

Cherokee Camp

by grugster

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

Chapter 1 – On the Plane

Chapter 1 of 6

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

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Dear readers,

The story is canon compliant until book four, and from then on it is AU!!

I'll mention rape and torture in this fic, but it won't be described in too much detail. All the characters are OOC because of the changes in Harry's fifth year.

The Character death warning I only included because there will be mentioned the death of Neville and Ron. No more characters will die in this story!

You can find a description and drawing to each character on my homepage and a group photo of all the people in the camp by Amandine as well.

Sunny

Chapter 1 On the Plane

Harry watched Severus glare at the seat in front of him as if he wanted to set it on fire; surely he wasn't still angry with Dumbledore for forcing them to fly?

"It would be a great experience for the boys, a good start to your adventure," the old man had said.

Adventure? The man had nerve, forcing them to go to this ridiculous camp!

On the other side of Severus, Draco was fast asleep, drooling on Severus' shoulder. He looked more peaceful than Harry had ever seen him. Besides Hermione, Draco was now his best friend. Draco was the only one who understood Harry because they had experienced the same horrible events. Maybe this camp would help Draco, but

Harry wasn't sure it would help him. It was just stupid! The fact that he was still under-age meant Dumbledore could still force him to do this. Harry was just grateful that it was Severus and Draco who were coming with him; it would have been embarrassing if it was Minerva or Dumbledore himself.

Harry could just see the headlines now: *Harry Potter, Insane after Torture in Malfoy Dungeons; Killed Voldemort, Now Insane Potter Sent to Camp for Insane Teenagers After Tragic Loss of Close Friends.*

Harry's throat felt tight whenever he thought about Ron and Neville. They had been tortured and killed in front of him, just to terrorize him. He had pleaded with the Death Eaters to let them go and take him instead. One of the Death Eaters even held his head up so that he had to watch them rape and torture his friends. In the end, they went too far, and Neville and Ron had died. Harry would never forget their faces screwed up in pain and their pleading eyes. He couldn't help them. Never would he forget, lying in his own blood and piss and seeing the life go out of Ron's eyes. At least Neville died with his back to Harry.

Draco had been raped and beaten. The Death Eaters also enjoyed cutting him; he was covered in scars now. The formerly beautiful boy was now a monster in the eyes of most girls. Even his damn father had had taken his own son. Draco had pleaded with them to kill him, but they enjoyed his agony too much.

They had played their sick games with Harry too, torturing him until he couldn't move anymore. They had forced him to call them "master," promising that they would let his friends go if he did, but nothing helped; they tortured them nevertheless. They had found the perfect torture for each of them. The Death Eaters' evil laughter would follow Harry to his grave.

Harry could still hear his friends' cries when he tried to fall asleep at night. Each night he tossed and turned, unable to rid himself of the sound of their pleas for help or the image of Draco being taken by one of the Death Eaters. This would go on until he finally passed out from exhaustion, but the nightmares reliving the horror of what the Death Eaters had done woke him every night. The guilt about not being able to help his friends gnawed at him relentlessly. Everyone should have been free and happy after Voldemort's death, but the Death Eaters had destroyed it all.

Now, he could only feel hate. Hate for the Death Eaters and hate for himself. He couldn't say which one was more prominent.

Harry shook his head; he didn't want to think about any of this right now. He would just have to survive this damn camp and then wait until he was of age. Then he could storm Azkaban and make them pay for what they did. He didn't care that it would land him in prison as well; life had lost all meaning for him. All he wanted was revenge. Damn, he needed to stop thinking like this so openly. That's what got him sent to the camp in the first place. Dumbledore and the rest of the adults thought he was insane. They thought sending him to a camp where he wasn't allowed to use magic would help him. They were just stupid.

"Stop brooding, Harry," Severus scolded him.

"I'm not," Harry said sullenly.

"Of course, you are. I can see the smoke coming out of your ears."

"I'm not! Besides, who are you to tell me to stop brooding? You have been looking daggers at the seat in front of you for the last two hours."

"I hate planes. Nine hours in here is pure horror. I'm really looking forward to arriving at the camp."

Severus' open character was something Harry had gotten used to. He was still surprised about how calm Severus could stay even when he yelled at him.

Things had changed a lot after that damn day at the Ministry. Draco had changed sides and had informed Dumbledore about his father's plans as well as those of Voldemort. He had fought side by side with Harry and the others.

Nobody would have thought Harry capable of killing Voldemort at the age of fifteen, but when Voldemort's ghost had possessed Harry and confronted Dumbledore, Harry pointed his wand at himself, killing them both. At least that was Harry's plan, but minutes later, he awoke in the arms of Dumbledore. By freely sacrificing his life for the others, he had activated his mother's protection of his soul, and only Voldemort's two pieces of soul had been destroyed. Harry hadn't even believed Voldemort was gone until he saw that the Dark Mark on Severus' arm had vanished.

Afterward, they had enjoyed two wonderful months at Headquarters, and although Harry had mourned the loss of Sirius, the happiness of the others around him infected him. He was able to enjoy his freedom, at least until the day when some at-large Death Eaters had captured them. Draco, Neville, Ron and Harry had been on their way back to the Headquarters after meeting Hermione and Luna in Diagon Alley. The Death Eaters Stunned them in broad daylight and Disapparated with them to the Malfoy Mansion. There they had to live through almost two weeks of torture. When finally freed and back at the Headquarters, the adults tried their best to help them cope with what had happened.

Draco and Harry had stuck together since then as if they had been friends for years. Only they could understand each other, and only they knew the horror of the two weeks spent in the Malfoy Mansion. They hardly spoke about what happened. Just being near each other gave them comfort. They had shared a room from then on, and when one woke up with a nightmare, the other was there to comfort him. Because the adults were concerned that they may not be coping well, some therapists had been enlisted, but while Draco opened up to one of the female therapists, Harry never spoke to any of them. Severus was really the only person they both opened up to.

In addition to Severus, there was Hermione. She was still a good friend, but Harry found it hard to speak with her about what happened. Hermione, however, wouldn't be Hermione if she couldn't come up with something to help in just about any situation. She had given Harry a notebook* which worked like a messenger; when he wrote something in it, Hermione could read it in her own notebook and then could reply. Writing to her was much easier for Harry than speaking face to face with her. He still didn't tell her everything, but at least it was a start.

Harry rummaged in his backpack for the messenger and finally found it.

"I'm going to write to Hermione," Harry explained to Severus, who still was eying him.

"Good idea."

Hi Hermione,

I'm on the plane now. Funny story: Severus is brooding beside me because Draco is asleep and drooling on his shoulder. But instead of waking him, he looks like he is trying to set the seat in front of him on fire.

Can you believe Severus still has his wand? That's so unfair! Dumbledore took ours away when he waved us goodbye at the airport.

Severus looked so mad at the airport that I had hoped that Severus would convince Dumbledore that this was a stupid idea, but you know something? Severus was just mad because of the plane. He hates planes. The camp he likes. Great! He even has friends there; maybe the camp was even his idea.

Now I've run out of things to say. Write if you have the book in your hand. I need some distraction.

Harry

The page went blank immediately, which meant Hermione was reading it, so the chances were good that she would answer soon. She would be returning to school in two weeks for their sixth year. Harry and Draco wouldn't be back by then, but Harry didn't care about that. What did he need school for? After all, he planned to kill the rest of the Death Eaters and then spend the remainder of his life in Azkaban. As for Draco, he wasn't able to concentrate on anything lately, so school would be senseless for him. Dumbledore had let Charlie Weasley take over Severus' job as the Potions teacher so that he could take Harry and Draco to Oklahoma.

Hermione's reply soon shimmered onto the page:

Hi Harry,

I would love to see Draco drooling on Severus' robes. He must look cute. I'm glad Severus still has his wand; at least he can rescue the two of you from any stupid things you try while in America. I want you two back in one piece! Tell Draco he should write me when he wakes up.

Please behave, Harry. Severus is just trying to help. I know you don't think you need help, but you do.

I have to go for lunch now. Write when you know something new.

Love, Hermione

Harry shut the book with a loud thud, waking Draco with a jolt.

"Thanks for rescuing me from drowning, Potter," Severus said sarcastically.

"Sorry, Severus," Draco said, blushing. He looked over at Harry, grinning. "Have you already written to your girlfriend?"

"Very funny, Draco. Hermione said you should write her, or she will break into our room and destroy your poster collection of the Falmouth Falcons," Harry said dryly.

"She wouldn't..." Draco said, but after a few seconds he rummaged in his backpack for his own messenger.

Harry just grinned.

*The messenger isn't my idea. I saw it in a fic by Emma Lipardi!

Please review!

Chapter 2 – Arrival

Chapter 2 of 6

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

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Chapter 2 – Arrival

Harry and the others got off the plane at the Will Rogers World Airport. After their nine-hour flight from London to Chicago, going through customs, and catching another flight to Oklahoma, they were all tired and irritable.

"Black Hawk," Severus greeted the man who was waiting for them. He was a Native American around the age of forty, at least that's what Harry would have guessed. Black Hawk wasn't in traditional native clothing, but nevertheless there was no question of his heritage.

"Night Rain," Black Hawk hugged Severus tightly.

They seemed to be very good friends. After all, Severus wasn't a person who let others hug him, and he especially wouldn't look happy about it. And, Merlin, Severus had a Native American name! Harry was definitely in hell.

Black Hawk stepped back a little to get a better look at the rest of the small group. "You must be Draco, right?"

Draco fairly hid behind Severus. He had been nervous around men ever since they had escaped his father's dungeons. Black Hawk seemed to sense this and tried to keep his distance, but still offered Draco his hand in greeting. Very hesitantly, Draco accepted Black Hawk's hand.

When Black Hawk turned to Harry, Harry looked defiantly into his brown eyes. He wanted them to know from the beginning that he wasn't here of his own free will.

"So you are Harry, nice to meet you. Save your energy for fighting us until we get to camp. We have a long drive ahead of us, so we should get started." Black Hawk lead them to a dirty, red pickup truck with the words *Awadvi Tsvsa* printed on its side. Whatever it meant Harry was sure he wouldn't like it.

"Couldn't behave yourself even for a few minutes, could you, Harry?" Severus asked him without his typical venom; the times when he spat angry insults at Harry were long gone. However, at the moment, Harry was longing for old times, so he wouldn't have to feel guilty about insulting Severus' friend with his behavior.

After Severus had thrown his luggage in the bed of the truck, he climbed into the passenger seat. That left only the back of the pickup for the two teenagers. Harry eyed the small rear-facing bench critically. It didn't look very comfortable, even if it did have seatbelts. "Fantastic! Our asses will be sore before we've even arrived at the damn camp," Harry mumbled sullenly to Draco.

"Try not to piss them off so soon, Harry. Who knows what crazy rituals they could do to you; just play the nice guy until we get out of here," Draco said while climbing onto the truck bed. After they had buckled up, Black Hawk lifted the tailgate and joined Severus in the cab.

"That's easy for you to say. You have been looking forward to going to this camp, right?"

Draco looked past Harry and into the distance. "Yes, maybe. Anything away from England is the right thing for me."

"I wish I could see it like that," Harry said thoughtfully. He didn't want to spoil this trip for Draco, but he hated the fact that the adults had once again decided what was best for him. He didn't need help, just his wand and the opportunity to kill those damn beasts in Azkaban. A life sentence wasn't enough punishment for what they had done.

By the time they reached the camp an hour later, Harry was really sore, which hadn't helped his mood. He had planned to behave and give these people a chance. If they were Severus' friends, they couldn't be all that bad. But now, after the uncomfortable truck ride, his good intentions had evaporated. Feeling depressed, all he wanted was a plane ticket back to London so he could tell Albus Dumbledore what he thought about his stupid plan.

Harry looked around. There was a medium sized farmhouse, two big stables, or whatever the big wooden buildings were, and paddocks. Other than that, it was just open land as far as he could see, just like the whole drive to the camp. Running away was not an option here.

A gentle but firm hand on his neck guided him in the direction of the house. Severus whispered in his ear as he steered him in the right direction. "I call these people my family, and I want you to behave. They haven't done anything wrong to you, so there is no need for you to hate them already. If you want to be angry at someone, then be angry at me or the Headmaster."

An old woman came over to them, and Severus let go of Harry's neck. "Severus, it's so good to see you again. It's been over a year since we last saw you."

"White Cloud." Severus hugged the weathered looking woman. She was sixty, if not older. It seemed that they were all American Natives. Maybe a family. Severus gently shoved the two boys in the direction of the old woman. "These are my boys."

My boys? A year ago, Harry would have been shocked by this statement. Now, it just caused him to feel less angry than he had felt after the long journey to the camp. Severus was the only person who looked at them without pity and who would let them decide whether or not they wanted to speak about something. Having Severus call them 'his boys' gave Harry a warm feeling. It also meant that Draco and he had someone at their side who belonged to them. They weren't alone like they had been in the dungeons.

"Oh, I have been so curious to meet you two; Severus has told us so much about you." Her smile was intoxicating, and what was left of Harry's anger vanished completely. There was no pity in her eyes, just happiness. Maybe it wasn't such a bad idea to stay here. At least it was a break from all the pitying looks at home.

"I'm Draco," the blond-haired boy said and offered her his hand, ever the polite aristocrat. The Death Eaters hadn't beaten that out of him. With women, Draco was much more at ease, at least if they didn't avert their eyes at seeing his scars. And, to Harry's relief, this woman didn't even seem to notice them.

"Nice to meet you, Draco," White Cloud said and shook his hand. "Severus was right, you are a very polite young man."

Harry stepped backwards. What would Severus have told her about him? That he was angry all the time and wanted to kill people? She wouldn't like that much. A hand on his back prevented him from backing away any further.

"You must be Harry," White Cloud said kindly. "I'm glad you decided to visit us."

Decided? He wanted to tell her that it was just the opposite, but her warm smile kept him from speaking his mind. It just would hurt her. Severus was right; they hadn't done anything wrong to him, so why should he hurt them?

When Harry didn't reply, White Cloud continued, "We know that it was a hard decision for you to leave England, but we hope you will like it here. Severus has always liked to spend some time here."

"I don't think I belong here," Harry finally said, averting his eyes. It was the truth, and Severus couldn't be angry with him for telling the truth. He hadn't hurt her feelings, had he?

"We will see, my boy," said an old man who came to stand next to White Cloud. Harry assumed it was her husband. "I'm Light Arrow, and over there is Red Horse and Rose." The old man pointed at a very big Native American in a dirty apron and a very beautiful young Native woman, both about Severus' age. "You must be hungry after the long journey. There is some stew ready inside."

"Where are the kids?" Severus asked while hugging the old man in greeting.

"They are with Crying Horse looking for firewood for the welcome feast tonight."

After Severus had shaken hands with Red Horse and had kissed Rose on her cheek, they all went inside to eat.

Please review!

Chapter 3 – The first Shock

Chapter 3 of 6

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

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Chapter 3 The first Shock

Harry wasn't sure whether or not these people were wizards; however, the question was cleared up as soon as they entered the house. A pot as big as a cauldron stood on

the stove, and a wooden spoon was magically stirring its contents.

Severus guided a still reluctant Harry to a chair at the large table. Harry watched with fascination as White Cloud waved her hand and the stew pot came over to the table. Another wave and the spoon vanished and was replaced by a ladle. If they could all do wandless magic, maybe he could learn it while he was here. He would have to remember to ask Severus about it.

White Cloud filled each of their plates and then sat down. Harry listlessly pushed the stew around his plate. He hadn't eaten on the plane, and he still wasn't hungry. His thoughts wandered to the dungeons. . . to Ron's pleading eyes. . . Draco naked and covered in blood and semen. . . the hard jerk on his hair as they forced him to watch. . .

A loud snap near Harry's ear startled him back to the present. The second snap focused his attention, and he looked up at Light Arrow. The old man watched him with a worried look and calmly said, "Easy there, son. Reliving the past doesn't help; try to stay in the here-and-now."

Harry had broken into a sweat and was breathing rapidly. Severus massaged calming circles on the back of his neck, helping him to calm down. Embarrassed, he grabbed for his spoon and started eating. Harry was relieved that the others weren't pressuring him into sharing, and after a short moment, Severus' hand vanished from his neck too. The flashbacks were horrible, and Harry was grateful that Light Arrow had been able to snap him out of it. The meal continued calmly; everyone ate in silence.

When most of them had finished, White Cloud directed, "After lunch, you can move into your rooms and rest for a while. The others will be back in an hour." Because he didn't want to draw anymore attention to himself than he already had, Harry finished his stew. Adults always seemed concerned that he wasn't eating enough.

When they were all finished, Light Arrow and Rose lead Harry, Draco and Severus upstairs to the bedrooms. He was looking forward to spending some time alone with Draco.

"I'm sure you would prefer your old room, Severus," Light Arrow said as he opened a door on the left side of the long hall.

"Yes, thank you," Severus said, placing his bag inside the room before rejoining the others.

Light Arrow pointed at the door beside Severus' room. "White Cloud and I sleep here. Whenever one of you has a problem, you can come to us; no matter what time it is." Light Arrow turned and opened the door opposite to Severus'. "This is your room, Harry."

"My room?" Harry and Draco exchanged panicked looks. "But I always share a room with Draco."

"Not here, Harry." Light Arrow gently guided Harry into the room while Rose steered Draco down the hall to a room at the other end.

Harry struggled against Light Arrow. "No! I won't stay alone! Let me go!"

Light Arrow quickly encircled Harry with his arms, pressing Harry's back against his chest. "Calm down, Harry, and I will explain the reason for it." His voice remained calm and gentle, despite Harry's panicked struggle.

"No, please..." Harry pleaded desperately. He felt hot tears run down his cheeks and hated himself for showing weakness again. He hated it here. Why were they all hurting him? He couldn't sleep alone.

Light Arrow sat down on the bed and cradled Harry in his lap. Harry was confused. He hated being held like this, with his choice of movement restricted. However, it felt good to have the burden of choice lifted from his shoulders. Secretly, he wanted nothing more than to be a child and feel safe; he hadn't felt safe for a very long time. Although he continued to sob, Harry soon stopped struggling, giving in to the soothing effects of Light Arrow's beating heart and calm words. "That's it, Harry, relax. I won't hurt you. Shhhh..."

When Harry finally stopped struggling, Light Arrow loosened his grip and Harry shifted position to hide his face in Light Arrow's chest.

"Please, I can't sleep alone. I have to be with Draco," Harry whispered.

"You can sleep alone, Harry, and you will. Severus' door is directly opposite to yours and mine isn't far either. As soon as you have a nightmare, or any other problem, we will be here for you. Draco has to learn to live on his own, just as you do. You cannot share a bedroom your whole life. We won't separate you completely, Harry, just at night. During the day you can both spend as much time together as you want, and you can visit each other in your rooms as well. This way you both have a place of your own, where you can retreat when you need down time. You need to find your way back to yourself and regain the power to live on your own."

"You don't understand," Harry mumbled into Light Arrow's chest.

"If I had a dollar for every time a child has said that to me, I would be a rich man, Harry. Maybe I don't understand your problem completely right now, but I do know that it is unhealthy to depend so deeply on another person who also desperately needs help. You are strong, Harry. You need your friendship with Draco and nobody is trying to take that away from you, but you are also your own person. I know you have nightmares, and that it makes you feel safer when Draco is there, but Draco needs time to heal as well. I'm sure he has been happy to help you, but he has his own problems and needs to concentrate on them, not on you. Now, we will be here to help you. There is a spell on each room to inform us if someone has a nightmare or has problems sleeping. We will be here to help you the minute you have trouble. You don't have to worry; if you want, I can have the spell notify Severus as well when you need help." Light Arrow started to gently move his body backward and forward, rocking Harry. "Do you want me to adjust the spell so that Severus will be informed?"

"Yes," he whispered.

The monotone voice and the gentle swinging began to cause Harry to drift off. He knew how pathetic he must look cradled in the old man's lap, but he had never felt so safe and warm in his entire life and wanted to enjoy it as long as possible.

"I'm scared," Harry whispered. He felt overwhelmed by all the stress from the last few weeks at Headquarters, from the journey, and from the events here at the ranch. He just wanted to hide in the strong arms and sleep. He was sure he wouldn't have a nightmare while Light Arrow was with him.

"I know, my boy, I know," Light Arrow said, never stopping the gentle swing. "But you are not alone. We will watch over you until you are ready to watch over yourself, no matter how long it takes you, Harry."

Harry clawed tighter at Light Arrow's flannel shirt. He didn't want to be alone; he didn't want the memories of the dungeons to haunt him.

"Look, you won't be alone after all, Harry. Karim has taken it upon himself to watch over you," Light Arrow said. A small chuckle in his voice made Harry look up. A black cat jumped up onto the bed and curled up in Harry's lap. Harry loosened his death grip on Light Arrow's shirt to pet the cat. Karim purred, lulling Harry into a restful sleep. His eyes drifted closed; Light Arrow didn't let go of him, keeping up the gentle swing.

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Draco watched fearfully as Light Arrow and Severus guided the reluctant Harry into his room. Only Rose's calming hand on his shoulder stopped him from panicking completely like Harry had.

"It's okay, Draco. Come on, I will show you your own room."

"But I have to sleep in Harry's room. Please you don't understand," Draco pleaded.

Rose smiled calmly at him. "I understand perfectly, Draco, but you need to take care of yourself while you are here, not Harry. My father and Severus will take good care of him, I promise." Gently she guided the blond boy down the hall to his room. Draco tried to look back over his shoulder at Harry's room in hopes that the door would open and Harry would come out.

"He is okay, and you will be okay as well, Draco," Rose said gently and stroked his hair before she steered him into his room. "Come on, I'll help you unpack, and then you can rest for a while."

"Harry cannot sleep alone, Rose," Draco tried to explain.

"You will not be able to care for him his whole life, Draco. One day you will have your own family. You will still stay good friends, but you both must learn to live your own life."

"A family?" Draco spat angrily. "As if any girl would even look at me!" He threw his bag on the bed and began to open it when a warm hand on his wrist stopped him.

"Don't speak like that, Draco," Rose said warmly. "Come, sit down with me for a while." Never letting go of his hand, she started to trace one of his scars that lead from the back of his hand to the underside of his arm. "A girl that can't look past your scars isn't worth your love, and there is a lot of love. I can feel it," she said while placing her hand over his heart.

Draco was too shocked to react. Nobody had touched him since the dungeons, and he was surprised that it felt good. He felt the urge to cry but managed to keep his face expressionless.

"You don't have to hide behind your mask here, Draco. We want to help you. You are still a wonderful young man, and you will find your way in life. The scars on your skin will become a part of you, and anyone who judges you by them is not worth your time. The scars here -" she laid her hand on his chest again, "- will be harder to heal, but we will try."

Her words touched something deep inside. How could a woman he had known for just an hour touch his soul like this? He grabbed for the hand that was hovering over his heart. "They will never heal." He was silent for a moment, and when he looked down, he found that he still was holding Rose's hand in his lap. Draco snapped his hand open to release it, but Rose didn't draw it away.

She encircled his hand with both of hers. "We will see, Draco. Just give us a chance and time."

///

Severus watched as Light Arrow cradled Harry in his lap. He was reminded of the times when Light Arrow had to calm him in the same way. He understood how frightened Harry was and why Harry thought he couldn't sleep alone. Severus knew about his nightmares and flashbacks, but he also knew that Harry couldn't hide behind Draco his entire life. Light Arrow would calm him down, so he didn't interfere, but rather observed the scene passively.

Severus slipped out of the room once Harry began to fall asleep in Light Arrow's lap, physically and emotionally exhausted. He wanted to check on Draco and Rose.

At Draco's door he knocked softly.

"Shh, it's surely just Severus wanting to check on you. Shall I let him in?" Rose said from behind the door.

The door opened by itself, and Severus smiled at the fascination on Draco's face over Rose's use of wandless magic.

"Can I come in?" He asked.

"Sure, you can help us unpack, Severus," Rose said cheerfully.

Severus eyed Draco critically. "Everything okay?"

"Sure," Draco said and looked at his hand, which a moment before had been held by Rose. "How is Harry?"

"He is okay, Draco. The two of you need to stop worrying about each other so much. Light Arrow is still with him." He looked at Rose, who knowingly smiled at him.

"You look tired, Severus. You should rest a while," she gently laid a hand against his cheek.

Severus grabbed for her hand and looked deep into her eyes. "I'm not the one needing to heal, Rose." He gently reminded her.

"You will always be the one that needs healing, big Brother," Rose said and encircled his hand with her own.

Severus could feel her magic flow into him, scanning him and calming him. He was tired from weeks of trying to help the boys without success not to mention from the long journey. Maybe it wouldn't be such a bad idea to lay down for a bit.

"Manipulative witch," he growled playfully at her.

She just smiled and then turned back to Draco. "Let's unpack while Severus goes to have a nap."

Please review!

Chapter 4 – How To Go On

Chapter 4 of 6

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

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Chapter 4 How To Go On

"It's nice to have you back, Severus," White Cloud said, placing a cup of coffee in front of him.

Light Arrow joined them at the table. "Yes, it was a good decision for you to come along with the boys. They both really need help. Harry is really on the edge emotionally. Is he opening up to you?"

"Not much. Sometimes he begins to talk openly, but when he realizes what he is talking about, he will stop. It's frustrating."

Light Arrow nodded. "Beyond the trauma, what do you think is going on?"

"He has convinced himself to avenge the death of his friends; the hate is eating him up inside."

"Hopefully, we can help him."

"Maybe you can; I will say this, letting you comfort him after he panicked was unusual behavior for Harry." Severus shook his head deep in thought.

"What about Draco?" Light Arrow asked.

"Draco, on the other hand, is much more open. He tries to focus on his own problems, but I fear he distracts himself by helping Harry. The good thing is that he doesn't feel guilty about what happened to the others, since he wasn't as close to them as Harry was, but he is very shy and anxious around men, which you have already noticed. Women aren't as big a problem; he just tries to hide his scars, which is impossible. Thinking about the fact that his own father disfigured Draco's face makes me sick. That and... Merlin, it's just horrible." Severus hid his face in his hands.

Light Arrow laid a calming hand on the underside of Severus' arm. "You shouldn't dwell on the past; think about how to move on. You look exhausted."

Severus glared at Light Arrow, batting his hand away. "You sound just like Rose. I'm not one of your kids anymore, Light Arrow. I'm not the one you need to worry about."

"You will always be one of our kids, Severus, and we can't help but worry when you look this tired." Light Arrow felt Severus' forehead.

Severus tried to jerk his head away, but Light Arrow anticipated the move and stopped him. "Hold still," the old man said strictly. When Severus obeyed, he asked more calmly, "What did Rose say?"

Severus resumed struggling to get away from Light Arrow's hand. Although he didn't have abilities like Rose, Light Arrow could still work calming magic that would cause those he touched to speak more freely, less encumbered by their emotions. "Please remove your hand from my..."

Severus was cut off by Rose as she came down the stairs. "I told him he should rest. He is very exhausted and in bad shape, Dad."

"I'm fine. Stop speaking about me as if I'm not in the room." Light Arrow removed his hand from his head. Severus was now free to glare at Rose, as she approached the table

"I'm not sure you really are in the room, Severus. Your body may be here, but your mind is not. It's still with the boys. You forgot to take care of yourself," Rose said, sounding as stern as her father.

Seeing that Rose had almost reached him, Severus made to stand up. "That's enough. I am going for a walk."

"You will not," Light Arrow ordered. A heavy hand on Severus' shoulder kept him from standing. "We will discuss this, now."

"I'm no longer a child," Severus shouted. He was on edge; the last few weeks had been so frustrating and exhausting. He would have removed Light Arrow's hand by force if not for a warm and soft hand that wrapped itself around his own. Severus turned to face a worried looking White Cloud.

"Please stay, Severus," White Cloud said calmly. "Let Rose check you over. She can soothe your nerves."

"I don't need to be soothed. I..."

"It wasn't your fault, Severus. You couldn't have rescued them any sooner," White Cloud said knowingly.

Severus was stunned. This woman didn't need Rose's abilities to know what was worrying him. She had sat there, calmly observing the scene and knew exactly what was wrong. Severus was so shocked that White Cloud could still read him like an open book that he didn't notice Rose's hands on his shoulder. When he finally did, it was too late. Her calming magic flowed into him, and he was melting under her touch.

"No, please," he mumbled halfheartedly.

"Hush, Severus," Rose whispered. She took one of her hands from his shoulder and placed it on his forehead. Gently, she drew it backwards against her chest. "Let me go deeper, Severus, you know you can trust me." She tried to reach the nerve bundles that were knotted and overstimulated. She needed to soothe them to make it easier for Severus to think and feel.

White Cloud hummed a soft melody, which Severus remembered from his first stay with them as a teenager. Her thumb drew small circles on the back of his hand, calming him enough for Rose to reach the deeper areas of Severus' nervous system.

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Harry's eyes snapped open at the loud noises coming from downstairs. He was amazed at how rested he felt after only an hour of sleep: he hadn't slept that peacefully since the events in the dungeons. A soft knock startled him and he stared at the door. The knob slowly turned and Harry instinctively grabbed for his wand. "Damn," Harry cursed under his breath when he remembered that Dumbledore had confiscated it.

"Harry?" someone whispered through the slightly opened door.

"Draco?" Harry asked, relieved.

Draco slipped into the room. "Did you hear the noises? I think the other kids are down there now." Draco jumped when a black cat passed him on its way out the door. "What's that?"

"A cat?" Harry said sarcastically, rolling his eyes. "Close the door, or are you so eager to see the others?"

Draco closed the door. "What was the cat doing in here?" he asked, confused.

"It was keeping me company. His name is Karim. At least I'm not totally alone." Harry looked worriedly at the door. "I hope he will be back tonight."

"I could try to sneak in when they're all sleep," Draco offered.

"No, they have a spell on the bedrooms." He paused thoughtfully before continuing, "And they are right. You have to concentrate on your own issues, Draco. Maybe this is your chance to start a new life."

"And what is it for you?" Draco asked, sitting down on Harry's bed.

Harry pulled his knees to his chest and hugged them. "I won't change my mind, Draco. I intend to kill them all; that's all I want to do. They have to pay for what they did to you, Neville and Ron."

"They hurt you, too," Draco said carefully. He knew that this was something Harry didn't like talking about.

"Let's just change the subject."

A sound from the hall indicated that someone was coming up the stairs, and there was shortly a knock at the door. The boys stared anxiously at it and said nothing.

"You are supposed to say 'come in' or something similar, Harry." Black Hawk's voice echoed through the door.

"But I don't want someone to come in," Harry replied rebelliously.

The man behind the door sighed. "I have to talk with you, and I hate to speak through a door. Can I please come in?"

Harry looked with concern at Draco, who just shrugged.

"Okay."

Black Hawk entered but stopped when he saw Draco on Harry's bed. "You two were supposed to rest."

"We did," Harry said quickly. "Light Arrow said that we could visit each other in our rooms."

Because Black Hawk was an impressive man that radiated strength and power, Harry was careful about what he said and how rebellious he acted. Draco, on the other hand, was visibly scared. Black Hawk, however, stayed near the door, as if he sensed Draco's fear, like a dog who could tell by scent if someone was afraid of him. Black Hawk turned back to the door.

"It's the truth!" Harry insisted, thinking that Black Hawk thought he had lied and now was angry with him. "He told us we can meet as often as we want. I swear." He didn't want to get in trouble so early, but maybe he had just misunderstood Light Arrow.

Black Hawk just lifted his hand to silence Harry, and then leaning out the door, he yelled, "Rose? Your boy is here."

Seconds later, Rose pushed past Black Hawk into the room. "Oh, you look much better, Harry. So, did you sleep well?"

Harry nodded and looked at Draco, who had relaxed visibly when Rose had entered the room.

"That's good," she said and reached to stroke his cheek. When Harry flinched away, she drew back her hand and just smiled at him. "I'm very glad you could manage to rest a bit."

She turned to Draco. "We need to speak about a few things, Draco, and then I want you to meet the others." She offered him her hand, and he took it.

Black Hawk moved further into the room to make space so the others could leave. When they were finally alone, he took a seat on Harry's bed and said, "Light Arrow has taken you under his wing, but he doesn't work outside with the kids. So whether you like it or not you are stuck with me for those times. I'm not a great talker and you don't seem to want to talk at all, so we should both get along quite well. I want to help you, Harry, but that is hard if you fight me every step of the way. I don't care how long we will need to help you, that is up to you. You can try to work with me and leave this camp in a few months, or you can fight my attempts to help you and I will just wait until you are finally ready. Months, years, I don't care how long it takes."

Harry looked with fear at the dark man in front of him, but he didn't know why he was afraid.

Black Hawk eyed Harry closely. "There is no reason to look at me like that. I'm here to help you. I have no healing magic like Rose or Light Arrow, but I want to help you nevertheless. I will show you how to take care of your horse, and how to ride him. I will help you through some of our ceremonies here, too. There is no need to be afraid of me. If you don't want to, you don't have to speak with me about anything that concerns your past, just the present. Light Arrow will take care of the rest."

"My horse?" Harry asked, dumbfounded.

"Yes, your horse. Everyone on this ranch has their own horse. Even Severus. You should see his horse; it is almost completely black, only its chest and one ear are white. His name is Thunderstorm because he has quite a temper; although, he is a lamb around Severus and Rose. Your horse is Tohiadedi. It's Cherokee for Freedom. He's a red roan Appaloosa. You will get to meet him soon. Now it's time to meet the others."

Harry desperately hoped that riding Tohiadedi would be better than his previous experiences riding a horse-like animal. Buckbeak's wings and feathers had made it difficult to maintain his balance and grip, and riding the Thestrals hadn't been much better, because their skeletal bodies made for a very uncomfortable ride. Even though he hadn't fallen off, those rides were in no way graceful. He hoped he wouldn't make a fool of myself, again. He decided to reserve judgment about whether or not having his own horse would be a good thing until he could meet the creature.

Please review!

Chapter 5 – Meeting the others

After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA. Draco/Harry friendship

Thanks a lot to my beta-readers, Tori and Leona, for correcting my mistakes.

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I'm not a native speaker of English!

Chapter 5 Meeting the others

Harry and Black Hawk joined Rose and Draco in the hall. Draco immediately moved closer to Harry. Unlike Draco, Harry wasn't afraid to meet the others; he just didn't care and he intended to ignore them.

"Stay calm, Draco; it'll be okay," Harry reassured him.

"Where is Severus?"

Before Harry could answer, Black Hawk interjected, "He's resting."

Draco froze halfway down the stairs. "I won't go down if Severus isn't there."

"Draco," Rose said calmly, laying a hand on his shoulder. Despite her soothing magic, he remained stiff as a board.

Black Hawk tried to maneuver Harry away from Draco to give Rose more room.

"No, I won't leave him alone!" Harry struggled against Black Hawk. He didn't care that the voices from downstairs had become silent, nor that everyone was probably listening to what was happening on the stairs. He heard heavy foot steps; Light Arrow was coming up.

Light Arrow gestured for Black Hawk to go downstairs and took his place at Harry's side.

"You can't make me leave Draco. You promised!" Harry backed away, but Light Arrow took him by the arm.

"Nobody wants you to leave him, but you have to calm down for Draco's sake."

Harry looked at Draco. The normally pale boy was now as white as a sheet. "Come on, Draco. Let's just get it over with. We can go back to my room afterward," Harry said gently.

"Why isn't Severus here? I want him to be here," Draco pleaded.

"Severus is resting, Draco. He was very exhausted. He will join us again at supper," Light Arrow explained.

"He has left us here, Harry! He is already back at Hogwarts and left us alone!" Draco said with growing panic.

"Draco, look at me," Harry said strictly. When he had Draco's full attention, he said, "Severus is still here. He wouldn't abandon us."

"Of course he wouldn't," a deep baritone came from the top of the stairs. "What's all this about?"

"Severus, you should still be resting. Why can't you do something good for yourself for once?" Rose admonished.

"I intend to do something good for myself. I am going riding." He looked at Draco. "After we meet the other kids."

Harry was glad to see the color return to Draco's face, and he heard him let out the breath he must have been holding.

"Indeed, Severus, riding will do you some good. Thunderstorm is eagerly waiting for you," Light Arrow said. "Let's go downstairs. The others are waiting." He moved his hand to lay lightly on Harry's neck. Harry found it comforting.

When they arrived in the kitchen, Harry saw White Cloud sitting at the table with a group of kids and a man whom Harry hadn't seen before. He had long black hair and wore sunglasses. The man stood up and introduced himself. "I'm Crying Horse. I'm glad you are here. We need help to make the campfire ready for your welcome feast." He shook Harry's hand, hugged Severus, and nodded to Draco.

"I am sorry, Crying Horse, but I am afraid you will have to make the campfire with the others. I want Black Hawk to show Draco and Harry the horses," Light Arrow said.

"Newbies have all the luck. We have to work our asses off," said a boy with short blonde hair. "I'm Brian and that's my buddy Ken." He gestured to a sandy-haired boy with lots of freckles. "Over there is Aiden." He pointed at a bored-looking guy with long black hair and a goatee. "The blonde girl is Melissa, and the red-haired girl is Maya. Melissa came from England and Maya from Chile. The rest of us are from the States." It was hard for Harry to tell how old they all were; Brian and Ken reminded him of Dean and Seamus and seemed to be around his age, while Aiden looked older, maybe seventeen or eighteen.

"This is Harry, and over there is Draco. Some of you already know Severus, but for those who don't know him, he is one of my sons," Light Arrow stated.

"Wow, then Thunderstorm is your horse, isn't he?" Brian asked Severus.

"Yes," Severus replied with a smile.

"He is magnificent!" Turning to Black Hawk, Brian continued, "which horses will Draco and Harry get?"

"Tohiadedi and Unega," Black Hawk answered while casually standing in the doorway. "So do you want to go?" he asked Harry and Draco.

Harry looked hesitantly at Draco.

"Come on, I will join you and then go for my ride," Severus said, guiding Draco out of the house.

The sunlight was blinding, and before Harry's eyes could adjust, Black Hawk had sneaked a hand onto his neck. Harry couldn't figure out why they were always touching them, and even more puzzling was why he liked it. It was crazy, but Harry felt much safer with a hand on his neck, even when it belonged to Black Hawk.

"Have either of you ridden before?" Black Hawk asked.

"No," Harry lied. Draco shook his head. Harry noticed that Draco had ventured out from Severus' side. He knew Draco felt safer outside, because he could get away if

necessary. Harry couldn't help noticing that all the men kept their distance from Draco. He wasn't sure how he felt about that. On the one hand, he was happy about it, but on the other, he hated it because it meant they all knew what had happened and what was wrong with him.

They passed a paddock where seven horses were standing. "This is one of our herds," Black Hawk explained as they watched Severus approach the gate and whistle.

Ears twitching, a black horse threw up his head to search for the source of the whistle. The horse neighed, racing toward them. It looked as if the horse wasn't going to stop, so Harry took a nervous step back. Dust whirled into the air as the horse slid to a sudden stop. He tossed his head in excitement until Severus held out his hand for Thunderstorm to rub his head against.

"Hello, my boy, it's so good to see you," Severus said affectionately. The horse answered with small grunting and snorting noises. When he had calmed down, Severus laid his forehead against Thunderstorm's. Harry thought they looked magnificent. Their black hair entangled and blew in the wind, so that for a short moment, it looked as if the two were one. "Soon, my boy, soon we will go for a ride," Severus whispered to the horse.

The other horses wandered over, curious. A red horse with three white feet, a white stomach, and an almost completely white head walked over to Black Hawk. A feather was braided into her mane. She was calmer than the black horse. "This is Shallow Water, my horse. She is a mare, unlike Thunderstorm who is a gelding," Black Hawk explained.

Severus petted Thunderstorm one last time, signaling Black Hawk that he was ready to move on to the next paddock. On the way, Black Hawk explained how the horses came to live at the camp. "Most of our horses have come from an organization that rescues abused and neglected horses. They can live here in peace for the rest of their lives. In many cases, we manage to nurse them back to health and to help them learn to trust humans again. Unfortunately, some will always stay wild and fearful, and we let them live wild on the plains. The ones that are here are horses who we have managed to rehabilitate for riding or still need medical care. We use this paddock for some of the geldings and calm mares. The fleabitten gray Quarter Horse mare dozing under that tree is Maude. She's Melissa's horse." Black Hawk clicked his tongue, and all the horses made their way lazily over to them. He dived under the gate to pet an almost entirely white horse, whose only color was black surrounding his eyes. "This is Unega, and he will be your horse Draco. Would you like to greet him?"

Harry watched Draco look uncertainly at the horse. He couldn't blame him; the horse looked very big and intimidating, and Harry knew Draco had never been that close to a horse before.

"Give it a try, Draco." Severus suggested.

That was all the encouragement Draco needed. He climbed under the gate and hesitantly approached the horse. The horse's ears circled nervously, and he abruptly jerked his head up, grunting anxiously as Draco drew close to him. Draco stopped.

"Come on, Draco, don't be scared. He is a very gentle horse, just a little skittish." Black Hawk rubbed the horse's neck, calming it.

Draco reached up to stroke the horse's face, but Unega flinched away before finally lowering his head and sniffing Draco's hand and rubbing against it.

Black Hawk turned to introduce Harry to his horse, a red roan with a flaxen-gold mane and white spots on his flank. "Come on over, Harry. This is Tohiadedi, or Freedom, whichever you prefer. He is an Appaloosa gelding."

As Harry approached the large, muscular horse, he couldn't help but wonder if it had been ponies he had seen in the paddock near his aunt's house. Harry felt as if Tohiadedi was eying him critically, and his snort wasn't friendly as Thunderstorm's had been. Harry paused, unsure if he should really move closer.

"Come on, Harry, it's okay. He has to get to know you. Just try to pet him," Black Hawk encouraged, calmly stroking the neck of the horse.

Harry very cautiously reached for the horse. Freedom bumped his head against his hand. "I don't think he likes me," Harry said, scared.

"He doesn't even know you," Severus said. He laid one hand on Harry's shoulder and reached for the horse with his other hand. "If you are nervous, the horse is nervous. If you are uncertain or angry, he will not trust you." Freedom snuggled his head against Severus' hand, but never stopped watching Harry with his big brown eyes.

Harry let his hand sink to his side. "I don't think I'm a horse person."

"You two just need a bit of time to get to know each other better, Harry," Severus said and guided him out of the paddock again. "You will love the sense of freedom when the wind is blowing in your face as you ride over the open land."

"I can't ride," Harry said dryly.

"You will learn as soon as Tohiadedi trusts you," Black Hawk explained. "From now on, he is your responsibility. You have to feed him, clean his hooves, groom his coat and mane, and when you are able to get his halter on, you will move him around. We will start riding lessons only when you manage all of this."

"So, never," Harry said sullenly.

"Look, the others are over there. Why don't you help them build the camp fire for this evening?" Severus suggested while leading Harry away from the paddock where Draco was still engrossed in the care of his horse.

"Can't I just go back to the house?" Harry asked.

Severus raised an eyebrow. "Didn't we agree to give all this a chance, Harry?"

Harry sighed, defeated. "Yes."

"Then go over and help Crying Horse and the others while I ride Thunderstorm."

"Okay," Harry said and sullenly walked over to the busy group. He had no interest in helping and definitely didn't want to get to know any of them better, but what choice did he have? He had to play the good little boy so he could leave the camp as soon as possible.

Chapter 6 – Separated Ways

Chapter 6 of 6

Summary: After two weeks of torture by Death Eaters, Draco and Harry have to find a way to cope with all their memories. Severus, as their guardian, tries to help and spends some time with them at a therapy camp in the USA.

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Chapter 6 Separated Ways

"Hey, Unega," Draco shyly greeted the horse, fascinated by his blue eyes. He had the feeling he could see into Unega's soul through those breathtaking eyes.

Draco wished he were brave enough to lay his forehead against Unega's like Severus had done with his horse. It must have been a great feeling. Nothing else around him would matter so much then.

Draco was so absorbed with Unega that he hadn't noticed Severus and Harry leave. When he finally realized they had gone, he stiffened with fear, causing Unega to snort and toss his head nervously.

"Are you okay alone with me, or do you want me to ask Rose to join us?" Black Hawk asked from where he was perched on the gate several feet from Draco.

Draco didn't reply; instead he backed further away from Black Hawk closer to Unega. Sensing Draco's uneasiness, the horse nervously stomped his hoof and searched for the source of Draco's fear. Unable to locate the threat, Unega gently nuzzled Draco's shoulder.

"It's no problem for me to call Rose, Draco," Black Hawk continued. "I'm very glad that you are already feeling comfortable around Unega. I would like to show you how to care for him, but I have to come closer for that."

Taking comfort in the big horse, Draco felt safer than he would have thought possible being alone with a man. "Stop being a ninny, Malfoy. You can't hide for your whole life," he mumbled himself.

"It's okay. I would like to learn how to take care of him," Draco said while holding his head high. "Um... please, just don't touch me."

"Of course not. If I'm too close, just tell me and I will back away, Draco. It's no problem." Black Hawk came over and petted Unega's forehead.

Black Hawk, with experienced hands, showed Draco how to put a halter on Unega. "It would be best if you asked someone to help you the first few times. Unega is a bit skittish, so at first it might be a problem for you to do it by yourself. Just ask one of the other kids if I'm not around." When he was finished, he tied the lead line to the gate, showing Draco the proper way to tie the slipknot.

Draco nodded and fought against the impulse to step back. Black Hawk was uncomfortably close to him now. He wanted to stand near Unega because he felt safer near the horse, but of course Black Hawk had to stand close to Unega as well in order to show Draco how to brush him.

Black Hawk grabbed a brush and showed it to Draco. "Brushes like this one are in the supply shed to the right of the house. Today, I will show you how to brush his coat and mane. Next time, I can show you how to clean his hooves. You can brush him as often as you want, but you need to do it at least once a day. The hooves also have to be cleaned once a day, but it is a little tricky. I want you to have someone around when you do it. Today we don't have to worry about it; Red Horse will clean them this afternoon." He glanced at Draco with concern. "Why don't you move to his head so that you can see what I'm doing?"

Draco fearfully moved past Black Hawk, holding his breath the whole time, but when Black Hawk moved away to the flank of the horse, Draco relaxed, releasing his breath. He watched Black Hawk's every move. When Black Hawk handed him the brush, he nervously started brushing Unega. The horse turned his head to see what Draco was doing; noticing Unega's eyes on him, Draco asked, "Is this right, Unega?"

The horse grunted as if replying and relaxed as Draco continued to groom him.

Draco glanced quickly at Black Hawk, who had made himself comfortable on the gate again.

"You are doing very well, Draco."

Draco smiled shyly at Black Hawk. It felt good to stand close to this big and friendly animal. He had the feeling he could brush him for hours and never get tired of it.

///

Harry had almost reached the group setting up the camp fire when Brian noticed him. "Ah, finally one more to help. Come over here, Harry." He waved Harry over to a shabby, gray-blue pickup. Miscellaneous pieces of wood lined the bed of the truck. "Grab a pair of gloves and help me carry the wood over there." Brian pointed at a growing pile of firewood. Without saying a word, Harry pulled on the gloves and started to carry the pieces Brian gave him.

"You're not very talkative are you?" Brian asked when Harry returned for more wood. Harry just shrugged.

Harry observed the scene around the campfire. Crying Horse and Aiden were chopping the bigger branches. Melissa and Maya were building the campfire and in addition to Brian and himself, Ken was carrying wood over to the stack.

"Need to burn off some energy?" Crying Horse asked Harry, offering him his ax.

Harry looked uncertain. "I've never done this before."

"No problem. I'll show you how," Crying Horse said. After a short lesson and a few miserable attempts, Harry managed to get the hang of it. He enjoyed splitting the big pieces and shortening long branches. The hard work cleared his head, and he forgot everything around him. When he moved to grab a new piece of wood, he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"It's just me." Rose smiled gently at him. She held up a tube of sunscreen. "Sometimes the men forget that newbies aren't as resistant to the sun as they are. Will you let me apply it? It wouldn't be good for you to have it on your hands while chopping wood."

"Okay," Harry said exhausted, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "But I'm sweaty."

Rose raised her eyebrow, and Harry was immediately reminded of Severus. "I live mostly with men here, Harry. Believe me, I'm used to sweating men." She grinned and held Harry's hair out of his face while she applied the sunscreen. When she had finished his arms and neck as well, she said, "All done."

Crying Horse came over, gave his wife a quick kiss on her cheek and finally turned to Harry. "Here, we don't want you to get a sunstroke, do we?" He placed a beige Stetson on Harry's head.

"Thank you," Harry said and adjusted the hat so that he could still see. "I'll get back to work, then." With that, he grabbed another piece and went on with his task.

///

"Hello, you two," Rose greeted Draco and Black Hawk.

Draco glanced at Rose in surprise. He had completely lost track of time.

"Really, Black Hawk, he's blond and you let him stand in the sun for over an hour." She shook her head disapprovingly at Black Hawk, who had started to care for Tohiadedi while Draco was lost in his work. Draco had to admit that he been so involved with Unega, he hadn't realized how hot he was.

"It's already too late," Rose said worriedly, pushing Draco's sweat covered hair out of his face to get a closer look at his skin. "Let's go inside and see if White Cloud has something to put on that sunburn before it gets even worse."

Unsure about what to do with Unega, Draco's confused look shifted between Unega, Black Hawk, and Rose.

"I will take care of him, Draco. Just go with Rose and let White Cloud have a look at you. It doesn't look too bad yet, but I should have realized sooner." Black Hawk smiled ruefully, "I will probably get quite a lecture from Light Arrow for not paying attention."

At the house, Draco sat on the big couch while White Cloud and Light Arrow fussed over him. "How are you feeling Draco? Dizzy? Do you have a headache?"

"No. I just feel hot." Draco looked nervously from White Cloud to Light Arrow, concerned by their level of worry.

"Nothing to worry about, Draco. You just have a light sunburn, but if you had spent any longer in the sun without some sunscreen, you might have gotten sunstroke." White Cloud gently stroked his hair, careful not to touch his burned skin. "Next time just remember to wear a hat and apply some sunscreen when you go out. We will give you a hat later, okay?"

"Okay," Draco said, still a bit worried. He wanted to see himself in a mirror to know how badly he was sunburned.

"Here." Light Arrow handed White Cloud a bowl.

White Cloud said in a calm voice: "No need to look so nervous, Draco. It's just curd. It will cool your skin, and with a bit of luck, you will hardly notice that your skin is burned. You'll stay inside and relax for the rest of the day so you are fit to attend the welcome feast this evening. Would you like some ice to suck on?"

"Yes, please," Draco said, eying White Cloud skeptically as she applied the curd to his face and arms. The feeling was unbelievable. The curd was very cool, and it felt fantastic on his hot skin.

Light Arrow came back with an ice cube. "Open up, son!" he said and placed it in Draco's mouth.

Draco slept for some time, only waking up a few times when Light Arrow or White Cloud applied new curd. An hour before the welcome feast, Light Arrow woke Draco. Tiredly, Draco looked around. Severus stood behind Light Arrow, his arms crossed in front of his chest.

"Come on, you have enough time to have a shower, but before you go up with Severus, I want to know which one you would like." Light Arrow held up two Stetsons, one in black and one in brown.

Draco sat up and looked back and forth between the two hats. "The black one, please."

"Then it's yours now." Light Arrow gave Draco the hat.

"Let's get you cleaned up," Severus said while grinning at the curd-covered boy.

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Harry had enjoyed chopping wood. The others had given him some space and hadn't bother him with questions. They had taken several breaks, during which they had all had something to drink and had eaten some watermelon.

"What's that over there?" Harry asked, pointing at a frame of thin branches that were bent and stuck in the ground to form a small, dome building.

"That was Tyson's sweat lodge. He left a week ago. It's the last ceremony you have during your stay here. Afterward, you just prepare yourself to leave. It doesn't matter how long it takes for you to decide to leave, but it symbolizes that you are ready to. Light Arrow would never throw someone out, even if you already had the sweat lodge ceremony. Maybe I'll try it out, but I don't want to leave this place, ever." Brain said, a melancholic look on his face. "Red Horse and Black Hawk were here as kids but came back, and now they are staying here forever. Severus also comes back from time to time. Light Arrow and White Cloud always say they are their sons, but in reality, Rose is their only biological child. It feels good to have a family like them."

Harry didn't know what to say. He wasn't ready to share and felt uneasy because they probably expected him to, so he decided to say nothing.

"How did you like Freedom?" Ken asked.

"Freedom?" Harry asked, confused.

"Your horse," Ken stated.

"Oh, I don't think he likes me. I'm not a horse person, I think."

"He is a great horse. I've ridden him once. He is gentle, but sometime stubborn," Ken said. "Just give him a little time to get to know you better. We can help you with that."

"Have you seen Thunderstorm?" Brian joined the conversation again.

"Yes, he looks magnificent," Harry said.

"Yes, he is. I have never seen a horse like him. The white spot on his chest and his white ear are from old wounds. His owners were absolute jerks and beat him. The coat at those spots didn't grow back in black, but instead came back white. Light Arrow once said that when he gets a new horse, he is sure that a teen will come along one day to work with it. He just waits for the teen that belongs to the horse. Unega and Tohiadedi have been standing in the paddock with our horses since this spring, as if he had known you two would come. That's crazy, isn't it?"

Harry felt a cold shiver down the back of his neck, and he heard a crazy sound in his head, like a wing beat of a huge bird. He shook his head to clear *Maybe I have been in the sun too long*, Harry thought, confused. The feeling of chills down his spine wasn't a bad one, though, as it had been with Voldemort; no, there was nothing frightening about it. It was a really good feeling, a safe feeling. Someone had been waiting for him.

"Yes, it is."