, no discernable future, to be always alone.

There was a soft knock, and the door to the bedroom opened. Snape swept in carrying a tray laden with eggs, fried potatoes, toast, jam and tea.

"I don't want to impose," Harry blurted.

Snape stopped short. "If I thought you an imposition, I would not have asked you to stay. In fact, I would have told you to leave."

Harry could not help but smile at Snape's bluntness. There had been a time in his life when he had found the wizard's abrasive disposition irritating, but after enduring a lifetime of secrets hidden behind benevolent smiles, Harry found Snape's candour refreshing, something he could learn to appreciate.

He eyed the tray of food that Snape had set on the little table next to the bed.

"You don't have to cook my meals; I can do that. And I have money; I can pay you for the food and board."

"I don't want your father's money, Potter, but you're welcome to cook if you want."

Snape turned on his heel and marched toward the door.

"Why *are* you helping me?" Harry asked suddenly, as if the question had just occurred to him, when in reality he had thought of little else since encountering Snape on the road behind the Dursleys' house.

Snape paused with his hand on the doorknob. "Because he used you like he used me," he said, so softly that Harry barely heard it.

Before Harry could ask what he meant, Snape was gone.

It soon became obvious to Harry why Snape had so readily agreed to let him do the cooking: the eggs were runny, the potatoes greasy and the toast burnt. Snape did not know how to cook.

The house was quiet when Harry descended the stairs a half hour later. He found Snape in the kitchen, a cup of tea in one hand, a copy of the *Daily Prophet* in the other.

"I brought the breakfast dishes down," Harry said, holding up the tray in his hands.

Snape grunted and waved his cup in the general direction of the sink, his eyes never straying from the newspaper.

Harry proceeded to fill the sink with sudsy water and wash the dishes by hand, the way he had always done while growing up at the Dursleys'.

"Your wand is in the guestroom, on top of your trunk," Snape offered.

Harry glanced over his shoulder; he had not been aware that Snape was watching him.

"It's all right. With Ginny and Molly always around, I never got the chance to learn any housekeeping spells anyway," he said before turning his attention back to the dishes.

He waited for a response from Snape, perhaps an offer to teach him some housekeeping spells, but the wizard said nothing, and when Harry glanced at him, he saw that Snape was once again reading the newspaper.

His task of washing the dishes completed, Harry took refuge in the guestroom *nowhis* bedroom.

~*~

As he watched the young man quietly leave the kitchen, Snape wondered exactly what it was he had allowed himself to get dragged into this time. For the past several years his life as a Muggle had been simple if lonely. Perhaps it was that loneliness that had led him to seek out an old acquaintance after a while...the one person who knew Snape's most shameful secret and didn't judge him for it. It was during one of his visits to Lucius' home that Snape had observed Harry leaving Malfoy Manor. He knew he should have left well enough alone then, but the strangeness of the event piqued his curiosity and stirred a long-repressed sense of duty in him. Instead of entering the manor, he had followed Harry to the narrow road behind the Dursleys' home. And after what he had seen there, Snape knew he could not turn back.

Harry's declaration that he did not want to be a burden had taken him by surprise. The young man's presence in his home was more than an inconvenience...it could easily cost Snape his freedom. He had half expected the day's headline to read: HARRY POTTER MISSING, PRESUMED KIDNAPPED...MAJOR WIZARDHUNT UNDERWAY.

Not surprisingly (at least to Snape), no one seemed to be missing the Saviour of the Wizarding World these days. The papers had been brimming with stories about Harry in the months following the fall of the Dark Lord, but soon the stories had dwindled to nothing, and the gossip and innuendo began: rumours that Harry Potter had been hospitalized more than once for an unspecified malady. Snape had tried so hard to look the other way.

But, old habits die hard, they say, and Snape had spent the best part of seven years of his life watching over Harry (more if he counted his secret visits to Privet Drive while Harry was growing up, and the numerous arguments he'd had with Dumbledore about the wisdom of allowing Harry to remain in the care of such loathsome Muggles as the Dursleys).

Snape had worked half the night to modify the spells and charms on his house that had been originally designed to repel intruders and the curious, not to physically keep someone in. It was past midnight when he had finally lain down on the couch downstairs and gone to sleep, too weary to make his way to the guest bedroom at the top of the stairs. There had been a time in his life when Snape could go without sleep for days at a time, brew the most complex potions without so much as breaking a sweat and still be alert enough to engage an adversary on command, but he was no longer a young man. His forty-sixth birthday was quickly approaching, and after a night spent sleeping on the lumpy couch, Snape felt every bit his age, which made Lucius' notion that Snape's interest in Harry was anything other than platonic all the more ridiculous.

Finding no magical cause for Harry's condition had been a greater disappointment than he had let on, but he had also been prepared for the eventuality. Two days earlier, Snape had left the Muggle library with an armload of books he had gathered with the aid of a skilled if somewhat nervous-looking librarian on the topic of Dissociative Disorders. Since then, he had narrowed the possibilities down to one condition in particular that seemed to fit Harry's symptoms and background...Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Snape was at a loss on how to treat Harry's condition...his first attempt at amateur Muggle psychotherapy seemed to have left the young wizard an even worse wreck...but neither was he prepared to concede defeat. With a determined swipe of his wand, Snape Vanished the copy of the *Daily Prophet* and sent his empty cup to the sink before retreating to his study.

~*~

Rain came down in sheets outside the kitchen's window. Harry gave the stew one final stir and set the spoon down on the counter. He had not seen Snape all day. He had knocked on the door of the study once, to ask if Snape would like some tea and sandwiches for lunch. His inquiry had been answered by a terse, "Not now, Potter!" from the other side of the door.

Had Harry been fond of reading, he would have found plenty to do at Snape's home. As it were, there was little or nothing for him to do. He was still uncomfortable in Snape's presence...every time he thought of the wizard, the scene with Lucius flashed into his mind, and the fact that Snape *knew* was beyond mortifying.

Snape swept into the room as if Summoned by Harry's reluctance; he cradled a large book in one arm.

"I need to become more familiar with Richard," Snape announced.

"Who?" Harry asked, feeling warmth rush to his cheeks.

"Richard...your alternate personality state."

Snape set the book down on the table and turned to look at Harry, who quickly turned his attention back to the stew.

"My what?" Harry asked into the simmering pot.

"Your alter ego, if you will. Several of the books I've read suggest that you suffer from a malady of the mind known as Dissociative Identity Disorder; some of the earlier tomes refer to it as Multiple Personality Disorder. If what I've learned about this condition is correct, increasing the amount of information you...Harry...have about Richard, will increase the amount of control you have over him when you change from one personality state to the other. You will in essence be able to communicate with him and eventually be able to exert your will over his actions. It is my intent to facilitate this exchange of information at the start, thus my need to acquaint myself with him."

Snape's explanation stopped making sense to Harry immediately after the word 'control.'

"Can't you just make it go away?" he said, sounding a little more desperate than he intended.

"Unfortunately, no. Some of the older literature suggests something called 'reintegration,' which involves bringing all the aspects into just one identity state, figuratively 'killing off' the other personalities, but that option appears to have fallen into disuse and for some good reasons. A peaceful coexistence of each part seems to be a more humane alternative. He is, after all, a part of you."

"I don't know, Snape. I mean, what you're saying sounds good, but what if it doesn't work?" Harry reluctantly glanced over his shoulder at the other wizard and was taken aback by what he saw.

Snape was staring at him: face pale, his mouth grim, right hand poised over his wand. Harry recognised an angry Snape when he saw him.

"I mean, if you think it will work...if it's that important to you...I can...I suppose..." An uneasy feeling overcame Harry. "Snape, what just happened?" he asked, not certain if anything had happened at all.

"Follow me," Snape ordered and turned on his heel so quickly that Harry had to scamper to keep up.

They went back to Snape's bedroom, where Snape repeated the ritual of withdrawing the Pensieve from its cabinet and depositing a string of his memory into it. By the time he completed the process, Harry's heart was threatening to beat out of his chest.

"Can't you just tell me?" he asked.

"I'd rather you see for yourself," Snape answered softly, some of the anger gone from his features.

Harry nodded and plunged into the Pensieve. He watched himself at the stove, practically grinding the stew into mush with the spoon. Snape stood by the table, talking.

"... figuratively 'killing off' the other personality, but that option appears to have fallen into disuse and for some good reasons. A peaceful coexistence of each part seems to be a more humane goal. He is, after all, a part of you."

Harry watched himself glance over his shoulder; a vicious smirk twisted his features almost beyond recognition.

"That's too bad, Snape...you're good at killing off people," Harry sneered.

Snape blanched, but Harry only chuckled and turned his back to the angry wizard.

"I don't know, Snape. I mean, what you're saying sounds good, but what if it doesn't work?" Harry said in a hesitant but much more affable tone.

The memory was brief but jarring.

"Snape...I don't know what to say. I didn't mean it..." Harry was embarrassed...and frightened, not of Snape who seemed to have calmed down considerably, but of himself. If there was a part of him that dared goad a wizard like Snape and then casually turn his back on him...

Snape's eyebrow shot up. "And you don't remember saying it?"

Harry shook his head.

"I suspected as much."

"But you said there's a way for me to control this other personality, right?"

"Yes. However, this new development does present some complications."

Harry's hopes sank. "What do you mean?"

"I can't be certain, but when I met Richard, he seemed gentle and polite, almost shy. What I just witnessed in the kitchen was anything but."

Harry didn't grasp the significance of Snape's words. "What does that mean?" he asked.

"It means it is possible that my work just got a lot more dangerous," Snape whispered.

Snape insisted that Harry eat some of the stew he had made, even though Harry's stomach felt like it had been tied into a knot, and he found it difficult to swallow. When Harry produced from his pocket a bottle of the pills the Muggle doctor had prescribed, Snape snatched it from his hand.

"They are just for anxiety...they help," Harry explained.

Snape turned the bottle over in his hand, sniffed its contents, scraped his fingernail over one of the small, yellow pills and tasted it. He returned the bottle to Harry without a word. Harry swallowed one of the pills and returned the rest to his pocket.

"What did you mean when you said your work is now more dangerous?" Harry asked after Snape had consumed his second helping of stew while Harry's first grew cold in its bowl.

"It's possible that Richard is not your only alternate personality state. This other one seems much more assertive...and aggressive. It also seemed to recognise me, while Richard didn't. While I have an idea of how to trigger the switch, I have no control over which personality state I'll be bringing forward or how that part of you will react to my meddling."

Harry weighed Snape's words carefully. He wanted to protest that he would never attack Snape without provocation, but Harry knew he would be fooling himself if he thought he had any say in what these other personalities did...if he'd had any choice at all, the one thing he would have chosen would have been not to have sex with Lucius Malfoy.

Harry shuddered at the thought, and Snape must have misread the gesture because he said, "It is a risk, but not an intractable one. Now that I'm aware of it, I shall be prepared."

"How are you going to do it?"

Snape was silent for a moment, and Harry felt his hands begin to shake. Harry hated this weakness in him and he hid his hands under the table, hoping that Snape had not noticed.

"Legilimency," Snape said suddenly.

Harry jumped to his feet, and his chair skidded across the floor. "No!"

Snape remained in his seat, unperturbed by Harry's reaction. "There is a Muggle method of unearthing buried memories. I could learn it, but from what I've read it's only marginally less invasive than Legilimency and far less reliable."

"I don't care!" Harry yelled. "I don't want you to see!"

Snape leaned slightly forward. "See what, Mr Potter?"

"I don't know! That's the problem; I don't know what I've done, or with who, or where I've been. Maybe...maybe there's a reason why I don't remember. Maybe I just don't want to!"

Snape rose to his feet and circled the table to stand next to Harry, so near that Harry could feel the wizard's breath on his damp cheek, and Harry realised he had been crying.

"We all have secrets we would rather not remember much less share. Trouble is, Mr Potter, you can't control that of which you're not aware. In this case, what you don't know can and will most definitely *hurt you*," Snape reasoned.

"I just don't want you to see," Harry sobbed, clutching the table as if it were a piece of drifting wood, floating in the middle of a dark sea that was threatening to swallow him.

"Maybe there's another way, and I shall try to find it," Snape conceded after a moment, and Harry felt his anxiety ebb slightly.

"Try to get some rest, Mr Potter. Do you need me to assist you to your room?"

Harry shook his head vigorously. "No...no. I'm fine," he lied. He felt disoriented and detached from his surroundings. He stumbled out of the kitchen and up the stairs until he found the door to his bedroom. His legs would no longer support him, and Harry collapsed on the bed, where he lay staring through the bedroom window at the rain that continued to come down.

Temptation Once Defied

Chapter 5 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Something woke Severus up in the middle of the night. He listened for it, but the house was quiet. The rain had died down and an eerie silence filled the darkness. He donned his faded, flannel robe and shuffled out of the bedroom, wand in hand. The hallway was deserted. He proceeded past Harry's room, and that was when he heard it again: a strangled cry, like someone being choked. Severus threw the door open and found the young man in what he concluded must be the throes of a nightmare. Body taut, fists clenched, Harry fought against an invisible assailant.

"Potter, wake up!" he ordered, rushing to the side of the bed, but Harry was oblivious to his command.

One fist grazed Snape's cheek when he leaned forward to try to still Harry's thrashing. The next blow caught him square on the jaw.

"Potter, wake up or I will hex you!" Severus threatened.

Harry's flailing limbs went limp, and Severus used the reprise to light a candle. The young man's eyes were closed, he looked pale, his breathing was shallow, but the lines on his forehead had relaxed. On impulse, Severus ran his fingers over Harry's forehead, pushing back strands of damp hair. His hand rested against Harry's hairline, and he stared at the faded scar that marred the pale brow. He had his share of scars, too...larger, deeper, inside and out...but none as terrible as this one. Pain surfaced anew, as fresh and raw as that fateful night so many years ago when the Dark Lord had cursed them both.

"I was a young man then, younger than you are now," Snape whispered. "I didn't know what I was doing. I was filled with hatred...I'm tired now; I don't want to hate anymore." And it was all right to say it because no one was listening.

Slim fingers gripped Snape's hand, and Harry's eyes fluttered open.

"Then don't." The words were a breathy whisper.

Snape tried to pull back, but the hold on his wrist tightened, and Harry brought the trembling hand to his lips. He placed a soft kiss on the palm of Snape's hand.

Snape snatched his hand away and fled the room.

He awoke early the following morning. Not eager to join Harry just yet, he took an extra long shower and dawdled around the bedroom. He meticulously made his bed and took extra care when combing his hair. He tried on a jumper and pair of trousers before he discarded them in favour of black robes. It was a good hour before he exited the room.

Music greeted him when he descended the stairs, and Snape paused. He followed the familiar notes to the study, where he found Harry sitting at the piano. An uneasy feeling settled in the pit of Snape's stomach, and for a moment he was uncertain how to proceed.

"Good morning," he finally said.

The music stopped, and Harry smiled up at him. "I hope you don't mind. I saw the piano and..."

Severus waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "It belonged to my Muggle grandmother; I keep it only for sentimental reasons, and I'm sure she won't mind, as she's been dead going on three decades now."

"Is there something you would like me to play? I'm not very good, but... I'm sorry; I seem to have forgotten your name."

"Severus. Severus Snape," he whispered.

The young man still sitting on the piano bench smiled in a way that Harry Potter had never smiled at him and stretched out his hand. "My name is Richard, but I guess you know that already."

Snape ignored the proffered hand and stared at Harry's face instead. "Do you remember how you got here?" he asked.

"Not really, but that happens to me sometimes."

An irrational anger flared inside Snape. "And you're not concerned to find yourself in a strange place, in the company of a stranger?"

Harry, or rather Richard, shrugged. "You're not a stranger...you're Lucius' friend."

Severus took a sharp intake of breath in an effort to control his temper. "Whatever gave you that idea?" he hissed.

"You were at his home. And your books," Harry pointed at the bookshelves, "they're all about magic. You must be a wizard like Lucius."

Snape caught Harry's gaze and held it for a moment; the young man did not try to look away. There was no hint of deception or trickery there...the green orbs were as clear and bright as the pages of a brand new scroll, and just as easy to read.

Snape was going to be ill. How could the others have missed something like this: something so disturbing and dangerous?

"Mr Po...Richard, would you care for some breakfast?"

Harry accepted the offer politely and followed Snape.

"Can you cook?" Snape asked when they reached the kitchen.

Harry grinned. "Better than I play the piano."

Snape noted that while Richard and Harry each had their own distinct personality, they did share some skills.

"Severus... may I call you Severus?" Harry asked between mouthfuls of egg.

Snape nodded.

"Did we...? How...? What I mean is...we were sleeping in different rooms when I awoke."

"Of course we have separate bedrooms. You're not an infant..." Understanding dawned.

"Oh. No!" Severus snapped, a tad more forcefully than he intended.

Harry blinked slowly at him and shovelled another spoonful of food into his mouth.

"Sorry. I'm starving; feels like I haven't eaten in days," Harry apologised while he dabbed his lips with a napkin.

Snape was relieved by the change of topic. "It's obvious by your appearance you haven't been eating enough. Do you mind if I ask you some personal questions?" Snape added.

Harry shook his head. "Go ahead, ask."

"Tell me, Richard, is Malfoy Manor your place of residence?"

The young man shook his head. "I live with Harry, but my home is on Privet Drive."

Snape was surprised by this answer. He waited a moment; then proceeded.

"And who is Harry?"

Richard seemed amused by the question. "He's the other, of course."

"Is your home with the Dursleys?" Snape ventured.

"NO! I told you; I live with Harry." The anger that fleetingly crossed Harry's features dissipated as quickly as it had appeared, leaving Snape confused.

After a few more minutes of conversation, Snape felt he had enough information to formulate a new plan of action. Harry was not aware of the other personality states, but at least one...Richard...seemed to be aware of Harry's existence. This was something Snape could use to his advantage. The young man seemed comfortable enough to be left alone for a few hours.

"I have some work to do in my study, Richard: do you mind staying alone for a while?"

Harry smiled. "Do you mind if I look at some of your books?" he asked.

"Not at all. You may peruse any book in the living room, but steer clear of the ones in the bedroom, and do not enter my study," Snape instructed.

When Snape joined him in the living room several hours later, Harry was curled up on the couch; three slim books rested by his feet, and a fourth laid open on his lap.

"Did you find anything interesting to read?" Snape asked.

Harry looked up, and Snape recognized by his smile that he was still in his 'Richard' personae.

"Lots!" Harry exclaimed. "This here, it talks about something called *Golpalott's Third Law*, but I don't understand it."

"It's one of two-thousand-three-hundred accepted principles that govern the making of all potions...one of my areas of expertise." Snape took a seat and launched into a lengthy explanation of the properties of potion ingredients and the alchemical processes that serve to amalgamate them into a product that is ultimately equal to more than the sum of its initial parts. "Golpalott's Third Law applies specifically to antidotes for combined poisons. Golpalott's theory is, however, incomplete, since the reverse is also true: the nature of some ingredients is such that they can act as substitutes for just about any ingredient regardless of its properties," Snape concluded, expecting to see the same dazed expression that had so often graced the faces of his students.

Harry's eyes narrowed for a moment. "So it's not enough to know what each ingredient does individually, it is also important to know how each ingredient will affect the others," he offered hesitantly.

"Correct," Snape conceded.

After that, they discussed theoretical Arithmacy, and the Laws of Transfiguration...this aspect of Harry's personality seemed particularly intrigued by the exceptions to Gamp's Law of Elemental Transfiguration...a topic that had frustrated Snape for decades.

Tea gave way to scotch, and sunlight to candlelight. A dinner of sandwiches and a game of Muggle chess later, Severus had decided he must have spent way too much time in isolation because he found himself actually enjoying the company of Harry Potter.

Well, not exactly Harry. The Muggle who called himself Richard shared little with Harry other than his physical appearance. Despite others' opinions, Snape knew that Harry's short comings were not all in his imagination; he had always found Harry to be impulsive, reckless and a bit uncouth. In contrast, Richard was restrained, thoughtful and polite. Each man's mannerisms were also distinct. Richard's movements were more fluid and graceful than Harry's, his manner more relaxed, even though there always seemed to be a hint of mischievousness hidden behind his ready smiles. Snape could not help but wonder if this was the man that Harry would have become had Voldemort not intervened.

"What?" Harry asked from where he was reclined on the couch.

Snape realised he had been staring. "Excuse me. I'm a bit tired; I think it would be best if I retire." Snape rose. "You may stay up and read if you wish, but please don't try to leave the house; there are wards in place. You remember what I told you about wards?"

Harry nodded slowly. There was a glimmer to the green of his eyes that Snape attributed to the alcohol the young man had consumed. Snape decided he should remember in the future that Harry's body was weakened and frail, and could not metabolize alcohol as effectively as the body of a man his age normally would.

Snape started to leave, but a soft touch on his sleeve stopped him.

"Wait. I had a really good time today." The young man stood up and was moving closer.

"As did I," Snape responded.

"I don't want it to end."

He was standing close now...too close.

"Mr Po...Richard," Snape started to say, but his words were cut short when Harry took his hand and brought it to his lips in a replay of the previous night.

His eyes met Snape's, and there was a forlorn longing there, so keen that Snape wondered how he could have missed it before.

"You don't like men?" Harry asked innocently.

Snape thought of another young man with tousled black hair and a mischievous grin many years earlier; a man who had made Snape feel things he had never felt before, or since. Snape swallowed hard and dismissed the thought: Harry was nothing like Regulus Black.

"It's not that," he answered.

Snape had fended off curses and werewolves; had stared down Dark Lords and First-Year students alike, but he now stood petrified, rooted to the spot, uncertain about what to say or do.

"I'll let you do anything you want to me...anything," Harry breathed.

Desire tugged at Severus' groin. Horrified, he shoved the young man away. Harry lost his balance and tumbled unceremoniously to the floor. He stared wide-eyed up at Snape.

"Stay away from me!" Severus hissed before fleeing to his room.

Memories

Chapter 6 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Harry stood next to Snape, watching the memories play themselves out in front of him like an outdated film...distant and strange. He had awoken that morning feeling agitated and more disconnected than usual, although he didn't know why. Snape had missed breakfast and scowled through lunch before he had insisted that Harry accompany him to the Pensieve afterwards. There were no dramatic revelations this time. Snape's memories of the previous day were almost tedious to watch in their triviality, which is why Harry could not explain the tears that welled up in his eyes.

Harry and Snape sat across each other in the study, a Muggle chess board between them. Snape's brow was furrowed in concentration while he absently caressed his bottom lip with one finger. The Harry in the memory took a sip of amber liquid from a tumbler and smiled over the rim. He had kicked off his shoes, and his hair fell around his face in disarray.

"What am I drinking?" Harry asked Snape, who stood silently next him.

"Single malt scotch...Macallan."

Harry wrinkled his nose.

"You don't care for scotch, Mr Potter?"

Harry shrugged. "Never had it."

Snape made his move. "Check. Are you ready to concede?"

After a quick glance at the board, Harry emptied his glass and set it on the edge of the table. "Some day you're going to explain to me how you did that." He slouched down on the couch and raked his fingers through his hair.

Snape finished putting away the chess pieces and for a long time said nothing.

"What?" Harry finally asked.

"Excuse me. I'm a bit tired; I think it would be best if I retire." Snape rose.

The memory ended abruptly, and Harry found himself back in Snape's bedroom.

"I don't understand. Nothing happened; why did you want me to see this?"

"Did anything seem familiar, a sense of déjà vu, perhaps?"

Harry shook his head, unable to describe the feeling of watching himself go through the motions of an entire day without any recollection of having lived it.

The passage of time became subjective for Harry after that. Dates lost their meaning. One day was much the same as the one before, and with each one, he retreated further into a small, dark place inside himself. He continued to cook the meals because he had told Snape he would, but he barely ate, and even the menial task of food preparation was quickly turning into an overwhelming chore. Sitting across the table from Snape, under the wizard's close scrutiny, felt like torture...Harry much preferred the solitude of his room.

At one time, Harry had feared the gaps in his memory; now he longed for a reprieve from the drudgery of his reality. He wished he could make himself disappear, become the young man who drank scotch, enjoyed chess and felt comfortable enough in Snape's house to walk around barefoot, if only for a little while.

Even if he couldn't remember being that person himself, he could at least relieve the normalcy vicariously through Snape's memories...but Snape had no new memories to share. Richard had not returned for whatever reason, and all that was left was Harry, wasting away. Even the solace of sleep was denied him. His dreams were becoming increasingly vivid and violent. It was as if Snape had removed a stopper, and every shadow in Harry's subconscious had come bubbling to the surface.

Alone in his room, Harry buried his face in the crook of his arm and cried.

The door flew open, and Snape marched into the room. "Get up, Potter!" he ordered.

Harry buried his face into the pillow. It was not time to cook dinner yet, and he wanted to be alone. "Go away, Snape," he mumbled.

Snape would not be deterred. "Do you realize you have not left this room for two days, not even to shower or eat?"

Harry blinked slowly. "Two days?"

"Two days. Thus far I have respected your wish for privacy, but I have enough to answer for already without someday having to explain the presence of your corpse in my home!"

Harry sat up on the bed. His movements were slow and unsure. He raked his fingers nervously through his dishevelled hair.

Two days. But he remembered having cooked dinner the day before. Two days. It was the thing about time and memory...the thing he could not explain.

"I'm sorry, Snape. I didn't realise."

Snape's voice cut across Harry's soft words. "I require neither an apology nor an explanation. What I want you to do is take a shower, put on clean robes, and meet me in the kitchen in twenty minutes. Do you think you can manage that, Potter?"

Harry nodded. "Wait. Did you say robes?"

"Yes, Mr Potter...robes. You *are* a wizard, and wizards wear robes."

Snape waited until Harry started to rise from the bed; he then turned on his heel and marched out the door.

Harry dragged himself to his feet. He retrieved a set of robes from his trunk and saw something drop to the floor: it was one of the silver rings; the other was still in the trunk where he had hidden them. He reluctantly picked up the jewellery and put it in the pocket of his robes before he made his way to the bathroom.

Harry's stomach protested at the scent of boiled beef that filled the kitchen when he entered it. Snape stood by the stove, seasoning the contents of a large kettle.

"How do you feel?" Snape asked over his shoulder.

"Awful," Harry mumbled.

If Snape heard his reply, he did not acknowledge it. "Please have a seat," he said.

Harry collapsed into the nearest chair and stared at the blue and white pattern of the tablecloth.

Snape set a bowl of thin soup in front of him. When Harry started to object, Snape scowled down at him. "You need to eat."

It was easier to do as he was told than to argue, and after the first few tentative spoonfuls, Harry discovered he was hungry after all.

Snape nodded his approval and took the seat across from Harry.

"I've been thinking, Mr Potter, and I believe Richard's absence has taken a toll on your mental state, and I might be responsible for it."

Harry frowned. "Responsible how?"

"That is not important; what matters is that I must set things right."

"I just need some Dreamless Sleep. I'll be fine if I can get some rest."

"We've had this discussion before, Potter. The Dreamless Sleep potion is for occasional use only, and you have far exceeded its recommended usage in the short time you've been here."

Harry pounded his fist on the table, and hot soup splashed onto his hand. He cradled his injured limb against his chest and blinked back tears of frustration.

"Then give me something else...something that will make me forget!"

"Calm yourself, Mr Potter; you're being unreasonable. Our objective is to recover as much of your lost memories as possible, in order to give you a better understanding of your circumstances, and thus greater control: not to make you forget."

Harry had to make Snape understand why he could not remember, why it would be best to forget. He steeled himself and reached into the pocket of his robes with his uninjured hand. He felt for the small metal object there, but found the pocket empty. He became flustered. He ransacked his pockets, turned them inside out in search of the missing ring. He remembered putting the ring in his pocket, but now it was nowhere to be found. Someone had removed it, but he had no memory of who or when. It had happened again...this terrible thing that happened to time.

Harry started to stammer, and the stammering dissolved into something else...a wail.

Snape had been watching with growing apprehension as Harry became increasingly agitated. The young man had jumped to his feet and was rifling through the pockets of his robes. His eyes grew wide and dilated, and his normally pale cheeks became suffused with colour.

"Mr Potter. Mr Potter!" Snape called out.

Harry looked up, his face contorted with fear and fury. He let out a wail and clenched his fists. "People are all alike. You can't trust people. You really can't," he ranted.

He headed with rapid, spastic movements toward the window, his fist raised. Snape moved swiftly, but not swiftly enough. There was a loud crash as Harry put his fist through a windowpane.

Snape threw his arms around Harry's lithe body and dragged him away.

"Let me out," Harry screamed. "Let me out!" It was the plea of someone helpless and trapped.

"Let me see your hand," Snape insisted, grasping Harry's wrist after he had subdued him to the floor.

Harry shrank away from his touch.

"I only want to see if you cut yourself," Snape explained more gently.

Harry sat absolutely still on the floor, his eyes wide...with wonder or fear Snape could not tell.

In a plaintive, child-like voice, a voice very different from the one that had denounced all people as untrustworthy, Harry asked, "You're not mad about the window?"

Snape dismissed Harry's concern. "Of course not."

With a muttered *Reparo* and a wave of Snape's wand, the window was fixed.

"Anyone can fix a window," Snape said when he saw the expression of awe in Harry's face. "Now, let me have a look at your hand."

Harry seemed to relax, and when Snape again took his hand, he offered no resistance.

"No cuts. No bruises," Snape declared.

"There's blood," Harry said.

"There's no blood; you didn't cut yourself," Snape assured him.

"Blood in the cupboard," Harry explained. "I was there."

"Where is this cupboard?" Snape asked, already convinced that whomever he was talking to, it was not really Harry but an alternate.

"Under the stairs," Harry offered in the same child-like voice.

Snape tried to reign in his frustration. "Yes, but where are the stairs?"

"In the house at Privet Drive," was Harry's reply.

Privet Drive. No matter to which alternate Snape spoke, the one thing they all seemed to have in common was Privet Drive.

"You said you were there. What happened at Privet Drive? Why was there blood in the cupboard under the stairs?"

Harry's tone turned conspiratorial. "Harry was bad. Harry is *always* bad, but he doesn't mean to be. Sometimes it isn't even him who is bad," he whispered.

Snape inhaled sharply. He leaned forward and whispered something into Harry's ear, and Harry smiled.

There was so much more Snape wanted to know about the time Harry had spent with the Dursleys. He had always suspected there was more than what the headmaster had told him.

But Harry was already rising to his feet. He looked around in confusion at the upset table and chairs. "I did this, didn't I?" he asked.

Snape knew his opportunity had passed, and answers to his questions would have to wait.

"You had a brief episode, what is called *afugue*," Snape explained. "You seemed to be looking for something in your pockets."

"The ring," Harry whispered.

Snape frowned. "What ring?" he asked.

"It doesn't matter. It's gone now," Harry responded, sounding forlorn and defeated.

"We need to talk more about this, and we'll do it after you have rested."

Against his better judgment, Snape provided Harry with a small dose of Dreamless Sleep.

Witness

Chapter 7 of 8

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

It was a dreary day. The first snow of the season had come early, and the wintry sun cast a gray light outside Snape's window that made the street look dull and dingy. Snape stood with arms clasped behind his back, his eyes roaming over the gloomy scene. The Floo-call had not come as a complete surprise...Lucius liked trophies, and Snape had no doubt a naked and pliable Harry Potter was the biggest one in his collection. It was only a matter of time before the wily wizard figured out why Harry had not returned.

A cloaked figure rounded the corner, and Snape tensed. At least the blond wizard had the good sense not to Apparate directly onto the front steps of Snape's home.

"Welcome, Lucius," Snape said as he opened the door to allow the other wizard inside. He paused to give Lucius the opportunity to swat the dusting of snow from his heavy cloak and sneer at his surroundings before he continued in a pleasant tone, "And to what do I owe the rare pleasure of your visit?"

"As if you didn't know," Lucius spat. "Where is he?" he demanded, sweeping into the room.

Amusement tugged at the corner of Snape's mouth, although there was nothing amusing about the situation other than Lucius' pompous performance. Snape took his time closing the door and turning around, before he answered the question.

"Upstairs, asleep in the bedroom."

"Your bedroom?"

"*His* bedroom," Snape emphasized. "I told you, Lucius, my interest in the young man is strictly altruistic."

Lucius snorted...a gesture incongruous with his elegant facade. "You speak as if I don't know of your proclivities. Tell me, Severus, how many men have you had under you, naked and panting, calling you master and begging for mercy?"

"Only those who were willing," Snape drawled, sinking into one of the plush chairs and gesturing for Lucius to take a seat.

Lucius chuckled. "Are you saying that Harry has spurred your advances?" he taunted, carefully arranging his robes as he took the proffered seat.

"I said no such thing, only that there have been no advances to spur."

"If that's the case, then all the more reason for you to relinquish him to me."

"I think I'd rather not do that," Snape said softly.

Lucius expression turned ugly, all pretence of civility forgotten. "You're making a big mistake, Severus. Hand the boy over and walk away while you still have the chance," he hissed.

Severus managed to maintain his nonchalant demeanour, but the wand concealed inside the sleeve of his robe felt suddenly heavy.

"Your threats are empty, Lucius. You have as much at stake in this as I do, if not more."

Snape's words seemed to give Lucius pause, but not for long. A vicious smile twisted the blond wizard's features.

"Do I? You seem to be labouring under the misassumption that anyone will care to listen to what you have to say. If what you say is true, Harry himself has no recollection of any allegations you may have against me. I, on the other hand, my dear Severus, have all the proof I need to send you to prison for the rest of your miserable life. Think about it: who will be there to protect poor Harry when you're rotting in Azkaban?"

"You'll be dead before I set one foot in Azkaban," Snape threatened with unwavering conviction, having no more intention of going to Azkaban than he did of turning Harry over to Lucius.

But Lucius only laughed. "Perhaps, but that will have changed nothing. You see, I've made provisions, and the Horcrux hidden in my vault will guarantee that you have one dreadfully long existence in which to answer for your crimes. Eternal life is only a benefit if that life is worth living, Severus."

Snape blanched. It had never been his intention to live forever, only long enough to see the Dark Lord defeated. The Horcrux he had created after killing the headmaster should have been destroyed once Harry was victorious, and it would have been had he not needed Lucius' help to carry out his plan. Snape had always known one day the treacherous wizard would use the artefact against him, just not like this.

"You would... over Harry?" he asked, incredulous. In his present condition, the boy hardly seemed worth so much of Lucius' trouble.

"Over honour, Severus, the honour that Harry Potter and his cohorts took from me!"

Revenge, a worthy pursuit in Snape's mind, suddenly took on a frightening significance, but he dismissed Lucius' overblown bout of self-righteousness with a casual wave of his hand.

"The boy only did what he was meant to do. He saved your son's life and probably yours, and has paid dearly for it. It was never about you, Lucius."

Reason was not to prevail this time...apparently Lucius drew no divisive line between honour and pride. "He humiliated me and took great pleasure in it," Lucius hissed, "and I will not be satisfied until I've claimed every drop of blood, sweat and come than I can extract from him."

A muscle twitched at Snape's temple, and his fingers flexed almost imperceptibly, but his expression remained unchanged.

"Get out," he whispered through clenched teeth.

Lucius rose to his feet, and for one insane moment the thought of killing the wizard where he stood fled through Snape's mind.

"I see you're going to need some time to consider your options." Lucius threw the cloak over his shoulders and hurried to the door. "Don't take too long. We both know I'm not a patient man," he added on his way out.

Snape remained immobile, the sound of the slamming door reverberating in his ears. After a moment, he left his chair and headed to the study to do some thinking and for a much needed glass of scotch.

The Weasleys always took care of their own, and Harry had mentioned the Granger girl...she was smart, and had always struck Snape as loyal and trustworthy, if insufferably conceited. With the right information, they should be able to take care of Harry. All Snape had to do was convince the stubborn boy he would be better off with them...getting Harry out of the way would clear the path for Snape to deal with Lucius.

His decision made, Snape marched to his desk in the study. He produced two clean pieces of parchment and a quill, dipped the quill into the inkwell and began to write. The first letter was addressed to Mrs Hermione Granger-Weasley, the other to Dr Elkwood, Chicago, Illinois, USA. A few hours later, after he had dispatched the letters, he went to wake up Harry.

Harry was not in his bedroom. The kitchen and the living room were also empty. A search of the entire house yielded no result. With a growing sense of apprehension, Snape raced to his bedroom. There, resting comfortably on his pillow, lay a folded piece of parchment. Snape picked it up with unsteady fingers, and his eyes darted over the smudged letters:

Dear Snape,

I heard you and Lucius talk. (I wasn't spying, really, I wasn't). You know...he's right. This is not your concern. I never meant to be so much trouble, for you or anyone else. Thanks for trying.

Harry

The parchment slipped from his fingers and seemed to take forever to reach the floor. Snape muttered an incantation, and a string of shimmering-blue materialized next to it. The tracing spell guided Snape out of the bedroom, down the stairs and across the living room, before it disappeared beneath the front door. Snape could have followed it all the way to Harry, but there was no need: he already knew where it would lead. With a whispered oath, Snape tossed a handful of Floo-powder into the fire place and stepped into the green flames.

~*~

Like its owners, Malfoy Manor had a way of weathering adversity and looking all the more splendid for it. Narcissa was rarely at home these days, and Draco was long married and travelling abroad with his wife, or so Lucius claimed. Snape followed a house-elf through the maze of gilded corridors to an unfamiliar wing of the house, where they reached a set of large double-doors. The doors opened, and Severus gaped in horror at the scene that greeted him.

He stepped into the room and whispered a single word..."Harry."

Harry dangled by his thin wrists from the ceiling, and the orange glow from the fireplace illuminated his abused and naked body in a stark display. Rivulets of blood decorated his arms from where the shackles had sawed into his flesh, to the sparse hair of his armpits. Lash marks crisscrossed his bruised torso, accentuated by glittering, silver needles that seemed to attempt to hold the skin together where it had split, and his thighs...*Oh, God, his thighs!* The young man's drooping head lolled gently, and his dishevelled hair obscured his features.

Rage surged inside Snape, and his black eyes glinted when they travelled to the other wizard in the room.

Lucius was leaning against the mantle, a glass of brandy cradled between his pale and bloodstained fingers.

"Now you may have him," Lucius stated calmly. "And this, too," he added.

A small object skidded across the floor and came to rest against Snape's booted foot. The innocuous-looking ring...the headmaster's ring...caught the light from the fire and sparkled.

Snape vacillated, torn between his thirst for vengeance and the cooling draught of good sense. Lucius was relinquishing Harry along with the Horcrux...Snape could take

them both and walk away. Conversely, he could kill Lucius and still take Harry and the Horcrux. The latter seemed like a win-win proposition, and Snape's lip curled into a derisive sneer. He reached slowly for his wand, but hesitated when Lucius made no move to stop him.

A low moan from Harry disrupted Snape's train of thought. The boy was dangling from the ceiling and in obvious discomfort. Using his wand, Snape deftly loosened the shackles. Harry's body crumpled, but Snape was there to catch him. At that moment Snape realised the disadvantageous position in which he had placed himself. He felt his wand fly from his hand, and suddenly he was staring up at the tip of Lucius' twelve inches of Elm wood. With an enraged growl, Snape tossed Harry out of the way and dived for his wand: the curse hit him on the back before he could reach it, and Snape screamed in agony at the burst of pain that exploded inside his body.

~*~

Harry awoke at St. Mungo's...the dull walls and starched sheets were beginning to feel like home for him. The usual faces swam before his eyes: Ginny's expression cheerless, Ron's expectant, Molly's stern. Hermione stood away from the others, her teeth chewing thoughtfully on her bottom lip.

No one spoke, until Ginny rose and headed for the door. "I'll summon the Healer," she muttered. Molly accompanied her, and a glare from Hermione sent Ron scurrying after them. Hermione slowly approached the bed, and uncertainty grew around Harry like Devil's Snare...suffocating.

"I received a letter from the Muggle-born psychiatrist you contacted in the United States; he says he'll be happy to take on your case as soon as you're ready, and that all arrangements have been made for your accommodations at the clinic."

What doctor? What clinic? "I didn't contact any doctor; I don't know what you're talking about," Harry whispered with some effort.

Hermione smiled. "I know."

She held a piece of parchment in her hand, but it was not a letter from any unknown doctor. The spiky handwriting was the same familiar script that had viciously scarred every single one of Harry's Potions essays during his six years at Hogwarts. He strained to read the content of the letter and failed.

"My glasses...I don't..."

"Dear Mrs Granger-Weasley," Hermione began. *"It is in great distress over Harry's well-being and dire need that I appeal to you for assistance. I have endeavoured to care for Harry to the best of my abilities, but unforeseen circumstances have intervened, and I'm forced to now relinquish this responsibility to you.*

I regret to inform you that Harry's condition is far more severe and pervasive than any of you suspects. I've included all the pertinent literature I have managed to amass on the subject and trust your superior intellect and discernment skills to interpret the significance of my discovery, as well as your good judgment to guide you in your consequent actions.

I must warn you that there are those who will seek to take advantage of Harry's tenuous mental state to do him harm. All precautions must be taken to prevent Lucius Malfoy from gaining access to Harry's person..."

"Oh, God...Malfoy!" Harry groaned, and struggled to sit up.

Hermione stopped reading and placed a calming hand on Harry's shoulder. "Harry, Malfoy is dead," she informed him.

The new information took a minute to penetrate the layers of fog that clouded Harry's mind, but once there, it spurred a flurry of questions, none of which he could articulate.

"How...when? He...he..." Harry stammered.

"No one really knows. Aurors were called to his home in the middle of the night. They found Malfoy dead with not a mark on him, killed by his own wand, and you unconscious and...in bad shape. One of his house-elves was also dead."

Harry's mind reeled with fragments of memories: Apparating to Malfoy Manor with the intention of telling Lucius he could have him, if he would leave Snape alone; unbearable pain and humiliation with no end in sight; slipping into unconsciousness only to awaken to more pain and Malfoy's insidious taunting; and then Snape's voice whispering his name. He didn't remember anything after that, but he was certain that Snape had been there...Snape must have managed to kill Malfoy and get out of there before the Aurors arrived.

"What about Snape?" he asked in a tired voice.

Hermione frowned. "I don't know," she said. Her eyes grew wide suddenly. "Harry, was Snape there?" she whispered urgently.

Harry nodded.

"Harry, the Aurors are going to want to speak with you; they suspect that the Killing Curse was cast on Lucius...if they find out that Snape is alive and that he had anything to do with Malfoy's death..."

Harry shrugged. "I don't remember. I only thought I heard him say my name, but I never really saw him, I don't think. Have you told anyone?"

Hermione shook her head emphatically. "Snape asked me in his letter not to tell."

Footsteps echoed down the hallway, approaching quickly.

"Good. Keep it that way," Harry said.

"There's one more thing," Hermione said in a rushed whisper. "This was inside the pocket of your robes when they brought you in. I recognized it and took it before anyone else noticed it. Harry, is it what I think it is?"

Harry looked at the large, gold ring that Hermione pressed into his hand. He couldn't remember putting on his robes after Malfoy had torn them from his body, and why would Snape make good his escape and leave his Horcrux behind with Harry? The room suddenly filled with people, and Harry quickly hid the ring between the folds of his blanket.

Yesterday Was Never

EWE, but otherwise canon compliant up to DH. It's several years after the war and the Dark Lord is defeated. Harry is suffering from a mental illness that makes him vulnerable, and Lucius Malfoy has a secret. A thought-dead Snape resurfaces to try to help Harry, but Snape has secrets of his own.

Harry braved the wintry weather and walked the few blocks to the Muggle pub. Two facts were undeniable: Richard liked bars and he liked men. And Harry did not mind indulging him once in a while, so long as all he did was flirt. This night, Richard had insisted that they go to the pub. It was a Saturday night, and the place was crammed to the rafters. Harry made his way to the bar and was about to order a beer, when he noticed a bottle on one of the shelves. The label read: *Scotch Macallan Fine Oak*

Thoughts of Snape flitted through Harry's mind. Richard stepped to the foreground, and Harry could feel himself fade until he was just a pin's point of awareness in someone else's mind, in control but not in charge. Richard ordered his glass of scotch and leaned back against the bar, scanning the crowd.

It had taken Harry three years of intense treatment to unravel the tangled webs of his own psyche, and another two years had passed before Dr Elkwood declared him well enough to resume a normal life and turned his care over to a therapist in London who specialised in dissociative disorders. Life for Harry was not what the average person would consider normal...he lived with a plethora of alternates, each with their own distinct talents and insights...but it was a harmonious coexistence, ever since he had learned to communicate with those parts of himself. Some alternates he could access directly, others only through notes, and some (like Thomas, Harry's protector and the most dangerous of the alternates) had merged or disappeared altogether.

The cost had been high. His marriage was not the least of the casualties of the war that Harry had fought with himself. Of his old acquaintances, only Hermione and Ron remained in contact. The Auror program had also become a dream of the past (although Harry still believed that Thomas would have made a superb Auror). Even with Hermione's capable help, Harry's efforts to find Snape had been fruitless...the cosy house in the Muggle neighbourhood had been hastily abandoned, and Harry was certain that wherever Snape was hiding, it was unplotable and unreachable. Harry had always been on his own, even when he didn't know it...except for Snape's diligent watch over him.

Richard reached into the pants pocket and fingered the cold metal of the ring that Harry kept there.

"You still carry it with you?" Harry heard Richard whisper. Harry was never certain if Richard actually spoke aloud to him, or if their thoughts simply transferred to each other...he suspected it was the latter.

"Always," Harry answered.

"You miss him, don't you?"

"I never got to thank him properly"

"Maybe he's the one who should be thanking you, for saving his life," Richard pointed out.

"That was Thomas; it wasn't me."

As Thomas and Richard's personalities had merged in therapy, Thomas' memories of the night Lucius Malfoy was killed had been transferred to Richard, allowing Harry access to them.

Snape had been on the floor, nearly unconscious after a prolonged round of *Cruciatus*, Harry too weakened and in pain to do anything about it, when Thomas had taken over. With a burst of inhuman strength, he had launched himself at Lucius and wrestled the wand from the startled wizard's hand. He had cast two *Avada Kedavras* in quick succession (one on Lucius, the other on a house-elf that had run into the room), without ambivalence or hesitation...Harry still flinched inwardly when he thought about it. Thomas had managed to drag Snape's prone body to the fireplace, toss in a handful of Floo-powder and shout 'Snape's home' as he shoved the wizard's unconscious body into the green flames. It was only after Snape had disappeared that Thomas noticed the ring. He had donned Harry's robes and placed the ring in his pocket, intent on leaving Malfoy Manor and go into hiding, before the condition of Harry's body caught up with him, and he collapsed near the door.

"I owe him a lot," Harry concluded silently.

"Snape or Thomas?" Richard asked.

"Both."

"What would you say to Snape if you saw him again?"

Harry felt the urge to shrug his shoulders, but Richard didn't shrug, not usually. *It doesn't matter; he's gone.*

There was a shift in Richard's emotions, something Harry felt inwardly but could not explain. Perhaps it was the alcohol Richard was consuming...no, there it was again...definitely not the alcohol: something else. It was difficult for Richard to keep information from Harry, since the latter allowed him freedom but not free reign.

"Richard, do you know something about where Snape is?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"I don't, but I think Ottie does."

Ottie was another alter: a seven year old child who loved biscuits, forever locked in and trying to get out from the cupboard beneath the stairs at Privet Drive. He rarely surfaced anymore.

"Ottie exists in another time...he wouldn't know anything about the present, let alone Snape," Harry argued.

"He knows," Richard insisted. "He likes Snape. Always talks about how Snape fixes windows, and sometimes brags about the secret place Snape told him about."

Excitement began to build inside Harry. *Richard, do you know where the 'secret place' is?*

"No. Ottie won't tell me and says I can't make him. He says it's a 'secret.' But I think he would tell you."

Harry sensed that Richard had supplied the last bit of information only reluctantly, but was too overcome with excitement to pay much attention.

Secret, Harry thought. A secret place...Secret Keeper!

Ottie was Snape's Secret Keeper. The realisation stunned Harry. There was only one problem: Ottie never spoke directly to Harry.

"Let's go!" Harry practically shouted inside Richard's head.

"We just got here, and I haven't finished my drink," Richard protested. "Where are we going?" he added, already relinquishing control to Harry.

"We're going to get some biscuits," Harry declared as he ran out of the pub, earning the curious stares of several patrons.

The following evening, Harry Apparated in front of the address scribbled on the small piece of parchment he held. The handwriting was childlike, but legible. His stomach was still revolting against the exorbitant number of biscuits he had been forced to eat before Richard had managed to persuade Ottie to disclose Snape's location. Still, Ottie had refused to tell Richard directly, opting instead to write down the address Snape had whispered into his ear onto a piece of parchment, but only if Richard first promised not to read it...only Harry. That's what Snape had instructed him to do. "Tell only Harry, and only if he really needs my help," Ottie had informed him Snape had said.

Harry approached the house with a determined stride and knocked on the door. A moment passed, and Harry was about to knock again when the door opened a crack, and a dark eye peered suspiciously out at him.

"Snape, it's me, Harry. Let me in."

"I'm not blind yet, Potter," Snape snapped. He grabbed Harry's arm and yanked him inside.

Harry grinned. The expression on Snape's face was a mixture of surprise and consternation that made the older wizard look more like an owl than a bat.

"I see time has done nothing to tame your recklessness," Snape hissed.

Harry's face fell. He had not expected a warm reception from Snape, but he had thought that he would at least be welcomed.

"I didn't have a way to contact you before I showed up, but you wouldn't have told Ottie where to find you if you didn't want me to come," Harry said hesitantly.

"Has something happened of which I should be aware?" Snape asked.

"No. Everything is fine."

"Then you shouldn't have come," Snape spat.

It was a swift blow to Harry's already tenuous confidence...maybe Snape was right, maybe he should not have come. "I had to give you back your ring," he tried to explain.

"You should have destroyed it."

"It wasn't mine to destroy."

Harry looked around the living room and for the first time noticed the room's unusual state of disarray. Old magazines were piled on the coffee table and next to the chair; various items of clothing were strewn across the floor; in one corner, the old piano leaned on a broken leg; a chipped plate crusted with food peeked out from beneath the couch, and the air was ripe with the smell of dust and rot. On one side of the room, several shelves had collapsed under the weight of the books they had held...the shelves had not been fixed; the books lay ignored on the floor. Harry's eyes took in Snape's stained robes and greasy hair.

"I lied," Harry confessed. "I came because I wanted to see how you were."

"There's nothing to see here, Potter. Go away," Snape said softly, his glittering eyes sweeping across the room as if looking for an uncompromised place amid the wreckage on which to settle.

"*He doesn't want you to go,*" Richard whispered inside Harry's mind.

"Richard thinks I should stay," Harry blurted.

Snape frowned, and his eyes pierced Harry with their intensity. "Ah, yes...Richard. I remember him, a very forward young man."

Harry felt his cheeks grow warm with embarrassment; it was still hard sometimes to acknowledge some of the things his alternates had said and done when Harry was not in control.

"Richard is sorry about what happened...he misunderstood."

"Did he?"

Something about the sceptical arch of Snape's eyebrow gave Harry pause...maybe Richard had not misunderstood at all.

"You seemed to enjoy his company. You know, Snape, if you wanted to spend some time with Richard, I wouldn't mind."

Snape's eyes narrowed dangerously on Harry. "What are you implying, Potter?" he asked softly.

"Nothing," Harry hastened to reply. "You just seemed to enjoy his company."

"Do you have any scotch?" Harry asked suddenly.

Snape frowned. "I might have a bottle or two in the pantry." Snape looked around the room as if at a loss for what to do next. "I suppose you could stay for a while. I don't get much company..."

Snape began to move some of the clutter around on the couch, all the while avoiding Harry's gaze. Harry approached him slowly and proceeded to help. His hand brushed against Snape's, and Snape flinched. Harry wondered exactly how long it had been since someone had visited Snape...most likely years if the wizard had been hiding the entire time; it was probably longer since someone had actually touched him.

Damn, Harry thought. He had always had trouble knowing what to say when others were distraught...Richard was much better at it.

"You go get the scotch, Snape; I'll pick these up," he said softly.

Snape's eyes darted to him suspiciously, but after a moment he relinquished the task to Harry and left the room.

When Snape returned with two glasses of scotch, Harry had cleared a space for the two of them on the couch, kicked off his shoes and was sitting with his long legs stretched out onto the coffee table.

"What do you do here all day, Snape?" Harry asked as he took the glass that Snape offered him.

Snape sat down stiffly. "I read my books. I do some occasional brewing. I watch the telly," Snape added, pointing at the dusty television that sat crookedly on a stack of books.

"You should leave this place for a while, Snape. Come to London," the young man suggested

Snape scowled. "To Grimmauld Place?"

"No. I gave that to Ginny...we are no longer together, you know. I have a flat now."

"I like my privacy. I require solitude for my studies..."

"Bloody hell, Snape! I'm not asking you to move in, just to come visit once in a while."

Snape's expression became hard once again, and Harry immediately regretted his outburst...this was not how he had expected his reunion with Snape to go. A long silence ensued during which Harry sipped his drink and Snape stared at the glowing embers in the fireplace.

"How did you get it...the ring?" Snape asked unexpectedly.

"I took it from Malfoy Manor, after I killed Lucius," Harry stated with a calmness he did not feel; his hands shook slightly, and his throat felt parched as he took the ring out of his pocket and offered it to Snape, who snatched it away as if afraid it would burn Harry's fingers.

Snape looked just as shaken. "I don't remember what happened that night. I awoke inside the fireplace in my home. The next day, when I read in the *Prophet* that Lucius was dead, I assumed I had..."

"So did I, until I regained some of my memories in therapy."

Harry knew the fear of not knowing, and the even worse fear of *knowing*. He related to Snape how Thomas had saved them both that night; he then sat back and sipped his drink while he waited for Snape to grasp the significance of the facts.

He did not have long to wait.

"How much does the Ministry know?" Snape asked, some of the old cunning back in his voice.

"Nothing, except that Malfoy kidnapped me and tortured me nearly to death. That's all I remembered when they questioned me, anyway...after that, I don't think they tried very hard to solve the case."

A sliver of excitement slipped into Snape's tone when he asked, "And the Horcrux?"

"Only Hermione and I know about that. She found it in my robes after I was taken unconscious to St. Mungo's. It's all right, Snape. I know Hermione; she will never tell. What you do with it is up to you."

Harry set down his glass and rose to leave.

"I never intended to..." Snape muttered absently.

"It doesn't matter. As far as I'm concerned, it never happened. You're free, Snape."

Snape remained seated on the couch, his eyes fixed on the embers dying in the fireplace, his glass of scotch ignored.

"Will you come to London?" Harry asked with his hand poised on the doorknob. His heartbeat drummed in his ears, one...two...three times.

"Do I have a choice?" Snape asked with a grimace that curiously resembled a sneer.

Harry shrugged. "Probably not, unless you fancy spending the rest of your life running from two tenacious Gryffindors. If you're lucky, I'll find you before Hermione does."

Snape's grimace was genuine this time. "Then you'll see me before the end of the week."

Harry felt Richard's jolt of excitement at Snape's words and winced...it was going to be a long week.

The End

Additional Author's Notes: This story is heavily influenced by two books: *Sybil* by Flora Rheta Schreiber (an account about a woman suffering from MPD and the therapist who diagnosed and treated her), and *First Person Plural: My Life as a Multiple* by Cameron West, Ph. D. (a true, first person account from a man afflicted with MPD). I also used numerous websites to research diagnostic criteria and current treatment methods for MPD, too many to list individually.