

Agoraphobia

by silverdoe

Agoraphobia – The abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult that is characterized initially by panic or anxiety and finally by avoidance of open or public places. As a result, severe sufferers of agoraphobia may become confined to their homes, experiencing difficulty traveling from this “safe place.”

Terrible Lies

Chapter 1 of 11

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~*~

Hermione Granger was sitting out in the small courtyard of her building. She usually came out a few times a week to soak up the sun. This was the only place, besides her small flat, she felt safe. She never ventured out into the world. Her time was spent reading and dreaming of how things could have been, if only...

If only the Light had won. If only Harry hadn't died. If only she had someone to talk to. If only she wasn't afraid to leave.

With her eyes closed and the sun on her face, she could relax. She could dream. She could remember all the good times. They could not find her here. In fact, even she wasn't sure just where here was.

All she remembered was waking up here. There had been a short note telling her she was safe and not to leave. She had tried to leave that first day, but the windows and doors had been locked and warded. She had tried every spell she knew but hadn't been able to get them to open.

The next day, she'd begun receiving newspaper clippings about the final battle. Harry was dead and Voldemort had won. The members of the Order were either dead or in the dungeons at Hogwarts.

The clippings had been rather graphic, describing the tortures placed upon other Muggle-born witches and wizards. Every so often, there'd been a picture of a beaten and dead body. So Hermione had stayed hidden in her little flat.

Every week, she'd noticed that her pantry and supplies were restocked and more clippings appeared. Occasionally a book, either magical or Muggle, had showed up on her shelves.

After a month, she'd noticed that the doors were no longer locked. That first day she had opened a window, just to breath fresh air. Yet her fear of being found had kept her inside.

The following few weeks had found her venturing as far as the front door of her building. She once almost made it outside when she'd seen a man standing across the street in a dark, hooded cloak.

She'd run back to her flat, locking and warding her door before collapsing into a chair. That had been the last time she tried to leave. She felt safe here. She had good food and books. She knew someone, somewhere, was protecting her.

And so she lived for years alone.

~*~

Harry Potter could have done just about anything he wanted in the world. Many people wanted him to be Minister of Magic. Others approached him with offers to play Seeker for various Quidditch teams.

Harry only ever wanted to be an Auror. After the Battle of Hogwarts, he began his training. He excelled and graduated the academy at the top of his class. He spent the next several years searching and bringing in rogue Death Eaters.

A freak training accident had brought his active career to a halt. The bones in his wand arm were shattered. Hundreds of tiny pieces of bone. The Healers were able to mend it, but there was some residual weaknesses left from the injury. For the young Auror, the injury was devastating. It meant never being in the field again. He would remain behind his desk for the rest of career.

So Harry decided it was time to take up one of the many other offers he had. He became the newest member of staff at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He filled the ever-vacant DADA spot and returned to fill it every year there after. It was almost like the position had been waiting for him. The long running curse had been lifted.

During his third year of teaching, he became the Head of House for Gryffindor. It brought on so many more responsibilities, but he enjoyed it. He became closer to his students. They began to realize that there was a real person behind the war hero.

One of his many duties as Head was to meet with the new Muggle-born students and their parents to deliver their Hogwarts letters. It was just such a meeting that he was heading to.

Since this was to be his first meeting with the family, he brought with him the acceptance letter, a copy of her transcripts and a slim file of records they had on her. He also had the newest copy of *Hogwarts: A History*. Since becoming Head of Gryffindor, he had given every Muggle-born student a copy. In a way, it was a secret tribute to a friend that was lost during the Battle of Hogwarts.

The family lived in a small flat near the outskirts of London. As this was his initial visit, he was dressed in jeans with a green buttoned-down shirt and a black blazer, and he arrived by cab.

After a quick climb to the third floor, he knocked on the door. He was greeted by a young girl with curly, black hair and inquisitive, black eyes. She was very tall and thin for someone her age.

"Hello, I am Harry Potter. I have an appointment with Perdita Randall."

"That's me!"

"Well, I'm pleased to meet you. Are your parents home?"

"Yes, yes. Come in. You can call me Peri, everyone does."

She turned from the door and led him to the sitting area.

"Mum, Dad, there is someone here to see us."

Peri's parents came down the hall to meet them. He looked at her parents and then back to the girl. The family could not have been more opposite if they tried.

Mrs. Randall was not very tall, but very plump. She reminded him of a children's nursery rhyme he used to hear his aunt singing to his cousin. Mr. Randall was not much taller; though he was thinner than his wife, he would never be called a thin man. Their young daughter towered over both of them.

They both looked to be in their fifties, which was fairly old to have an eleven-year-old in the Muggle world. Though Mr. Randall was bald, you could tell he had had fair hair in his younger days, possibly the same color as his wife's.

Shaking himself from his thoughts, Harry quickly crossed the room to greet both of them.

"Hello, I am Harry Potter. We spoke on the phone last week."

"Yes, I remember," Mr. Randall said, motioning for him to have a seat.

"I am here to speak to you about your daughter's future." And with that, he launched into a lecture he had come to think of as part speech, part theatrics, and part humor. He gave the family their first glimpse of true magic and explained all about the school and the world their daughter would become a part of.

After nearly an hour of questions and answers from the inquisitive young girl and her family, Harry stood to leave when a question that had been burning on his tongue finally made its way forward. He looked over to Peri, who was deeply engrossed in the book he had given her.

"Mr. and Mrs. Randall, if I may, I have a few questions for you?"

"Of course, Professor, ask away."

"Has anyone in either of your families ever made mention of being a witch or wizard?"

"No, I can't say that they have," Mrs. Randall said, her husband shaking his head in agreement. "Is that going to be a problem for Peri?"

"No, no. She will not have any problems I am sure. It is just that Peri's schooling has already been paid for. While it is not uncommon for wizarding families to pay in advance for future generations, it is almost unheard of for a Muggle-born witch."

"Well, to be perfectly honest with you, Peri is not our biological daughter. We adopted her when she was just an infant."

"It is the strangest thing," Mr. Randall continued. "We had never discussed adoption. We were both quite happy just as we were. And then one day, my wife and I just got

up and drove down to the orphanage. We came home a few weeks later with Peri."

"Don't get us wrong, Professor," Mrs. Randall cut in. "We love our daughter very much. We just never felt we needed to have a child to complete our family."

The puzzle was starting to make more sense to Harry. He thought for a moment.

"Is there anything you can tell me about her parents? Did the orphanage give you any idea who they were?"

"They had very little information for us. They told us it was a young couple and they did not want to give her up, but they felt they had little choice. The only condition was that she be allowed to keep her given name. I think it might have been a family name."

"I see. Well, I must be going. Peri, I will return in a few weeks to take you for your school things."

"Thanks, Professor. Er... Professor, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course, Peri. What is it?"

"This book, the one you gave me. It, well, does... What I mean to say is, are you THE Harry Potter from this book."

With a smile breaking out on his face, he replied, "Yes. I am the one the book mentions. But that was a long time ago, and now I am just your teacher."

"Wow, my teacher is a hero." Everyone laughed.

"It was a long time ago, Peri. Now remember, you must keep this a secret from everyone."

"Okay."

"Mr. and Mrs. Randall, it has been a pleasure. I will see you in a few weeks," Harry said, shaking their hands as he made his way to the door.

Harry made his way to an alley close by so he could Apparate back to Hogwarts.

~*~

It was a beautiful day in early July that Hermione found herself out in the little courtyard behind her building. She spent the morning reading, and now she was just relaxing in the warm rays of sunshine.

Apparation made a very distinct 'pop' when it occurred. If you knew what to listen for, you could hear it over the noise of the traffic traveling down the street.

Hermione Granger was still enjoying the sun when she heard the 'pop'. She bolted upright and looked around her in horror. Her worst fears were being found by a dark wizard or a Death Eater and being dragged back to the Wizarding world to be tortured or killed.

She was frozen in fear. Her wand, which she rarely carried anymore, was safely sitting on the dressing table in her room.

Gathering her strength and courage, she bolted for the door leading to the courtyard, ran up to the second floor, flung open her front door, and ran inside. A few quick waves of her wand and the door was warded and locked with every spell she knew.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right. This story is almost complete. Should be seven or eight chapters. I will post one each week.

Down In It

Chapter 2 of 11

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"Professor Potter, I see you made it back from your meeting. How did things go?"

"Good, Headmistress. I believe she will be an excellent student," Harry told his old Head of House. "There is something I wanted to discuss with you, if you have a moment."

"Of course. We can go to my office and have some tea while we talk."

Harry followed her up the spiraling staircase and into her office. They sat in the wingback chairs in front of the fireplace.

"Well, Harry, what is it you wished to discuss," she asked, passing him a cup of tea.

"Perdita Randall."

"The student you met with today."

"Yes. When I was going through her file before the meeting, I noticed that her tuition was already paid for."

Minerva did not say anything. She merely raised her eyebrows in surprise. Harry looked at his old professor before continuing.

"I began wondering how it could be paid for if no one from her family was magical. I checked the ministry records, and there was no information regarding her birth in the magical records.

"I did something I do not normally do. I questioned her parents regarding their heritage."

Minerva frowned at this. It was an unspoken agreement when dealing with the families of the new Muggle-born students not to question their family tree.

"Continue Mr. Potter," she said, the scolding tone present in her voice.

Harry knew that she was not pleased by what he had done when she reverted to treating him like a troublesome fourth-year.

"The girl could not be any more the opposite of her parents. She is tall with dark hair and eyes. The Randalls are very... uh, how to put it, very robust with fair skin and hair.

"It turns out that Peri was adopted by the Muggles shortly after her birth. The Randalls never really wanted children. They were both in their early forties when they decided to go to the orphanage. They both said it was a spur of the moment decision.

"They told me that the biological parents were young and that was why they chose to give her up. The only thing was the child had to keep her given name.

"I admit I was curious and began to wonder if she had magical parents. But as I had already checked the record, I knew this was not the case. I just feel as if I am missing something here.

"Even if the child was born at home, the Ministry would have records, would it not?" His questioning eyes looked to the Headmistress.

"I would like to say yes, but it has happened in the past, a young witch or wizard being born to a magical family and the Ministry not having records of it. It was before my time as headmistress. I only know because Albus had been working on a new way of record-keeping in his spare time."

"Spare time. You mean in between saving the world from Grindelwald and Voldemort," Harry said with a smile.

A smile crossed the old witch's face, "Yes, he always had several little projects going to keep himself busy during the down time."

"Do you think his records would show the name of the parents?"

"I am not sure if he ever completed the project. Even if he did, it is not likely to matter. He had a theory that all magical children had to have magical genes somewhere in their family. As it turned out, he was partially correct. Many of our Muggle-born students had grandparents or great-grandparents that were magical on at least one side. He started the project as a way to confirm magical births of children in order to save them from some of the ridicule by purebloods. As this is less likely to happen nowadays, I didn't see the importance of continuing it.

"Even his records had the occasional glitch in them. As I recall, Miss Granger was never registered by the Ministry or Albus. She did not show up on any records until her first burst of accidental magic at the age of four."

Harry nodded. For a moment, he was lost in the memories of the past, before continuing.

"It's just... It seems strange, and there is something about her. I feel like I have met her somewhere before, like I should know who she is."

"Very well, I will look through some of Albus' things and see if I can find his books."

"Thank you, Headmistress."

~*~

A few weeks later, Harry Potter arrived at the Randall residence. He had come to escort Peri on her first visit to Diagon Alley. His inquiries into her birth parents had not given him any more information. He didn't know why he felt consumed with the need to find out. He was sure that it was important.

He knocked on the door and waited for it to be answered. The door opened, and he saw Mrs. Randall standing there to greet him.

"Good morning, Mr. Potter."

"Hello, Mrs. Randall. How are you this morning?" Harry asked. He had noticed that she looked tired.

"Please, call me Lynne," she said. "I would have tried to reschedule our trip, but I was unsure how to contact you."

Harry immediately became concerned.

"Is everything okay?"

"Mr. Randal has taken ill. I do not believe he will be up to the adventure today. He should be up and around in a few days. I'm afraid that Peri is rather angry with me as well. She was so looking forward to going to this Diagonal Alley."

Harry suppressed his laughter before speaking again.

"If it is alright with you, I can still escort Peri today, and then possibly next week, I can take you and your husband along, so that you may see it for yourselves."

"I wouldn't want to inconvenience you."

"Oh, no. I would be happy to do it. I can remember my first trip there. I am sure she has been bubbling with excitement all week."

A smile crossed Lynne's face.

"Yes, she has been rather anxious. I suppose it would be fine." She turned and called down the hall, "Peri, Mr. Potter is here."

A few moments later, the young girl came out into the sitting room.

"Hello, Professor." There was a slight tinge of sadness in her voice.

"Peri," her mother started, "Mr. Potter would still like to take you today, if you would like."

Her face light up and a large smile crossed it.

"Yes, very much so."

"Good, run along and grab your jacket and your things, and we can get on our way."

When Peri returned, her mother handed her some money and kissed her before pushing them out the door. As they made their way to the stairs, Harry heard her call from behind them, "Behave, Peri, and have a good time."

They made their way to the alley as Harry explained Apparition to her.

"Just hold on tightly to my arm, and you might want to close your eyes."

She nodded and squeezed her eyes shut as Harry turned to Apparate them to the Leaky Cauldron.

~*~

Hermione was starting to feel more herself. She no longer jumped at every loud noise. The fear that she had been found and was going to be killed was slowly ebbing. She had just finished her morning shower and thought that, since the weather was nice, she would venture out to the courtyard today.

She was still a little apprehensive of leaving the safety of her flat, but the sunshine just seemed to call to her.

The memories of a few weeks ago still haunted her. She was so sure that the sound she had heard was a witch or wizard Apparating.

With a deep breath, she summoned all of her courage and opened her front door. Taking her first steps beyond the threshold in weeks, she made her way downstairs.

Once outside, the bright sunlight vastly improved her mood. The timidity she had felt earlier was beginning to evaporate.

She stood in the sunshine for a few minutes, eyes closed, face pointed to the sky, enjoying the feel of the warmth. Then she made her way to her favorite lounge chair by the back gate. It was under a large tree that provided ample amounts of shade and sunshine.

Relaxed for the first time in weeks, she began to read the book she had brought outside with her. After a few hours, her eyes began to feel heavy, and she drifted off into a light sleep.

~*~

Harry and Peri spent several hours exploring all of the wonders of Diagon Alley. He loved this part of his job. It allowed him to remember his first memories of this magical place. The first years he had spent in the magical world had been the best of his young life. He had found the first place he had ever called home. He had made friends, some of the best anyone could have asked for.

Ron was his first friend. They'd met on their first day and had been close ever since. Harry had even married Ron's sister and began a family of his own. Their friendship had grown stronger after the Battle of Hogwarts and the loss of their friend Hermione Granger.

As his thoughts lingered on Hermione, Harry's eyes began to show the sadness within. Peri glanced at him and wondered why he was so sad all of a sudden. She thought maybe she should ask him, but she didn't really know him that well, so she just gazed into the store with all of the owls on display.

Shaking his head to clear the memories, Harry turned to look at the young girl beside him.

"You know, Peri, it may be best if we get you an owl of your own. That way you can keep in contact with your parents."

"Oh, yes. Can we?"

"Most certainly," he replied while holding open the door for her to enter.

After spending an hour browsing the many different types of owls, Peri settled on a Northern Hawk Owl. She liked that it looked so much like a hawk. She also explained to Harry that it was diurnal.

With a smile, Harry was once again reminded of his clever lost friend.

Once they finished up their purchases, the two of them made their way to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch.

~*~

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That's What I Get

Chapter 3 of 11

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That's What I Get

The sun was beating down on her body, and her stomach was grumbling for lunch, yet Hermione was lost in her dreams. They were good dreams. Dreams of the way things had been before, before the Light had lost, before she had been forced into hiding.

The book that she had been reading fell from her fingers and dropped to the ground. The sound made her shift her position. But she slept on, unaware that her safe, quiet life was about to be turned upside down.

~*~

After a quick lunch, Harry and Peri returned to the building in which she lived. They arrived near the back gate, which Harry opened to let young Peri through first. As Harry moved through the gate, he saw a rush of bushy hair and a frightened woman run screeching into the building.

A little taken aback, Harry just stared after the upset woman. Peri was the first to say something.

"Oh, the date lady left her book. I will drop it by her door."

"You know her?"

"Yes, she lives here in the building. She is a little strange."

"How so?"

"Well first of all, she never leaves the building, except to come out here. Every once in a while, I see her staring out the front door to the street, and then she turns and heads back to her flat.

"The only time she ever speaks to anyone is to ask what the date is. Then she shakes her head and mutters about going crazy. To be honest, I think she already is." She gave him a small smile as she said this.

"She has only ever had one visitor that I have seen. Though, he tries to hide so no one notices him. I've seen him on a number of occasions. Sometimes I get the feeling that he is watching me.

"He is very creepy, dressed in black from head to toe. Most of the time he wears a hooded cloak, even in the summer. I have only ever seen his face once. It was late, and I saw him standing here in the courtyard with his hood down gazing up at the building. His eyes looked so sad. Like your eyes did earlier outside of Eeylops Owl Emporium."

Harry looked at her and smiled; he couldn't think of anything to say in response. He didn't want to explain the haunted look she was referring to.

"Grab her book, Peri. I will walk you upstairs."

When she came back carrying the book, Harry glanced at the title and gasped. He quickly grabbed the book from Peri, startling the child, and looked at it again. Thinking his eyes were playing tricks on him, he closed them for a moment before looking at the battered book for a third time.

There was no mistaking what it was. He had seen his best friend pour over this book for hours looking for clues to help them defeat Voldemort. He had not seen it in years, but he was sure of what the symbols on the cover read.

"The Tales of Beedle the Bard."

Shooting a silvery wisp of smoke off in the air, Harry ran to the building with Peri trailing behind him.

~*~

Remus Lupin was sitting in his study watching his son play chess with his wife when the stag that was Harry's Patronus came bursting into the room.

"Hermione. Hackney. Help. Hurry."

"What the..."

"Remus, you don't think he's actually found her, do you?" his wife asked from the floor.

"I'm not sure. We all thought she was dead. Harry finally started to accept that a few years ago. I wouldn't have thought she would have stayed away this long without contacting someone. I will be back, love." He bent down to kiss his wife and ruffle his son's hair before he left to find out what was going on.

~*~

"Professor, what is wrong?" Peri asked when they reached the entry to the building.

Harry stopped and turned to her.

"Peri, what else do you know about the 'date woman'? Do you know how long she has lived here?"

"She... she has lived here since before I was born. My mum told me she moved here about thirteen years ago. She moved in late one night and hasn't left since."

"Have your parents ever said what her name is?"

"No, no one knows. She doesn't talk to anyone, except maybe that man that visits. Do you know her, Professor?"

"I think she might be an old friend of mine. Where is her flat?"

"Her flat is on the second floor, directly below mine."

Before Harry could ask any more questions, Lupin came through the front doors.

"Harry, what is going on?"

"Peri, I need you to go up to your flat. I will return later to talk to you and your parents."

"Yes, Professor."

When she was on her way upstairs, Harry turned back to his friend.

"I was here to escort a new student to purchase her school supplies. When we returned, I saw a woman running from the back garden into the building. She left behind this book."

He handed it to Lupin. Lupin stared at it for a minute, then looked back at Harry.

"Are you sure it is hers?"

"Positive. She carried it with her all the time. I saw her read it a hundred times. This is what Dumbledore left her in his will," Harry said as he pointed a finger at the book.

Lupin nodded his head. If this was Harry's proof, it was good enough for him. The two of them made their way to the second floor. When they approached the door to "date woman's" flat, Harry felt the first of her alert wards.

Harry and Lupin began to attack the wards on the door. Just when they thought they had breached them, other, further wards were thrown up. The two wizards struggled to break through. After a few minutes, Harry was beginning to growl in frustration. He began to beat on the door, yelling for her to open it.

"Harry, stop. Just stop and calm down."

"Remus, that is my friend in there, and I am not leaving here until I see her."

"Look, I understand that you are upset, but place yourself in her shoes for a minute. She disappeared more than ten years ago, without a goodbye. The Ministry has never been able to trace her signature. She was declared dead five years ago.

"From the wards she has up, she obviously doesn't want to be found. We don't know why she left or why she is determined to keep us out. But I am sure that banging on her door and blasting your way in is not the way to get her to open it."

Harry nodded in agreement. He was frustrated, but he knew the man was right.

"Alright, Remus. We will do it your way."

Lupin looked to door and began to knock.

"Hermione, it is Remus Lupin and Harry Potter. We are not here to hurt you. We just want to talk to you. Please open the door."

They waited a minute and nothing happened. Lupin knocked again. Nothing. Harry knocked and called through the door to her.

"Hermione, Please. Just talk to us. Let us know you are alright."

Finally they heard a voice coming from inside.

"Harry Potter was killed by He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, and Remus Lupin was killed by Death Eaters at the Battle of Hogwarts. I don't know who you are, but go away before I hurt you."

Both Harry and Lupin stared at each other, not knowing what to say. How could she think they were dead? Is that why she had remained hidden for all these years?

"Hermione, I am not dead. I'm right here. Open the door, you can see for yourself."

They listened again. All they could hear was Hermione chanting the same thing over and over again.

"Harry is dead. Harry is dead. Harry is dead. Harry is dead."

"Harry, we might have a better chance to break these wards now. I don't like what I am hearing. We will need to be very careful with her. When I say this, I mean we may need to stun her. I want you to be prepared for that."

Harry nodded, and the two of them began to disassemble the wards again. The woman behind the door did not seem capable of trying to stop them in her distress. When they finally breached the last one and opened the door, the first thing they saw was a crumpled ball of quivering flesh and hair that was Hermione Granger. Her chanting continued.

"Harry is dead. Harry is dead. Harry is dead. Harry is dead."

Harry crouched down in front of her and spoke gently to her. Slowly, he reached out to touch her shoulder. She flinched as if he had hit her.

"Hermione, it's me Harry. I am not dead. I am right here. I want to help you. Reach out and take my hand."

"No, you're dead. Not real. Don't take me to Him. I have seen what he does to Mudbloods. He will torture me and then he will kill me. I don't want to die. Please just leave me alone. Take my wand. I won't do magic anymore. No one will know I am here. I just want to live."

"Hermione, please listen. We are not going to hurt you..."

"No, you're not real. Harry is dead. Remus is dead. Tonks is the dead. Ron is dead. Fred is... Everyone is dead."

Remus looked down at her. Harry could not make himself speak. Tears were beginning to form in his eyes. Why would she think that they had all died? Sure there had been losses. In the end, the Light had won. She was acting as if Voldemort had been victorious.

Remus found his voice first.

"Harry, we need to get her out of here and to St. Mungo's. She is having some sort of breakdown."

Harry nodded and reached out to grab her arm. Hermione started screaming and kicking and punching at Harry.

"Calm down, Hermione," Harry shouted over her screams. He tried to stop her arms from striking him. Her screams were getting louder. Her fighting was more erratic. She was terrified of him. Harry Potter. What had his friend gone through to make her act this way?

"*Stupefy.*"

Hermione slumped into Harry's arms. He turned and saw Lupin with his wand outstretched.

"I'm sorry. I had to do it. I didn't want her to hurt herself or us."

"Let's just get her out of here. I'll call some friends from the Ministry and have them go through her stuff here. Maybe they can tell us what is going on."

With two 'pops', the wizards and witch disappeared from the room.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right.

Head Like A Hole

Chapter 4 of 11

Agoraphobia – The abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult that is characterized initially by panic or anxiety and finally by avoidance of open or public places. As a result, severe sufferers of agoraphobia may become confined to their homes, experiencing difficulty traveling from this "safe place."

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~The reasons for the warnings on this story begin in this chapter~

~*~

Head Like A Hole

Harry paced around the waiting room outside of the Janus Thickey Ward of St. Mungo's. His eyes fell on his friends that had come to be with him and wait for news on Hermione. Ron, best friend to both Harry and Hermione, sat in one of the chairs. Harry's wife, Ginny, sat next to him along with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. Lupin was there with his wife, Nymphadora Tonks. Even Headmistress McGonagall was there waiting. They were all waiting.

It had been thirteen years since he'd last seen his friend. The woman he encountered in that little flat was hardly recognizable as the girl she had once been.

Harry was awoken from his thoughts as the Healer came down the hall towards them.

"Mr. Potter, I need a word."

"Sure."

He motioned for Harry to follow him a short way down so they were out of earshot of the others. Harry glanced back to his friends and shrugged.

"Miss Granger's situation is very delicate. She is going to need long term care. She has no magical relatives and is therefore the responsibility of the Ministry for her care. I spoke with the Minister, and he has agreed to allow you to become her magical guardian. Do you understand what this means?"

"Yes, basically I am in charge of her care."

"Yes. If you agree to be her guardian, you will be responsible, and we will be able to discuss her care with you. Do you agree?"

"Yes, of course. What do you need to me to do?"

"Well, first I should bring you up to date on her condition, and then you have a few decisions to make."

"Alright."

"From the brief discussions I have had with Miss Granger, I have been able to get some information from her. She has not left her flat since the final battle. That was thirteen years ago. Although in her mind, it has only been three or four years. She was under the impression that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has won the war and that all of her friends are either dead or in prison.

"For several years, someone has been altering and modifying her memories and feeding her false information. Because of this, she has developed several phobias.

"There are large gaps in her memories. We attribute those largely to being Obliviated numerous times.

"It will take the Healers several months to retrieve the memories, and then they will have to start to rebuild her mind. At best, she will be required to be under constant medical supervision for at least a year."

"Whatever treatment she needs, I will pay for. I want her to get the best care possible."

"That won't be necessary. Professor Dumbledore had set up a fund for war victims before his death. Her treatment will be covered under this fund."

"You said there were decisions to be made. What kind of decisions."

"The man who altered her memories also abused her."

"Man, what man?"

"We are not certain who he is. We are hoping to uncover that information during her treatment."

"How did he abuse her?" Harry asked, not even sure if he wanted to hear the answer.

"Everything points to sexual abuse."

"I see. How do you know this?"

"Miss Granger is nine weeks pregnant."

"Pregnant."

"Yes. From our initial tests, I would say that this is not her first pregnancy. Her uterus shows signs of at least one other."

"There were no signs of children in her home. The Aurors have searched her entire flat."

"I do not know what happened to the first child, she has no memory of it, though I am certain that she did carry to full term. Whether or not the child was born alive or dead, and what happened to it, I can not say. We have not found those memories yet, and it may be a long time before we do."

"Does Hermione know about the babies?"

"No. We have not told her, yet. Mentally, it may be best if we don't tell her about the child she is currently carrying."

"What do you recommend we do about the baby?"

"Her treatment for the next several months will be hard on her, but she should be able to carry the child to term and deliver without any problems."

"What kind of treatment?"

"We will have to uncover all the hidden memories. Then we can begin to reconstruct her mental timeline. Our best Healers will work on it. She will be unconscious during treatment. It will be exhausting work for her, and she will probably sleep when she is not in treatment. It is likely we can hide her pregnancy from her until she delivers."

"Is this the best option for her? Won't it be the same as what the man who did this to her?"

"Yes and no. She will regain these memories after the restructuring is complete. So, she will eventually be aware of everything that we do. But it is the best option in order to save the child. In the mental state she is in currently, if we were to tell her, she may harm herself or the child."

"This is where your decision comes in. You need to decide whether or not to keep the child for her. She can not make this decision in her current state. If you decide to let the child go to full term, then arrangements need to be made for it after birth. She will likely still be under our care after the birth."

"How long do I have to decide?"

"I need to know soon. Today will be best."

Harry sat down and put his head in his hands.

"I'll leave you to your thoughts."

"No," he said, looking up to the Healer, "treat her and the baby. When it is born, I will take it home."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, it is not this child's fault. I won't be responsible for killing a part of her. Will we be able to determine the paternity of the child?"

"There are a few spells that we can try once it is born, though they generally work better if we have the information on the father. Until then, we may be able to get some information from her memories."

"Is it possible to find out how old the other child might be? Maybe we could find out what happened to it."

"If the baby lived, it is possible that whoever put Miss Granger in this position killed or harmed it in some way. It is also possible that it could be being raised somewhere by complete strangers. Unless we find the person responsible, it is most unlikely that we will ever know. The most information I can give you is that the child is possibly between ten and twelve in age."

Harry knew that it would be next to impossible to trace a child without any more information. He would have to wait and see what the Healers found.

"I want daily updates. I want to find who did this to her. Who took her from us for all these years? I want to make sure this person is punished."

"Of course, Mr. Potter. Would you like to see her now?"

"Yes."

"This way. She is sedated and will not likely wake up."

"I understand."

Harry visited with Hermione briefly. He wanted to make sure she was alright before he went to tell the others what had happened. He wanted to make sure she was real.

He sat down beside her and held her hand. He wanted to tell her everything would be alright, but the words wouldn't come. He wasn't completely sure if she could recover from this, but he knew that her friends would take her anyway they could get her.

Broken or whole, they would accept her.

He brushed his lips across her forehead and stood to leave.

~*~

Out in the waiting room, his friends stood to gather around him as he came back to the waiting area. He told all of them what the Healer had said.

Mrs. Weasley had to sit down when Harry came to the part concerning the pregnancies.

Lupin and Tonks filled them all in on what the Aurors had found in the flat, including the newspaper articles containing the lies she had believed all these years.

After all was said, and Harry promised to keep them all updated, everyone made their way to the exit. Harry kissed his wife before asking her to sit down.

He took a moment to gather his thoughts while he stared at her.

"Ginny, I need to tell you something."

She raised her eyebrows in concern, but motioned for him to continue.

"I offered to take the baby home when it is born. I know you said that you wanted to start an apprenticeship here, but I cannot let the baby go to an orphanage. I want to raise that baby until Hermione is fit to decide."

"Harry, I would have expected nothing less."

"I love you, Ginny Potter."

"I love you, Harry Potter."

They were interrupted by a soft cough.

"Harry, I would like to speak to you for a moment, please."

Harry turned and was surprised to see the Headmistress behind him.

"Of course. Ginny, I'll see you at home," Harry said as he kissed his wife again.

They waited until they were alone again before McGonagall spoke.

"I wanted to talk to you about Miss Randall."

Harry was a little taken aback at the subject of the conversation. In the rush to get Hermione to St. Mungo's and the subsequent events, he had forgotten about the young girl who led him to his friend.

"Harry," she spoke again, a little dismayed at his lack of concentration.

"I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't have left the girl in a rush, but things..."

"No, that's not it. I understand. What I meant was our last discussion about her parentage."

"Oh, yes. Did you find Professor Dumbledore's books?"

"Yes, though they were not much help. He never finished his project I'm afraid."

"Well, at least we tried."

"However, I may have found some information that is relevant, especially after this evening's revelation about Miss Granger. You see, while I was going through Albus' things, his portrait began to take an interest in what I was doing. He began asking numerous questions and became increasingly annoying. I finally told him what we were looking for. He directed me to his research. Then he began to ramble on about how Perdita was a character in one of his favorite novels. I listened to him rattle on about the story for hours while I dug through his old papers.

"It was when he started to speculate on whether or not Miss Granger was named for one of the characters in that story as well, that he got my attention. I asked him to explain. Being the crazy man he was, he merely suggested I read the story as 'I might find it enlightening'. The story was 'The Winter's Tale'. It appears this book was actually a play written by a Muggle known as Shakespeare."

Harry nodded his head. He remembered who Shakespeare was from his primary school days, though he was not familiar with that story in particular. McGonagall glanced at him before continuing.

"It took me a few days to track the book down and read it. The play is about two childhood friends. After a visit by one, the other assumes that he has slept with his wife and the child she is carrying is not his. His wife flees with the child, but the child is lost in the process. Many years later, the child finds out about her parentage and returns to her father. The child's name was Perdita."

Before she can continue, Harry interrupts her.

"Professor, what has...?"

"Patience, Potter." She took a breath before continuing. "In the story, the mother's name was Hermione."

Harry stared at her. He tried to speak, but instead ended up doing a very good fish impression. McGonagall took his silence as a chance for her to continue.

"It just is too much of a coincidence. Shakespeare's Perdita being the lost daughter of Hermione. The fact that they live in the same building, and you said the Randalls never wanted children, yet they woke up one day and decided to adopt an infant.

"I also checked with the Ministry records again. It is not that there is no record of her birth. The record had been erased. It would've taken an extremely powerful wizard to alter those records. Even her school records show the Randalls as her biological parents. I think we need to go see the Randalls and possibly bring them here."

"I agree. I'm starting to think that maybe someone made them adopt that child. I'll Floo Tonks and have her join us. It will be best if we have an active Auror with us in case that is true."

The duo left St. Mungo's and made their way to the Randalls' residence. It was time to find out the truth about a little girl.

~*~

Rather Long A/N:

I never intended to include Shakespeare's 'The Winter's Tale' in this story, nor have I ever read it. However, I did mean for that child to be Hermione's and that they would discover this fact when they found her. I was having a hard time coming up with a good name for the girl, so I searched a website on names, using "lost" as the meaning. When I saw Perdita and the meaning behind the name, I couldn't resist using this in the story. It seemed to fit so perfectly into it. Turning Perdita into Peri is all me though. The alternatives were, well, they were scary.

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right.

Sanctified

Chapter 5 of 11

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~*~

When they arrived at Hermione's building, Tonks was waiting out front for them.

"Wotcher, Harry. Minerva," she greeted. "Before we go up to the Randalls, I think we should go to Hermione's flat. There are some things you need to understand."

Harry looked at her, curious as to what she and the other Aurors had found and had not yet told him. He gave her a nod and they followed her upstairs. When they reached the door, she turned back to stop them from entering.

"Harry, I want you to run through this like you would any other case. Keep your emotions out of it. The room has been sealed, and all the original wards have been re-established. I will open it up for you, and then we will see what you can find."

He nodded his acceptance but couldn't bring himself to speak. With a wave of her wand, the Auror wards were taken down.

Standing in front of the door, he started checking for any wards. He found Hermione's wards and easily dismantled them. He ran an additional check and was surprised when he found a Muggle-Repelling Charm. Why would she want to keep Muggles away from her door?

A final check revealed that a Disillusionment Charm had been placed on the potted plant near her doorway. A flick of his wand revealed a box in which a wand lay hidden. He looked to Tonks.

"We think that the person keeping her here used this wand to avoid detection. We haven't removed it for testing yet. We are hoping maybe he will reveal himself."

He nodded his understanding and continued into the flat.

He continued his search, finding faint magical traces throughout the room. The kitchen and sitting area seemed normal, with faint traces of magic. It seemed that Hermione rarely used magic here, preferring to do things the Muggle way. It could be why they were never able to trace her.

The only recent traces were to strengthen her wards. He found a strong pulse of magic in the bathroom. On the wall hung a print of the painting 'Head of a Girl'. There was another Disillusionment Charm on the picture.

A flick of his wand and Harry saw the picture had hinges. The picture opened to a medicine cabinet. There were various types of potions inside of it. He leaned closer to read the tiny scrawl of handwriting. Contraceptive and healing potions were on the top shelf, along with Pepper-up Potion, bruise-healing paste, burn-healing paste and a wound-cleaning potion. The second shelf held Befuddlement Draught, Calming Draught, Forgetfulness Potion and Sleeping Draught.

It was the contents of the third and final shelf that sent a shiver down his spine. Several love potions including Amortentia, Blood Replenishing Potion, Skele-Gro, a potion to induce miscarriages, another that purges the bowels of all waste product, Polyjuice Potion, and Veritaserum.

These were not something that Hermione would keep on hand just in case. These potions all served a purpose. Harry did not want to think about what that purpose may be.

He went into the bedroom where there were more hidden items. His stomach began to twist into knots every time he thought of what one might use each item for. There were various ropes and scarves, whips, shackles, and a large array of vibrating sex toys. Scanning the items, he found traces of semen and blood on most of them. The fact that someone did this to her and then erased it from her memory was nauseating.

When he was done, he sat at the kitchen table and put his head in his hands. He almost wished she had been killed instead of being subjected to this life.

Tonks put a hand on his shoulder. "Harry, there is more. You should return to the entrance and check there."

He got up and went downstairs, running his wand past the doors. His expression changed from concentration to confusion, and he turned back to Tonks to question her.

"It is almost as if someone didn't want her to leave here."

"More like someone made it so she wouldn't leave here. These wards are truly some advanced magic. Not quite Dark, but borderline I would say. We had to bring an Unspeakable in just to tell us exactly what it was.

"This entry and the back garden gate have been charmed specifically to Hermione. If she were to try to leave, she would face her biggest fears upon leaving the safety of the building.

"This is Hermione's diary," she said, pulling a small book from her pocket. "No, you can't read it, it is evidence, and though much of it has been erased or altered, we may be able to recover some information from it. From what we have gathered, every time she tried to leave, she would see something akin to a Death Eater standing in the alley.

"Come back upstairs, there is more you should hear."

Once they were seated around the table, McGonagall conjured some tea for the three of them.

"Whoever trapped Hermione here, most likely beat and raped her. The evidence points to this; I don't need her memories to know that. But the evidence also narrows down the number of people that could be responsible for this. There are very few wizards capable of creating the wards that are on the doors in this building.

"If you were to check, each and every door has an Anti-Hermione Charm on it. If she had tried to go to a neighbor for help, the wards would have prevented her. The strongest of these is on the flat directly above here.

"That door also has an additional charm on it, intended to keep the occupants of that flat from leaving this building on a permanent basis. In other words, the people who live there cannot move out if they wanted to. They don't realize this of course.

"We have already been up to speak to them. Don't worry, their memories have been modified, but I really needed to find out if they ever felt like moving. The wife told me they hadn't ever thought about it but might consider it soon. Their daughter is going away to boarding school, and her husband is retiring. They would like to move out of the city, find a small place in the country and relax.

"Now, this all seems to be too much of a coincidence to me. There seems to be a reason you wanted me here with you tonight, and I am guessing it has to do with that family upstairs," Tonks said, looking straight at Harry.

Harry ran his hand through his hair, a nervous habit and something he had not done in years. He looked at his friend and decided that it was best if she knew his suspicions.

"There is a young witch living in the flat upstairs. I met her a few weeks ago when I brought her the acceptance letter from Hogwarts. During my meeting with her and her parents, I learned that Peri, the young girl, was adopted. The whole time I was there with them, I felt that there was something about this girl that I was missing, like I knew her.

"When I returned to Hogwarts, I told Minerva about my suspicions, and she agreed to help me look into the child's parentage. We were hoping to find out if her parents were magical."

"Are they?" Tonks asked

"We are still not positive, but from what I learned today about Hermione, the wards and charms around this building, and what the crazy old coot's picture told Minerva, I think... maybe I'm reaching."

"No, Mr. Potter. I do not think you are," McGonagall said.

Tonks looked between the two professors, trying to understand what they weren't saying. After a moment, a thought hit her.

"You... both of you think that the girl is Hermione's daughter."

"Yes," Harry said, feeling as if a great weight had been lifted from his chest.

~*~

Harry, McGonagall and Tonks made their way to the third floor. Harry knocked on the door, and a surprised Mrs. Randall in a dressing gown answered.

"Mrs. Randall, I am sorry to drop by this late at night, but we really needed to speak to you and your husband, if that is alright."

"Of course, Professor. Please come in. Peri told us what happened earlier. Do you know that woman from downstairs?"

"Yes. That is what we are here to talk to you about. This is Headmistress McGonagall from Hogwarts and Auror Nymphadora Tonks with the Magical Law Enforcement."

The three women made their polite greetings.

"Is Mr. Randall feeling up to talking? It would be best if you were both present to hear what we have to say," inquired Harry.

"I'm afraid this flu has him very ill. I can hardly rouse him to drink his soup."

"It is important that we speak with both of you. This is not something that can wait. If it is alright with you, I can send for a Healer to see to your husband."

"Uh... well, I don't..."

"It is perfectly safe, I assure you."

"If it is really that important, then I suppose that will be alright."

McGonagall turned to Tonks, "Nymphadora, would you retrieve Poppy."

Tonks nodded and left.

~*~

Poppy Pomfrey came out of the room followed by a bewildered, but healthier Mr. Randall. After the introductions were made, Poppy made her excuses and headed back to Hogwarts. Mrs. Randall busied herself fixing tea as Harry brought the man up to date on the events that had taken place that day, and Tonks placed a Silencing Charm on the young girls room.

The Randalls were stunned as they sat and listened to Harry. Mrs. Randall kept thinking about that poor woman and that she should have invited her to tea. Mr. Randall was concerned about his daughter and the world she had suddenly found herself a part of.

When Harry finished telling them everything that he knew, the room fell silent. Tonks was the first to break the silence.

"Mr. and Mrs. Randall, with your permission, I would like to check you for compulsion charms. I just need to scan you both with my wand. I promise it will cause you no harm."

The Randalls gave their consent, and Tonks began the scans. When she was finished, she nodded to Harry and McGonagall, confirming that both of the Randalls had been under the influence of charms.

"What does that mean?" Mr. Randall asked the Auror.

"It means that someone, most likely the wizard responsible for the condition of your neighbor, has placed several charms on you. The first was responsible for your desire to adopt. The second was aimed to keep you in this building. We had suspected this."

"You mean that we never really wanted or loved our daughter?" Horrified by this thought, Mrs. Randall broke down in tears.

Harry kneeled in front of her and grabbed her hands. When he spoke to her, his voice was soft and gentle. "No, the compulsion only made you take the steps to adopt her. You love and cherish that little girl by your own will. In your heart, she means more to you than any compulsion could make possible."

A teary Mrs. Randall stared into his eyes for a moment, trying to determine if what he said was the truth.

"How can you be sure? How do we know that it is not some curse that was placed upon us?"

"Look around you. Your kitchen cupboards are adorned with her artwork. Every inch of your mantle shows her smiling face. You accepted that she is a witch and that she is part of something you will never belong to. Trust me. If there was any part of you that did not cherish that child, these visual reminders and acceptance would not be here. Having a child thrust upon you and loving that child are very different. I know this. I have had some experience with it myself."

Mrs. Randall seemed to agree with him. She slowly regained her composure and looked around at the strange assembly of people in her sitting room.

"What should we do now? I mean, it is a possibility that our daughter belongs to the Granger woman."

"Peri belongs to you and your husband. There is no mistake in that. All we ask is for the three of you to come with us to the hospital tomorrow so we may confirm our suspicions about her biological parents," Harry said.

"Will this help you to determine who did this to us all?" Mr. Randall asked.

Tonks was the one to answer this. "It will help answer some questions. Until we do find out who is responsible, I feel it is in your best interest for us to find a temporary place for you to stay. Even though there are Aurors watching the building, I do not feel it is safe for you to remain here."

"Where do you recommend we place them?" McGonagall asked.

"With Harry's permission, the safest place would be Grimmauld Place. It is still one of the safest buildings in London, and it will give young Peri a chance to experience some of her new world before term starts up next month."

"Tonks, I have told you and Remus repeatedly. That is your home. You do not need my permission for anything that goes on there."

Tonks smiled at him. "Fine, I will send a note off to Remus to let him know to expect company."

She pulled some parchment and a quill from her robes and quickly jotted down a brief note before heading off to Peri's room to borrow her new owl, Skylar. Harry helped Mr. Randall pull the luggage from the storage closet. McGonagall quickly made the Portkey that would take the three Randalls to safety from a tea cozy.

Within the hour, the Randall family had packed and been whisked off to stay with the Lupins until the wizard who was responsible could be caught.

~*~

Harry went back into Hermione's room one last time. He thought maybe he would bring her something to spruce up her hospital room. The more he thought about it, though, the less he liked the idea. He wanted to light the whole place on fire and watch it burn.

Tonks followed in behind him and put the charms and wards back in place, but not before McGonagall had a chance to look in the medicine cabinet. Her gasp brought Harry's head to attention.

"What... what is it," he asked.

McGonagall pursed her lips as she held up one of the potion vials and shook her head. "It can't be, but it looks so familiar."

"Can't be what," Tonks called from the kitchen.

"He is dead; this can't be his handwriting."

"Who?"

"Severus."

~*~

~Someone's POV~

The light is on in your bedroom. I wish the curtains were open so that I could see your beautiful body. I remember the last time I was there. I came to you that night as myself, not as the persona I usually portray. Something I rarely do.

You made love to me that night. Of course you had the help of a potion and a few well placed suggestions. It was so good to feel your body slide up and down on top of me. I noticed you were trying to fight it; I could see the fear in your eyes. Your eyes never lie to me.

You barely seem to notice the difference between me and my other toy. There was no gasp of surprise I have come to expect when I reveal myself to you. I wonder if I have broken you yet. Have I have killed that fiery spirit you were known for in school?

I hope not. I do love the feisty lion hidden within you. It is why I chose you for my toy.

It was really chance that brought me to you. I saw you hurt, dizzy and stumbling around the grounds looking for your lost savior. In that moment, I made my decision. I took you to a safe house to keep you until I could arrange a more permanent place for you.

I hope you like your home. I did try to make sure it was nice for you. The other lives in squalor compared to this. But then he barely realizes who he is, so comforts would be wasted on him.

I allowed you to give him an heir. Everyone should have someone to carry on their bloodlines. Even him, the worthless half-blood traitor though he is.

Not that the girl will ever know. No one will ever know. You do not even know she is yours. You can't remember the joy or the pain of pregnancy. I saved you from that.

I kept her here, to torture him. I tell him when I bring him who she is. I think he yearns to hold her and love her. I even allow her to see him once in a while. I am sure with your genes she is curious about him.

I wish tonight I could play with you, my toy, but I must return home first. The time I spent away from you these last two months was painful. I needed to feel you and could not.

I want to touch your creamy skin, run my blade down your legs, and to play our many games. I want to hear you beg and cry for me to stop. I want to whip you until the blood flows down your back to that delectable arse of yours and colors it red. Then I would take you from behind, using your blood to coat me. I love to hear you scream in

both pain and pleasure. I give you both. The marks you bear are from me, and they make you mine.

Have you thought about me and my toy while I was away? Do you pleasure yourself? Do you run your fingers through your wet folds and rub your clit until you come? How I wish you would do that for me. I want to watch you. Maybe next time that is the game we will play.

I will never let you go, but I may rescue you, soon. Then I can be the hero and you will love me for it. You will come to me then. I have conditioned you to want me and my touch. You yearn for it.

But first I must make plans. The other toy must be dealt with. He has outlived his usefulness. I will dispense with him this week. Don't worry, my love, no one shall miss him. He is already dead. Don't mourn for him, no one else shall.

Tonight I must hurry home. My wife will be waiting. I shall have to kill her tonight. The poisons are not working fast enough.

Soon we will be together, always.

~*~

The young Auror on duty watched a man in an elegant suit make his way out the back gate and walk down the alley. He thought nothing of the Muggle as he passed his hiding spot.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right and for naming Peri's owl.

Hurt

Chapter 6 of 11

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In case you live under a rock, Harry Potter and associated characters belong to J.K. Rowling. Chapter title is from The Downward Spiral, Nine Inch Nails.

~*~

Chapter 6 Hurt

Hagrid sat at his table, tending to an injured porlock, when he heard the low buzzing sound of one of the many wards keyed to alert him. It took him a moment to remember what that particular one was for.

It couldn't be. He hadn't heard that alarm in over fourteen years. That one was for when Severus Snape came back injured from a Death Eater meeting.

"Them wards shoulda been disabled after the poor man died," he grumbled to himself as he walked to the gate to check on them.

As he approached the gates, he saw a crumpled grey form on the ground in front of them. When he got closer, he realized that it was a man lying there in the path. He was wearing a drab grey shift. His long, black hair hung down to the middle of his back. It was full of tangles and looked as if someone had hacked at it with a knife.

He rolled the mass onto its back and was startled to see the face of a man who had died over thirteen years ago.

"I don' know who you are, mister, but this kind a joke ain' funny. I oughta call the Aurors; don' know if you'll last long 'nough for them to get here though. Guess it'd be best to get ya' to Poppy."

He picked up the man and carried him to Hogwarts.

~*~

Minerva McGonagall and Harry Potter arrived back at the gates of Hogwarts to see Hagrid disappearing into the castle carrying a large bundle. The two of them made their way into the castle and up to McGonagall's office to discuss the day's events.

When they entered, Harry noticed that one of the many orbs along the mantle was glowing green. Strange, he had never noticed them there before.

"Professor, what is that orb there."

"Those are the teacher's alarm orbs. Each one represents a different teacher. They glow when that teacher is in danger or injured. I cannot remember ever seeing that one glow before. I am not sure who it is for. I'm sure Albus could tell us whose it is."

She walked up to the portrait of the previous Headmaster to try and get his attention. She was startled to see his picture empty. Albus never left. His only other portrait hung in an area rarely visited by anyone.

"Well this is certainly a first. He is always here," she said to herself.

"Where would he have gone?" Harry asked the Headmistress.

"He has another portrait in the infirmary, though he never goes there."

"All the time I have spent in there and I never noticed any portraits," Harry laughed.

"It is in a private room used mostly by teachers during the war."

Harry nodded. He learned something new about the castle every day it seemed.

"Albus, I really need to speak to you," she yelled to the blank picture. It took a few moments before the wizard came back into view. He looked from McGonagall to Harry and then let his gaze fall on the glowing orb.

"Minerva. Harry. How nice to see you both this evening, or is it early morning already?"

"Albus, where were you? We seem to have an injured teacher somewhere, and I am not sure who it is. These damn orbs are yours, maybe you can help."

"Ah, yes, the orbs. He is being tended to at this moment, I assure you."

"What do you mean by he is being tended to? How can you possibly know? The only teachers here are Harry, Hagrid and I. I know that is not Hagrid's orb."

"No, it is not. I must go and check on my boy."

The portrait was blank again.

"My boy. He hasn't called anyone that since..."

The fireplace flared and Poppy Pomfrey's head was floating just inside.

"Minerva, you must come quickly. It's, well, it's impossible, but... just come through and see for yourself."

Her head disappeared, and Harry and McGonagall made their way to the fireplace to Floo to the infirmary.

They appeared in Poppy's office a few moments later to see Hagrid standing just outside a door that Harry had never noticed before.

"Hagrid, what is going on? Who is in there?" McGonagall asked.

"A dead man."

"Dead? Someone died," Harry blurted out.

"No, the man is alive but he is also dead."

"Hagrid, you are starting to sound like Dumbledore." The headmistress sighed.

"Sorry, Professor. The alarms sounded earlier. I went to check on the gates and I found a man lying in front of them, a man I recognized 'cept he's been dead for years. So I thought maybe it were a joke, but Poppy tells me it's really him."

Harry shook his head, trying to make sense of what he just heard. Hagrid seemed very upset, perhaps that made him make less sense than normal. Before McGonagall could ask him to explain, Poppy came out of the room, pulling the door shut behind her. She motioned for them to have a seat.

"Poppy, please explain what is going on. Who do you have in there?"

She looked from McGonagall to Harry, searching for a way to soften the blow. She was never one to beat around the bush, but in this instance, she found herself reluctant to be direct. How do you tell someone that a person long thought dead was alive? Gathering her courage, the nurse took a deep breath.

"You both must promise not to upset my patient in anyway. He has been through entirely too much already."

McGonagall had a confused look on her face. Harry, who had very little patience, sighed and said, "Fine. Just tell us who it is."

"Severus Snape."

Harry turned to look at McGonagall as she spoke the name. Looking at Poppy, he saw that she was nodding in confirmation.

"I'll kill him. All this time, we thought he was dead. I testified about his innocence. After tonight and everything we have learned. He took Hermione. He did all those horrible things to her."

"Harry, you don't know if that is true. I am sure there is an explanation," McGonagall said.

"You know it's true. You said yourself it was his handwriting. I already know he can Obliviate someone, and I seen him kill Dumbledore. He obsessed over my mother for years. Hermione and she are similar in many ways. That's probably why he took her." He jumped to his feet and began pacing the small office.

"Hermione? Professor Snape took our little Hermione. Are ya' sure? 'Cause the man I seen tonight wouldn't have been capable of doing anything," Hagrid remarked.

"He's capable. He's evil and I trusted him. Again! I even named my son after him."

Harry's voice had started to rise and he was almost shouting. The events of the day were really beginning to get to him. After Dumbledore's death, he had wanted nothing more than to see Snape strung up by his genitals. Then, when he'd viewed the man's memories, he felt saddened that he had not trusted him more. He had believed the man to be innocent. Now he felt utterly betrayed, again. McGonagall may not want to believe it, but the signs were clear as far as he was concerned.

"Harry, did you really find Miss Granger?" Poppy asked.

Harry just glared at her and continued pacing. McGonagall filled Hagrid and Poppy in on all they had found out over the last eighteen hours. When she was finished, Poppy looked at Harry, who had stopped pacing to lean against the doorframe.

"Harry, I can assure you that whoever did this to Miss Granger, it was not Severus Snape."

"Oh, I suppose it is just some strange, cosmic coincidence that they have both come back from the dead on the same day. All the signs point to him," he sneered.

"No, that is not what I am saying. Hagrid is right. The man in that room is not capable of doing anything for himself, let alone being responsible for all that was done to Miss Granger."

When Harry went to interrupt her, she just held up her hand. Harry promptly closed his mouth.

"At first, Hagrid and I thought it was some cruel joke that someone was playing, a Polyjuiced imposter or something. All my scans tell me that he is Severus. A barely

recognizable and broken Severus."

"I am sure whatever is wrong with him, he did it to himself."

"Harry, you don't talk 'bout the professor that way. You told me yourself he saved us all," Hagrid said.

"He fooled us all. You heard what Professor McGonagall said. He was responsible. Those were his potions in that cupboard," Harry said, his anger still evident.

McGonagall had had enough of Harry's tirade. She knew he was hurting and desperate to blame someone, anyone, for his friend's rape and torture, but this had gone on long enough, and they were no closer to finding answers to their questions. What was wrong with Severus? Why did they both reappear now? Who did this to Hermione and Severus? She would not allow him to condemn the man until they had proof, one way or the other.

It was late. She was tired. They needed to discuss this rationally.

"Harry, you will sit down and be quiet, or I will place you in a Body-Bind."

A glance at her face showed the reasons the Gryffindors of his age rarely disobeyed their former Head of House. The stern look the witch was giving him left little question as to his options. He took his seat and sat quietly, waiting for Poppy to continue.

Minerva looked at Harry to make sure he was complying before addressing Poppy again.

"Please, tell us what you know."

"I have healed everything physically that I can. His mental state, well, I think with time that might heal as well."

Gathering her thoughts, she began to list the physical injuries, ignoring the gasps and the curses uttered by the others in the room as she went through the list of his injuries.

"He is severely malnourished. I have no doubt that this has been going on over a long period of time. His bones are weak and brittle from the loss of nutrients.

"He had several broken bones that had been poorly healed. I had to break and reset several of them. His ankle was so badly broken and damaged, I had to fuse the joint together. He will walk with a limp for the rest of his life. I gave him some Skele-gro. He will have to continue with doses, along with a nutrient potion, for the next few weeks until his bones are stronger.

"His back is a mass of crisscrossing scars and sores, as if he was regularly whipped. I healed the worst of them and dealt with the residual infections. I was able to clear up some of the scars; unfortunately some were too old and too severe to heal completely.

"The wound on his neck from Nagini was also poorly healed. The scar tissue that developed made it almost impossible for him to turn his head. I had to lance off most of the built up tissue and then close the wound again. I am hopeful that with therapy he can regain some motion in his neck."

A pause, to gather her courage once again. The injuries she had listed already were easy. Superficial, even, compared to the others. The ones left sent a shiver down her spine, and she had been a nurse here for some forty years and through two wars. A deep breath and then she continued.

"There were severe lacerations on his hands and ankles. The leather straps, that I assume were used to tie him in place, had long ago dug into the skin. These wounds were not treated, and the skin was allowed to grow back, embedding the straps into the skin.

"I had to be very careful when removing the straps that had grown into the skin. The hands are very delicate, and I did not want to cause any more damage than necessary. There may be some mild nerve damage, but that is all.

"He has been brutally raped, on more than one occasion. I would say that this went on throughout his imprisonment, wherever that was. Judging by the amount of damage, it is quite possible that objects were frequently used to penetrate him. I removed several splinters and what I suspect is ginger from his anus."

She looked to their faces. Hagrid had slow, quiet tears running into his beards. McGonagall was sobbing openly into a handkerchief. Harry was lost in his own head. It was clear to them all that they had failed two of the heroes from the war.

"Fuck."

Snape was supposed to be dead. Harry saw him die. He was present at the burial when they had placed his coffin into the ground. He had visited this man's grave at least twice a year since then.

"Fuck."

Harry felt his anger at the man slip away. There was no way he could be responsible for Hermione in the condition he was in. What sick, sadistic bastard was running loose in the Wizarding world? Were the similarities in Hermione's and Snape's condition a coincidence? Was the same wizard responsible for both?

"Poppy, you said something about his mental state. Is he awake? Were you able to question him at all as to who did this to him?" Harry asked, slipping back into his Auror role.

"He was conscious and aware. Unfortunately, he would not speak to me directly. He would only talk to Albus."

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A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right.

Help Me I Am In Hell

Chapter 7 of 11

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~*~

Her colleagues stared at her; a confused expression was evident on all of their faces. McGonagall tried to say something but was at a loss for words. Determined, she tried again.

"He does know that Albus is dead, correct?"

"Yes, he seems to. However, when I tried to speak to him, he would not acknowledge me. He would not look at me, and he would not answer my questions. Albus repeated the questions I asked and then he would answer, directing his answers to the portrait."

"Did he manage to say who did this to him?" Harry asked.

She shook her head. "I am sorry, Harry. He was only conscious for a few moments before the pain and potions took hold of him, forcing him back under."

"What do we do now?"

"We wait. With the number and severity of his injuries, he probably will remain unconscious for a several hours."

"I hate waiting," Harry muttered.

"When he does awake, he will be very weak for a few days and will need more rest. I will not have you tormenting him with questions he is not ready to answer," she said, giving Harry a sharp look.

"In the meantime, we should alert Nymphadora to this new development," McGonagall said.

"No!" Harry exclaimed, jumping up from his seat.

"Why ever not, Mr. Potter?"

"If you tell Tonks, she will have to make a report. If whoever did this finds out that Snape is here and alive, he may try to come after him, or he may panic and try to flee. This needs to be kept quiet for as long as possible. For his safety and Hermione's."

"You think the two of them were held by the same person?" Poppy asked.

"Yes, and the more I think about it, the more I am convinced. I mean, first there are those potions, which Professor McGonagall assures me have Snape's handwriting on them. Then there is that wand outside Hermione's flat. It looked familiar. I could not place where I had seen it before at the time, but now I am sure that it is his. If I am right, that wand is the perfect tool to use against Hermione. The Ministry assumes he is dead and would not think to track his magical signature because of that.

"We need to determine how he got here. If we knew that, we might be able to track him back to his last location and then to who was holding him."

"Hagrid, you said you were alerted to his presence by an alarm?" Poppy asked.

"Yea', the one that always sounded when he returned from a meetin' with You-Know and he was injured."

Hagrid still found it difficult to say Voldemort, even after all these years.

"That means he had access to one of his Portkeys. But why did he wait so long to use it?" The nurse had spoken this question more to herself than to the others in the room.

"Portkeys. What Portkeys did Severus have?" the headmistress asked.

"He always had at least three on him at all times. Albus insisted. They were in case he was too injured to Apparate. Just press and say a word. There was a necklace, a Prince family ring he wore on his right hand and a small band around the little toe on his left foot. All three were made to bring him to the gates and set off the wards.

"The necklace and band were charmed to be invisible and undetectable as a Portkey. The ring was an heirloom, and he always wore it except when brewing. Nobody would have suspected that it was a Portkey."

"But why so many, and why didn't anyone else know about them?"

"Albus wanted to make sure he always had a chance to escape in the event his spy status was questioned. He felt that if the true purpose of the ring was discovered, then he would have one of the other two.

"The necklace could have been felt if someone touched him on the neck, but the chances he would willingly let someone that close to him were slim. But the one on the toe, no one would suspect and no one would look. It was the perfect spot, as long as he could touch it.

"They were all for his safety, which I would think is the same reason he never told anyone else about them. If I am right, he probably never told Hagrid anything other than Severus would be at the gate injured when those wards sounded."

"Tha's about right, Poppy. I never once asked 'im how he got there. Jus picked 'im up and delivered 'im to you."

"Just a moment. Let me check on him," Poppy said as she rose and made her way to the little room.

She held a small band in her hand when she returned. She handed it to Harry.

"Will you be able to use that to track his movements?"

"Yes. This is the Portkey you mentioned?" She nodded.

"There is a wizard that works in the Portkey Office that owes me a favor. He might be able to trace it backwards. It will depend on the protection spells Professor Dumbledore placed on it. I will go and see him in the morning."

"There are still a few hours till morning; I suggest we all go get some rest. I am sure Albus will wake us if anything happens. He is not likely to leave that room until Severus is well," McGonagall said.

Nodding in agreement, the others made their way out of the infirmary and to their separate quarters. Answers would have to wait.

~*~

He was lying on a soft bed with warm blankets covering him. It had been so long since he'd last had this dream. He could hear raised voices coming from the other room. He could make out a male voice and a female voice as well, possibly two. It all seemed so real, maybe it wasn't a dream this time.

The voices sounded angry. He decided to lie still and try to figure out where he was and what was going on before he gave away any indication he was awake.

He could feel his arms and legs; they did not seem to be stretched and tied tightly to the bed posts. He wiggled a finger and almost jumped when he felt it move near his side.

Without changing his breathing or opening his eyes, he tried to get a feel for his surroundings. Everything smelt fresh and clean, and a comfortable bed was not something he was used to. His tormentor never gave him comfort or care, so he must have escaped or been rescued.

Determined to figure out whether he was safe or in more danger, he cracked an eye open a fraction of an inch. Peering through his lashes, he was able to make out the smooth granite walls of what could possibly be Hogwarts' infirmary.

A few quick glances around the room confirmed he was alone and at Hogwarts. He closed his eyes and controlled his breathing. How did he get here? His mind was a mess. He tried to organize what he could remember: his childhood, his school years, the beginning of his teaching career.

Concentrating harder, he began to remember his spying activities and the rebirth of the Dark Lord. The following few years when he was forced to return to the Death Eaters and bow at the feet of that monster.

The sharp pain he feels in his chest reminds him of what he had to do to maintain the façade of loyal Death Eater. His mentor and friend, dead at his hands. The last year he spent at Hogwarts replacing the man he looked to as a father.

He remembers giving Lily to Harry Potter. All of his memories, good and bad, of the girl he loved were gone. An empty hole is all that remained. Another ache develops.

His last clear memory is trying to heal himself in the shack; everything else is hazy. He tries to remember what happened after that, but it is like fighting his way through a thick fog. He has glimpses of memories but feels no connection to them.

He can see himself looking worse than he could have imagined possible: brewing potions, staring at a ceiling as he was bound to a bed, tied to a pole, beaten and bruised, raping and torturing what looks like Hermione Granger, being raped himself, but it doesn't seem real.

Did this happen to him? Did he do those things to that girl? He fought the urge to be sick. That would alert them to his awakened state, and he wasn't ready for that yet.

Just as he took a few deep, calming breaths and reinforced his shields, the door opened and in walked Poppy. She looked over her patient and noticed he was still sleeping. She went to the foot of the bed and lifted up the blanket. A quick swish of her wand and she removed the band from his toe. She turned and left him to his thoughts once again.

The band. That had been his salvation. His last hope. That band had kept him going during his darkest days. He remembered now. He had escaped. He slipped into his thoughts and began to remember the last few weeks.

Ma... Master. His master had left him on the care of an elf. Mot was the cruel little creature's name. Years of working for the master had made him a perfect slave. Mot would come three times a week to clean and shave him, feed him his miserable little meal, force him to drink potions and reinforce the spells that controlled Severus. Mot never touched him and never let him out of the straps that held him to the bed and dug into his arms.

For over a month, the elf came and did his master's bidding while the man was away. Then a few days went by without any sign of the elf. Severus began to regain some sense of himself. He started to regain control of his thoughts. After a week, hunger had become a constant feeling. The small glass that was charmed to fill every 12 hours did, but no food was brought to the man.

He was used to this by now; the master had used food as a punishment before. Starving him for days to see what he could tolerate before he weakened and passed out from hunger. But something was different this time. He felt stronger, somehow. Mentally and physically.

A few days ago, the spells holding the straps in place had weakened enough for him to pull his arms closer to his face. It took him some time to chew through the leather. He had to stop occasionally and sleep to regain some strength.

After several days, he was managed to get through the one on his right arm. He paused for a few minutes, letting the blood flow back into the abused limb, before removing the one from the left side. He was careful not to irritate the wounds in his wrists and ankles as he escaped the bed.

He was free and in control for the first time in over a decade. Reaching to his foot and praying it was still there, he grasped at his toe and softly whispered, 'Home Sweet Home'. A tug at his navel proved that Albus' spells had worked, and no one had found the little band of safety.

~*~

Harry Potter awoke after only a few hours of sleep. He dressed quickly and headed downstairs to greet his wife and children. Grabbing a slice a toast, he headed to the Floo and the Ministry. He was determined to solve this mystery, and if he had to blackmail that man in the Portkey Office, then so be it.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right. Mot means 'death' in Ugaritic

Another Version of the Truth

Chapter 8 of 11

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A/N: I am sure everyone has seen the warnings. They still apply.

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Lucius Malfoy sat in his study, reviewing his business correspondence from the last two months, but his thoughts were elsewhere. While every member of his family carried the Dark Mark, his son was deemed by the Ministry to have taken it only under duress. For this, Lucius was thankful. It meant that the Malfoy name and social standing had not been completely destroyed by the Dark Lord's downfall. Unfortunately, it also meant that Draco controlled all of the family holdings.

His son had allowed him to control some aspects of the family businesses, once he was sure that Lucius would not revert back to his former Death Eater persona. How naïve the boy could be. Lucius had been slowly diverting funds from some of the businesses into a little known account he had set up to use for his pleasure and for what he was calling his retirement fund. He was going to use that money to fund his new life, away from the accusing eyes of the British wizarding population.

Lucius had never had a Death Eater persona. He was and always would be a pure-blooded supremacist. The person he had become since the war ended, this respectable and honest wizard, was the façade. He counted down the days until he could return to his former self.

The things he did to maintain this new identity helped him with the Ministry and one of his toys. The Ministry was beginning to see him as truly reformed, though a few still had their doubts. But the Malfoys had the support of Harry Potter. Potter had stood up for his family after the final battle.

Draco had been cleared within the first week. Potter had testified about the events surrounding Dumbledore's offer and Draco's reluctance to take a life. The Wizengamot had heard how he had been forced to take Lucius' place and all about the task that was given to him. Everyone seemed to agree that the boy had been set this task in order to set him up for failure and to punish him for his father's mistakes.

Narcissa's trial had taken a little less than a month before she too was cleared. While she had rarely performed any duties for the Dark Lord, she had been accused of harboring him at the Manor for almost a year. Her part in saving Potter had actually earned her an Order of Merlin, third class in the end. It seemed that many wizards felt without her deception the battle would have been lost.

Lucius' trial had lasted more than three months, but the Ministry hadn't let him off completely. Every misdeed he had done in the last twenty or so years had been scrutinized. He had been accused of everything from bribery to murder and even a few things he hadn't done. The evidence against him, for most of the crimes, was sketchy at best. With Potter's testimony, he had managed to get off relatively easy.

He had spent ten years under Ministry control, his magic had been bound, and he'd had to perform community service for the betterment of the wizarding community. During this time, he had to rely heavily on his personal elf for the care and protection of his toys. He could not be seen taking care of those things himself. Especially if he wished to retain control of the Muggle-born Project.

The Muggle-born Project was a brilliant idea he'd had to separate the Mudbloods from their parents once they began school. Plus, it had the added benefit of allowing him to perform his community service, making him look better in the eyes of the Ministry. Even after his commitment to the Ministry was complete, he continued to lead the Project in order to control the young Muggle-born children.

The Project placed Muggle-borns with pure-blooded families during the summer holidays, thus allowing them to learn more of the customs and traditions of the wizarding culture they now belonged to.

The press ate it up. A Malfoy and reformed Death Eater trying to instill the values of the wizarding world in the Muggle-borns was just the thing to get his name and picture on the front page of the *Daily Prophet*.

'Lucius Malfoy Takes a Stand for Muggle-borns and Half-bloods'.

The article, once it had been doctored a bit, found its way into the hands of his toy. His plan was to make her see him as a savior. He left the headline alone but changed the article in order to further terrify and control his toy.

Being the head of the Project gave him the right to place the students with families of his choosing. He only had to answer to Percy Weasley, who was easily persuaded to see only what Lucius wanted him to see. He was careful to place many of the students with unknown supporters of the Dark Lord, ensuring that they would be forever turned from the Muggles who had raised them. He used his influence over these families to force them to do his bidding in regards to what the children learned. If he could not eradicate the Mudbloods, he would see to it that they felt the same way about Muggles as he did.

~*~

He had returned home late last night from the mainland where he had gone to make arrangements for himself and his favorite toy. His family had assumed he had other business to take care of and did not question his lengthy trip. He had been eager to set his plan into motion, but his stay had lasted a little longer than expected.

His anger began to swell as he remembered the events of this morning. Today was supposed to be the first day of his new life, without his wife. Even the glass of Firewhiskey he had had before breakfast was not able to calm him down.

He had been trying for months to kill his wife, making sure his elf dosed her tea with a variety of untraceable, slow-acting poisons. The poisons were designed such that his wife should have died a week ago, had she continued to take them. Something had happened. Not only had she not died, she seemed to have recovered from her illness enough to go to Tenerife with her sister, unbeknownst to him.

He had placed several calls while away to check on her health, as any concerned husband would. When it became apparent she was recovering, he had decided to take matters into his own hands, literally. He had been set to do just that upon his return.

He had tried in vain to locate his wife before the rest of the occupants of the manor awoke this morning. She had not been in any of her rooms, the garden or solarium. After several hours of endless searching, he had called her elf.

"Master call Calla," the little elf had squeaked when she'd popped into view.

"Where is my wife, elf," he'd snarled.

"Mistress has not been well. Mistress has gone with her sister on holiday."

Lucius had waved his hand to signify he was through with her, and she'd disappeared.

On holiday with that blood traitor of a sister, Andromeda. He would now have to wait for her to return before he could continue with his plans. He really should have killed her before he'd left. That poison he'd found had obviously not worked as it was supposed to if all it had done was make her ill.

He needed to clear his head and calm down. Another glass of Firewhiskey and his anger began to abate. After another hour of perusing business correspondences, he began to think about his two precious toys. A devious smile spread across his face. One he would destroy, and the other he would keep, until she was of no more use to

him.

He was beginning to relax and allowed himself a few minutes to reminisce on how he had come across the toys that had brought him so much pleasure over the years.

~*~

How lucky that he found the Mudblood dazed and confused on the grounds of Hogwarts. He grabbed her up and Apparated to the nearest deserted place he could think of, the Shrieking Shack. He knew that the Dark Lord had already left it to go into the forest.

His first thought was that he was going to teach the little Mudblood a lesson. He would torture and rape her before disposing of her body back on the battlefield. He would leave her alive, just barely. With any luck, they would not be able to save her in time.

When he arrived at the shack, he was surprised to find an unconscious Snape slumped against the wall. He had been told by the Dark Lord that the traitor was dead. He could see several discarded potion vials and blood surrounding the Potions master. A slow trickle of blood from the man's neck proved he had tried, and failed, to properly heal the wounds inflicted by Nagini.

He raised his wand, intent on finishing the job the snake had failed to do, when a thought crossed his mind. The man was obviously weak and unable to defend himself. In this state, Lucius could take advantage. He could have his revenge on the man and take his time doing it. He would make him suffer for betraying the Dark Lord. He needed to find a place to put him until he was free to play.

His mind made up, he called to his elf.

"Mot."

"Master call," the little elf said as he popped into existence.

"Mot, my irascible little elf. I have new toys for us. Take both of them to your rooms and make sure it is properly warded so no one can find them, and tell no one they are there. I will return when I can. Until then, treat only what needs to be in order to keep them alive."

"Yes, master." An evil grin spreading across his face.

"And Mot, feed this one," pointing to Snape, "only when necessary. I cannot have him regaining his strength before I have had time to enjoy him."

"Yes, master. It will be my pleasure to keep the toys and keep this one weak."

The elf grabbed hold of both the Mudblood and the traitor and disappeared. As much as Lucius wanted to play, he knew he would be missed if he did not return to the Dark Lord's side soon.

~*~

Returning to his papers, Lucius attempted to conclude his business correspondence for the day. He had to schedule a time to check on all the children in the Project this week for his Ministry-appointed bean counter, otherwise known as his Project Liaison. It was the standard 'Are the children happy, healthy and safe' visit. Of course, Lucius preferred to do these visits personally. He was able to intimidate and control the youngsters when they were in his presence, force them to see and understand his views.

He tried to concentrate on his schedule, but his thoughts kept returning to his elf. Mot was an incredible find. He closed his eyes and thought back to that day so long ago when he had found the elf in his manor.

He had come across the elf shortly after losing his other personal elf. Lucius had been disposing of a few artifacts that were stored beneath his drawing room when he came across a small door he had never seen before. Crouching down, he had spelled the door open and been surprised to see a small corridor behind it. After enlarging the passage so he could walk along it, he came across a series of elf quarters that he had not known about.

Malfoy Manor had housed five elves at the time: one for each family member, a cook and one for general cleaning duties. Those elves all stayed in quarters near the kitchens. However, before Lucius was born, his grandfather had owned several dozen elves. These rooms must have been where they had been housed.

Doorway after doorway had led to rooms that were little more than small dens. Piles of discarded clothing and linens, which must have served as the nests for each of the creatures that had once lived down here, and a small wash basin, no larger than a soup bowl, were the only content in the dens. A few had small wooden boxes, also lined with discarded linens. Lucius assumed these must have been for the offspring of the manor elves.

At the end of the corridor had been a heavily warded door. It had looked like the others, and Lucius had assumed it led to another den. But when he began to dismantle the wards, he became aware of a blood ward on the door. He had heard of this type of ward and knew it would only open with blood from the master of the house. His curiosity was piqued. There was very little he did not already know about Malfoy Manor, and now he had found unused servant quarters and a room only he could open.

Slicing his wand across the palm of his hand, Lucius allowed the blood to pool before placing his palm against the door. When the door opened, he was surprised to see a well-appointed room that was tastefully decorated in blue and green tones. A small bed sat along one wall with a side table next to it. In the middle of the room was a leather sofa surrounded by several stacks of books. A low table was in front of the sofa, also covered in books. A curtained area in one corner lay open to reveal a miniature bathroom, complete with a tub and a separate shower.

Seated at a small table and chair set was an elf Lucius had never seen before. The elf looked towards him and then went back to his lunch. Astonished, Lucius stood there staring for a moment, incredulous at the absence of any recognizable elvish behavior in the creature.

"Elf, what are you doing in my home?"

"I believe it is you, sir, who has entered my home," the strange little elf squeaked.

Stunned, Lucius Malfoy actually was at a loss for words. How dare an elf speak to him like that, in his own home no less? He would kill the little creature for disrespecting him that way. He raised his wand, but before he could utter a curse, he flew back into the wall. As he slipped into unconsciousness, the elf smirked and went back to his meal.

When he came to, he was lying on the sofa. The elf had pulled the chair over from the table and was watching him. He slowly sat up, mindful of the throbbing pain in his head. The elf stood and bowed before him.

"Master Malfoy, I am Mot."

Lucius was confused. Was this the same elf that had only minutes before thrown him into a wall?

"Who do you think you are, hexing me in my home?" Lucius snarled, reaching for his wand to kill the belligerent elf.

Mot glared at his master. His life would be easier if he learned to respect the power elves had and that it was at his disposal. Most elves did not mind using their magic to assist their wizard masters.

"You will not find your wand, wizard. I have removed it while you were out."

Lucius was stunned into silence for the second time that day by an elf. This elf and his unusual behavior was as infuriating as it was intriguing. The elf began to speak again before he could think about it any longer.

"As I was saying, I am Mot. I belong to the master of the house, which must be you if you have entered these rooms."

"If you belong to me, why have you hexed me and stolen my wand? How did I not know about you until now?"

"Your father placed me here a few years before you were born. He warded this room so no one but he could enter. You are the first to enter in more than sixty years. Your father moved the other elves to different quarters after he placed me here. He did not want them to stumble upon my existence.

"My meals are delivered three times a day. I read books that were provided for me. I learn about your culture and your history. I fully expected to die without ever seeing another wizard or elf again."

"If you were his personal servant, why did he lock you away in this room?" Lucius could not help but ask; he wanted to understand his father's motivations.

"The Mistress wanted him to dispose of me. She did not want any reminders of the one who killed Master's first son."

"You are clearly delusional. I am the first and only heir to Abraxas Malfoy."

"No. Spurius Caedmon Malfoy was born 1950 and was killed in 1952. He was the son of Abraxas Flavius Malfoy and Cedrella Aquila Black. Cedrella was Master Malfoy's mistress for a time before she married Septimus Rufus Weasley. The child was born long after your parents were married. Mistress Malfoy came to love the boy as if he were her own. At that time, she was unable to have any herself.

"When Cedrella married Weasley, Master was very angry. He ordered me to punish the boy. Master always appreciated my talent for causing pain. When the Mistress found me with him, he was barely breathing. She tried to kill me. She would not have an evil, out of control elf in her home. Master stopped her and promised he would take care of 'disposing of' me. That is when he put me here. He knew he could not harm me, for he could not trust another elf with his most precious secrets. I controlled the magic binding his toys in the dungeons. The Muggles and the Squibs he tortured for amusement. Disposing of me would mean the magic would fail. He could not spare the energy to handle it himself. By placing me here, it allowed me to continue to supply the magic yet made it seem to Mistress that he had killed me."

Lucius was unsure whether or not to feel sick or impressed by the elf's words and actions. He had always known the he and his father had shared a passion for torture. His father used to tell him stories about it when his mother was away. It was how he had learned to appreciate true torture. Unfortunately, it had been years since he had last played in any way. Not since the Dark Lord's fall to the infant Potter brat. He had not known about the elf control his father had used on the prisoners, though he could see the benefit of it. He could also see how he could use it for the same purposes.

"Did you enjoy helping my father with his toys, elf?"

"Yes, Master Malfoy. I enjoyed it immensely and have missed hearing the screams from the dungeons," Mot answered with a grin.

Lucius smiled for the first time since coming into Mot's quarters. He and Mot were going to get along well, very well indeed.

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right. Calla derived from Greek, "beauty". Spurius means "of illegitimate birth" in Ancient Roman. Flavius means "golden" or "yellow-haired" in Ancient Roman. Aquila is for the constellation and means eagle.

The Begining of the End

Chapter 9 of 11

Agoraphobia – The abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult that is characterized initially by panic or anxiety and finally by avoidance of open or public places. As a result, severe sufferers of agoraphobia may become confined to their homes, experiencing difficulty traveling from this "safe place."

A/N: There is severe torture and graphic rape in this chapter. I am sure everyone has seen the warnings. They still apply.

In case you live under a rock, Harry Potter and associated characters belong to J.K. Rowling. Chapter title is from Year Zero, Nine Inch Nails.

~*~

Harry Potter made his way through the Atrium at the Ministry of Magic. Once he reached the lifts, it was just a short ride to level six where the Department of Magical Transportation was located. It was still very early in the morning, and the office was empty. He leaned against the wall, waiting for the man he hoped could help him.

Several years ago, before he had left the Auror Department, Harry had helped the man with a complicated problem involving the illegal breeding of fire crabs. Harry had been investigating the disappearance of a young wizard child when he'd stumbled upon the man's hidden breeding facility. Harry had promised not to make a report as long as the man gave him all of the animals. He'd promptly taken the creatures to Hagrid, who had agreed to care for them until he could release them somewhere safe.

Harry closed his eyes and tried to relax. All the events of yesterday and very little sleep was making his head spin. About ten minutes later, he heard footsteps coming towards him. He opened an eye. Basil. Just the man he was looking for.

"Good morning, Mr. Potter. Are you waiting for me?" the man asked, his voice carrying a hint of nervousness.

"Good morning, Basil. I was wondering if I might have a few words with you."

A look of panic flashed in the man's eyes, and Harry decided to put him at ease.

"Not to worry, I just need some information."

"Of course, come in and have a seat."

Harry followed him into his office. Even though Basil was the only person who worked in the Portkey office, it was fairly large due to the amount of discarded objects in boxes that were waiting to be turned into Portkeys. Harry took a seat in front of the desk and waited for him to place his belongings in a small closet.

"What can I do for you?" Basil was looking more relaxed.

"As I said, I need some information. I also need to make sure what I am about to tell you remains between us."

Basil nodded that he understood, and Harry grabbed his hand and said, "*Dissimulo*." When Harry felt the burst of magic spread through him and into the man in front of him, he began the story of the two long lost heroes.

To say that Basil was surprised by the sudden resurrection of two of the Light's celebrated heroes was an understatement. He sat in stunned silence after Harry had finished his story. Harry broke the silence.

"I need to know if you can trace this Portkey." Harry held the small silver band out in front of him. "Snape used it to escape. I want to use it to find the person responsible for the disappearance and torture of both of them."

Basil took the ring and went over to a table that had several large maps spread out on top of it. He waved his wand over the band. It began to hover over the table. After casting a few spells at the map, he switched to a different map. Harry looked at the pile. There were probably close to thirty maps lying there. Harry ran his hand through his hair. This was going to take some time.

~*~

Severus was lying in his bed in the Hogwart's infirmary, watching the first light of day through the window. His first sunrise in nearly thirteen years. He had spent most of the night in various stages of sleep or wakefulness. He found that his memories became clearer the more he allowed himself to think about them.

He remembered the day he first woke in that hateful cave where he had spent the last thirteen years. He knew that cave. It was a small cave, disguised as a bell barrow, at the edge of the Malfoy property. It was Lucius' bolt hole, known only to him and Lucius. Lucius had made him the Secret-Keeper for that place more than twenty years ago, shortly after the first fall of the Dark Lord. Neither of them had believed him to be truly gone, and Lucius had felt the need for a safe place in case the Ministry decided that he was lying about being under the Imperius Curse. He had hidden it well; not even his family had known of its existence.

Lucius had come to him one day and asked him to perform the Fidelius Charm. He'd told Severus that he knew that Severus had gone to Dumbledore and turned on the Dark Lord. Lucius told him he would keep his secret, if Severus kept his. Severus had agreed. He had kept the secret, telling no one about the cave's location. Only those present when the spell had been performed knew of its existence.

Lucius had only asked him once to reveal the location. He had acquired a new elf and had wanted the house-elf to be able to access the room. Severus had thought this a little odd since the elf would have been able to come and go using house-elf magic as long as Lucius was present in the cave. Severus deduced that Lucius was using the cave as more than a hide-out. It was well known among the Death Eaters that the only reason Lucius kowtowed to the Dark Lord was so he could indulge in his more sadistic hobbies.

~*~

The elf was not in the room when Severus awoke, and at first, he thought he was alone. He tried to sit up, only to find himself bound to the bed. He struggled but was still too weak from his wounds to put any real effort into it. He tried to turn his head and look around, but his neck was too stiff to move. The skin felt tight and unyielding. The snake bite. The skin and tissue must have healed wrong.

He tried to utilize the little wandless magic he was capable of to release himself from the bindings, but it felt as though something was suppressing his magic. He had a brief moment of panic before mentally calming himself, only to nearly jump out of his skin when something, or someone, touched his leg.

"Professor Snape, are you alright?"

The voice sounded familiar. A student, but which one? She wasn't in his line of vision, so he was unable to determine just who she was. He tried to voice his curiosity, but his tongue felt like it was stuck to the roof of his mouth.

"Professor Snape, it's Hermione Granger. Do you know where we are?"

At least that answered his first question but prompted so many more. How had she gotten in here? Maybe he was wrong. Maybe they were not in the cave on the Malfoy property. If that was the case, where were they, and how did they get here? He needed answers.

"Water," he managed to croak.

"The elf left me with a glass, but I don't think I can reach you to give you any."

As she spoke, a glass straw appeared above Severus and dribbled water into his mouth.

"Oh," she said.

Severus was able to catch most of the water. It was not enough to cure his thirst, but it did help. If he ignored the pain, he was able to move his head enough to see the girl. She looked as bad as he felt. Her bushy hair looked as though it hadn't seen a brush in weeks. She had bright purple bruises along her jaw and over her left eye. She was sitting on a bed next to him, wand arm chained to the bed post. He could see red marks on her wrist where she had obviously been pulling against the cuff in an attempt to remove it.

"Are you hurt?" he croaked again. *Damn, how was he supposed to convey strength if his voice would not cooperate?*

"Nothing that won't heal." *Severus hated how the war had affected the children. The wounds that he could see should not be dismissed so easily by someone her age.*

"Where are we?"

"A cave on Malfoy's property--," she started to say before Severus interrupted her.

"Lucius' bolt hole? But how did you enter? This cave is under the Fidelius Charm."

"The elf showed me a bit of parchment that said, 'Lucius' secret room is a bell barrow in the far northwest corner of his property in Wiltshire, on the edge of Cranborne Chase'."

Severus realized that what she had read was the slip of parchment on which he had written down the location on for the elf all those years ago. It still did not answer how they came to be there together or why.

"I am assuming we are not guests and are instead prisoners of some kind. Do you know if the Dark Lord or Potter won?"

"I am not sure. The elf that comes here to feed me won't speak to me, and the last thing I remember is looking for Harry on the grounds of Hogwarts. After we saw you and Vol... the Dark Lord in the shack, Harry disappeared to the Headmistresses' office. Ron and I went to find him, but he was gone, so we started searching the grounds for him. I got separated from Ron. I was tired and had a few minor injuries. I remember stumbling and then getting hit by a stunner. When I woke, I was in the Shrieking Shack, I think. That elf made me read the location here and then spelled me back to sleep. The next time I woke up, I was here, in this room. I did not even know that the elf belonged to Malfoy. I have not seen Malfoy since we got here."

"How long ago was that?"

"Five or six days ago." She paused for a moment, trying to gather the courage to ask the question that she had been thinking about since she'd woken up in this room. "Professor Snape, do you think Malfoy is going to kill us?"

Yes, he did, but he wasn't sure he wanted to tell her that. He didn't think he could handle a hysterical teenage girl while chained to a bed.

Trying his best not to scare her or snap at her, he said as calmly as he could, "I am not sure, but I don't think he has us hidden here so he can invite us to dinner."

She smiled. Not a full smile but enough that he saw a light dance in her eyes that had been absent since he first woke up. She saw right through him and it seemed to lift her spirits. At least with him awake, she did not feel so lonely. He made the decision to be honest with her.

"Miss Granger, Lucius Malfoy is a sadistic bastard. We are in a place that only the three of us and the elf know about. It is warded just as heavily as Grimmauld Place. I am the secret keeper. No one will find us unless Lucius wants them to. I don't know what his plans are, but judging from our condition and the fact we are both restrained, I would imagine that torture is going to be involved."

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"Treating me like an adult and not lying to me."

"Unfortunately, this war turned you and your friends into adults a long time ago."

"Yes, it did, and since I am an adult, will you call me Hermione."

Severus nodded.

"Professor Snape..."

"Severus. If I am to call you Hermione, you may call me Severus. Besides, I am no longer a professor."

"Severus, I am scared."

"I know. I am as well."

She looked at him and met his eyes looking back at her. He was serious, she could see it.

"But I promise not to let anything happen to you."

As soon as he said it, he wanted to take it back. There was no way he was going to be able to keep that promise. He knew that they were both likely to be killed. The smile she gave him made it worth it though.

~*~

It was several months later when the day came that he could not protect her. He had always taken the brunt of the beatings from Malfoy, mouthing off at him so he would ignore the girl and take his anger out on Severus. The sessions never lasted long. Lucius was usually in and out in less than thirty minutes.

He sometimes wondered why Lucius was holding back. Not that Hermione could tell, but Severus could. Lucius only came every few weeks to check on them. The elf, Mot, came daily to feed Hermione and tend to their wounds.

Lucius had evidently ordered the elf to keep Severus weak as it only fed him every other day. He would loosen the chains long enough for Severus to gulp down a bowl of porridge. The elf never took his eyes off him while he ate.

The first time the elf had come to feed him, Severus had tried to fight it. Severus had ended up with a broken arm and had not been fed for a further three days. By the time he was finally fed, it had been five days since his last meal, and he was incredibly weak. Lucius had not allowed the elf to heal the arm for days to teach him a lesson.

Severus and Hermione spent their time telling each other about their lives. Severus had not opened up to anyone like this since Lily. He quickly realized that Hermione had a thirst for knowledge that rivaled his own. He had always thought she just memorized the books and regurgitated the information back to her teachers. He was surprised to hear of the effort she put into learning about the world she had become a part of.

The day she was taken from him, they were deep in discussion about house-elves, Mot in particular, and did not hear Lucius and Mot enter.

~*~

"I can't believe Malfoy named his elf 'death'. That's just evil," exclaimed Hermione.

"Lucius did not name him. I believe his father, Abraxas, did. Lucius has nothing on Abraxas. Abraxas was very inventive in his torturing of people. Mot was his greatest weapon. Most house-elves have a conscience of some kind. He does not," said Severus, still oblivious to the newcomers.

"Yes, but my father had several more years of practice. I am just beginning to learn the art."

Hermione squealed in surprise as Lucius strolled into view, Mot just behind him. Severus' face grew tight as he schooled his features into a mask of indifference. They hadn't meant for Lucius or Mot to discover how friendly they had become. Severus had a feeling that this knowledge would be used against them. He wasn't wrong.

"Do you recognize this, my pet?" Lucius asked, holding up a vial of purple potion. "You should. You made it. I believe you told me it was one of your best inventions. A potion that would grant total control over the drinker. Just a few drops a month and they will do whatever is asked of them. Brilliant, if you ask me. Did you ever get the chance to test it? No, you wouldn't have, would you? You would not have wanted to subject someone to the torture of it. Such a shame really. I'll tell you what. Why don't we test it now and see just how well it works."

Lucius reached over and pinched the man's nose shut, waiting for his breath to run out. When he finally gasped for breath, Lucius poured the dose down his throat and quickly clamped his mouth shut.

The effect was almost instantaneous. The dark eyes glazed slightly, and his facial muscles began to relax. When Lucius felt that enough time had passed, he ordered Mot to remove the chains. He needed to test it to see if it had worked.

"Sit up."

The dark-haired man did, swinging his long legs to the floor in front of him. Not enough; he really needed to make sure that the toy would obey him completely. Turning to Mot, he said, "Tie the Mudblood to the rack."

Mot quickly complied. Hermione was strung up, with her arms tied at the wrists above her head, her toes barely touching the ground.

"Now, we will see just how well this works. I want you to whip the girl, and I want to see the marks. Do not stop until I tell you to."

Severus looked at Malfoy. He tried to resist, he really did. Hermione looked at him and started to whimper when she saw Severus take the whip. He started to walk towards her, his eyes showing his remorse. He tried to apologize as he walked past her, but the potion would not allow him to.

At the first hit of the whip, Hermione screamed. Inside of his head, Severus screamed along with her. Her screams turned to whimpers after a few minutes. When her legs finally gave out, Lucius ordered him to stop. There was not an inch of flesh that he had not struck. Her back, thighs and calves all had red or bleeding welts across them.

Severus stood there, whip in hand, and watched as the elf untied her and laid her down on her stomach across the bed. A few minutes and several healing potions later, her back was healed. Not even a small scar remained as evidence of the torture he had just inflicted upon the poor girl. Lucius went over to her and Obliviated her. Wiping her mind clear of any memory of what he had just done to her. A small part of Severus wished that the hateful man would Obliviate him as well, but he knew that Lucius would not, if only to torture Severus even more.

Mot arranged the girl on the bed and secured her hands and legs to the posts. Lucius eyed the dark man as he slowly circled him. Since the potion had proven efficacious, Lucius was trying to decide how best to use it.

"On your knees."

Severus fell to the floor, arms to his side.

"I have decided on the best way to get back at you, traitor. A great mind like yours deserves to be wasted. I will control you until I get bored, and then I will kill you. Oh yes, make no mistake, I will be killing you. You see, although this lovely potion of yours forces you to do my bidding, I can see from the look in your eyes that you remain fully aware of what you are doing whilst under its influence. Perfect. You will be forced to remember and relive all of it. I think, in time, it may even break you, though I am not sure how long that will take."

With a nod from Lucius, Mot began to tighten the binds on Hermione's arms and legs until they were stretched painfully to their limits.

"Physical torture, as rewarding as it is, is draining, and though I enjoy it, I think that other forms should be explored. I have recently become interested in psychology. I believe you are familiar with the word, so I won't go into detail on these Muggle beliefs. Some of their theories on how prisoners react to psychological stress are intriguing, and I am going to explore, or in your case, exploit, them for my enjoyment."

Lucius flicked his wand, and the shift that Severus wore disappeared.

"In the few months you have been in my care, I have yet to break either of you. I have never had this much difficulty in breaking someone before. I blame that on being too busy avoiding prison to give the two of you proper attention. That is about to change."

Another flick and Severus' wrists were bound behind his back.

"Seeing how I now have all the time in the world to proceed, I think we will be trying this new approach. It's simple really. While your psychological torment will be remembering, hers will be forgetting. I wonder who will break first."

Another flick and to his horror, Severus found himself getting hard. A silver ring was added to the base of his cock.

"Some say knowledge is power. That may be true. However, knowledge will be your torment and your downfall. The absence of knowledge will be hers. For someone who craves knowledge as she does, I am sure the lack of it will damage her eventually. The power will be mine."

One last flick and his knees were spread open, displaying him to all.

"In the morning, your little companion will be gone, on to her new life in total isolation. You will remain here, in my presence, so that I can control you. We are going to see just how well that control works."

Lucius stood in front of Severus and opened his robes.

"You will pleasure me with your mouth. There will be no teeth and you will not bite down. You will follow my orders, or I will allow the elf to continue to stretch the Mudblood until she rips in half. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

Severus was surprised to hear how frail his voice sounded. He had always been able to control his voice and to use it to instill fear in others.

"Open your mouth."

An order, Severus complied. He was determined Hermione would not be tortured because he had not followed orders. He had created the potion, and though Lucius was

correct that he had never tested it, there was no doubt in his mind that it would work perfectly. He would be at this man's mercy until the potion wore off. Sometimes he hated his brilliance.

As Severus pleased the man before him, Lucius fisted his hands into the dark hair. When Lucius was close to reaching his peak, he began to thrust violently into the mouth before him, not caring that the man was gagging with each thrust. Before he reached his completion, he pulled back from the mouth surrounding him to come all over the man's face.

Severus was disgusted. He moved to wipe his face but was unable to do more than squirm, as his hands were bound.

"You were not told to move."

Severus flinched, anger and hatred expressed on his face. He longed to wipe the spunk from his eyes and the bit that was hanging from his nose.

"You allowed yourself to gag and it decreased my pleasure. That was unacceptable. For that, the girl will be punished. Mot, stretch the girl."

Mot snapped his fingers, and the rope drew tighter on Hermione's limbs. Severus could hear her joints popping as she was slowly pulled from the bed by the bindings. Hermione's screams echoed around the room until she passed out from the pain.

When she was suspended above the bed, Lucius ran his hands across her naked abdomen. He stroked her almost lovingly before he plunged three fingers deep inside her. Removing his fingers, he stalked over to Severus and wiped the come from his face before shoving the same three fingers into Severus' mouth.

"Lick them clean."

And he did. He hated how his body reacted to each command before he could even try to fight them.

"Shall I tell you something, Severus?" Lucius did not wait for a reply. "This is a lesson, not unlike the ones you teach to your students at school. There are two parts to this lesson. First, this lesson is about actions and consequences. You displeased me. That was your action. The punishment of the Mudblood was the consequence. Take note. Every time you disobey me, I shall punish her. The harshness will depend on the amount of disobedience. In time, I expect you to obey me without use of the potion, but we will have to wait and see on that.

"From my studies, I have learned that this is called conditioning. A Russian physician discovered the particulars. I am sure this was not what he had envisioned when he commenced his experiments.

"The second lesson has much to do with the first. You see the Russian physician used dogs as his subjects. That is what the two of you are: my dogs. I am teaching you your place in this lesson. I am teaching you what you are, what you were born to be."

Lucius paused in his speech to push Severus' face to the floor. He positioned himself between Severus' spread legs. Without preparing or lubricating him, he thrust viciously into him. Severus screamed at the sudden intrusion and pain. As Lucius continued to thrust into him, the blood slowly began to lubricate him, and the intense pain died a bit. Severus became aware that Lucius had been asking him a question. One his brain seemed unwilling to process through the pain and humiliation.

"What are you?"

Unable to respond, he heard a whimper escape his throat.

"You are my toy, my pet. You like me using you like this, fucking your arse, being ripped in two. You like being my whore. Don't fight it. You will learn to love this. Trust me."

Those were the last words Severus heard before he slipped into oblivion.

When he awoke the next morning, he was bound to his bed. His body ached all over. The feeling of dried cum on his face and dried blood on his thighs made his stomach lurch. He looked over to where Hermione's bed was to find it and the girl gone.

He struggled desperately against the leather straps that had replaced the chains. He was alone. Hermione had been taken to someplace else. He had sworn he would protect her. How could he do that now? During their first few weeks in this place, they had come to know one another. They had spoken of their fears and of their desires. He had come to care for the girl.

Severus decided the next chance he got he would use his emergency Portkey and escape. Then he would try to find Hermione and rescue her. It was the only way. They both knew that they had been among those declared dead. Lucius had been ecstatic whilst telling them that news about six weeks after they'd come into his possession.

~*~

But Severus did not get the chance to escape for quite some time. The elf watched him closely when he came to care for him. The house-elf's magic was too strong for Severus', and the potion made him unwilling to even attempt an escape.

He later learned what had happened to Hermione. Lucius showed him when he dragged Severus to her flat and forced him to rape her. He then Obliviated the girl and returned Severus back to the room.

When the magic holding him began to fade, many years later, and the potion started to wear off, Severus decided to take his chance. He was able to finally reach the little silver band. He only hoped he would be able to save Hermione as well. After all these years, it was this small piece of hope that saved him.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right.

Dissimulo means keep secret. Thanks to CharmedForce for inventing this spell for me.

Demon Seed

Chapter 10 of 11

Agoraphobia – The abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult that is characterized initially by panic or anxiety and finally by avoidance of open or public places. As a result, severe sufferers of agoraphobia may become confined to their homes, experiencing difficulty traveling from this “safe place.”

A/N: I am sure everyone has seen the warnings. They still apply.

In case you live under a rock, Harry Potter and associated characters belong to J.K. Rowling. Chapter title is from The Slip, Nine Inch Nails.

~*~

Harry was relentlessly pacing the office. It had already been forty minutes, and they hadn't even gone through half of the maps yet. He was tempted to ask if there was anything he could do to help, but the last time he did that, Basil had threatened to hex him.

He turned to pace back to the door when a silvery wolf came barreling towards him. Tonks.

"Harry, meet me at St. Mungo's. No hurry." The silver wolf disappeared.

Harry turned back to see the man bent over yet another map. "Basil, I am going to St. Mungo's. Find me as soon as you know."

Basil did not answer him. Without looking up from the map, he waved his hand in acknowledgement.

~*~

He Apparated to St. Mungo's and quickly made his way to Hermione's ward. He met up with Tonks and the Randalls outside of her door. He greeted them all and was just about to ask what was going on when the door opened and Madam Pomfrey stepped out.

"Oh, Harry. Good, you've arrived just in time," she said as soon as she saw him.

"In time for what? Is Hermione alright?"

"She is fine. She is resting. I have just come to check her for any experimental potions that may have been in her system. We wanted to make sure that nothing would interfere with her treatment. The Healers are going to start rebuilding her memories tomorrow. Harry, if I may, I would like to speak to you in private."

Harry agreed and led her down to the waiting area. Tonks and the Randalls were left outside of Hermione's door, talking quietly.

"Why are you checking for potions? Don't they have someone here that can do that?" Harry asked.

"Severus and I worked together quite frequently on many of the potions he was developing for both healing and for Voldemort. During my examination of him this morning, I found traces of one of the last potions he had developed. It is a nasty little control potion he was supposed to make for Voldemort.

"I called the Healers here and asked them to check over Hermione, but they felt that since I had the most experience with his experiments that I should come and check her. I am happy to give her a clean bill of health. I can detect no traces of any of his experiments in her system."

"Were you able to ask Snape who was responsible for his and Hermione's condition?" Harry asked.

"The potion I found in his system acts like a liquid Imperius. Severus has been under the control potion for a very long time. I imagine he is still trying to make heads or tails of his memories at this moment. He is still only speaking to Albus' portrait and can only manage a few words before he gets too exhausted. Albus has refused to tell us much of what they discuss. I believe Minerva is about ready to threaten him with turpentine.

"The other reason I asked Tonks to send for you was because we performed the paternity and maternity spells on Perdita. Since we were in agreement that Severus and Hermione were her parents, it was a fairly simple charm. The results were exactly what we expected them to be."

"I thought that Snape was being controlled by someone else. Why would this person want Hermione to give birth to a child? We all saw the potions in her flat. It could have been taken care of at any point in time," Harry said.

"My only guess is that they wanted another way to torture Severus. By giving and then taking away one of the only things that man has ever wanted, a family."

Harry did not know what to say to this. How similar his and his ex-professor's lives were. That had been his dream too. He was so happy when it finally came true. He could just imagine how the stern man must have felt to see his dream and then have it taken away.

"Now that I think about it, there were very few people he ever told this to. Albus and I were among a select few he actually trusted to tell about his hopes and dreams. If I had to guess, I would say whoever did this to them was at one time a close friend of his."

Harry was lost in his thoughts for a few moments. Finally, Poppy managed to get his attention again.

"Harry, I ran the charm on Hermione to test the baby she is carrying against Severus, and it does not match."

"What exactly does that mean?"

"Severus is not the father of the baby Hermione is currently carrying."

~*~

Lucius' day was going from bad to worse. His wife was conveniently away, and now he was having trouble finding his elf. He had been calling his irritable little elf for nearly five minutes.

"Mot."

The elf never went this long without coming when he called. Even if he just popped in to say he would be back, he always came. Maybe he was sick. Do house-elves get sick? It was something he never considered before. He knew that when a female gave birth, they were often missing for a few hours. Maybe there was something wrong with one of his toys. No, Mot would definitely come if that was the case.

"Mot."

His mind was wandering. That was never a good sign. It meant he was stressed. He hated being stressed. He would have to make sure to spend some time using Severus' mouth to ease his tension before lunch.

"Mot."

He made his way from his office to the drawing room where Mot maintained his residence even though the rest of the elves were located in the kitchen quarters. Mot claimed it was too crowded in those quarters for him. The staff had doubled since Draco had got married. His Daughter in Law insisted on having two of them to manage the child. It was ridiculous. Any perfectly good nanny elf could watch a small child twenty four hours a day. They did not need time for rest.

"Mot, damn you, elf. I need you," Lucius called as he passed his son's office.

"Father."

Closing his eyes and quietly cursing, he turned back to enter his son's office. He did not have time for this. Seven more years, just seven more years, and he could petition the court for his title of Lord Malfoy and stop taking orders from his son.

His son was sitting at his desk, writing what appeared to be a rather long letter.

"Draco. I am in a hurry. If you don't mind, we can catch up after lunch."

Lucius turned to leave, when his son stopped him, once again.

"Yes, I can see you are extremely busy. It looks to me that you have just spent several weeks in the Canary Islands. Now, I was under the impression that you were inspecting the vineyard and monitoring some of our rental properties. Since neither the properties nor the vineyard are on a volcanic island off the coast of Spain, I would like to know what you were doing there. You did not have permission from the Ministry or me to go on vacation."

Draco said all this without looking up from the papers in front of him.

"I am no longer under Ministry control and do not need their or your permission to go anywhere."

Draco looked up and grinned.

"That, Father, is where you are wrong. You are free to come and go anywhere in the British Isles. You need permission to go anywhere else and will continue to do so for another seven years. Or did you forget that small part of your punishment?"

"When you left, you left with my permission to visit those two places. Imagine my surprise when I find out you have been traipsing across Europe."

Lucius was furious; of course he had forgotten. It was not something that came up that often. He rarely left to go to the continent.

"Fine, I will be sure to notify you in the future if I have any changes to my travel plans. Now if you will excuse me, I really need to find Mot."

Lucius turned to leave. Draco's voice stopped him. He turned back to see his son once again speaking to him without looking up from his work.

"You won't find him. I killed him." Draco paused as he was thinking. "I think it was a little more than two weeks ago."

Draco looked up just in time to see what little color his father had leave his face.

"You what?"

Draco looked directly at his father.

"I. Killed. Him."

Lucius glared at Draco, a murderous look on his face. With a flick of his wand the entire contents of Draco's desk crashed to the floor. Draco stood up and brushed invisible dust from his robes.

"How dare you. Mot was my elf. You had absolutely no right to touch him."

"Father, I am surprised. It is so unlike you to be wrong twice in one, day but you forget, yet again, that I do have the right. I am the current Lord Malfoy. Any and all elves that reside within the Manor properties are under my control.

"That deranged little thing tried to kill my son, your grandson. Fwendy found him trying to strangle Scorpius and informed me, but not before he managed to kill two other elves. I did what any parent would have done in my situation."

Lucius raised his wand to curse his son. The word was at the tip of his tongue when Fwendy popped into the room and silently called away his wand. Lucius' anger only seemed to multiply. He grabbed the desk and physically threw it towards his son and his elf.

"He was my elf. Mine to deal with. You should have informed me right away. Mot monitored several things that could not be left alone for this long."

Lucius was shouting, his normally immaculate hair had escaped its clasp and fell onto his face, and repressed rage had caused his eyes to darken considerably.

"Had I known you would be this upset, I would have informed you earlier. Have you finally found something that is just as evil as you are? Or are you afraid whatever little secrets you had the elf protecting will slowly start to reveal themselves?" Draco said calmly, trying not to show that his father's anger was affecting him.

"I don't know what you are talking about," Lucius replied, silently telling himself to calm down before he gave anything away.

"Come now, there is no reason to lie to me. I know you are up to something, and I intend to find out what it is. Have you not found it strange that we are the only two in residence?"

Lucius looked up at this. Had his son found out about his extracurricular activities?

"Mother is somewhere where even you cannot find her. I sent my wife and son to her parents. I did not want them exposed to you any longer. I know you are up to something, Lucius. I am just not sure what exactly it is yet. I also know that Mother does not have some unknown illness. I recognize the symptoms of poison. I was very good at Potions.

"I also know that you were not. So I assume you must have an accomplice of some kind. I thought, at first, it was Mot, since he would have been able to remove the Malfoy Family Dark Potions book from my office. But he would not have had the ability to make those potions. In fact, the only person I could think of that had even heard of the book, let alone been capable of brewing the Potions contained within it, was Severus, but he is dead, which leaves me at a loss as you are far too paranoid to allow someone else to brew them. So tell me, am I wrong to suspect you of trying to poison my mother?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about. I would never harm her or you. What reason would I have for doing such a thing?"

"Fine, I will let it go, for now. But I will be watching you. Until I am satisfied that you are not causing harm to anyone, you are restricted to the grounds."

"You cannot do that. I am your father..." Lucius stopped speaking as Draco held up a hand. Glaring at his father, he asked, "What did you do?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about? What is wrong?" Lucius replied.

"Harry Potter and a team of Aurors have just come through the gates. I ask you again, what did you do?"

~*~

Harry was just about to leave St. Mungo's and head back to the Ministry to see if Basil had found the point of origin for the Portkey they'd taken from Professor Snape's body when he saw the man running through the hall towards him.

"Mr. Potter, I am glad I found you. I have the information you requested."

Harry looked around and saw that Tonks was watching the conversation between the two of them. He led Basil down the hall so they could speak in private.

"What did you find?"

"The Portkey came from a property in Wiltshire."

"The Malfoys?"

"Yes, though it did not come from the Manor. It originated from somewhere near the forest. I am not familiar with the Malfoy property so I am unsure if this is one of the tenanted farms or something else. I cannot detect any buildings in that area."

"Thank you. Do you have the coordinates for me?"

Basil handed Harry a piece of parchment and said his goodbyes. Harry turned and saw that Tonks was still watching him. From the look on her face, he knew he was not going to get out of there without explaining the last two conversations to her. He also knew he was going to need her help. He did not want to try and take down the Malfoys on his own. He hoped that they would not be involved. He had come to like Draco in the last couple of years.

"What was that all about, Harry?"

She had to know who the man was. She worked at the Ministry.

"Does it have something to do with Hermione?"

"It may. We probably should find someplace else to talk."

Harry led the way down the hall to the family waiting room and cast a few privacy spells.

"How many Aurors do you have on staff that can be trusted to keep their mouths closed?"

Tonks looked at him for a moment before answering.

"Ten. If I went to Kingsley, I could probably get another six or seven. Why?"

"Last night when Minerva and I returned to Hogwarts, we were summoned to the hospital wing. Hagrid had found a man outside of the gates and taken him to Poppy. He was badly beaten, malnourished and had been violently raped.

"From what little he told us, or rather, what he told Albus' portrait, we came to the conclusion that the man and Hermione had been held by the same people. Somehow the magic that had been binding him began to fail a few weeks ago and he'd managed to chew through his bindings and use an emergency Portkey he had. I asked Basil to trace it this morning. These coordinates show where he Portkeyed from," Harry said, holding up the parchment he had been given.

"Who was it? Where are we going?"

"Tonks, this has to be kept absolutely secret. I do not want to put anyone at risk."

She nodded that she understood.

"It was Professor Snape. He came from Malfoy Manor."

The shock that Tonks felt showed on her face.

"Let's get to the Ministry and get a team together. If they are involved, we are going to need everyone I can get."

The two of them quickly made their way to the Floo and on to the Ministry.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right. Fwendy was a nickname given to author J.M. Barrie by a young friend, possibly the beginnings of the name Wendy. Fwendy has been Draco's elf since he was born and is very loyal to him.

Lights in the Sky

Chapter 11 of 11

Agoraphobia – The abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult that is characterized initially by panic or anxiety and finally by avoidance of open or public places. As a result, severe sufferers of agoraphobia may become confined to their homes, experiencing difficulty traveling from this "safe place."

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~*~

Draco looked out his windows and saw that Harry and his cousin were heading towards the door along with about twenty other Aurors. He turned to ask his father again what he had done and noticed the man was gone.

"Damn."

He left his office and headed to the front doors, arriving just in time to see Fwendy answering the door.

"Fwendy, I will handle this," Draco said as he came up behind her. She nodded and disappeared.

"Potter. Nymphadora. When I told you to stop by anytime for lunch, I didn't think you would bring the whole Aurory with you. What do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"Malfoy, we are here to place you and your family under arrest."

"You can't possibly be serious, Potter. Arrest? For what?"

Draco knew that whatever reason they were here for had to do with his father. He was surprised that the man who had become his friend would come and arrest him.

"Suspicion of Death Eater activity."

"Come now, Harry, you cannot arrest someone for a suspicion. I thought we had moved past the idea that I was a willing Death Eater."

"Draco, look, I am sorry, but we have compelling evidence. The laws that were passed after the war allow us to hold all residents of this property until such time that our investigation is complete."

"What do you think I am doing, training Scorpius to be a junior Death Eater? Torturing Muggles for sport? Maybe, you should reconsider having your son come over if you think that is what is going on in this house," Draco said with a cold tone to his voice.

"Draco..."

"Don't, just don't. I have tried so hard to erase Death Eater from my name, and here you are making ridiculous accusations. You know as well as I do that I have nothing to do with anything remotely close to Death Eater activity."

Draco was furious. He had thought that they had moved past their old grudges and finally became real friends. For Harry to come to his home and accuse him of this hurt.

Harry didn't say anything. He stood there quietly, looking into Draco's eyes. He didn't know what to say to him to ease the hurt he saw the man desperately trying to mask.

"Fine, at least tell me what it is you think my family and I have done."

"There was a Portkey activated from this property last night. The person told us he escaped from being held and tortured since the end of the war."

"The end of the war."

Draco was stunned. It could only be his father. He knew what the man was capable of, but he still held out hope that he had been reformed.

"Lucius. I suspected something was going on, but I never would have guessed he had someone held here. My father has been acting suspicious lately."

"What do you mean?"

"I think he is trying to kill my mother, though I have no idea why he would do it. Not to mention his little unauthorized side trip through Europe and some disappearing funds I have been trying to find."

"Is this why you sent her and my mum away?" Tonks asked. Draco nodded and gestured for them to follow him down to his office.

"She was displaying some symptoms of poisons known only to the Malfoy family. It would have taken a master to brew the poisons, so I wasn't completely sure. I was just finishing up a letter to Harry before you arrived. I was going to send it off today." He looked at Harry and handed him the letter he had been drafting when his father came in before continuing, "I wanted you to come over and look through the things I have found and give me your opinion."

He quickly read through the letter, guilt rising in his chest. He should have trusted his friend more. He should have been better composed when he arrived at the Manor. He knew Draco would not appreciate him showing up with Aurors and searching his home.

"And then there was his elf. Evil thing was always lurking around and then would disappear for hours at a time while my father was away on business. He wouldn't come when I called and would not tell me where he had been."

"A few weeks ago, I think the thing finally lost its mind, and it tried to strangle Scorpius. I killed it and sent my family off. I knew then that they were not safe and that my father was not as reformed as he had claimed."

When they reached the office, Draco had forgotten his father's temper tantrum. Harry and Tonks were shocked to see the mess in Draco's office. Harry, sensing that the three of them needed some time to discuss a few things, sent the other Aurors off to search the Manor for Lucius Malfoy.

"Draco, what happened?" Harry asked.

"Father and I, well, he is not too happy with me. He made this mess when I informed him that I killed his elf. I believe he was going to kill me or at the very least, curse me, but my elf stopped him. When I confronted him about my suspicions with regard to Mother, he seemed not to care. He was more concerned about not being informed about the elf. I am certain he was just worried that now the elf was gone, his secrets would start to appear."

"Now you show up and tell me that someone has been held here and tortured. It could only have been him that did it."

"Where is your father now?"

"He's here somewhere. I have restricted him to the grounds. The wards won't allow him to leave."

"You restricted him to the grounds. I would have loved to see the look on his face when you did that," Harry said and laughed. Draco struggled to hide the small smile on his face as he tried not to laugh. Tonks looked at the two unlikely friends and smiled. It was nice to see that they'd grown up and realized life was not about childhood rivalries.

"When did you say you killed that elf?" Harry asked, gathering his composure.

"Roughly two weeks ago," he replied.

"This elf, what did you say his name was?" Tonks asked, making notes in a small book.

"I didn't. It was Mot."

"Yes, Mot. Would your father have left him in control of the magic binding of a prisoner if he had one?"

"Of course he would. He would not sully himself with such a mundane task. It is beneath a Malfoy to do something so, so menial."

Harry rolled his eyes and looked at Tonks. From the look she was giving him, he knew that she was thinking what he was.

"So when Mot died, what happened to any of the menial tasks he was handling by magic? Would another elf step in?"

"Usually yes. However, Lucius never trusted the other elves. If he was hiding something, he would have made sure that whatever it was stayed hidden. He would have set up a location under a Fidelius Charm. The other elves would not be able to take control if they were unable to find the location. Something like binding a person, cleaning, food service and other simple charms would fail. He would then need to go and replace those with his own or find another elf to do it. Since he is no longer in charge of the Malfoy properties, that latter would have been difficult for him. The elves are loyal first to the Lord of the Manor. They would be unable to hide anything from me for long."

"I am still not sure how he managed to keep Mot under his control. It should have reverted to me when the Ministry gave me title."

Harry thought about all this for a few minutes. A small part of him had decided that Draco was telling the truth and probably knew nothing about Snape or Hermione. He still had some doubts though. If Lucius had kept Snape here, he would have had to put him somewhere.

"The Portkey we traced came from the back of your property, near the forest. Are there any buildings or shelters he could have been using to hide this person in near there? Maybe a building was there and then destroyed at some time?"

"Nothing that I have ever seen. I heard him and the Dark Lord refer to the toys my grandfather used to keep. He used the dungeons for them. The dungeons haven't been used since he died. The Dark Lord preferred to keep his prisoners close by. That's why he chose the rooms below the drawing room. Other than that, there is a cottage on the other side of the gardens that is vacant and the stables. There have been no other buildings on the property since I was born."

Tonks knew where Harry was going with this. He was hoping that Draco would remember an area where there had once been a structure, so they could begin to search for the place where Snape was held. She looked at Harry, a thought crossing her mind.

"Harry, it is possible that it has been under the Fidelius since before Draco was born. There was a war going on then as well. If he needed to hide it, it would have been prudent to have it protected a long time ago."

"But he would still need access to his Secret Keeper. How else would he have been able to take anyone there with him?"

Draco was the one to answer.

"If my Father had a place under Fidelius, the only person he would have trusted to be his Secret Keeper is dead and has been since the war."

"Would he have made Mot the new Secret Keeper?" asked Harry. "That could explain why he was so upset when the elf died."

"Potter, I will forgive you this time for suggesting something as idiotic as a Malfoy using an elf for a Secret Keeper because I am familiar with how you grew up," said Draco.

"If he had a place within the grounds, under Fidelius, could he hide there?" Tonks asked, interrupting the verbal fight before it could begin.

"Knowing my father, that would have been the purpose for such a place. He would make sure it was safe and well stocked. He always had several escape plans in case things went south, and since I have him restricted to the grounds, that is where he is most likely at."

Harry knew that meant they could quite possibly search the grounds from now until the end of time and never find a trace of the man. They were so close. He hated to think he might never be able to bring the man to justice for what he had done to Hermione and Snape. As much as he did not want to admit it, the man did deserve better. He needed to find Lucius and prove that he was evil. He needed to do this for Hermione.

"Harry, I know that, under the law, you don't have to tell me what suspicions you have, but it may help if I knew what you were looking for."

Harry thought this over. He could let Draco in on a few of the details without giving away too much.

"Very well. I will tell you a bit of what we know. I will not tell you names. We need to protect the victims until we can either find your father or another way to protect them."

Draco nodded. He understood. This was Auror Potter talking to him, not his friend Harry.

"Yesterday, I came across a woman long thought dead. She was being magically kept in a flat and had no contact with the outside world, either magical or Muggle. She believed that Voldemort had won the war. She had also been severely abused and raped both physically and psychologically. We managed to get her to St. Mungo's where she is undergoing treatment."

"Her road to recovery will be long, if she recovers at all. Her mind has been messed with for so long, the Healers are unsure just what she will be like when they are through."

"At first we had no leads as to who could have done this to her, and then last night a man was found outside the gates of Hogwarts. He was also very badly abused and neglected. He was being controlled with a combination of potions, Imperius and magic."

"He somehow managed to activate an emergency Portkey he had on him to escape. When I had the Portkey traced, its location was revealed to be this property."

Draco walked through the events in his head. Something was nagging him. He knew something, he just couldn't figure out what it was at the moment. He walked to where the contents of his desk lay on the floor. Staring at the papers, he saw it. He bent down and picked up a few. No, his father couldn't be that sick. This was just a place he keeps his current mistress. He shook his head to clear his thoughts.

He looked at the paper in front of him and back to Harry. He had to say, something but if he did, he would be condemning his father. Deep down he wanted to believe his father had reformed.

"Where did you say this flat was?" His voice sounded weak.

"Why?" Harry asked, looking from Draco to the paper he was holding.

Draco looked at Harry. "Was it in Hackney?"

"Yes."

Draco closed his eyes and took a moment to recover his composure. When the Lord Malfoy mask was firmly in place, he opened his eyes.

"Some of the things I have discovered about Lucius in the last few weeks is that he is very good at covering his tracks. He has been taking money and valuables from the family vaults for a few years. He was also siphoning money from certain business accounts into one in his own name. His Apothecary bill has been unusually high for a man with minimal brewing skills. He purchases products several times a year from a Muggle place called 'The Pleasure Palace' and several department stores."

"I also managed to find references to lease payments on a flat in Hackney," he said as he handed the slip of parchment to Harry. "I thought little of it at first. Lucius has been known to have the occasional mistress or two. I assumed the flat was where he would meet with her and the purchases were for whatever the two of them got up to when they were alone. I never imagined... I never thought he could be this..." Draco stopped. He really didn't want to say the word he was thinking. He was afraid if he said it out loud it would make it true. But not saying it didn't make it any less true. His father was evil, and he had been fooling them all for years.

Harry took the paper and glanced at the address. It was for Hermione's flat. This was all the proof they needed. Tonks was looking at the paper over his shoulder. She was thinking about something Draco had said earlier. Something about the Secret Keeper.

"Draco, you mentioned that the only person who your father would have used as a Secret Keeper was dead." Draco nodded. Harry looked confused, as if he wasn't sure where Tonks was going with this.

"Who would your father have trusted to keep his secrets?"

"The only person he ever trusted enough was Severus Snape. I think he probably knew all along that Snape was not as loyal as he claimed. He always told me that if anything happened to him, I was to go to Snape and he would protect me.

"He tried, you know," he said as he looked at Harry and Tonks. "He came to us Slytherins at the start of every year with Professor McGonagall and told us how the school could protect us from family pressures, and if we ever felt the need, we could go to either him or McGonagall for help. I wish I would have listened to him. When I killed... tried to kill Dumbledore, maybe things would have been different.

"It was tough being in Slytherin. You never knew who you could trust. Who was for the Dark Lord, and who was against him among the students. Even our head of house. There were so many rumors about his loyalties; it was hard to know what to believe. The few who were brave enough to turn on their families didn't go to Professor Snape. My wife and her sister both went to McGonagall for guidance after our fifth year. Blaise did as well.

"Now it is too late. He is dead, and I never got the chance to..." Draco trailed off, clearly distressed by not trusting enough in his old head of house.

By the time he finished speaking, Harry and Tonks were looking at each other. It was clear to them both that Draco had no idea of his father's actions. They were all quiet for a few minutes, each lost in their own thoughts.

Harry was thinking about what Draco had told them about Lucius. If he was truly restricted to the grounds, then the only way to find him was to ask Snape for help. But would he even be able to help them. He needed to speak to McGonagall, and he needed to tell Draco the truth about Snape.

"Draco, you are sure your father cannot leave the grounds?"

Draco nodded, "He can only leave now if I remove the wards or take him off the grounds with me."

"I need to use your Floo. I think there may be a way to find his Secret Kept location."

Draco looked at him for a moment and then motioned him towards the fireplace. While Harry was making his call, Draco went over to Tonks.

"Surely, after all these years, he does realize there is no way to bring someone back from the dead."

"Oh, he knows that. But the person he is hoping will help us did not die. He was only missing," Tonks replied.

~*~

A/N: My thanks to Sempra for reading through this, time and time again, until I got it all right.

My apologies for taking so long to get this out. Real life caught up to me. I have been working on making this chapter right for several weeks. I hope you like it.