Storyid: 1327142
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Name: Blast From the Past
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Chapter 1 to 29

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Chapter: 1

1976
"I can't believe you are still letting him get to you, Prongs. Honestly, after six years, you should be able to ignore Malfoy no matter what."
"If only it were that easy, Padfoot. But you weren't there." James' brow furrowed in anger at the memory of his latest Malfoy confrontation.
"What could he have done to provoke you so much? I thought you'd been 'tamed' by Lily. At least enough to avoid a month of detention AND losing house points."
"That's my weakness. That Malfoy git was saying things about Lily that, well, any man would have done the same thing to protect the reputation of his future bride."
"Future bride?" Moony cut in. "Since when are you engaged?"
"We're not, but I think we will be one day," James replied. He got that look in his eyes again, the twinkle that told his closest friends he was thinking about Lily Evans and how happy she made him. Shaking his head to bring himself back to reality, he looked at the clock. "As for right now, if I don't get to detention, McGonagall will skin me."
"Have fun with Lucius!" Moony teased. James simply rolled his eyes and left the common room, waving goodbye to the Fat Lady in the portrait.
As he approached Professor McGonagall's office, he became aware of footsteps behind him. James thought to himself that he would have been perfectly happy to serve a months detention alone if only he could have gotten one or two good hexes out before the impromptu wizard's duel between he and Lucius had been interrupted. He turned to face Malfoy, steeling himself for the familiar sneer, and was startled to see Professor Dumbledore there instead.
Professor Dumbledore smiled in greeting, "Mr. Potter."
"Yes sir," James answered with a smile for the kind headmaster. Albus Dumbledore had offered nothing but kindness since James' first year, despite the number of rules that James and his Marauding friends had broken. Right now, thought, James had to wonder what was going on.
"There's been a slight delay. Professor McGonagall will be a bit late and I offered to greet you and Mr. Malfoy in her absence. It seems that she's decided..ah, Mr. Malfoy, nice of you to join us. Cutting it a bit close, weren't you?"
The blond scowled at Dumbledore and then at James. "I'm on time, that's enough." He leaned against the wall casually, expressing in his body language that he felt his participation in this

detention was far beneath him. "I believe you were about to give us a message from McGonagall?" he drawled.
"Professor McGonagall has decided that the two of you should begin your detention with an extra assignment. Seeing as how you are well ahead of your peers in your respective focus classes, she would like you to work together and share that knowledge."
James groaned inwardly. Detention with Malfoy would be bad enough, but to actually have to converse with him and work together? That was just asking too much. Glancing at Malfoy, the sneer on his face told James that he was none too happy about this turn of events, either. Taking a deep breath, he looked back at Professor Dumbledore with a silent plea for escape in his eyes.
"What type of assignment?" he asked.
Dumbledore smiled at the young man, knowing full well that he was dreading this answer with every ounce of his being. Never has Dumbledore seen such a pair of polar opposites as James Potter and Lucius Malfoy, nor did he expect to find such a pair again. It was precisely these differences that prompted him and Minerva to develop this particular punishment. Despite young Mr. Malfoy's background, they hoped that he could be positively influenced if provided with enough of a good example. Thought their efforts had not worked during his first six years at Hogwarts, neither professor was quite prepared to give up on the boy just yet. Who better to influence him than James Potter, the last heir in the Gryffindor bloodline, the young man who had already found himself fighting on the side of good when faced with a small group of dark wizards in his fifth year. James was a powerful force to be reckoned with and Dumbledore sincerely hoped something good would come of this assignment.
"Well, Mr. Potter," Dumbledore answered, "since you have excelled in Defense Against the Dark Arts and Divination, and you, Mr. Malfoy, have shown extreme cunning in both Potions and Charms, Professor McGonagall and I would like to see if you can create a divinatory potion with a corresponding Dark Arts charm. The purpose would be to learn of major future events connected with the Dark Arts and then use the charm and potion to ensure the best possible outcome."
"Excuse me sir," Malfoy was using his best manner now, knowing full well how to turn on the charm and appear the perfect gentleman. "It sounds as if you are saying you want Potter and I to rid the world of all future negativity. Isn't that quite a tall order for a couple of students?"
"Not at all, Mr. Malfoy. I simply asked you to work on this. If you can save the world with it, so much the better. It need not be that complicated for the detention requirements, however. I do suggest you both get started on it. You'll be working on this for 3 hours every night this week. Should you be late or absent, you'll lose your house an additional 50 point."
"Yes sir" the boys said almost in uni

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Chapter: 2

1997
"Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy," Snape's voice bellowed and echoed in the potions classroom. "I believe I have made it clear on numerous occasions that I will not tolerate such disruptions in my class.

50 points from each house and you'll both be serving detention with me at promptly 8:00 this evening."
Harry closed his eyes and silently counted to 10, willing himself to stay silent so that Snape couldn't find anything else to punish him for. He still couldn't understand why Snape continue to harass him in class. Within a few weeks after Harry joined the Order of the Pheonix in fifth year, Snape had begun to treat him as an equal. Well, only during the secret meetings of the Order. They'd been having a lot of meetings lately, as there was strong suspicion that Voldemort was going to strike soon. The entire wizarding world had finally accepted the fact that Voldemort was still alive and had been waiting with much anticipation for his next attack. Oddly, there had been only one minor attack each year, almost like clockwork. The next attack was expected to be not against Harry, not against Hogwarts, not even against the Ministry, but against the entire known world, Muggle and Wizard alike. The Order was preparing an army. An army to fight an all out war against Voldemort - to hopefully fend off the strain and tragedy of living like that had 20-some years ago before Voldemort lost power after attempting to kill young Harry Potter.
Harry was snapped to attention by Malfoy's demeaning whisper. "You might want to wake up, Potter. If you dare to attract any more attention over here before this class is over, I'll spend a month making sure you regret it." Harry opened his eyes and glanced sideways at Malfoy. He had to admit that he should be making the most out of the unfortunate pairing with the clever Slytherin. Harry was lousy at Potions, not as bad as Neville Longbottom, mind you, but lousy nonetheless. Malfoy, on the other hand, was not only clever in Potions, but was also Snape's pet student. If Harry played his cards right, he could learn a little something useful and bring up his standing in the Potion Master's eyes.
Quickly, he turned his attention back to the bat's wings that needed to be sliced thinly. He had paid enough attention before Malfoy's insults brought them detention to know that the bat's wings would be useless if not sliced thinly enough and added at just the right moment before the potion turned blue.
Draco Malfoy was pleased to see that his threat had worked. He had to admire Potter's skills with a knife, even if the Gryffindor knew next to nothing about the full on process of brewing the night vision potion. Malfoy, like many other seventh year students, had picked up on the fact that many of their potions were being tested and kept by Professor Snape. It was widely suspected that Snape was storing these advanced potions for a very specific reason, though the details of that reason varied by the speaker.
"All right, if everyone's potion is ready." Snape paused and took a look around the dungeon to verify that the potions were in fact ready. He was pleased to see that Miss Granger had finally succeeded in keeping Longbottom out of trouble for this session. "We'll test these out now. Please fill a small vial from your cauldron and wait until I tell you to drink." Snape wandered around the classroom, watching the nervous anticipation on the faces of many of his students. He knew that each potion was exactly right, his expertise allowed him to be certain of that simply by the color, the thickness and the smell of it. In spite of his harsh façade, Snape would never allow a student to test a potion that would cause them any harm. He found it much easier to command attention if he allowed the students to fear the unknown. He also believed it would better prepare them for the real world.
After verifying that all the students were prepared, Snape raised his wand and muttered "Tenebae Totalus," one of the few simple charms he would perform, considering his dislike for most wandwork. Every torch and candle in the room went out simultaneously, plunging the dungeon

room into complete and total darkness. "Drink your potions now."
Draco Malfoy put the small vial up to his lips and tossed back the thick blue potion as if it were a stiff drink. He'd begun to think he needed a stiff drink after the way he found himself admiring Potter's hands a few moments ago. It started with the way he handled his knife, but quickly evolved into the way he *handled* his knife. Draco could admit that Potter wasn't a bad looking bloke, and he had no qualms about either gender when regarding sexual relations, but Potter was in a field of his own. Potter was his mortal enemy, the bane of his existence, the opposite of all he believed in, and too damned innocent to be any fun in bed anyway. Nevertheless, once Draco opened his eyes and began adjusting to night vision, he let his gaze wander around the room, taking in all the students, the materials and his professor, subconsciously avoiding one specific Gryffindor.
Harry Potter had the distinct impression that Malfoy was distracted by something. Shrugging his shoulders, he downed his vial of potion, grimacing against the chalky taste, and carefully felt to set the vial down on the table. He closed his eyes and took a couple of deep breaths, allowing the potion to sink in. When he opened them, to his utter amazement, he could see everything in the room. It wasn't quite like daytime, rather everything had a slightly blue-grey tint and certain things seemed to be glowing. Hermione and Neville looked like a couple of floating heads across the room from him, the white collars that stuck up from their robes were glowing, casting an odd light on their faces. Looking over at Ron, Harry smiled to himself when he saw that the boy's red hair seemed to be on fire - so fitting for someone with a temper like his. Finally, he turned his head to look at Malfoy, and couldn't help the gasp that escaped his lips. Malfoy .unbelievable! His silver blond hair appeared truly silver, his pale skin looked like porcelain and, when Harry finally caught a side view of those grey eyes, they appeared to be sparkling like diamonds.
Harry shook his head in disbelief. He hadn't begun to show any "relationship" interests until the end of sixth year (with the exception of Cho, of course). After Cho, and the guilt he felt over Cedric's death, Harry had determined that any type of "relationship" wasn't a good idea for him. Anyone he dated would automatically be in danger because of Voldemort's vendetta against him. Harry wasn't willing to put anyone else in that position. Finally, toward the end of last year, he began to acknowledge that he was no longer immune to the maturing students he shared his classes with. Parvati was very nice looking. Seamus could be downright sexy when he tried. Even Blaise, Slytherin or not, was pleasant to look at. Truth be told, there were a great number of people in seventh year alone that Harry found attractive, or interesting, or engaging, or . whatever. But there were three people, exactly three people in his year that Harry knew he would never see in that light. Ron - because he was Harry's best friend and Harry had spent so much time with Ron's family that they felt like brothers. Hermione - because she was Harry's other best friend and the sister he never had. And finally - Malfoy - because he was an arrogant, evil, insensitive, prat who knew nothing but how to behave like his bastardly, insufferable git of a father. Malfoy was his enemy. And his enemy looked rather hot through night vis

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Chapter: 3

Harry had spent the better part of his afternoon sitting in a dim corner of the Gryffindor common room. He stared blankly past his Magical History book for an hour or so, then put it away so he could concentrate on looking directly at the Care of Magical Creatures assignment without actually seeing it. To the casual observer in the room, it looked as though he were diligently working on his homework. To the ever watchful eyes of his close friend Hermione, it was obvious that he was in a completely different world, and by the look of despair in his green eyes, it didn't look like a very happy world at that.

Hermione got up and slowly walked up to the quiet table, glad for once that most of her housemates weren't big on homework. They were mostly running around in various parts of the castle looking for trouble, which would give her a little more privacy to talk to Harry. She had a feeling this talk was going to warrant some privacy. No one could look that upset about things that were okay to talk about in public. Harry didn't even blink as Hermione slid into a chair next to him. He did, however, jump about two and a half feet when she gently placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Geeaarrdfi, don't do that, are you trying to kill me or something?"

"Yes, Harry, I've been your friend for six years and helped you through a million conflicts just so that I could slowly kill you by touching your shoulder when you least expect it."

Harry looked at her in confusion. She sounded so serious. The sarcasm was there, but just barely. He pondered a moment, then finally decided that she was indeed joking. "I just meant, you startled me."

"I've gathered as much, but it's always a bit startling when you're suddenly and unexpectedly brought back to earth from . well from wherever you were."

"I've been right here, I'm doing my homework. I thought you'd've been glad of that."

"I would have, if you actually had been. Harry, I'm not stupid."

Harry wondered why she would even bother with such a statement. As Head Girl, Hermione was as far from stupid as one could get. She knew she was highly intelligent and very crafty. Harry knew that she was also rather modest. She still maintained what she'd said to him in their first year, that her skills were all books and cleverness. She still referred to him as a great wizard. Even he wouldn't let himself think about that again. Not now. He looked up at her, his emerald eyes cloudy with thoughts he wouldn't finish.

"Harry, you've got to talk about it sometime."

"Why?"

"Well, because it's just, you just need to. You shouldn't keep such things bottled up inside of you. It's not good for you. You're wearing down, you hardly eat, you look like you haven't slept in months and you've always got such a pained expression in your eyes. I worry about you Harry. Ron's worried about you, too. Even the teachers are concerned. We've all noticed that you' you're just not acting yourself since the beginning of term. Did something happen at the Dursley's?"

Hermione took a deep breath, having sped up her speech to get it all out before she lost her nerve. She and Ron had been speculating that something more horrid than usual must have happened over the summer while Harry was with his Aunt and Uncle. They'd tried to approach Harry a couple of times, but never asked directly because they were concerned that it might be SO bad that it would be worse to ask than to wait until he felt like talking. She only asked tonight because it was becoming obvious after two months that Harry was never going to just 'feel' like talking.

Harry felt a small tug at the left corner of his mouth. He recognized it as the beginnings of a

smile. He couldn't remember Hermione being nervous just talking since she finally took the initiative to tell Ron how she felt about him. That thought took the possibility of smiling far from Harry's mind. Early sixth year - before the usual tragedies, during one of those moments when they had all thought life could be good, Ron and Hermione giggling and blushing with their newfound romance, it was enough to drive anyone mad. Harry didn't realize he was so close to tears until he felt them splashing on his arm.
Hermione sat in silent shock. She'd seen Harry cry before. He'd cried in relief when Ginny was finally safe at the end of second year. He'd cried in sorrow when Cedric was killed in their fourth year. He'd cried in frustration when it looked like Ron wouldn't make it to the end of their fifth year. What shocked her is that she'd never seen him cry like a statue. After a tiny twitch at the corner of his mouth, no other muscles had moved. The anguish turned his eyes into identical swirling green tornadoes, the tears followed their silent paths down his cheeks, but there was no sound, no sobbing, nothing.
"Harry?" She asked gently. "Would you like to go outside and talk about this?"
Harry snapped out of his daze (barely realizing that he'd been dazing a lot the last few weeks) and looked at Hermione as though she had a hippogriff on her head. "No." He got up and headed directly to the portrait hole, not looking back once. Hermione didn't know what to do. She felt that Harry obviously wanted to be alone, but her stronger urges told her to follow him anyway. Not being one to question those strong urges of hers, she got up and promptly followed Harry through the portrait hole, trailing behind him all the way to his favorite hiding spot behind the castle.
She stood in the shadows, watching, wondering, what could possibly have upset Harry so much that he would withdraw into this self-inflicted torture? Harry sat silently, tears still streaming down his face and waiting, wondering when Hermione would get tired of standing in the shadows.
After at least a quarter of an hour had past, he finally opened his mouth and spoke. "You may as well come over and sit down, since you refuse to go back into the castle."
Hermione gasped, then collected herself and stepped out of her hiding place and walked over to join Harry on the ground. "How did you know I was there? I know you couldn't have seen me from here."
"I didn't need to."
"What do you mean? Harry, please, for Merlin's sake, talk to me?"
"Not that it's of any importance, , something did happen over the summer. Something a little strange." He trailed off, knowing this wasn't the news Hermione wanted him to share, but hoping that revealing this secret would at least quench her curiosity for a while. "I, er, that is, I can see things."
"Like?" Hermione knew there was more to it, she just couldn't put her finger on it.
"Like things around me. Like dreams when I'm awake. I know things that ordinary senses wouldn't tell me."
"Harry!" she cried as dawning fell over her. "You're a seer?"
"I suppose. But only randomly and never anything important. I'd better get going though. I have that detention with Snape." Harry sincerely hoped his friend wasn't going to make a big deal out of it. He had the distinct feeling that if Dumbledore were to find out about this, he would want Harry to train this new sense in case it could be useful in the ongoing war against Voldemort. Harry couldn't see where anything about it would be useful. If he were to see an event, well, he

probably wouldn't be able to prevent it and then it would be worse than if he hadn't known. He didn't want to think about any more loss, any more of the people he loved getting hurt. He knew he couldn't stand it if something bad happened to one of his friends and he'd known in advance. If only his were the side with the power and protection. If o

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Chapter: 4

A quick note to those who have reviewed this for me - this is my VERY FIRST fanfic and I'm SOOOOOOO glad to know that you are enjoying it! I hope you like this chapter. The next few chapters may come in a little slower (because I have jury duty this week and therefore not as much time in front of a computer) but I promise to try not to take toooo long.
Thank you sooo much!
/blah blah blah/ = parseltoungue ' blah blah blah' = thoughts
Harry walked into the Potions classroom, preparing himself for the worst. He found that Snape and Malfoy were already there, but presumably hadn't been for long.
"Potter," Snape sneered. "As I was just explaining to Mr. Malfoy, the two of you will be spending your detention cleaning up the classroom and organizing the storerooms. There have been a great many incidents of potions boiling over or being spilled. I fully expect those areas will be thoroughly cleaned as well. I'll be in my office." With that, he walked through a door into his adjoining office, leaving the two boys alone in the dungeon classroom.
Harry glanced at Malfoy, then scanned the room. "I'll start out here if you want to start in the storeroom," he offered. Obviously, splitting the job would be best, so they wouldn't have to spend too much time in direct contact with each other.
"Fine," Malfoy said. He turned and went toward the storeroom without further comment. Harry watched him go, curious as to why Malfoy would pass up the opportunity to insult him. After a moment, he gave up and went to the far back corner of the classroom to begin cleaning. Seeing the layers of different potions which had dried and congealed there, he glanced around and realized he was starting in the very corner where Neville Longbottom usually sat.
'Great. Poor Neville,' Harry thought. 'I feel bad for him that he gets in trouble and gets picked on so much, especially in here, but I hate the idea of having to clean all this up.'
He heard clanking from the storeroom. 'I guess it's not any better in there. The student stores are always a mess with everyone spilling things, putting them in the wrong places and everything. He's got it just as bad as I.' "hmmfph, not nearly" he muttered.
"Talk to yourself all the time, Potter?" Harry spun around to see Malfoy's familiar smirk.
"I'm honestly not given much choice at the moment if I want an intelligent conversation," Harry replied. He promptly turned around and went back to scraping the dried potion layers off the stone floor.
As he sat there, scraping endlessly, Harry began to drift into the thoughts that frequently haunted him. Thoughts of right and wrong, thoughts of death and life, thoughts of loss. He'd lost his parents at the early age of one because they were on the side of 'right' and Voldemort didn't like that. He'd grown up with the Dursleys who hated him because his parents were 'weird'. His first

year at Hogwarts, Harry had been reminded of his loss by looking into the Mirror of Erised and seeing his parents standing there with him. He'd nearly lost his best friend, Ron during their chess game on the way to the Sorcerer's Stone. Ron never talked about it and would be loathe to admit how badly he was hurt. He'd tried to sacrifice himself, despite the possibilities of how serious it could be. Ron did that for Harry, for the side of 'good' and 'right'. During his second year, the Chamber of Secrets was opened and again, Harry found himself fighting on the side of 'right'. He'd come very close to losing that battle. He and Ron, along with Professor Lockhart, had nearly gotten crushed by the rock avalanche. Hermione was among the students who were petrified by the basilisk, along with Colin Creevy - a first year who wanted nothing more than to be Harry's friend and take his picture - and Percy's girlfriend, to name a couple. Though the Mandrake Roots were matured enough to revive the petrified students, it was a stressful and harrowing experience for them, their families and their friends. The worst of it though was Ginny. Little Ginny Weasely had nearly died because of Tom Riddle. In retrospect, it would seem that Ginny's involvement was all because of Harry. Lucius Malfoy would have found someone else to give that diary too, but it ended up in Ginny's book because of Harry's representation of 'good' and Malfoy's connection with 'bad'.

Simple as that sounded, it was very true (at least in Harry's mind) and it was a realization that sparked an idea in Harry's mind.

Finally getting through the worst of the spilled potions, Harry got up and began straightening the rest of the room, cleaning off tables, straightening the caldron shelves and such. His mind wandered through third year, the run-ins with Sirius before everyone knew he was innocent, the danger he and his friends put themselves in for what they believed to be 'right'. Fourth year was even worse, his fight for good resulted in Voldemort coming back to power and Cedric Diggory dying. He'd been told that it wasn't his fault. What he'd thought all along and never voiced to anyone is that if he had been selfish, Cedric would have lived. It was only because of his desire to do what's 'right' that he had suggested he and Cedric grab the cup at the same time - the cup that ended up being a portkey and led Cedric to his death.

The past two years since Voldemort's return had been a bit of a blur. Harry supposed he was lucky that he hadn't spent the past two summers with the Dursleys, as much as they hated him. The fact that he had spent those summers, and indeed, his 16th and 17th birthdays in battle, that would never escape him. A virtual prison surrounded by hate - or - a magical battleground surrounded by the dead and injured bodies of his friends, acquaintances, and teachers. Ron had nearly lost his life again, Charlie Weasley had been killed by Petter Pettigrew in an early battle, even Snape had been horribly injured more than once in the bast two years. The toll this war was taking on the people Harry cared for was devastating. He'd often wondered if it would stop if he just gave in and submitted to Voldemort's desires. Would his death keep his loved ones safe? He'd decided he couldn't take anymore tragedy, loss, or trauma - and couldn't stand the idea of his friends living with it either. The reason for this final decision was Hermione. She's been captured by some of Voldemort's supporters and tortured for days on end. She'd been much quieter and more cautious since her return, but refused to talk about it.

/foolish boy..watching you..for master../

Harry looked up quickly. That voice, it sounded vaguely familiar, almost like Voldemort in his first year, before his resurrection. He listened quietly, wondering if maybe he was imagining things.

/my master will know/

"Malfoy, is that you?" Harry asked without thinking. If it wasn't Malfoy, he certainly didn't want to admit that he was hearing things. Malfoy would have too much fun with that information.
"What?" Malfoy said from inside the student storeroom. "Is what me, Potter?"
"Did you say something?"
"No, have you gone daft? Or did you just decided to start talking back to yourself?" Harry watched as Malfoy stepped around the doorway. His hair wasn't as sleek as usual, relaxed, almost tousled. It looked good on him.
'Merlin, what am I thinking?' Harry shook his head in exasperation. Between these tortured memories and his bizarre thoughts of Malfoy he must be going mad. "Funny Malfoy, I just."
"Um, Potter?" Malfoy interrupted. His voice rose a bit, shaking with nerves. Harry looked up, wondering what could make the infamous, cold- blooded Draco Malfoy sound nervous. "Could you, um, could you come over here, slowly, but, um NOW!"
Surprised at Malfoy's visible display of weakness, Harry started across the room, wondering what on Earth could have shaken his stoic enemy like this. As he rounded the last group of desks he realized it - it was a snake.
As Harry stood watching, he saw Malfoy glance up nervously. He was very visibly frightened by the snake. Harry felt the corner of his mouth tugging upward as he thought how ironic that someone he had once suspected as the heir of Slytherin would be afraid of snakes. 'He's got his guard down. He's even nicer looking when he's showing real emotion.' Harry thought back and couldn't remember seeing Malfoy show anything besides hatred, disgust or anger - until now. Now those steely blue-grey eyes showed nothing but fear, with just the tiniest bit of hope. After a few very tense and silent moments, Harry finally realized that hope was Draco Malfoy's silent prayer that he would be protected from the snake by the very Gryffindor he despised.
"Potter, are you just going to stand there? Or did you set this snake on me and your watching the show?"
I?./
Harry looked at the snake, wondering how it got in here, why it was trying to protect him, why it was calling him master. Harry hadn't spoken to a snake since second year. He rarely had the chance to be around them, but made a conscious effort NOT to speak parseltoungue under ANY circumstances. He'd convinced himself it was an evil power and he shouldn't be using it.
Snapping out of his thoughts, he looked at Malfoy again. "What is it you want me to do, Malfoy?" He made sure to spit the name out in hatred as Malfoy had so frequently done to him and his friends. "You want HELP from the FAMOUS Harry Potter? You're not concerned with your reputation being sullied by the story of how you, a Slytherin, had to be SAVED from a snake by The-Boy-Who-Lived?"
Draco Malfoy was taken aback by this behavior. 'I've never heard him refer to himself as The-Boy-Who-Lived,' Draco thought. 'I've never quite seen him so heartless and forceful. I think I li.' Draco closed his eyes a moment, trying to block the image of the swirls of emerald green in Potter's eyes. "Yes, Potter," he forced himself to say. "I want help from you. You can speak to this snake. You can tell it."
/foolish ?/
".well?" Malfoy said.
"What? Well, what?" Harry realized the snake was asking for permission to bite Malfoy, feeling that Harry needed protection from him for some reason. He'd ignored bits of Malfoy's request, listening instead to the voice only he could hear. "Nevermind, Malfoy, hold it a moment, would

you?"
/why do I need protection from this boy?/
/he's brought you pain, the worry from you master/
/you think I'm worried about what he can do to me?/
/master's mind shows boy haunts will be happier/
/no, biting Draco won't make me happier, thank you, though./
/master will remember me if I'm needed?/
/yes, I'll send word./
'I called him Draco. How very odd.' Harry watched as the snake bowed it's head slightly and turned to slither away, slipping through a nearly invisible crack in the corner. He looked up at Malfoy. 'Draco. He offered me friendship once. Told me to watch out for the wrong sort. I wonder.'
Malfoy released a very deep breath as the snake left the dungeon classroom. He looked over at Harry gratefully, then suspiciously as he took notice of the odd expression on Harry Potter's face. Malfoy sneered his best sneer, pulling on the behavior he'd learned from Lucius growing up. "Don't you want to run to all your friends and spread the word now? Let everyone know you've become a hero once again?" Secretly, he wished they could keep it just between the two of them. He couldn't imagine what counter-story he could concoct to defend himself and his reputation. He wondered, not for the first time, what might have been if Potter hadn't turned down his handshake in their first year.
"No, Malfoy, I get pretty sick of being called a hero. I've always just done what's been expected of me as the son of James and Lily Potter. I never asked for this. I never set out to save the wizarding world. Those I did set out to save, ." He paused. He could hardly believe he was saying all this to Draco Malfoy of all people. Thoughts and feelings he couldn't express to his best friends, no matter how hard he tried. Fears he couldn't talk to his own godfather about. Torturous memories that he often wanted to cut out of his brain. All of this seemed to bubble at the surface when faced with the opportunity to talk to Malfoy about it. He replayed that first year conversation in his mind once more, as he had done more than a hundred times in the past six and a half years. Finally he looked at Malfoy. His emerald green eyes darkening to a deep, cloudy forest green. They met and connected with the blue-grey eyes, previously cold and hard as steel, now opening up with curiosity. Un-named emotions passed between the two young men as they stared into each others eyes. Finally, Harry took a step forward.
"I've been thinking, Malfoy. You offered me friendship and a handshake once. Told me that I should learn the wrong sort."
"Yes?"
"Perhaps you were right. I'm thinking it's time I re-evaluate my allegiances." With that surprising statement, Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who- Lived, the one who faced and battled He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, the proclaimed Savior of the Wizarding World stepped forward and offered his hand to Draco Malfoy, son of Lucius Malfoy - a Death Eater and rumored to be Voldemort's right hand man.
Draco looked at his hand, looked into those deep green eyes again and realized that something VERY important and VERY real was going on here. He offered Harry one of his very rare genuine smiles and accepted the handshake.
"You realize, Potter, that this changes everything?"
"Of course, Malfoy. That's my go

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Chapter: 5

1976
James Potter and Lucius Malfoy had been working diligently on their assignment from Professor McGonnagall and Headmaster Dumbledore. After a few minor adjustments, they'd finally figured out exactly what needed to be done. Tonight, their fourth night of detention, they were ready to test it out.
'I can hardly believe Malfoy's being so incredibly agreeable. Must be something in this for him that I haven't figured out yet.'
"So are you sure about this?" James asked. He was a little uncertain, wondering if perhaps Malfoy had decided to poison him during the 'test'. After all, the Slytherin definitely had the upper hand in Potions. James couldn't have identified half the ingredients in this potion, not to mention verified their purposes.
"Don't be absurd, Potter," Lucius looked at the raven-haired Gryffindor with contempt. He knew the Potion was perfect. For that matter, everyone in school knew that Lucius was a Potions expert, second only to his housemate, Severus Snape. How dare Potter question his knowledge?
"Of course I'm certain about my potion. Perhaps you would prefer that I take it first, to ensure that you won't be poisoned by my exceptional knowledge?"
"Absolutely Mr. Malfoy, that's exactly what I would prefer," James said pompously, doing an amazing impression of the everyday tone and behavior of one Lucius Malfoy. Oddly, Malfoy was completely oblivious to the fact that he was being mocked. He simply reached for a small vial and filled it slightly over halfway with the watery black liquid.
"Tell me sirs, are we ready for our test?" Professor McGonagall asked. The two young men turned to see their Transfiguration professor standing just inside the doorway along with Albus Dumbledore. James smiled at the two professors, noticing the twinkling eyes and friendly smile he received in return from the Headmaster. James had always admired and respected Dumbledore, who was widely known as the most powerful wizard of this time.
"Yes, Professor, I believe we are," Malfoy answered.
The four of them gathered around the caldron, the young raven-haired man holding the small, liquid filled vial. Lucius and James explained what they had come up with for the first stage of the assignment.
"We decided that it needed to be visual," said Lucius. He took out a blank piece of parchment and spread it across the table. "We've enchanted this parchment to show a calendar of sorts. It's receptive to the dates spoken to it." With that, he touched his wand to it and said, "November, 1976" Immediately, lines and numbers appears on the parchment, spreading across it, merging together, until finally there was a complete calendar month neatly laid out on the table.
James Potter smiled to himself, pleased that he could achieve such accurate results without the help of Moony, Padfoot and Wormtail. He'd discussed it with them first, not wanting to use the Marauders Map secret without the prior knowledge of the other Marauders. Looking up at his professors, it appeared they were quite pleased with the enchantment as well.

"Now," James said, "all we have to do is brush the potion over it, and it will reveal any dark disturbances during the month of November."
There was a moment of silence as the young men pondered the power and importance of what they were about to do. If this worked, well, it could well change the way the wizarding world was run. It would be an invaluable tool for the Ministry of Magic, as well as a highly guarded secret that would require great protection by the Misuse of Magic office.
"The potion will not be complete until we add the Centaur tears," Lucius said. "With the seeing powers of the Centaurs, the tears will give us the opportunity to see the future. The potion without the tears would simply reveal dark influences of the here and now."
'Like you?' James thought. He knew the Malfoy's had been Slytherin's for many hundreds of years. He also knew that Lucius Malfoy's mother, Electra, was as dark as they came. 'She's probably been teaching Lucius the Dark Arts since he was a baby.' Shaking his head slightly, James came back to the issue at hand.
"How much of the Centaur tears do we need to add?" he asked.
"One drop should be enough for the month," Lucius said. He pulled a dropper out of a delicate glass bottle and allowed one very small drop to fall into his vial and they watched as the potion went from a murky black to crystal clear.
"It looks just like water!" James said with surprise.
"It's supposed to," Lucius replied quietly. He was quite proud of this potion. Lucius never told anyone how often he worked with Severus Snape on their Potions homework, late evenings in the dungeon, hours and hours of detailed potions work, creating new ones, practicing old ones. He never talked about the deeper level of his friendship with Severus. Their friendship was quite different than the others he had formed within the Slytherin dorm over the last six years. Lucius was hoping this potion, created on his own, would be special enough and powerful enough to provide him with a place in the wizarding world as a future potions master. Perhaps he would even have the opportunity to work with Severus in a professional capacity. Lucius was completely unaware of the discreet smile that crept onto his face as he considered the notion of impressing Severus with his new potions work, working with Severus, creating potions with Severus, spending extra time with Severus, touching that line of thinking would get him nowhere. Lucius already knew that his parents had pledged him to Narcissa. No matter where his desire or his heart led him, he would be married to Narcissa within a year and they would be expected to produce an heir as soon as possible.
"Ah-hmmm" The sound of Professor Dumbledore clearing his throat quickly broke that train of thought. "Shall we?" Dumbledore asked Lucius, the twinkle in his eyes told Lucius that he knew exactly what the young blond had been thinking, while the smile told Lucius that Dumbledore would keep that knowledge to himself.
"Yes sir," Lucius said. "We shall."
Lucius picked up a soft brush and dipped it into the vial James was holding. The parchment darkened slightly as the liquid was spread across, but then went back to its natural pale color almost immediately. They looked at one another, then at their professors, and waited. The four of them sat in the potions classroom looking at each other silently and waited for something to happen for what seemed like hours. Finally, (about 3 ½ minutes later) it happened.
Shimmering letters appeared on the calendar, in the box representing November 17th. ~Darkness falls, 4:17 pm~
"Now what?" James asked.

"That's simple, Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy," Dumbledore replied. "Now you get to work on the next step."
"We would like to see what the two of you can do to prevent or correct the problem that will occur on November 17th," McGonagall said. "You may use a charm, a potion, divination, or any other ideas that make sense to you. Please notify us when you are prepared, we'd like to see something by the end of the week." With that, she glanced at Albus, her eyes clearing saying 'we've got a lot to talk about' and turned to walk out of the room.
Professor Dumbledore nodded slightly at Minerva, then looked at the young men in front of him with the ever-present twinkle in his eyes. "You two may not be old enough to have learned this yet, but I'll tell you now, there are very few times when it is beneficial to argue or disagree with a woman. Something about them, they always seem to have the upper hand." He smiled and started toward the door, then paused and looked back at them. "I'm very proud of the both of you. That's some good work you've done, and very befitting work from two of the most powerful students in the school."
James smiled at the kindly headmaster, then turned to begin putting equipment and ingredients away so he could get back to his common room and find the woman who had the upper hand in his life. Lucius followed suit, primarily thinking that Electra would be proud to hear that he had impressed the headmaster with his potions work.
In the corridor, Minerva and Albus walked quickly and quietly to the gargoyle which led to Albus' office. Albus Dumbledore quietly whispered his password, {Sugar Quills} and the two of them followed the spiral staircase up to the office where they could, at last, discuss the amazing events that had taken place that evening.
"I find it utterly amazing that two students could put together such powerful magic in a matter of days, Albus. What are we dealing with here? What do you hope to get from this?"
"I believe those two students, along with a few others, could do much more than that if they were to put their minds to it. We have some strong powers in this school, Minerva. Stronger than we have in at least two decades. And there will be more to come, power like this school never thought it would see. I can sense it." He reached for a Chocolate Toad and quickly bit a leg off before it could hop away. Though he seemed distracted by his love for sweets, Minerva knew he was completely attentive in all things serious.
"What do you know?"
"I know that James Potter and Lucius Malfoy are very powerful wizards, possibly much more powerful than many of the governors of the school, and even a number of members of the Ministry. I also know that Potter is most likely going to marry Lily Evans, the most powerful witch born of non magical parents I have seen in my lifetime. I've no doubt that those two will produce some very strong children in time. Furthermore, I know that Lucius Malfoy has been promised to Narcissa Black, also a gifted potions student - not to mention an excellent beater for the Slytherin Quidditch team - and those two are very likely to have extremely powerful offspring as well."
McGonagall sat silently, wondering what this was leading to.
"I've received word from an old friend at the Ministry of Magic, a seer in the Future Accuracy and Reparation Department. She tells me that Scales of Power are showing something very odd, extreme fluctuations in the balance of power, and that these two families are somehow involved in it. The time wheel seems to be a bit off, as though the future has been put together wrong, like a potion mixed in the wrong order. The high levels of power we have within these young people

lead me to believe that we're on the right track. Once we see what else Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy come up with, we'll have an idea what to do ne

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Chapter: 6

1997
Hermione sat quietly watching him from across the room. She looked at the dark hair that seemed so much tamer these days, the glint of green from behind his glasses, the width of his shoulders 'he's grown so much' as he bent over the book. She'd been waiting for the chance to see WHAT he was reading, knowing that Harry didn't spend that much time with books unless they were Quidditch related. 'well, he didn't in the past' she thought. Finally, he adjusted a little, moving the book so she could see the cover.
~Safety in the Darkness~
'Now why would Harry be reading something like that? I don't recall any of our classes requiring it?' Her thoughts were interrupted at that moment by her frustrated, red-headed boyfriend.
"Oi, 'Mione," Ron said as he plopped down on the couch with her. "Where've you been? I thought you'd be in the library, but you.." He trailed off as he noticed that she was still staring. He followed her gaze and found that it met with the image of his best friend in the world. Taking in Hermione's thoughtful expression, he leaned closer and whispered in her ear (making sure to let his breath tickle her neck in that way that made her squirm) "I could find myself jealous right now if I wanted to, you know."
Hermione turned to smile at him, the expression in her eyes letting him know his breath had the desired affect on her. "Honestly, Ron, you know there's nothing to be jealous of." Smiling sweetly, she leaned over and planted an innocent kiss on his cheek.
Ron barely had time to smile before she turned back to look in Harry's direction, only to find that he was gone. "Where'd he go?" She and Ron looked around the common room, curious as to where he could have gone. They hadn't heard a door close and he would have had to walk right past them to get to the portrait hole.
"He must have gone up to the dorm" Ron said, "just quietly."
Seeing no other explanation, Hermione nodded, but kept her troubled look. Finally she turned to Ron with her business-like 'we've got something serious to talk about' expression.
"Have you noticed anything unusual about him lately?"
"Like what? I mean, blimey, this is Harry we're talking about. Not much usual about him, is there?"
"I mean odd for Harry's normal behavior." She looked around, realizing the room was empty, but felt the need to continue whispering anyway. "He's reading something called Safety in the Darkness. Unless I'm mistaken it's about the Dark Arts. Last month, I noticed that he spent hours in the library reading up on the history of wizards good and bad, and something called Charm your Enemies or Curse your Friends. I have to admit, even with the restricted reading I've done, that one made me a little nervous."
"So you're worried because Harry's reading more?"

"No, it's more than that, Ron. It's WHAT he's reading. It's what ELSE he's doing."
"What else IS he doing?"
"Haven't you noticed that he seems to be getting along with Malfoy quite well? And even after that last detention, what was that - two months ago - they're almost..well.. CIVIL to each other! Plus, Harry's been working really hard in potions. I mean, it's great to see him taking school more seriously, but honestly it seems more like he's being influenced by something dark. He doesn't even smile anymore. And when's the last time you saw him looking forward to a Quidditch match?"
Ron sat quietly, taking in this information. 'I'm usually better at noticing things like this. I must really have my head in the clouds. It's all her fault. I'm so nutters about her I can barely focus in class, forget about noticing other stuff. Why did she notice it? Doesn't she feel the same way anymore? Maybe I really SHOULD be jealous of Harry? Maybe I..' He should his head, determined to stay on track here. 'Mione loved him. He knew that. She was just seeing something he wasn't. Something strange about a person that neither of them could see at the moment.
HARRY's POV
I'm sitting right here in front of them and they're asking where I've gone. This is absolutely too amazing for words. Hermione hasn't even noticed that my book is still here. I don't dare turn the page, though. I don't think I want anyone to know about this. At least not yet. At least not anyone in here.
Now wait a minute? Anyone in here? But there's someone else that I would like to tell?
~you know there is~
Ahh, there's that voice again. Not the snake from the Potions classroom, but the voice in the back of my head. The one that's been torturing me ever since I shook hands with Malfoy. I still marvel at that sometimes, over six years of knowing him before I took the chance to actually speak to him civilly. Before I reached out and accepted his touch. It's amazing that you can know someone that long, interact with them every day and never actually so much as touch their hand.
~that's not all you want to touch~
Shut up! So, Ron and Hermione are whispering about something. I'm guessing it's about me, but it's hard to tell for sure. I have been getting some really strange looks from Hermione lately. Neither of them have gone so far as to ask why Malfoy and I are getting along better. They haven't said anything about my improved Potion skills. They haven't said anything out of the ordinary. I'm glad of that. I really don't think it would do either of them any good to know what I'm doing. I try to keep our conversations normal, casual. I try to, but I'm not sure I'm succeeding. I'm rather excited, actually. All these years of fighting against Voldemort and his followers, I've felt so useless. Now I feel that I'm actually doing something. Something important. Something that can make a difference. And it's in large part thanks to Draco Malfoy.
~Perhaps you should go thank him in person~
For once, I decide to listen to this voice. Forgetting momentarily that I'm invisible, I get up and walk over to the portrait hole and through the opening. I realize I've left my book on the table and decided not to do anything about it after I hear Ron and Hermione asking 'who's there?'
I suppose it must be strange to see the portrait open for no reason.
I set out across the castle, determined to find a certain silvery-blond Slytherin friend of m

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Chapter: 7

I honestly thought it would take longer than it did. He nearly ran straight into me as he burst out of the Great Hall. I could hear the familiar laughter of the Slytherin table before the doors closed. Wondering what they would be laughing at him for, I watched in amazement as he paused and closed his eyes. He stood there silently, fists clenched and took a few deep breaths before finally heading off toward the Slytherin dungeons.
I followed, of course.
~of course~
Now is not the time. I want to follow him to make sure he's okay. To see if he needs..
~a kiss? A hug? A warm romp in the..?~
Stop! I sighed.
I didn't mean to actually sigh aloud, but I did and apparently Draco heard it. He turned and looked directly at me, directly THROUGH me.
"Harry?" he said quietly. Now, how could he possibly have known I was there? I looked down to make sure I was still invisible. Yep, nothing there. How could Draco know and why would he look so hopeful? I mean, I know we're friends now (of sorts) but I didn't realize he would actually WANT to see me..
~like you WANT to see him?~
Yes, okay, I admit it. I'm finding Draco Malfoy to be quite the object of my lustful affections. I guess it started when I did a mental/magical exercise called 'Opening the Darkness Inside' where the wizard is instructed to focus on all the 'taboo' acts, everything from stealing or cheating to sex of all sorts to cruelty and unforgivable curses. With each act, you have to imagine yourself doing it and explain to your conscience why it's okay to do it. Only then did I realize that I wanted to do many 'taboo' things to that pale skinned, well toned body. And I wanted to stare deeply into those steel eyes while I did them.
Draco was still looking around the corridor, occasionally stopping to make direct eye contact with me while looking directly through me. How odd that he could know me so well that he would recognize my sigh, know the height of my eyes, feel my presence. I looked into those eyes of his, looked him over head to toe actually, and took the opportunity to notice a few things myself. For one thing, he was breathing just the tiniest bit faster than normal. For another, he seemed a little - scared. It seemed so very unlike Draco, having only seen this side of him that night with the snake.
~let's hope he's not afraid of ALL snakes~
Oh, that voice in my head is really beginning to bother me.
I watched quietly as he turned again, apparently having decided I wasn't in the hall with him. He walked the same as usual, swiftly and smoothly, with a fluid-like motion that almost gave the impression that he was floating. His head was held high, shoulders back, accentuating his perfect posture and aristocratic background. He exudes such power it makes me jealous. It used to make me angry because I thought he was a phony. I thought it was all for looks, but having worked with him in potions, having studied with him in private, I finally realized it's REAL power. It's a deep, natural power and he has no problems with using it to get what he wants. That's the Slytherin in him. That's what I'm jealous of.

For the thousandth time, I wonder what would have happened over the last few years if I had allowed the Sorting Hat to put me in Slytherin. Would Charlie and Cedric and Justin still be alive? Would Lavender be in that coma? Would Hermione have been tortured? Would I still have been Snape's least favorite student?
"Good evening, Master Malfoy." I look up to see that Draco is being addressed by a portrait of a rather foreboding wizard in silver dress robes. "Password?"
"Potter" Draco says quietly. I'm shocked. He's using my name as his password? I suppose that's somewhat logical, no one would ever guess it. I'm stunned, but I follow him into the room through the portrait hole. Looking around, I see that the Head Boy definitely has some privileges. Not only does he have his own room, but he's got his own adjoining bathroom as well. The room is decorated in Green, Black and Silver, but what else would you expect from a Slytherin?
Draco flops into a big, cushiony armchair and leans back, staring up at the ceiling. I'm standing around wondering how to best reveal myself now that I've stayed invisible this long. Powerful magic. It's much easier to BE invisible, than to wear an invisibility cloak. I'm becoming more and more grateful for the decision to "rethink my allegiances" and increasingly pleased with how quickly I seem to be picking up these dark tricks. I realize that my friends would go nuts if they knew about this, but my goal is that they'll never know - and that they'll be safe. That's what powerful magic can do.
So, just as I'm wondering if I CAN consciously decide to be seen, if it's really that easy like the book said, Draco starts talking to himself.
"I just don't get it. I can't..I can't do this..it's.." He's silent. I wonder what he's talking about but my train of thought is quickly broken when he gets up from the chair and begins stripping on his way across the room. The shoes, robe, pants, shirt, tie, they end up scattered around the floor. Before I realize myself, I'm following him across the room, a sudden need to be near that beautiful body.
He stopped and turned so quickly that I ran directly into him. I automatically put my hands around him to make sure he didn't fall and I could swear that I saw comfort in his eyes amidst the confusion. I couldn't help myself. I kissed him.
DRACO's POV
Bastards. They're all bastards. I can still hear them laughing as I storm out of the Great Hall. I feel like screaming. I feel like running outside and jumping in the lake. I feel like pulling out my wand and putting them all under the Cruciatus Curse.
Get a hold of yourself Draco. Such emotion is not befitting a Malfoy. I stop and close my eyes, fists clenched in anger and center my breathing to bring the emotions in check. After a moment, I'm feeling better, more in control (as much as I can be these days) and I turn towards my room. Control. It's something I've been losing my grip on lately. Harry and I have been friends for a few months. It's become a fast friendship, and probably the first true friendship I've ever had. Crabbe and Goyle are imbeciles that I would never associate with if not for our family ties. Pansy is a giggling little twit that I can barely tolerate in a crowd, much less in private (despite what she seems to believe about a relationship between us). No, Harry's definitely different. Harry challenges me. He's always been a powerful wizard, a well known fact since he survived the Dark Lord's curse as a baby. But now, he's really beginning to come into that power. He's got a sudden thirst for knowledge of all things dark. He's asked me for tutelage on potions, curses, hexes, astral projection and more. He's been reading any restricted books he can get his hands on. His drive and focus is almost frightening.

Though I consider him my friend now, we haven't made a public display of our camaraderie. I still don't know how my father or our Dark Lord will react to Harry's desires to change sides. For that matter, I still don't know what Harry's true desires are. Does he really want to change sides? It seems odd to me that someone who's spent so much time as The-Boy-Who- Lived and the Savior-of-the-Wizarding-World, someone who's fought for the 'good' team in so many battles would suddenly decide that joining the Dark Lord and becoming a death eater is the thing to do. I haven't asked him about it yet. I know I should, but somehow, every time I think about asking him, I catch sight of his eyes.

Those glittering emeralds are going to be my undoing, I can feel it. There's so much in his eyes, so much that I doubt he'll ever tell me. I wonder if he's talked about this to his friends. I wonder if they would understand it, because I certainly don't.

'What was that?'

"Harry?" I turned, fully expecting to see Harry standing directly behind me. I can almost feel his presence. I heard a sigh, correction, I heard HARRY sigh. I'd know that sound anywhere. I've heard it in class when he's frustrated with an assignment, I've heard it in the halls when we used to fight so much and he'd get tired of my snide remarks, I've heard it recently when we're discussing the Dark Arts and he's getting tired, but most of all, I've heard it in my dreams. I've dreamt about Harry so often lately, I'm beginning to think I'm obsessed. I keep looking around, waiting, hoping for him to step out of the shadows somewhere. I finally decide he's not there, I'm certainly not blind, so he CAN'T be there. I know he's not using his invisibility cloak because he loaned it to me three nights ago and I haven't returned it yet.

Apparently others in my house are beginning to notice something unusual as well, because they're commenting on changes in my behavior. Changes I thought I was concealing. Pansy's comment tonight about me getting soft was just too much. I know what she meant, just as I know the double entendre was intended. Everyone else knew it as well. The little wench will pay for that comment, eventually.

"Good evening, Master Malfoy" I barely pay any attention to this portrait anymore. He's some heir of Salazar from about 500 years ago and I can't remember his name 90% of the time.

"Password?"

"Potter" I almost whisper it. I'd be humiliated if anyone from Slytherin knew it, but that's not why I feel the need to whisper it. It's hard now, really hard, to call him Potter. I've gotten so used to calling him Harry, both in my head and in person - hell even in my dreams.

Once inside my blissfully quiet, private room, I fall into my big comfortable chair, my favorite chair, and decide to think. I'm thinking about what's going on with Harry and me. I wonder if maybe it's time to send an owl to my father. I have the feeling that he and the Dark Lord would be pleased with the turn of events. After all, that's what they wanted of me six years ago. If Harry had accepted my friendship then, he would have been training in Dark Arts by the end of first year. He would have probably been invited to Malfoy Manor for holidays so he could continue to train.

"I just don't get it. I can't..I can't do this..it's.." There you are Malfoy, talking to yourself again? You've gone and lost your head this time, might as well run into a bludger for all the good your brain's doing you right now.

In my frustration I decide that a nice long shower would be perfect. I jump up and head to the bathroom, pulling my clothes off as quickly as possible. I know that a shower will calm me down, I'm very much a water person and can be easily calmed by the flowing water (not to

mention the fact that I can adjust the temperature if a certain dark-haired Gryffindor invades my mind again). Just as I've almost reached the bathroom, I realize that I'm too particular to leave my clothing lying around like that - even for a few minutes.
I stop and turn to pick them up, but I'm unable to, suddenly finding myself up against an invisible body-shaped mass. The force of the impact nearly knocks me over, but I'm quickly caught and steadied by a pair of strong and comfortable arms. I can feel the robes, I can feel the torso against my own, I can feel one leg against mine, and I can feel the arms around me. The hands, resting on my back, just above my waist, are the only part of this mass that connects to me, skin to skin. It's nice. I can't explain it but I feel comfortable with those hands on my back. Before I have time to register this and say anything, my mouth is covered by invisible lips.
##*#*#*#*#*#*#*#*#*#*#*#
Author's Note: Thank you to all my readers (even if you didn't review) This being my first fanfic, I'm a bit nervous about it. Please, if you read, send a quick review, just so I know what you think about it. What's working, what's not, etc. PLEASE?
Specifics, since I haven't replied to any specific reviews yet, I'm going to do it now.
Delie: Are you still reading? I hope so. Please let me know if you're still interested.
Lanevaly: I hope you're still reading, too. As I guess you can tell by now, I'm not actually pairing James/Lucius together. All will be revealed in good time!
Aranami: Thanks so much for your continued reviews. It's wonderful to know that I'm holding your interest. I hope you like both of these chapters I'm posting today. And thanks for the cookie!
She-Who-Is-Not-To-Be-Psycho: Thank you for both reviews, I hope you check back and read the updates, I think you'll like where Harry and Draco are going. sly smile
Keitorin: Thanks! I think there's a bit to keep you busy

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Chapter: 8

DRACO's POV
I try to gasp but it's not really a gasp. Have you ever tried to gasp when your mouth is connected to another one? The result is basically your breath mixing with the breath in the other mouth. It's a bit sensual, to be completely honest. My eyes close. I certainly don't mean for my eyes to close, but I can't seem to do anything about it. The feeling that surges through my body, it's like I've been struck by lightening, rather pleasant lightening, and it's reaching through me to awaken every nerve ending I've got.
I can't seem to think straight and before I realize it, I've got my fingers tangled in the hair of my pursuer. I hear that gasp again and my mind screams 'Harry!' but my mouth won't form the word. I must be dreaming. I've fallen asleep in the chair and I'm just having another dream about him. I realize that he's never been invisible in my dreams, but it's not an unpleasant twist.
One hand removes itself from my back and I can feel movement. The robes are rustling against my bare legs, then, suddenly the familiar black robe (complete with Gryffindor badge) appears in a rumpled pile on my floor. Yes, this must be a dream, a wonderful dream and I'm not going to allow myself to wake up until it's completely over!

I can feel his lips on my neck and this time the gasp is definitely audible. His tongue flicks over the hollow of my throat and just as I'm REALLY beginning to get into this dream he moves away again. I was about to be very disappointed, but then I hear clothing rustling around again. Suddenly there's an empty pair of shoes on my floor and shortly after I see a dark read sweater land on the floor as well. Reaching out, I realize I can touch him. I've dreamed of this so many times, but it's never felt so real. If I thought he would feel like this in reality, I would try this when I'm awake.
It's extremely erotic, not being able to see what he's doing, what he's reaching for, where his lips are heading next. This thought is just crossing my mind when I suddenly feel those lips on my bare chest.
"Ahhhh"
I hear a very faint snicker. Merlin! I wish this were real. Was that a zipper? More fabric rustling and there's a pair of pants on the floor. "Interesting how the clothes appear. I wonder where my subconscious came up with this?"
HARRY'S POV
His subconscious? He thinks he's dreaming! How very interesting! On second thought, if I were suddenly being seduced by a person I couldn't see, I might assume the same thing.
Seduced. Yes, I suppose that's what I'm doing. I didn't really intend to, and now that I'm standing here in nothing but my boxers, I can't bring myself to allow him to see me. I'm thoroughly enjoying this and something about being invisible makes it feel so wicked, so exciting, so..DARK!
I'm amazed by the softness of his skin and the shivers that run through him as I trail my tongue down his chest, circling his navel, tickling along the edge of his boxers.
~Ahh, seems like someone's pleased~
Yes, I can see that Draco's pleased. I have the slightest bit of guilt at seducing him like this, when he clearly thinks he's dreaming. I wonder if he would react like this if he knew the truth. Has he fantasized about it as much as I have?
Suddenly, I can't do this. I grab at my clothing (noting that it disappears as soon as I touch it and wondering why that applies only to clothing) and I turn to run out of the room.
By the time I reach the portrait of the fat lady, I've dressed myself, discovered that I can indeed reverse the invisibility spell and calmed my raging hormones. "Nincompoop"
"Hmmph" the fat lady replies. "Perhaps someone should change that password." She suggests in a tone that tells me she's not in a very good mood.
"Yes ma'am. You might be right," I mutter as I walk into the common room.
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Hermione and Ron looked up when the portrait swung open. "Harry?" Hermione asked. "When did you leave?"
"Where have you been?"
Harry looked at Ron, briefly thinking that it was really none of Ron's business, then immediately considering how insanely outraged Ron would be if he actually knew what Harry had been doing. Harry smiled to himself.
"Just went for a walk. I left a while ago. I'm pretty tired and still have some Transfiguration homework to finish," he said, nodding toward the staircase. "I'm just going to head upstairs. I didn't mean to interrupt you lovebirds."
With that, Harry picked up the book that was still open on the table, turned and went up to the

boys dorm.
"Hmmm..what do you reckon that was about?"
"Probably just what he said, he went for a walk and he's going to do some homework."
"Really, 'Mione. You'd think that after all the WATCHING and NOTICING you've been doing that you would have noticed something seemed wrong about that."
"I did notice, but it's obvious we're not going to get any answers tonight. We'll just have to spend a little more time with him and try to figure out what's going on."
"You know, I really love it when you start scheming!"
Hermione simply smiled and kissed Ron goodnight. "See you in the morning," she said as she headed out to her private room.
##*#*#*#*#*#*#*#*#
Harry sat quietly in his bed, curtains drawn, wand lit, book open. He was determined to finish reading Safety in the Darkness by the end of the week. Draco seemed to think it was an odd choice, but hadn't asked any questions. Harry paused in his reading, contemplating the fact that Draco rarely asked questions about any of this. They had yet to discuss Harry's reasons for learning the Dark Arts, or how far he planned to go with this. Knowing that Hermione and Ron would have him committed to St. Mungo's, he had long decided not to tell them anything about his recent decisions. He knew that if they ever found out they would likely go through some very specific phases.
First, Hermione would try to analyze him and Ron would yell about Draco and threaten various hexes.
Second, Hermione would talk about going to Dumbledore or McGonagall and Ron would yell about Draco and threaten various hexes.
Third, Hermione and Ron would team up to convince him that Draco and/or Voldemort had put him under a spell, possibly even the Imperious Curse.
Finally, when they got around to believing that he was acting on his own will, they would despise him. Their feelings would be hurt, they would lose trust in him, they would stop speaking to him. He would become as hated and avoided as Draco himself. That thought hurt Harry. Ron and Hermione had been his friends for over six years and were primarily the best friends (not to mention the FIRST friends) he'd ever had. He didn't want them to hate him. But more than that, he didn't want them to die.
Listening to Ron, Dean and Seamus as they got ready for bed, the laughter and companionship in the dorm was comforting but at the same time reminded him again of all that had been lost. Neville would never be able to talk and laugh with them again. Harry thought back to when Dumbledore awarded Neville 10 points for standing up to him, Hermione and Ron in first year. That was a very brave moment for Neville. He showed his bravery on few occasions, but when he did, it was a great deal of bravery. The last time, just before Christmas in sixth year, was during the Death Eater siege at Hogsmeade. Neville saw LeStrange and Parkinson approaching the group, wands directed at Harry's back. He jumped in front of the Stupefy curse and was taken away by Parkinson when the Death Eaters left.
When Neville was found a few weeks later, his tongue had been cut out and he'd been exposed to the Cruciatus Curse so many times that his brain didn't seem to be functioning properly any more. His grandmother was highly distraught about it, yet somehow looked at it as a heroic act. Harry didn't want any more of his friends being 'heroic' on his behalf. Ever. Safety in the Darkness would help him to make sure of that.

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Author's Notes: I hope you all are enjoying this. I also hope it's not confusing with the changing POVs. Harry and Draco have so much going on that I felt I HAD to put it in first person. The rest of it seems to fit better in third person, though. Let me know if there's anything confusing.
Redmeadow: Glad you're enjoying it! I hope to make this one rather long. There are a lot of twists in the future of it.
Aranami: Yes, it is and that's EXACTLY how I was thinking about it. Glad you like dark Harry, it seems to me that he's got every reason to turn, at least somewhat. If chap 7 made you blush, I have to wonder what this one

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Chapter: 9

1976
James, Remus and Sirius walked quietly across the grounds, their path lit up by nothing but the moon and the stars overhead.
"You feeling okay, Moony?"
"Fine, Padfoot. I guess I'm still a little tired from last night, but at least I've got a month before I have to deal with it again."
"True. Maybe we should head back to the dorm?"
"I wouldn't argue with that idea, what do you think James?" They both turned to look at their friend, their very quiet friend who hadn't said much all evening.
"Hmm?"
"Geez, Prongs," said Remus. "You've really been out of it lately. What gives?"
"Oh, I..erm..well.."
"For Merlin's sake," said Sirius. "Spit it out already."
"I've just been thinking about this project from Dumbledore."
"The big 'find the evil and stop it from happening' project?"
"That's the one."
"What about it?" Sirius stopped walking, turning to look his friend directly in the eyes. He had the feeling there was something big going on here.
"Well," James said as he looked into the dark eyes in front of him. "I'm just wondering the purpose of it. I mean, Dumbledore can't seriously be thinking of using our work to help the Ministry, can he? They wouldn't even take it seriously, would they?"
"I don't know, Prongs," Remus said cautiously. "If your work is really that great and that accurate, then he'd have to make them take it seriously, wouldn't he?"
"I don't even know that it's working. I mean, something is supposed to happen on the 17th. That's only two days away and we don't have any idea what will happen or how to stop it. How is that supposed to help anyone?"
"What plans do you have for this phase?"
"Malfoy is working on another potion and, I think, a charm to go with it."
"And then?" Remus tried to sound casual, but he couldn't help being concerned. It seemed

obvious that Malfoy couldn't be trusted, yet James was working so closely with him and was apparently going to knowing allow Malfoy to use magic against him.
"And then we'll meet up with Dumbledore and McGonagall and we'll test it out," James said simply with a bit more confidence than he felt.
"Hmmph." Sirius looked over at Remus and saw that the wolf was close to the surface. Even this close to the full moon, Remus was fine, except when provoked and everyone knew that messing with his friends was enough to provoke him.
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Lucius, James, Albus and Minerva sat around the table in the Potions room looking at each other. Minerva McGonagall was awestruck. Albus Dumbledore simply appeared knowingly pleased. Lucius Malfoy and James Potter were pleased as well, but a bit confused by McGonagall's reaction.
"You were actually there, weren't you?" McGonagall asked.
"Yes, ma'am, we were," Malfoy said. "It seemed we just..appeared there..after taking the potion."
"I'm still not certain what's happened," said James. "I know that I drank the potion. I know that it was tonight and I was sitting here, and then suddenly it was the day after tomorrow and I was in the Great Hall. I know that Malfoy and I performed that very intricate charm and then he walked up to Pritchard, you know that fourth year from Ravenclaw? I'm not sure what happened after that, they just talked for a moment and suddenly we were back here. Can either of you explain that?" James looked from the Headmaster to the Professor and back again.
"I believe the explanation is that the two of you..changed the future, Mr. Potter." Dumbledore said. "We have it on authority that the day after tomorrow, November 17th, at 4:17 pm, Ms. Pritchard would have walked away from the Ravenclaw table in a deep depression and proceeded to attempt to perform one of the unforgivable curses on a fellow student. Somehow, your presence delayed her long enough for the urge to pass. She will, instead, approach me for some private discussion and we will be able to help her through a very troubling time."
"How do you know all this?"
"Simple, James. With certain assistance, Professor McGonagall and I can be quite powerful seers. Certain wizards can work together to increase their power, as we have been doing for years. It would seem, based on the strength and success of this assignment, as well as the extremely high level of magic involved, that the two of you have that ability as well. This is precisely what I was hoping for."
Lucius and James looked at Dumbledore in shock, then at each other with mutual respect clouded by distrust.
"Why would we WANT to work together, Headmaster?" Lucius voiced the question that both of them were thinking. "We don't exactly get along, you realize."
"I hope you would want to work together to prevent a huge imbalance of power in our future. You see, gentlemen, the department of Future Accuracy and Reparation at the Ministry has found a very strong power that appears to be in the wrong place. It would seem the Scales of Power indicate that a Dark power is rising now and will be struck down in a few years' time by an even stronger Light power. Unfortunately, within two decades, that Dark power will rise again and eventually the Light power will be joining it. We don't know the details of it, but since it would appear that your potion and charm did the job, we'd like the two of you to try it again, for 1997, December, I think. It's extremely important to the future and balance of the wizarding world. This needs to be fixed." He stopped, looking at them with hopeful expectation.

Now, James Potter and Lucius Malfoy understood the expression of awe from their Transfiguration Professor as well as the knowing expression from their Headmaster. Now they understood the implications, the importance of this particular detention assignment. Now, they both understood that there would be a choice for each of them to make. Looking at one another, crystal blue eyes met with deep brown ones. Questions and answers seemed to pass between them all within a look. As one, they turned back to the Headmaster and nodded. James was the first to speak, his voice revealing nervousness and resignation as he asked the inevitable question, "Wh

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Chapter: 10

Okay, I don't think I've put a disclaimer in here, but I'm pretty sure I'm NOT JKR, nor do I own these characters or locations etc.
Warning - this is slash, not that I think it should matter
Authors Notes: I have lots and lots of details in mind for this and it is currently the longest thing I've ever written (and we're not even halfway done!) I just hope it's turning out well. I have read so much amazing stuff on here and I would really love to have tons and tons of reviews to ensure me that people are reading and enjoying my work. If you read, please review (I welcome suggestions, corrections, praise, etc.) If you happen to have any tips on how to get multiple reviews please let me know.
Aranami - oh, my faithful reader, you make me feel soooooooooooo good. Thank you thank you thank you!
Menecarkawan - thanks! *blush* you're too kind! Yes, I believe he is a bit daft, and I hope they can, too.
Elani - thank you so much for reading it! "most original" wow - I'm honored considering some of the stuff I've read - including yours!
THANK YOU SOOOOO MUCH!
And with that - enjoy!
Chapter 10
1997
It was late November and the halls of Hogwarts were buzzing with discussion of students' plans for the winter holidays.
Ron and Hermione had been asked to visit with the Grangers in light of their recent engagement. Many people were still of the opinion that 17 was too young for such intense relationships and serious commitments, but Harry agreed with those who understood that it almost seemed necessary after the last few years. So many people were dying, so many kids were being captured, so many adults being killed or permanently injured by the heavy curses of Voldemort and the Death Eaters, that it made joy and happiness and love seem THAT much more urgent.
After Hermione's capture, Ron had nearly lost his mind. Once they finally got her back safe and sound, Ron seemed to be attached to her hip and had become her primary source of comfort. Harry suspected Ron might be the only one she confided in about what exactly had happened to

her while she was gone. He was glad. She needed someone to talk to. And there was no reason for them to delay marriage based on age, especially while there was still a war going on.
Harry was thoroughly thrilled for his friends and was secretly glad they would be gone for the two week break. It would give him some much needed time to work on his new studies.
Looking around the common room, Harry verified that he was alone (not unusual considering the fact that it was just after midnight). "Inoculas" Harry muttered and promptly disappeared. After the first few times using the invisibility spell, he'd decided it was an extremely simple spell. He could see no reason for it to be Advanced or Dark. It seemed like a perfectly easy and useful spell to him. He was still marveling at the ease of just *being invisible* compared with the care and caution needed when *wearing an invisibility cloak* while he made his way to the Astronomy Tower.
He paused just inside the observation room at the top of the tower, momentarily shocked by the image of Draco's head floating in mid air. Of course, he quickly realized that Draco was wearing the borrowed invisibility cloak and had simply slipped the hood off of his head.
Deciding he should show himself, Harry faintly whispered "Optica" knowing that it was the intent making him visible, not the spoken word. Draco gasped and jumped so quickly that he tripped on the cloak and proceeded to fall through the window behind him.
Harry ran to the window without thinking and reached out his hand as if he could simply catch the Slytherin. "No, Draco - stop!" Much to the amazement of both young men, just as Harry's brain was telling him (belatedly) to pull out his wand and say "Wingardium Leviosa," his eyes were telling him that Draco was indeed levitating some 20 feet below the window, despite the lack of said levitating charm.
"Up here," Harry said, more to himself than anything. He was simply thinking out loud at this point, thinking that he needed to find a way to bring Draco back up to the observation room.
Draco, having heard Harry's first exclamation, was unaware that anything else had been said. He was therefore extremely surprised (and more than a little relieved) to feel himself rising up to the level of the window.
After mere moments, he found that he was level with the window and face to face with the emerald eyes he'd been thinking of earlier. By this time Harry was beginning to connect his words (or his desires) with the effect on Draco. Holding out his hand (his still wandless hand) he said "in here" and was pleased to see that Draco floated safely inside the window and hovered just an inch or so from the floor.
They stood there in silence, looking at each other for the briefest of moments before Draco said "Would you mind terribly letting me down so we can discuss this properly?" Draco was thinking he'd be more likely to die of a delayed heart attack than be able to calming talk about what had just happened.
"Down" Harry said as he pulled his hand back and let it hang by his side.
Draco felt the slightest jar as his feet hit the floor and he was once again being influenced by the pull of gravity. "Thanks." He tried to hide the fact that he was shaking from head to toe, but the observant Gryffindor simply wouldn't allow that.
"Are you okay?"
This seemed to be wrong thing to say because Draco's look of shock, frustration, fear and disbelief was accompanied by his loud expression of utter panic.
"Am I okay? You apparate in front of me, scare me half to death and cause me to fall out of a window in the top of Hogwarts' highest tower, then use some incredible power to keep me from

plummeting to the stone walkway hundreds of feet below and you can stand there and calmly ask if I'm okay? If that little trick hadn't worked do you think I would have been okay when I was lying out there broken beyond recognition with my blood seeping out of my skull?" Draco took a quick breath and continued. "When were you going to tell me you could already apparate? And that you could levitate people? How long have you been able to do this stuff?"
"Slow down," Harry could think of nothing but the need to calm Draco down. Stepping forward, he quickly closed the distance between them and wrapped his arms around the trembling blond. "Draco! You're shaking!"
"Ahwzeletalskrd" the muffled voice came from somewhere in the vicinity of Harry's shoulder. Pulling back just a bit, he looked at Draco who was intently studying the pattern of stones on the floor.
"What was that?"
"I said," Draco stated with more confidence than he felt, "I was a little scared."
"I'm so sorry. Merlin, if I'd known..." Harry's voice trailed off as Draco's steely eyes met with his own and seemed to reach directly into Harry's soul. They stood there, still gently holding each other, for what seemed to be hours.
HARRY'S POV
The moment I saw Draco falling through that window, I felt a rip inside, as if it were in my soul. Honestly, I think my primary focus was the strong desire to make sure I didn't cause the death of another person. So many deaths were already on my conscience.
As I held him, the shaking slowed down and his breathing went back to normal. But once we made eye contact, everything seemed to stop. I thought back to the night I'd followed him to his room.
He had looked directly into my eyes that night, although there's no way he could have known it. When I left his room it must have convinced him that he was dreaming, because he never mentioned it to me.
I had wondered about it, though. That was two weeks ago and I had spent every evening of those two weeks wondering how he would have reacted if he knew it was real.
DRACO's POV
Those glittering green eyes could almost make me forget. I don't think about wrong or right, war, Dark wizards, father, falling to my death, - indeed, I don't think about anything but the glow from those eyes.
The way he's got his arms around me is so like that night a couple weeks ago. The dream - it felt so real, it felt just like this.
I realize I'm about to try to kiss him and decide that it's not the best idea. How did we end up here, anyway? Oh, yes. I fell out the window.
That leads me to thinking about Harry's apparent abilities. I have to say I don't quite understand this side of Harry Potter. I definitely consider him a friend, yet I would never let a 'friend' hold me like this. I recognize the self-satisfaction of finally having won him over, yet I'm secretly disappointed that he's apparently turning his back on those Golden- Boy values of his. I've always grudgingly thought of Harry as admirable, and I can't seem to back that up any more. It's disappointing, and yet the disappointment is highly confusing to me. I'm not quite sure why I care - this is what I wanted, isn't it? This is what father wanted in my first year.
But my father never looked into those brilliant green eyes.
~*_*~

Harry finally decided it was time to move. He slowly stepped back, releasing Draco from his embrace. Draco immediately looked down at the stone floor again, trying to ignore and deny the feelings swirling inside of him at the separation.
'Back to his questions,' thought Harry. "Okay - I guess the first thing to tell you is that I didn't apparate. I just appeared."
"What do you mean?"
"I mean - Inoculus," Harry said and abruptly disappeared, leaving Draco looking around the room in confusion.
"Where the hell did he go?" Draco said, obviously thinking aloud with the assumption that Harry was no longer in the room.
"I'm right here," came the disembodied voice that most definitely belonged to Harry. The chuckle at Draco's shocked expression belonged to Harry as well.
"Bloody hell, Potter. What are you playing at?"
"I'm not playing. You had the invisibility cloak, you know I wasn't weari - where is it?"
Draco looked around, then walked toward the window feeling for the shimmery cloth. "I don't know, it might have fallen - no, wait." He picked up the cloak and draped it over one arm (providing a rather odd image). "Found it." He turned back toward the center of the room, looking around for a clue to Harry's whereabouts. "Where are you?"
"Here." Draco jumped again as he simultaneously heard the voice next to him and felt an arm across his back. "Relax Draco. I'm just standing here to make sure you don't get too close to the window again. Maybe you should sit down somewhere."
"Maybe you should make yourself visible again, Potter."
"Fine," Harry said, reappearing with ease. "What's gotten into you?"
"Nothing."
"Then why have you suddenly reverted to calling me Potter and talking to me like I'm an enemy? I'm sorry I startled you, I'm sorry you fell. I didn't intend for anything bad to happen."
"How long have you been able to make yourself invisible?"
"About two weeks.." Harry said hesitantly. 'He's going to figure it out. He's going to realize now that he wasn't dreaming that night. I can't believe I was so stupid. He's going to hate me.'
"Two weeks?" Draco asked. "And you didn't bother telling me? Is this something you cooked up with those friends of yours, so you can run around playing tricks on Malfoy, and Filch won't catch you?"
"No!" Harry couldn't believe the behavioral change in his new friend. "Hermione and Ron don't even know. I didn't tell ANYONE! I would have. I was going to tell you tonight, that's the whole reason I asked you to meet me here. I've been practicing and - you know, I don't see why I'm trying to explain myself to you. You're acting like a prat and I have nothing else to say to you while you're in this mood."
Harry turned to walk out of the room, but paused when he felt Draco grab his wrist. "What now?" He didn't understand why, but he knew that it would take every ounce of his self control to stay mad at Draco if he allowed himself to look into the crystal blue eyes. He kept his back to the Slytherin, just to be on the safe side.
"How did you learn it?"
"Safety in the Darkness, book I was reading."
"Why did you want to?"
"Seems useful, easier than a cloak."

"Why didn't you tell them?"
"Don't know."
"What's the password to my room?"
"Potter." No sooner was the word out of his mouth than Harry realized Draco had been hoping for such automatic answers. He still refused to turn around. He had enjoyed being friends with Draco - with Malfoy. It would be difficult to hate him again, even more difficult to be hated by him again. "I'm sorry, I'll go now."
"Why?" Draco asked quietly.
"Because I should. I'm sorry about tonight. I'm sorry about - well - I won't go back there. I'm sorry. Just, stay safe, okay?"
With those words, Harry pulled his arm free and walked out; disappearing once he got to the hall since he had once again left his cloak with Draco. Meanwhile, Draco sat down hard on the stone floor of the observation room, invisibility cloak in his lap, expression of utter disbelief on his f

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Chapter: 11

Draco sat in the empty observation room for longer than he cared to consider. Finally, deciding that he would just have to snap out of it, he got up, still holding Harry's invisibility cloak, and walked out into the hall.
Coming down the last flight of stairs to the main floor of the castle, he finally realized he'd been sitting - brooding - much longer than he thought. It was daylight and the early risers of the school were already in the Great Hall for breakfast. Draco thought he could get back to his room before anyone noticed; very few Slytherins were early risers. What he didn't count on was one particular red-headed Gryffindor.
"Watch where you're going Malfoy," Ron said just in time for the blond to avoid running directly into him.
Draco looked at the floor quickly, realizing that the conflict with Harry last night was bothering him much more than he expected. "Sorry, 'scuse me."
Ron was still looking in the direction of the Slytherin dorms when Harry and Hermione caught up with him 10 minutes later.
"Earth to Ron?"
"Hmm?" he turned at the sound of Harry's voice. "OH,, erm, I - uh - morning."
"Ron, are you all right?" Hermione wasn't use to seeing Ron this distracted unless it was because of her.
"Yeah, fine," he said, coming back to reality. "It was just - Malfoy acted *human* for a minute there. Freaked me out."
The three of them laughed as they headed into the Great Hall for breakfast, two of them completely oblivious to the concerned look and the forced sound of the laughter coming from the dark-haired one in the group.
~*_*~
Potions. Double Potions, with the Gryffindors. Potions with Potter, Harry. Two hours in a

dungeon with Harry. Draco couldn't seem to put his finger on the precise reason that he was dreading this class. He'd been getting a lot of comments from his housemates ever since he and Harry became friends. Of course, they didn't know he was friends with the Golden Boy, they just knew that Malfoy was a little different and didn't seem to enjoy harassing said Golden Boy anymore.

He was early, as usual. Draco sat, watching as the rest of the class filtered in, Snape pacing around with his robes billowing behind him. Finally, at the back of the crowd, came the Gryffindor Trio. Draco watched in amusement as the three of them realized there were only three seats left in the room, and that one of them was next to Draco Malfoy. Harry whispered something to his friends and nodded toward the empty seats on the other side of the room. At Hermione's questioning look, he nodded again and the Trio split up. Draco took a deep breath and braced himself against the onslaught of emotions as Harry walked toward him.

As Hermione and Ron sat down, Ron mumbled his concern for Harry and Draco, just loud enough for Hermione to think she'd heard him wrong. She didn't get the chance to ask about it, because at that moment, Snape stopped his pacing, faced the classroom and asked Seamus Finnegan what would happen if he added a handful of peppercorns to an infusion of wolfsbane and Hydra blood. Seamus, of course, didn't know and Snape promptly took 40 points from Gryffindor.

As several Slytherins smirked at this, Harry was distracted by the hand brushing his thigh under the table. He was shocked, nervous and a little excited, but couldn't bear to let anyone, especially Draco, realize how much that touch affected him. He'd begun to realize that he was getting too close to Draco.

'Why is it that I can't just use him for his knowledge and not care what happens to him? I just - ahh, there's his hand again. I've got to find a way to get him to stop that.'

Harry reached down and clamped his hand over Draco's, simultaneously turning to land an uncharacteristic sneer on the boy's face. His resolve nearly faltered when he thought he saw a trace of disappointment in the blue-grey eyes, but it was gone before he could be certain. All he could see, upon truly looking, was the familiar fire of cruelty and joy - the sort of joy Dra-no-Malfoy always got when harassing Harry and his friends. As they glared at each other, the blue-grey eyes became silvery and the sparkling emerald eyes became darker, much like the night in the potions classroom.

Draco held Harry's gaze while telling himself that he didn't feel anything unusual and there was nothing special about that smoldering look. After what seemed like quite some time, but was in reality less than a minute, Draco moved his hand slightly, to let Harry recognize that it held a piece of parchment.

Harry took it, looked down and read ~infuse wb & H-blood, you get empathy potion, add peppercorns, it's a love potion~

Surprised that Draco would be giving him answers, he looked up, suspiciously at the blond Slytherin who had invaded his dreams last night. Harry didn't think he could ever tell anyone that he'd woken up shaking and crying after the dream about Draco's fall from the Astronomy Tower. In Harry's dream, Draco hadn't stopped falling. It was horrid.

Harry was so caught up in the emotions, thoughts, memories, dreams and Draco's note that he didn't hear Snape calling his name.

"MR. POTTER!" Harry jumped, looked at Draco again and then at the very impatient Potions professor with the inky black eyes glaring at him.

'I'm so sick of this.' Harry thought as he gave Snape the same uncharacteristic sneer. He noticed a flicker of questioning in the older man's gaze, but it, too, was gone before he could be certain.
"Yes?" He purposely left off the 'sir' simply not being in the mood to indulge Snape's attitude or ego.
"I was asking if you could tell me what happens if you add a handful of peppercorns to and infusion of wolfsbane and Hydra blood. It seems that no one else in your house has been taking the initiative to study, though. Is there any REASON I should expect Harry Potter to know the answer when even his studious friend, Ms. Granger doesn't?"
"What will happen is highly dependant on who is making the potion as well as who drinks the potion and who is around when the potion is taken. As those possibilities are endless I can't see how anyone could answer your question. Were you, however, to ask what the infusion does and how the peppercorns could change that, I would be able to tell you that the infusion of Hydra blood with wolfsbane is an empathy potion, allowing the creator and the drinker to have a temporary emotional connection. The addition of a handful of peppercorns makes it a love potion, which we all know are forbidden due to the total lack of control by the drinker and the complete power held by the object of the inflicted affections."
Snape's eyes widened ever-so-slightly during Harry's response, barely acknowledging his surprise and approval. The other students in the room, however, were doing well to keep their chins out of the empty cauldrons on the tables in front of them. Under the table, Harry felt Draco's pinkie finger wrap itself around his own and squeeze, as though silently saying 'Way to go!'
Snape cleared his throat and quietly added 60 points to Gryffindor, causing the aforementioned chins to fall even further. Then, without further comment, he barked out his orders for the empathy potion they would be preparing today, reminding everyone to leave the peppercorns alone.
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As they were leaving the classroom, Draco and Harry seemed to take a little longer to put their supplies away, both hesitating in the hopes of talking to each other. Harry went so far as to tell Ron and Hermione he would catch up with them at lunch. Draco glared at Pansy when she tried to hang around waiting for him. Finally, as they left the dungeon classroom, they were the only ones around and Harry took the opportunity to quietly approach Draco about his run-in with Ron that morning.
"What did the Weasel say?"
"Stop calling him that," Harry said. "He didn't say much, just that you nearly ran over him and then you actually apologized to him. We all know you well enough to know that it's not in your normal behavior to apologize to people." This last bit was said with a bit of dry humor but Draco barely noticed it.
"Well, I didn't mean to run over him. I was just, my mind was somewhere else at the time."
"Okay. Oh, and thanks for the help in potions."
"I can't say I was much help. You went into much more detail than I would have expected. Quite a performance you put on there, you sounded like.." he trailed off, not sure he wanted to finish the sentence.
"You?" Harry finished for him. "Listen, can we meet tonight? Maybe 11 or so?"
"Sure, how about the Quidditch stands, that hidden spot near the broom shed?"
"Sounds good, see you th

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Chapter: 12

To all my faithful readers (and any new readers I may gather), I would like to say thank you! Thank you for reading, reviewing and enjoying. Thank you for the kind words, the helpful suggestions, and the high praise. I have lots of stuff in mind for this fic and would like to remind each and every one of you that you can't take anything, especially in the wizarding world, at face value. (Enjoy! - more notes after the chapter.

Chapter 12

Harry walked slowly out to the pitch at 10:45 that evening. He was listening closely, expecting to hear Draco's footsteps or something to let him know when the blond arrived. He hoped Draco would be using the invisibility cloak again, to make sure he wouldn't get into trouble. Of course, as Head Boy, he wouldn't be likely to get in trouble for walking around after hours, but one could never be too safe. Once he got to the designated spot, Harry decided he should be visible, if for no other reason than to avoid Draco's yelling about it again.

It was a new moon and a cloudy night, which meant there was no natural light out there. Not wanting to worry with lighting his wand, Harry had decided to bring a couple vials of the night vision potion. He and Draco would both be able to see each other and their surroundings without the tell-tale wand-lights they usually relied on.

He decided to sit while waiting for Draco and walked over to the broom shed so he could lean back against it. Much to his surprise, when he sat and scooted back toward the wall, he was met with something much softer than the wall. Something that said "Ooohff," very quietly as it breathed on his neck. Harry had to focus for a moment to get the shivers to stop running up and down his spine, but as the breath continued on his neck and he almost felt the brush of soft lips on the sensitive spot behind his earlobe, he found he had no control over the shivers and the best thing to do would be move.

"Harry" The voice cleared up any doubts as to where he was. He was sitting between Draco's legs and those were Draco's lips on his neck. That was definitely Draco's tongue teasing the soft flesh of his neck and those had to be Draco's arms that were now wrapping themselves around his torso and pulling him closer to what could only be the body of one Draco Malfoy.

"Wha..what.." Harry paused. He couldn't do this. He couldn't allow himself to get close to anyone else. Especially not like this. He took a deep breath, reminded himself of the many people he had lost, the others who were injured, the children who were orphaned, the Dark Lord who was determined to hurt anyone and everyone Harry Potter cared about. These thoughts helped Harry to gather his resolve (though not before Draco gently bit Harry's neck bringing a spontaneous moaning/gasping sound from his throat). He pulled away and turned to face Draco with the coldest look he could manage.

Only when he realized that he could barely make out the shape of the Slytherin in front of him, did he remember that there was no light out there and therefore the look on his face would do him no good at all. He would have to rely on his voice.

"Don't do that, Malfoy. I said I wanted to talk with you, not shag you."

"Who said anything about shagging, Potter? You sat in my lap, what was I supposed to do?" Draco didn't know any other way to react to the raven- haired boy when he was in this mood. It was almost comforting, reminding him of the relationship they'd had for over six years, but something deep inside told him he didn't really want it like this. Not being one for introspection, Draco decided that he liked Potter and their light-hearted quarrels were fun, so he went with it.
"It was an accident. I was just.. nevermind, it really doesn't matter. I did need to talk with you though."
"Okay, what about? Are you going to tell me about your new skills now?"
"Um, sure. Let's see, I can appear and disappear at will, I didn't know I could do anything wandless that strongly, and I'm still sorry I startled you. I'm beginning to catch thoughts sometimes, but only when there's a lot of emotion behind them. And, it appears that I'm a seer. I've told Hermione that, but none of the other stuff. I only told her that because she was pestering me to talk about stuff and I didn't want to."
"Have you tested the wandless magic? I mean, aside from last night?"
"No. I'm not really sure what to test it on."
"Why don't you see if you can summon something without your wand?"
"Um.. Accio firebolt"
Harry's broom came rushing from the broom shed and stopped next to him in mere seconds.
"Care to try something else?" Draco said, sounding less impressed than he truly was. Wandless magic is quite powerful and something that is usually done only in times of duress or by the absolute most powerful of wizards. In fact, his parents and their associates had given him access to the knowledge that not even Voldemort was powerful enough to use wandless magic. "Don't use the spells. Just do it."
Harry looked at Draco, contemplating, then quickly shifted his eyes upward. Before Draco could do anything, he was sitting on the edge of the broom shed's roof. "Well, that was a bit..startling. Would you be so kind as to bring me down now?"
Harry glanced at the ground and Draco was gently set on his feet.
Before Draco could say another word, Harry was intently hissing at the back corner of the broom shed. He walked over and knelt in front of what Draco assumed must be a snake. The parseltongue was interesting to listen to, but a bit disconcerting as well, simply because Draco couldn't make out what was being said.
/massster isss powerful..but boy still haunts/
/draco's my friend now..he's not hurting me/
/he hauntsssss..masssters dreamssss/
/it was just a nightmare..because he fell last night/
/massster doesn't sssseeeee..boy hauntsss..massster dessiresss/
/desire draco? I can't/
/you do..sentee can see/
/you are sentee?/
/yessss..and you desire the boy..massster/
/okay, I do, but he's not hurting me/
/master will call sentee if needed?/
/yess/
Harry turned around to face Draco again, searching for his shape in the darkness.
"So, you do realize that the Dark Arts aren't the only reason you can do this, right?"

'Ah, there he is,' Harry thought. "What do you mean?"
"Magic is neutral. Your ability to be invisible, use wandless magic, even talk to snakes, it's because of the amount and strength of your power, not the lightness or darkness of it."
"I..that doesn't make sense. If I had the power to do this stuff before, then why couldn't I?"
"You didn't try. You never knew it was a possibility until you started studying the Dark Arts," Draco paused, considering. "Why DID you start studying the Dark Arts? Why did you suddenly decide after all these years that you wanted to be my friend?"
"Because, there was something that drew me."
"Drew you to darkness?"
'No, drew me to you.' But Harry wasn't about to say that. He wasn't quite prepared to accept what he had just admitted to Sentee, either. "Yes."
"What?"
"The protection."
Draco laughed. "What protection, haven't you been paying attention? Don't you know what Dark wizards tend to do?"
"Yes, but they never do those things to each other, or the loved ones of other dark wizards."
"Have you never heard of the torture Voldemort puts his Death Eaters through?"
"He rarely kills them. And he doesn't touch their families."
Harry heard a choking sound from Draco, a cross between a laugh and a sob. Finally deciding that he needed to see, and realizing that wand-light still might be noticed from the castle, he pulled out the vials of night vision potion and handed one to Draco.
"Here, night vision. I hate talking to people I can't see."
Both of them quickly drank the potion and Harry placed both empty vials back in his pocket. The stood there, eyes closed, for a few moments, allowing time for the potion to take affect.
HARRY's POV
As soon as I opened my eyes, I realized the night vision potion may not have been my smartest idea. I'd managed (after many bizarre dreams and inappropriate thoughts) to stop thinking about the way Draco looked that day in Potions. Once I saw the shimmer of his hair and the pure liquid diamond eyes gazing at me, I was lost again. The desire that ran through my body was like nothing I'd ever felt before. Of course, I'd never really paid THAT much attention to my attractions, preferring to keep to myself as much as possible. But if Sentee could sense this in me, no wonder she worried about the affects Draco could have on my safety.
DRACO's POV
Now I know why I didn't look at Harry in class that day. I'd already been intrigued by his hands, I would have lost all sense if I'd looked into his eyes after taking that potion. I've never seen anything so bright, it was as if he had two miniature suns inside his head and they were shining through a pair of pure emerald contact lenses. They were captivating. Something made him gasp slightly and when he opened his mouth I could see the tips of his pearly white teeth. I longed to run my tongue across those teeth just to see if they were as smooth as they looked. The upward glow from his white collar cast an odd shadow on his face, but the brilliance of his eyes countered it perfectly. I'd never felt so drawn to anyone in my life. Of course, Pansy couldn't be as captivating and beautiful as Harry, and having never even pretended to date someone else.. did I just call him beautiful? Merlin, I'm in trouble now.
Thankfully, before I could say or do anything that would show my foolishness, Harry said the one thing I'd never expected to hear from him.

"I'd like you to write a letter to your father and have him set up a meeting for me with Voldemort."
~*~*~*~*~*~*~
menecarkawan - yeah! I'm glad you thought the scene with Snape was funny. I can hear Harry's voice in my head during that answer. Hope you liked the broom shed meeting.
She-who-is-not-to-psycho - WOW! You get a cookie for giving me my longest review EVER! I'm glad you came back and hope you have time to check back and read the rest. I'm honored beyond belief that you think Albus sounds like the original. I've tried really hard to capture these characters as much as I can, and can sometimes hear the voices in my head (esp. Hermione for some reason) Are they too corny? Please tell me what doesn't work, I really want this to be a good fic!
Malfoy Snogger - love your name, don't worry I'm not stopping there. And I can't tell you what will happen, that would give away the ending (and the sequel - cause I'm thinking there will be a sequel, maybe)
Jade Maxwell - I think that's the first drool I've gotten, I'm so pleased! Wow, such awesome pointless praise, feel free to pass on some more of that whenever you get the chance!
BloodIce - thanks for reading, I hope you liked this chapter as well.
Wow - 22 reviews, that was officially an average of 2 reviews per chapter. I'm jumping up and down in my chair with excitement (and since I'm at the office right now, that's getting me some really strange looks from the salespeople around here.) Please, please, please - if you read, review. If you review, and you've seen anything that should be changed or that seems WAY to OOC, or inconsistencies, let me know.
**Now, click that little blue button for me - you know you want

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Chapter: 13

Recap: "I'd like you to write a letter to your father and have him set up a meeting for me with Voldemort."
Chapter 13
DRACO's POV
I felt a dull thud reverberate through my body as my knees gave way and I unceremoniously landed on my butt. I couldn't have heard him right. There's no way I heard him right. It's just not possible that he could be that incredibly dim. Or maybe he's got a death wish. That's it. The fame and power has finally gone to his head and he's decided to end it all. He must figure the Dark Lord will be so anxious to kill him that he won't be tortured first.
Torture! I'd nearly forgotten! Those glowing eyes of his distracted me so much that I forgot he's carrying around some altruistic image of Death Eaters in his head. 'He doesn't touch their families' my arse! I can't even count the times I've been put under the Cruciatus curse just so my father would do his bidding. I've heard the stories of other families, Death Eaters trying to bring their children into the fold. Hell, it would seem that some of the students here are already Death Eaters, and my Father's made plenty of comments to suggest that I will become one during the

winter holidays.
"Are you sure?"
Of course I'm sure. Hmm, that wasn't my subconscious asking that question was it?
"No, Malfoy, it was me." Harry dropped down to a sitting position in front of me.
"What are you talking about?"
"I'm talking about you. Are you sure that your father is planning on you becoming a Death Eater?"
"Yes. I thought you said you could only catch random thoughts."
"No, I said that I can catch thoughts sometimes, if there's a lot of emotion behind them. You've been raging with emotions since I came out here."
"Really, like what?"
"Your father used the unforgivables on you?"
"At times." I really didn't feel like talking about it, but I knew I needed to say something to convince Harry that Voldemort and his Death Eaters were not a path for him to choose. "You're wrong, you know. He does hurt family members."
"I'm sorry Draco. Really, I am. I just, I have to do this. I need you to trust me, trust that I know what I'm doing."
"Trust you.." The full weight of the word trust hit me like a ton of bricks. I don't know that I've ever trusted anyone before, well, aside from my father and look how that's turning out.
"You're still a ball of conflicting emotions, Draco."
"Like what kind of emotions?" My mind elsewhere, I simply asked out of courtesy, something to continue the communication between us. I didn't expect the answer that would follow.
"Like anger, shock, fear, desire."
I looked up at the last word, almost relieved that he already knew. It was something I had finally admitted to myself after a few dreams, and I was beginning to hope the feeling was mutual after I found out that he HAD indeed been in my room that night. I think I gasped. Harry Potter is a truly breathtaking beautiful, sensual human specimen. I could tell by the smile that graced his face that he knew exactly what I was thinking. I felt myself moving slowly towards him, unable to break the eye contact. In the space of a few moments, I was diminishing the distance between us, knowing without a doubt that the moment my lips touched his, my life would inevitably change. A sudden horror that it would be a negative change made me want to turn away but I found I couldn't no matter how hard I tried. Our noses were touching, our breaths were mingling together and there were two battling thoughts in my head.
'I've been waiting for this for so long'
'Why can't I turn away?'
Again reading my thoughts, Harry answered me, his lips gently brushing against mine as he spoke. "Me too, and because I don't want you to." Any response I might have had to that was lost in the pure ecstasy of his lips on mine. The heat that spread through my torso was mildly reminiscent of a drink of strong alcohol, but I also felt tingles coursing throughout my body.
~*_*~ The gentle, questioning explorative nature of the kiss quickly turned into a passionate, needful urgency. Harry felt the question on Draco's lips and knew the thoughts that ran through his head. He reached up, placing one hand on the side of Draco's neck, fingers tangling in the pale hair, his thumb gently stroking the smooth skin of Draco's jawbone. He needed to express his desire, needed Draco to recognize and accept it. Harry realized, the moment he said the word desire, the instant their eyes met, that this was exactly what Harry had been needing all year.

Contact. He'd been shutting himself off from so much, only finding interest in learning and practicing his new powers. He barely realized that he wasn't experiencing many emotions anymore. It seemed Draco was the only one who could bring emotion to the surface for him. The two of them broke contact, breathing heavily and staring at each other in wonderment.
"I-uh"
"Me too"
"You said"
"I'm sorry, I guess that was wrong of me, wasn't it?"
"Potter! Would you please stop talking to me before I can finish my sentences? I feel like I'm sleeping through half the bloody conversation!"
"Sorry."
"Thank you. Now, what was wrong of you?"
"Drawing you in. I mean, I guess it was unfair. I just - wanted to."
"What are you talking about?"
"You were wondering why you couldn't turn away before we kissed. You were just about to ask why I said 'because I don't want you to'. I'm explaining. You couldn't turn away because I was drawing you in."
"Did you put a curse on me?"
"My gods, am I THAT bad a kisser?"
"What? No, I mean - aarrgh. I am trying to get you to explain what you meant by drawing me in. Were you controlling me?"
"Yes." He said it so bluntly, so matter-of-fact, like it wasn't a big deal. Like every witch and wizard from the Weasleys up to Dumbledore wouldn't be furious to know that he was using power to control people. Draco simply stared, disbelieving. How could Harry have gotten so strong and not realized it?
"What do you mean? How strong am I?"
'Merlin, he's completely oblivious!'
"I am not."
"Please, Potter, stop reading my mind."
"On one condition. Stop calling me Potter. You haven't called me that in months, at least not when we're alone. I would think after we kissed isn't a good time to start that again."
"Had that kiss been of my own free will, I might agree with you, but I hardly had a choice in the matter. What is it, some silent Imperius curse?"
"No, it's not that strong. It's just, well, I don't know what it is to tell you the truth. I was just thinking that I wanted to kiss you, and I wanted you to kiss me back. I didn't want you to turn away, so I focused on that. And you didn't turn away." Harry was slowly leaning closer to Draco as he said this. The blond simply sat there, staring at the ground, wondering how much truth was in this statement. Once he flicked his eyes upward diamonds and emeralds clicked together and he found himself leaning in for another kiss. Just as their lips brushed each other, Draco leaned back, somewhat startled by the involuntary disappointed whimper from the Gryffindor in front of him.
"Are you still controlling me?"
"No."
"You promise?"
"Yes, I promise. Do you trust me?"

Trust, there was that word again. Mere moments ago, Draco had been certain that he could never trust anyone, not after dealing with his father. Looking into Harry's eyes, Draco realized now that his father couldn't possibly touch him the way Harry had. The depth and reality of his feelings settled into his soul with a certainty like nothing he'd ever felt before. He knew it would be some time before he'd reveal it all to the young man in front of him, but for now, it was enough that he recognized it himself.

Draco looked at the other boy in amazement. "You honestly have to ask that? You think I would have any reason not to trust you after the events of the last few days? If you truly wanted to hurt me, you wouldn't have saved my life when I fell."

Harry's eyes darkened noticeably at the mention of Draco's fall. To Draco, vision still affected by the potion, it seemed as though the emeralds had been replaced by something much darker, barely allowing the light to shine through, emotion swirling in the depths of those eyes and suddenly, without warning, a shimmering gem slid down the young man's cheek. Draco reached up, tentatively, and touched the gem. It was wet. He moved to his knees and pressed his lips against the glowing path of the tear, and against the next few tears that followed it. Realizing that he couldn't kiss away every tear, and that he had no idea why Harry was crying in the first place, he simply wrapped his arms around his companion and held him close.

"What's this for?" Draco asked after a few moments.

"I..it was - I had a dream."

"Voldemort?"

"No, it was that night, after I left the tower. I dreamt that you fell. That I couldn't stop you. It was horrible. And I couldn't figure out what to do, I couldn't explain, I didn't even think you'd want to talk to me again because you were mad at me."

"I was?"

"Weren't you? About me sneaking in your room. About me kissing you that night?"

"You silly git." Draco caught Harry's lips in another passionate, yearning kiss, twisting his hands through the messy dark hair, reveling in the sensations caused by the hands that were gently roaming his torso. Pulling back in need of oxygen, he was pleased to see that green eyes were bright and twinkling again. "Do you really think I would have been mad about you kissing me that night, considering that I've been wanting it for ages?"

"Well, I didn't know you wanted it. You thought you were dreaming. I didn't think you would react the same way if you knew it was real, and especially if you knew it was me."

"Oh, but I DID know it was you. I know the sound of your breath, Harry." Draco stopped, suddenly realizing he was getting a bit mushy and that this, er, CONVERSATION (and its accompanying activities) had completely distracted him from the real issue at hand. "You simply CAN'T meet with him. Are you DAFT?"

"What?"

"Voldemort. You can't honestly ask me to set up a meeting. He'd kill you!"

"Well, since we're changing the subject, what about you? You're planning to be a Death Eater by the end of next month!"

"I never said that!"

"You didn't have to, remember?"

"I was thinking about my FATHER. HE wants me to become a Death Eater. It's quite different."

"And what do you want, Draco?" Harry's voice had begun to get that demanding, closed off tone in it again. The same tone that had mildly excited Draco on many occasions, starting with that

night in the potions classroom, the night they finally shook hands. The same tone that now excited him and mildly disturbed him simultaneously. Unbidden thoughts and images of EXACTLY what Draco wanted began flashing through his head. His heart started racing, his breath came slightly faster, his pants began to get just a little tighter.
"Draco!" Harry's voice interrupted a very strong train of thought. "I meant," he said slowly, "what do you want to do about your father's wishes? Are you looking forward to becoming a Death Eater?"
"It's not truly something one looks forward to, Harry. He places his potentials under the Cruciatus curse until he's satisfied with the volume of their screams, then he puts them under Imperius and makes them fulfill whatever twisted desires he can come up with at the time. There's a test for loyalty, usually involving the torture and/or murder of some Muggles, then finally, once he's determined they're worthy, he paralyzes them so they can't twitch or move or squirm with the pain of the Dark Mark being branded onto their arm. Now tell me, Harry, if you want to meet him so badly, if YOU are thinking about becoming a Death Eater, is that something YOU would look forward to?"
"I never said I was planning to become a Death Eater. I just.."
"You never really answered me, either. Why is it that you've suddenly decided after all this time that you wanted to learn the Dark Arts. This isn't just about defending yourself against them, is it?"
"I told you," Harry's voice was quiet again. "Protection."
"I'll protect you," Draco's voice was just as quiet.
"It's not me I'm worried about." "You're never going to tell me what's really going on in that gorgeous head of yours, are you?"
"You really think I'm gorgeous?"
"Stop changing the subject, Potter. You can be so frustrating sometimes."
"I thought we'd agreed that you wouldn't call me Potter anymore."
"Sorry, but will you?"
"Will I what?" Harry smirked, teasing the blond in the hopes that he would drop the uncomfortable topic so they could get back to the enjoyable activities they'd recently discovered together. He reached one hand up, caressing Draco's cheek and rubbing his thumb over the still kiss-swollen lips.
"Will you stop that and pay attention to me. I'm asking you to tell me what you're up to. What kind of kooky plan do you have and how do you expect Voldemort to help you?"
"I can't tell you that."
"Why not?"
"Because, the less you know, the safer you'll be," Harry was beginning to get quite emotional.
"My father is Lucius Malfoy, my safety has already been determined."
"You know that he'll keep you safe?"
"No. But I know that if he doesn't want me safe, or his Lord doesn't want me safe, then I won't be."
"You know that if anyone find out about us, you won't be safe, right?"
"I know."
"We should go in, get some sleep. It's got to be getting late."
"Right. You're right." They both stood, stretching out the cramped legs that had been folded underneath them. Harry intertwined his fingers with Draco's, pulling him close and meeting his

lips once again. The kiss was sweet, lingering and slightly passionate.
Once they finally broke apart, green and gray eyes met each other, staring, seeking answers to unasked questions. Draco took a deep breath, gathered his nerve, and finally asked, "So, what are we?"
"I don't know, Draco. We're..different."
That seemed to be the best answer either of them could comprehend at the time. The smiled at each other once more, then Draco donned the invisibility cloak, Harry made himself invisible and they silently walked back to the castle and attempted to get some sleep.
~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
A/N: Hope you all liked that chapter. It's by far my longest chapter yet. (over 2500 words) I made a few corrections to chapter one and realized it's less than 900 words! Can't believe the difference. Anyway, don't worry about chapter one, it was just typos. However, I know I've posted a few other things with typos as well, and therefore I'm wondering if anyone out there would like to volunteer to beta for me?
On to the replies:
Jade Maxwell: you flatter me too much, and yes, they are!
She-Who-Is: I hope you finally found chapter 12. I know how frustrating that is, I'm having the same problem right now with a couple fics on my faves list. Sorry about the angst, I hope this made up for some of it.
Menecarkawan: yes, shake him roughly, he needs it! Can't believe you thought that one was short, it was 1600 words, (see my earlier note about chap one) Anyway, I hope this one makes up for it, but don't expect them all to be this long.
PeachDancer82; Thank you for the comments. The past will be returning in the next chapter or two. I hope this was enough H/D action to tide you over for a bit.*grins
Delie:I'm going to tell you a secret - Shhh, don't tell any of the other readers.I didn't realize the possible connection when I made Narcissa's maiden name Black. I was just looking for now that you mention it, Sirius has owled to let me know that he and Narcissa are cousins. More about that later. You are so incredibly flattering! I hope you aren't TOO upset at catching up!
Hermione DB Granger: I'm so incredibly flattered now! Awesome reviews AND referrals! That error was supposed to be 'reputation' sorry for the typos, I've fixed chp 1 now. I'm really sorry you don't like H/D fics, but that has to be the absolute best praise I've received in all my 32 reviews! I sincerely hope you do keep reading, I'd like to see what you think later on.
Aranami: Thank you! Sentee will be coming back later on, so I'm glad you like her. She's got a very protective streak for Harry, doesn't she?
To all my readers: Thank you so much! You are great, you are awesome! Please, do me a favor and check out my favorite stories list. There are so many wonderful stories on here and I want you all to read those I've listed because they are in large part my inspiration!
Now, click that little button on the bottom left and tell me what you like, don't like, want, don't want, etc. I live for feedb

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Chapter: 14

**reposted same day to correct an error.

Chapter 14

Harry awoke the next morning with a shooting pain in his scar. Pain this intense could only mean one thing, Voldemort was on a rampage. After the various battles over the last two years, Madam Pomphrey and Professor Snape had put their heads together to create a medicinal potion for Harry that would alleviate the backlash he felt from Voldemort's attacks. Unfortunately, as they had seen before the last major attack, it only worked on what Voldemort considered mundane. Harry got up and grabbed some parchment and a quill, deciding that he needed to get an early start on his day.

~Moony,

I'm writing to tell you a few things, but I'll have to be quick about it because I've got tons to do. Firstly, hope you're doing well and that I'll be able to see you soon. I've still got my eye out for that rat. Secondly, as my surrogate godfather (and probably the only person I can talk to about this right now) I feel I should tell you that it would appear that I'm, well I have, ah-hem, I've got a bo… no that won't work… I think I'm beginning my first romantic, no scratch that, my first intimate (?) relationship. It's not actually extremely intimate, just yet. I know I'm not making any sense, but as I've been dreaming of him half the night, well, you get the idea. Thirdly, I'm on my way to ask for a meeting of the Order. Something is up, more details later. I'll be fine, don't worry about me. I've got everything taken care of.

Please stay safe,

Son of Prongs~

Harry grabbed another sheet of parchment and scribbled an even shorter letter.

~Fawkes,

Order trouble, Gargoyle at 8 am.

Lightening~

Harry rolled up both letters and quickly got dressed, thankful that his dorm mates were still asleep. He grabbed his winter cloak and slipped through the door and down to the common room without disturbing anyone. At just after five in the morning, he knew that the chances were good that he'd be the first one up.

As he walked out to the owlery, Harry pulled his heavy winter cloak around him tighter. The biting cold seemed worse today than ever. Even last night, when he was out at the darkest hour of the night and sat in the grass that was now stiff with frost, the cold hadn't reached through him like this.

'Of course, last night I WAS engaged in some warming activities,' he thought with a grin.

He was still grinning slightly when he reached the owlery and walked up to Hedwig. "Hey girl," he said gently. He stroked her head and was rewarded with a drowsy hoot from her. Once the snow-white owl woke up completely and looked at her owner, however, she quickly changed her attitude. She turned partially away from him, as though she wanted to ignore him, but knew she couldn't quite do it. "What's wrong, Hedwig?"

She made a slight trilling noise which, to Harry's ears, sounded very much like Mrs. Weasely scolding the twins for some prank. 'Hmm,' he thought. 'I wonder what this is about.' He tied the first letter to her leg and attempted to get her to look at him, but to no avail. "Well, should I use another owl, or can I trust you to take this to Moony for me?" With that, she looked at him,

hooted indignantly and flew out the window. Harry shrugged his head and went to another owl in the room, attached his second letter, explaining that it went to Fawkes and watched as the bird flew out the window.
The young raven-haired man stood at the window, looking out over the grounds of the school that had become his home over the last six and a half years. As the winter holidays that would mark the midpoint of the school year drew closer, Harry found himself wishing the year wouldn't end. He'd never really had a home with the Dursley's, but in spite of spending his miserable summers there, he'd been excited and hopeful about returning to Hogwarts each year. This would be different. This summer he would be turning 18 and he would be through with school. Though he was still unsure what kind of career might be suitable for him, Harry was more concerned about what kind of home might be suitable. He'd never given it much thought before. Now, all he could do was assume that he'd have a small flat by himself. He certainly wouldn't be getting married like Ron and Hermione. He couldn't imagine going back to the Dursley's. Unexpected images of coming home to Draco's welcoming arms flooded his mind, but he pushed them away. Even if he were to allow this-whatever-to go any further, it could never be permanent. At least, not as long as it would put Draco in danger.
The intensity of that thought was the first clue Harry had as to his deep, undiscovered feelings for the blond. Feelings that went much deeper than the shivers and tingles brought about by the memory of Draco's tongue sliding gently across his lips. Draco's hands pulling him closely, as if they had to get rid of all space between them or they would surely die. Draco's teeth gently nipping at his neck. Draco's gasp when their tongues first touched each other.
'Stop that. You'll never get anywhere if you stand around mooning like that.' He quickly reminded himself of his purpose, his very reason for still being here, as well as the lives lost because of him. These thoughts were somber enough to dispel any comfort or joy he might have felt at the memories of the Slytherin. Realizing that he still needed to get some breakfast and prepare for his meeting, he left the owlery in a rush.
~*_*~
Harry sat in the empty Great Hall, enjoying his pancakes and eggs and decided that he rather liked having breakfast before everyone else. It was quiet, allowing him to relax a bit and spend some time with his own thoughts, thoughts that continuously conflicted with each other, but still his own thoughts. 'I just might start getting up at 5 o'clock every day! (He chuckled to himself) Now, wouldn't THAT make Ron and Hermione think I've lost my marbles! Almost as much as telling them about Draco.'
'HARRY!'
He jumped up, looking around frantically for the source of the cry. Someone was frightened, or in danger, or both. Someone who sounded too much like Draco.
'HARRY, PLEASE HEAR ME, PLEASE HELP'
'Where are you?' He could only hope the thought would actually reach the intended.
'ASTRONOMY TOWER'
Harry jumped up and ran, too scared to even contemplate what type of problem could have prompted such a panicked sound in Draco's thoughts.
As he burst into the Observation room he nearly froze in shock. Through the window (the same window Draco had fallen through before) he could see the bottom of a school robe and a pair of feet dangling below it. The person (Draco) wearing the robe had to be hanging from the turret at the top of the tower. Without conscious thought, Harry reached out with all the magic he had

inside and grabbed hold of Draco, safely pulling him inside the tower. Once he was certain the young man was indeed safe and on solid ground, he gathering the shaking Slytherin in his arms. "What in the name of Merlin were you doing out there? Were you trying to hurt yourself or have you just completely taken leave of your senses? What if I hadn't heard you? What if you hadn't heard me? What if I hadn't gotten here in time? You could have fallen; you could have d-" he paused, unable to say the word. His mind swam as he realized the multitude of reasons for his outburst. He wasn't just upset or nervous. He wasn't just sad or depressed about the deaths and loss in his life. He wasn't just enamored with the blond Adonis in front of him. He wasn't just wound up as a result of the run and the high magic. He was falling in love. "Gods, Dray. I can't do this."

Harry looked up into the glittering gray-blue eyes and realized that all his plans were going to be even more difficult thanks to those eyes. Those piercing eyes that seemed to reach through his own and deep into his heart, even into his very soul. Those eyes that were looking extremely tired this morning. "What's wrong, didn't you get enough sleep?"

"No, I haven't slept at all. I've been, erm, studying."

"Studying what?"

Instead of answering, Draco looked at the large table in the center of the room. There was a piece of parchment, a quill and three books lying on the table. Draco held out his hand and with a flick of his eyes, he was holding the parchment. With another flick, the quill began to float.

Harry laughed at this. "Couldn't let the Boy-Who-Lived have a talent that you don't have, eh?"

"Oh, but you do, Harry. You have no idea, but you do."

Their eyes met again as Harry offered a questioning look in response to Draco's quiet tone. "What is it, Dray? You sound sad. I never knew a Malfoy could sound sad."

Draco held his gaze, raw emotion running rampant through his eyes. "You've never seen a Malfoy fall in love."

DRACO'S POV

I don't know why I told him that. I just felt I had to. Yes, I was up all night trying wandless magic. My father's always told me I had a very strong bloodline and that I would be more powerful than him. I never thought about how powerful I could be, never thought about how powerful anyone could be, really. Not until I saw what Harry could do. When I FELT what Harry could do. The power and strength emanates from him now. That's why I can't believe he doesn't realize it. Though, from my early morning experiments and my very brief success at self-levitating, I can see where it's an amazingly heady experience.

Feeling this power within me takes my breath away, almost like Harry's kisses. I'm staring at his lips now. I can't look him in the eye anymore. I'm ashamed to admit that I'm afraid of what I'll find there, now that I've told him how I feel. Hmn, a Malfoy in love. That is a bit of a stretch. I've never seen anything resembling love between my parents. I never really gave a thought to love until recently. Never thought of marriage, relationships, sex, families and the like as anything but a way to further a bloodline. Not until late in our sixth year. Looking back on it, I can remember times, many times, when I was so attracted to him that I could barely force myself to walk away; ignoring the strange looks I got for passing up the chance to insult him. It's no wonder he never noticed. What reason would he have for noticing me or my behavior when he had real friends, a real life, not just some shell of a life designed for him by his father? His mouth. It's so perfectly shaped, slightly full lips, turning up just a bit at the ends, so tempting, so completely kissable.

HARRY's POV

I've never seen a Malfoy fall in love? What's he getting at? Surely he's not - no, he couldn't be. He can't be. I don't want him to be. Okay, I do, but I can't allow it. That would put him in even more danger. Unless he comes with me? That might work. I could bring him into - oh, who am I trying to kid?
Yourself?
Right, and I can't do that, can I? Because I'm in here and I know what I'm thinking so I can't be tricked!
He looks so sad, and he won't even look at me. I wish I could make everything perfect. I wish we hadn't fought all these years. Maybe things would have been easier if we'd been old friends who just fell in love like Ron and 'Mione. We wouldn't have all these- these issues. There I go again, trying to kid myself. I know better than that. It wouldn't have made any difference if we'd been friends before. There's still Voldemort.
~*_*~
Draco finally gave in to the urge and leaned forward, claiming Harry's lips in a gentle, yet passionate kiss. Harry gasped as he felt Draco's velvety tongue flicker over his lips. That same tongue slipped inside his mouth and he deepened the kiss, meeting it with his own tongue.
~*_*~
HARRY'S POV
I honestly think I could live in a moment like this forever. His arms around me, his mouth on mine, his body pressed against me, it's enough to make me forget that I've ever had a problem in my life. I'm soaring. Even flying over the Quidditch pitch has never felt this good. There are these odd, fluttery feelings in my stomach that only flutter harder when Dray moves to kiss my neck. That sensitive spot behind my ear, the one he found last night, Gods, his tongue makes my wees kneak. MMMM, knees weak, yeah, that's - oh, this has to be heaven! I keep gasping for breath, not only because I know on some subconscious level that I NEED oxygen, but also because he smells so good. Like a fresh breeze mixed with something purely Draco. Mmmm, I never knew being bitten could feel so good. I'd have sought out a vampire years ago if it could make me feel like this. The slight pressure that's too much pleasure to be truly painful is gone after a second, replaced by that tongue again as I feel him licking the bite mark. I guess he's trying to make it feel better (which I didn't think possible) and it's working. I feel safe, I feel alive, I feel comforted. I feel - loved.
The comfort and certainty surrounds me and the unspoken promises and declarations are hanging somewhere in my mind but that one thought, LOVE, is right there in front. I put my hands on Draco's shoulders to bring the slightest bit of distance between us. As our eyes meet, it's finally clear to me - no matter what is wrong, or right, or good or bad, or safe or dangerous, this has happened. That love isn't just my feeling, it's his.
"You - hmm" My voice is shaking. I need to sit. No sooner did I form this thought than my legs took over and I plopped to the floor. Dray immediately sat in front of me, looking at me with concern. "You love me?"
He glanced away for a moment and I realized that I had spoken without thinking it through. I'm placing way too much confidence in my telepathy. Just because he kissed me doesn't mean he loves me. I open my mouth to make a joke of it but it never comes out because just at that moment, he looks at me and nods.
I can't help it. I know I shouldn't be happy about it. I know I'm going to have to work really hard to keep him safe and that it may hurt him horribly when I do what I know I must. But despite all

this, all I can do right now is smile!
"I love you, too." I took a breath to calm myself. "Now, Mr. Malfoy," using my best 'I'm being stern and you'd better answer me properly' voice. "Would you care to tell me what in bloody hell you were doing hanging from the top of the tower?"
~*_*~
After Draco's jumbled, hasty, but enlightening explanation, (AN: nothing specific here. Read Dray's thoughts above and you'll understand what he said to Harry about the studying, etc.) the two newly in love young men left the tower together discussing the intense, but non-life threatening topics that all young lovers should discuss. What now? When do we tell people? What do I call you? When can we kiss again?
Only when the got close to the corridor leading to Dumbledore's office, did Harry remember that he had an 8:00 meeting to get to.
"Dray, baby, I've got to, er, what's wrong?" Draco had the strangest look on his face and a glint in his eyes that Harry had never seen before.
"Nothing," he grinned. "You called me baby. It's cute."
Harry groaned in frustration. 'I refuse to act like a girl just because I've got a boyfriend,' he thought. "Whatever, listen. I've got to get to a meeting, but can we talk after Potions or something?"
"Are you forgetting that it's Saturday? And a Hogsmeade weekend at that? You can come to my room after your meeting, I mean, if you want."
"I'd love to." Harry smiled and squeezed Draco's hand, leaning forward to kiss him quickly. Before Draco could react, Harry turned and ran down the corridor, leaving Draco gazing after him, shaking his head in wonder at the charge he felt course through him from that small contact with Harry's lips.
~*_*~
"Pixie Wands" Harry huffed at the gargoyle, trying to catch his breath. The gargoyle moved aside obediently and allowed Harry access to the spiral staircase that led up to Dumbledore's circular office.
"Ah, Harry. I got your note. Please, sit down. Tell me what's going on."
"Sir, I had another vision last night. It was the worst one since last year. Voldemort was torturing some Muggles again, but important ones. I heard reference to the Prime Minister. Then he was talking to Nagini and a couple Death Eaters about his plans. The Death Eaters never spoke and I couldn't quite tell who they were under the robes and masks, but he was telling them that he's going to storm the Royal Palace next week, then he's planning to take control of Beauxbatons, and finally go to Durmstrang and gather supporters. After that, they plan to attack here. He seems to think if he can control the schools, he'll have more power over the Ministry. I'm not sure why he wants to storm the Palace, though. Maybe to draw attention, or to gain power in Muggle society, I don't know."
Dumbledore sat quietly, sucking on a sugar quill. After a few moments of silence (during which Harry's mind began to wander to the most unpleasant of thoughts again), he finally spoke. "So, my dear boy, is there anything else you would like to tell me?"
"No, sir?" Harry was completely taken aback by that question. He remembered Dumbledore asking him that during second year when he was hiding the fact that he could hear a voice in the walls. He also remembered Dumbledore asking him that in fifth year when he was hiding the fact that he'd gone out to look for Ron during that two days he was missing. He assumed that

Dumbledore had given up on getting information from him. At the moment, though..oh, THAT's what Dumbledore wanted to know about! His personal studies.
"Harry, I will ask once again, before I resort to demanding. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?" It was disconcerting how calm the Headmaster could seem when his words clearly showed that he was not about to take any guff.
"Yes, sir. I've been doing a bit of extra studying in the evenings."
"I'm not going to ask for details at this time, Harry. I believe in you and I have enough confidence to know that things will turn out as they should, no matter the choices that some people appear to make. Bear in mind, though, that I do know more of what goes on in this castle than you might think. Also remember that your magic can be felt by some. Those who are particularly receptive will notice a change in the strength of your aura. Those who are close to you will feel a difference in your presence. You might want to be certain you've considered those choices carefully before following through with anything, even in the name of the Order. I realize that you feel, rightly so, a sense of responsibility in the fight against Voldemort, but you must realize that there are things you do not yet understand. Things gone wrong that are in the process of being righted as we speak. Be careful Harry. I was very fond of your parents, felt like they were of my own blood. I would hate to see you do anything you'd regret when seen through their eyes." He looked at the young man knowingly, giving Harry the distinct impression that the elderly Headmaster could indeed see directly into his mind and heart and knew every thought, power and plan he had.
"You may go now. I'll call the rest of the Order together and relay your message. There's no need for you to be present. You look like you could use some rest."
"Thank you sir. I did have a fitful sleep last night. Please, stay safe."
Harry left the room as Dumbledore wondered how often the young man was worrying about the safety of others, and if he ever considered the safety of himself any more.
~TBC~
Wow! You readers are absolutely fabulous!
Litine - thank you!
Jade Maxwell - I'm blushing, okay? I can't say any more, I'm blushing! Glad to be inspiration to you. Hope the wait wasn't too long.
Hermione DB - It's nice to see you continuing to read and catch up. I am still incredibly flattered that you are continuing to read. I did notice that one little error in chapter 5. Once you read further, you'll see there IS a potion to be taken, it just didn't show up in that chapter. (It's in #9). I'm absolutely loving the fact that you seem to be able to pick out all of my personal favorite lines (intelligent conversation, I'm not stupid, etc.) It feels so good when a reader appreciates the same things the writer does. *grins
Malfoy Snogger - You'll find out in due time. I can't give away all my secrets. I'll tell you this, though. There's a hint in Chapter 5, though. Wow, I'm flattered that you think I'm good at writing the snoggy stuff. I was a little nervous about that.
Menecarkawan - thank you! You keep shaking Harry like that, maybe you'll knock some sense into him yet!
Delie - Oh, thank you thank you thank you. I've tried to keep them sounding somewhat in character, but I wasn't sure I was doing a good job. I think it's because of my current obsession. Not only am I writing this, but I'm also reading all the other fanfics I can find and there are some REALLY great ones on here. ****IF YOU AREN'T CURRENTLY READING DELIE'S

'DANGEROUS MEMORIES' YOU REALLY NEED TO. IT'S AWESOME!***** Plus, I'm nearing the end of the fourth book again. I guess that helps with the proper slang, because I'm certainly used to using American slang in my normal speech. Anyway, thanks muchly and I'll be sure to get that message to Sirius as soon as he gets out of the shower - oops, did I say that? Bloodice - thanks! That was one of my favorite parts to write!
TO ALL READERS: This chapter just kept going and going. I didn't realize it was going to be that long, but it is. Now, it was almost longer but I decided to stop so I could update for all you wonderful adoring fans. I hope to get the next chapter up soon and I think (for you fans of the 1976 chapters) that we'll definitely be taking a trip to the past in chapter 16. Much thanks and love to you all!

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Chapter: 15

Chapter 15
Harry ran back to the Gryffindor common room, determined to grab a couple of his books and get back out before he could be interrupted by the mass of students heading to Hogsmeade. Luckily, it seemed that most everyone was still at breakfast. In the dorm room, he quickly gathered 'Safety in the Darkness', 'Rise of the Dark Arts', 'Dark Ones of the Ages' and 'Science of Power'. He had been amazed to find so much information on the Dark Arts just sitting there in the Restricted section, as if waiting for students to seek it out.
Just as Harry was placing these books in his bag and was about to leave, Ron came bursting into the room.
"There you are, Harry. We've been looking all over for you. Reckon I'll have to get myself a map to let me know where you are, much as you've been hiding from us these days. What gives?"
Harry was about to avoid the questions with an excuse about meeting Dumbledore when Hermione appeared in the doorway of the dorm, her eyes reflecting Ron's statements. He sighed inwardly, knowing this would not be an easy conversation, but one he would have to have eventually. He seriously doubted either of his friends would understand, but regardless of his plans or the need to keep them safe, he couldn't bring himself to turn his back on them completely. Perhaps if they turned their backs on him it would make things easier, but for now - well - he would just have to tell them the truth. Part of it, at least.
"Okay, sit down, both of you. I guess I do need to talk to you." Harry swung the door shut and locked it (good thing Hermione didn't notice that he forgot to use his wand) before sitting on the edge of his bed, facing the two people he could honestly say were his best friends ever. Ron seemed a bit surprised that he was agreeing to talk to them. Hermione seemed extremely relieved. It was the pure trust in her dark brown eyes that made Harry realize that he was definitely doing the right thing. She probably wouldn't agree, but that old Muggle phrase rang true in this situation; What she doesn't know, won't hurt her. 'As long as I know it' Harry thought.
"All right, firstly, I'm sorry I haven't been around much lately. I've been doing a lot of extra studying and training - you know - for these battles with Voldemort. I wasn't in the Great Hall just now because I had an early breakfast and a meeting with Dumbledore about my dreams. I'm

not going to Hogsmeade because I need to get some more rest, I wasn't able to sleep much last night, and because I need to keep training."
He looked from the sky blue eyes to the chocolate brown eyes, both pairs filled with concern, compassion and understanding. 'They have no idea how much I value their friendship.' He hoped sincerely that he wasn't about to lose it. 'But, even if they don't want to be friends with me anymore, at least they'll be safe. I can live with that, anything, as long as they and Draco stay safe.' Before his subconscious could begin adding to the list of those he needed to keep safe, he took a deep breath and started talking again.
"I guess you've noticed that I've improved in Defense Against the Dark Arts lately," he said.
"You hardly needed improvement in that class, Harry. You're a great wizard and you've defended yourself and many others against the Dark Arts over the last six years. Everyone knows that." The quiet tone of Hermione's voice only served to remind him how much things had changed. Everything but her faith in him.
"Thank you, but I can always use improvement. I've also improved in Potions. Snape informed me a few days ago, though I don't think he cared much to admit it, that I'm nearing the top of the class now. I can only attribute that to one person - Draco." He paused, wondering what type of reactions he was going to get. He knew that Ron hated Draco and his family and expected that to bring about the strongest of reactions. Because of this, he was looking at Ron and therefore missed the flash of pure rage and hatred on Hermione's face.
"What does that bloody prat have to do with this, Harry?" Both young men looked at Hermione in shock. She rarely got angry anymore, and she had never been one for cursing or name-calling.
"He's been helping me. We've been doing some extra work together for a long time and - well - we've also become friends."
Tears immediately began streaming down Hermione's face. Ron tried to put a comforting arm around his girlfriend, but was quickly pushed away as Hermione stood up to tower over the seated Harry. Her voice was low and steady, but undeniably filled with pain and rage. "You don't know what you are getting yourself into, Harry Potter. Malfoy will never be your friend. He's using you, gaining your trust and seducing you into darkness. I knew there was something wrong with the books you've been reading. I suspected someone was pulling you, convincing you somehow that the Dark Arts are good. It's not true, Harry. It'll never be true. If you're not careful, by the time you find out how wrong you are, it'll be too late. You could very well cause exactly what you're trying to prevent. As for Malfoy - I'll just say" she paused, once again gathering her composure and steadying her breath.
She glanced from Harry to Ron, obviously seeking and needing the love that emanated from his eyes. Empowered by his love and support, she turned back to Harry. "Thanks to my capture and the Imperio curse, I know more about entertaining Narcissa Malfoy than anyone ought to. I've also seen the people they associate with. The same people, same families that Draco Malfoy associates with. You have no idea how lucky I am to be alive. I just hope that whatever you're up to, isn't going to take my second chance away from me. If you ever, EVER, allow him or anything connected to him to hurt me, or Ron, or anyone else I love, so help me Harry Potter, you'll pay for it. You have no idea what that kind of torture can do to a person. I've changed. I'm still your friend, but I won't let you hurt me. And no matter what you say, I'll never trust a Malfoy."
With that, she turned and started out of the room, pausing at the door to look at Ron. "I need a few minutes. I'll be in my room when you're done here, okay?" Ron simply smiled and nodded.

Once she had left and the door was closed again, Ron turned back to Harry.
"Sorry about that. She's a wild one, isn't she? I mean, I knew she didn't like - well - that's not important. Tell me Harry, why do you think Malfoy's your friend?" He looked at his friend with pure trust and expected nothing but the truth. Harry was extremely grateful for that, but knew he couldn't give the whole truth. It would only make things worse.
"He just is. We started talking in one of our detentions and later he agreed to help me with some of my studies. I mean, who better to bring my marks up than the Head Boy, right? And we've just become friends. He's really not that bad. His mother's a pain and his father is wrapped around her little finger. He doesn't even like Crabbe and Goyle, and he despises Pansy Parkinson. Besides, Snape is a little more bearable now that Draco and I are friends." He paused, thinking back to what Hermione said. "Um, Ron? Do you think Hermione will calm down? I'd hate to lose her friendship just because of Draco."
"She's probably calm already. Nothing keeps her upset too long these days. Her emotions seem a lot different ever since - well," Ron looked down at the floor, tears welling up in his eyes at the thoughts of what the love of his life had been forced to endure. "She's never told me if Draco was there, but I knew his parents were. It's just hard, Harry. She'll be okay, just don't expect her to spend any time around him."
"To be honest, I was expecting her to be the calm one and you to fly off the handle."
Ron smiled sadly, "Probably would have been right if this had happened a year or two ago. A lot's changed, though, Harry. People need friends. Hermione's right about one thing, you're a powerful wizard. Reckon you're as powerful as all our teachers, more than some. You know things, I've seen it. If you know you can trust Malfoy, well, I guess I have to accept that. I should get going, though. 'Mione'll be waiting. You want anything from Hogsmeade?"
"Nah, I'll be all right. Thanks Ron."
"What are best friends for?" He smiled as cheerfully as possible and went to check on Hermione, leaving Harry to finish gathering his things. Just to avoid further trouble, he put his bag under his school robes and decided to walk invisibly to Draco's room.
~*~*~*~*~*~
HARRY's POV
I walked quietly through the portrait hole, reappeared, and put my bag down in the armchair I remembered so well from my last visit to this room. Draco really should change the password. I can't believe he kept it this long. I looked around the room, finally realizing that he was sound asleep in the bed. Without another thought, I shrugged out of my robe and shoes and climbed into the bed behind my new boyfriend. I couldn't help but smile at the happy noises that came from Draco's throat when I wrapped my arms around him. I smiled even more at the slightly feral moan I got in response to kissing the back of Draco's neck. I refrained from doing anything else that might wake him up, simply because I knew that we both needed to sleep. I curled up closer behind him, enjoying the warmth and the feeling of belonging, and I fell asleep.
I remember waking up. It was that point where you're awake, but not completely conscious yet. I was so very comfortable and warm that I didn't want to open my eyes. I was afraid that if I did, something in this dream world would disappear and I would be cold and lonely again. I finally realized that I was feeling arms around me. There was a weight on my right leg. There was a hand on my back. I knew it was a hand because I could feel the fingers when it occasionally brushed through the hair at the nape of my neck. That hand kept rubbing my back, up and down, in long strokes then little circles and finally trailed back up to my hair. When the fingers tangled

in my hair and gently pulled on a handful of it, I gasped. I must be a freak of some sort, because I know hair-pulling is supposed to be a bad thing, but it felt SO good. Before I had time to think about it any further, there was a velvety brush across my open lips and then I was brought to complete consciousness with the realization that Draco was kissing me again.
Oh, if only I could wake up like that every day for the rest of my life, nothing would ever go wrong again. I kissed him with every bit of emotion I had. Not only the love for him, the tingles that ran through my body at his touch, and the soaring happiness that came with being in his arms. I knew I was also kissing him with the need to belong, the frustration of seeing Hermione so upset earlier, the relief at Ron's understanding comments, the pain of the people who'd been lost, the fear that someone else would be hurt in this next attack. With everything I put into that kiss, I had one primary thought. 'I finally belong somewhere. I'm complete with Draco.'
"Hey, sleepyhead." The smile in his eyes was heavenly to me. I recognized a doubtful, nagging voice in the back of my head telling me that it was too soon, too good to be true, too strange, too sudden, too dangerous. I refused to listen.
~damnit! I've been waiting for something to make me happy for seventeen years. I'm not going to let YOU destroy it now. I deserve this. I'm the Savior of the Wizarding World, for Merlin's sake. I have a right to a little joy in return for what's expected of me.~
Once I was satisfied that the voice would be quiet, at least for the time being, I turned my focus once again to the incredibly edible looking Slytherin I was currently sharing a bed with. His eyes were sparkling and his hair was loose and tousled. I could just imagine the grimace if he could see his hair now, but it was such a cute image that I couldn't help but laugh.
"What's so funny?"
"Oh, just the reaction I imagine you'll have when you see how unkempt your hair is." I quickly held onto him, so he couldn't get out of the bed and look in the mirror. "Don't you dare. You're not allowed to change a single strand of it. Not yet, at least."
"Oh?" He raised one eyebrow at me and smirked. It's amazing how different his smirk can look when it's not layered with hatred and insults. It's extremely sexy. "And how do you plan to keep me from it?"
"Like this," I said, grabbing a handful of the silken spun gold and pulling his face towards mine. Again, when our lips touched, the sensation was unbelievable. Molten fire running through my veins couldn't warm me like his kiss. I wondered if it would last forever or if this was a result of the newness of our relationship. I couldn't imagine a time when his touch wouldn't affect me, when his kiss wouldn't bring me to life in ways I never knew I needed. As I broke away from his mouth and pulled gently on the hair I was still holding, he arched his head back, revealing the perfectly porcelain skin of his throat. His subtle Adam's apple moved slightly as he swallowed, enticing me. I thrilled at the shudder that ran through his body when I circled his Adam's apple with my tongue.
Pushing gently, I rolled him over onto his back and followed so that I was lying halfway on top of him. Our legs were still slightly tangled from earlier, my left leg completely wrapped around and pinned underneath his left leg. I reached up slightly, planting gentle kisses across his eyes, down one cheek and finally sucking on his earlobe. As I marveled at the reaction this drew, I continued, licking and sucking at his neck, returning after a moment to the Adam's apple that started it. A couple of quick flicks across it and this time I was rewarded not only with the shudder and a gasp, but also with the realization that he was incredibly aroused. I moved one hand down to caress the arousal that was pressed against my hipbone, beginning to feel slightly

frightened by the size of it. Though I had found a few people attractive, and had found myself in the middle of a few sex dreams, I was utterly inexperienced. I'd never dated anyone and even my dreams weren't very detailed.
Fear of my own inadequacies brought my raging desires to a screaming halt. I simply lay there, gazing into Draco's eyes, recognizing the passion and the curiosity there.
"Baby, what's wrong?" I couldn't help but smile at that. He called me 'baby'. He looked so concerned, so interested in *me*. I tried with all my might to make that a confident smile, tried to fall back into the mindless excitement I'd been feeling. I looked at his hair, traced his jawline with my tongue, kissed his neck. It was working, I was beginning to forget how nervous I was - and then it happened.
I looked into his eyes again. Those liquidy diamond eyes that pulled me into their depths were clouded with a stormy gray clouds of passion. Through it all I could see silver sparks, like light reflecting off a mirror. "What is it?" he asked again. I knew then. I knew how much he loved me, and I knew that I was really in for a battle to keep him safe. The more immediate concern, however, was that I also knew he wouldn't let the answer to that question go unspoken.
"I'm ..I was just.." I don't know why it was so difficult to say it. 'I'm nervous, I'm a virgin, I've never done this before, I don't want to disappoint you.' I could think these things with ease, but admitting it to Draco, well, I was feeling like my face would blend in well with Ron's fiery red hair. Somehow, though, I suddenly didn't need to tell him. When he put his hand against the side of my face and his thumb brushed across my mouth, I just closed my eyes and leaned into the touch, reveling in the warmth I felt there. When I looked at him again, I saw understanding in those silver sparks.
"I know, Harry. I'm nervous too." I couldn't believe this, DRACO? Nervous?
"Why would you be nervous? You're the Slytherin Sex God! You've been praised throughout Hogwarts for at least two years!"
Oh, that smile. That smile and those eyes would be my undoing. Then I noticed something I hadn't seen at first. A pink tint on his cheeks. Draco was blushing!
"I've been called that, but I can only guess that it's based on my striking good looks," he said. I could tell he was trying to use his pompous, overly-sure-of-himself voice, but it was still a little too nice to sound like the old Malfoy. "As for being praised, I'm sure I haven't a clue what you're talking about."
I had to roll my eyes at that statement. "Please, even if no one else said a word, Pansy has told everyone who will listen, even Gryffindors, how amazing you are in bed! She's talked about your, erm.. your skill, your.. uh.. stamina, hell, even your size!"
I knew, the moment I said it I knew that it was all a lie. Pansy didn't know the first thing about Draco in bed. I could tell by the look on his face alone. I could tell by the shocked thoughts that were emanating from his mind. I could tell by the hopeful expression in his eyes as he turned to tell me the truth.
"Harry, none of that is true. I mean, I don't know if it is, I don't have.." He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "Harry, I'm a virgin."
I had to kiss him again. I've always heard the idealistic fantasy that sex should be saved for someone you truly love. It's mostly Muggles that talk about it. Actually it's not a big an issue in the Wizarding world as it is in the Muggle world. Some wizards live by it, though. I've always expected to. Being brought up as a Muggle does have a lasting effect. When I fell for Draco, I knew that whenever I decided to have sex, I wanted it to be with him. I never realized that it

bothered me on some level that he'd already had sex, quite a bit of it by the rumors. I never thought about it until just then. When I realized how incredibly thrilled and honored I felt at the idea that he was just as innocent and inexperienced in this area as I was.
I broke our kiss when something triggered my mind to notify me that the hormones were on the loose again. "Dray, honey, we need to talk."
"'bout what?"
"About this. I mean, we're both nervous. We just worked out some of our feelings yesterday. I hate to risk sounding like a girl here, but, maybe we should wait."
"You wouldn't mind?"
"No, I don't want to push you into anything."
"I don't, either. But if you want to wait.. if WE are going to wait, then you'd better stop laying on me right now."
Laughing, I rolled off of him and closed my eyes. It was nice, just laying there with him, hearing him breath, knowing that he and I would someday share a very special first - together.
I think I'd almost fallen asleep again when he finally broke the silence.
"So, I've seen your disappearing act, I've witness the mind-reading and been the object of the wandless magic. The one thing you haven't said much about is the seeing."
"Not much to tell. It started over the summer, I thought it was probably a residual affect to those dreams I've been having for years."
"What dreams?"
"The link with Voldemort."
"The .. what? You have a link with..?"
"Good grief, Draco, don't you EVER listen to gossip?"
"Not if I can help it. Gossip is far beneath a Malfoy."
"You know, you can put enough contempt into your voice to be convincing sometimes. It's kind of sexy, to tell you the truth."
"Oh, shut up and tell me about the dreams."
"I don't like talking about them much, but basically when Voldemort is active, I sometimes get dreams of what he's doing or planning. I started taking a potion for it last year because it got so bad."
"Dreamless sleep potion?"
"No, it's a new one, Snape and Pomphrey made it for me, created it for me. It doesn't stop the dreams, but I don't remember them as much and it lessens some of the other affects of the link."
"What kind of affects?" Draco pulled me closer, wrapping his arms around me as if he wanted to protect me from my own answers. I took a deep breath and continued, amazed at the comfort I found there.
"The pain, the shakes, the nausea, the weak muscles, the ringing in my ears.."
"Harry?" His voice was so quiet. "Those are after affects of the Cruciatus Curse."
"I know. I often feel what his victims feel."
He held me closer, then. I calmed at the feeling of his lips moving across my forehead, tracing my scar. His hands rubbed my back in calming circles, his breath moving my hair slightly with every exhale.
Finally, I pulled back a bit and finished my explanation. "The dreams are much better, well, at least until last night. He's planning something big now. But I've already told people. It'll be all right. I don't think my seer skills are working anymore. Every time lately that I think I'm having

a vision, it's you and my father. I'm probably just going nutters."
Draco lay there, holding me in silence for just a few moments, apparently thinking about what I'd just said. "Babe, just out of curiosity, and I sincerely hope I won't regret this question, but, just exactly WHAT are your father and I doing in these 'visions'?"
"Well, nothing spectacular. Talking to Dumbledore, practicing hexes and stuff, mostly just standing, talking, in different parts of the castle. Why?" When I looked into his face again and saw the relief plastered across it, the meaning of his question finally caught up with me. "EEEwwwwwwww!"
He just smiled at me. That smile that was almost his trademark Malfoy smirk, but had a real smile underneath it. "My thoughts exactly!"
~*_*~
Okay, wow - I think chapter 14 got more reviews than any of my others. I'm so thrilled! I'm getting teased for writing fanfiction, but you guys make it all worth while. (Would you be upset if I stopped writing now? I'm just curious?)
Malfoy Snogger: I'm so glad you liked Harry's note. I was trying to make it sound like his flow of speech if he were trying to admit this to Sirius in person, you know? Tee Hee - the biting! I love it when readers comment on the little things. I hope you enjoyed South America! I'm looking forward to more fabulous reviews when you get back!
Peeves & Peach Dancer 82: Thank you both! I hope you continue to enjoy it!
She-Who: Thanks for all those comments. You're awesome! Actually, Lucius is being.. well, nevermind I can't tell you (evil grin)! I really appreciate all your praise and I'm honored! I can't believe someone actually wants to write with me! That is so cool! Unfortunately, I'll have to wait until this is done, because I'm working on two other projects (original ones) right now. Or I could just stop with this story and leave it where it is? I know what you mean about the getting together being too fast and too slow at the same time. I felt the same way about it, but since they wanted to, I couldn't stop them. Besides, I know what will happen to them next. I hope this hasn't been too angsty for you!
Cassa-Andra - Thank you! You now have one of your answers, the other will come soon!
Menecarkawan: If they're connected at the hip, Harry can keep him safe, right? (grins)
Delie - blushing again! I personally think it WAS there in the books all the time, I just doubt it will ever be blatant. You're welcome and you deserved it! And, uh- erm - Sirius? In my shower? (clears throat and raises eyebrows innocently) I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. (grins)
General note: I know I said we'd go back to the 70s in chapter 16, but there was too much other stuff going on, so it'll be chapter 17 instead. I'm going to let you all know that I'm amazed at how long this is getting! Of course, I could stop. (I should really stop baiting them like that, I'm getting a little too ev

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Chapter: 16

Chapter 16

DRACO's POV

It was getting late. The students were coming back from Hogsmeade and we'd have too many questions to answer if we didn't show up for dinner in the Great Hall. That's what I was thinking. That's why we left my room and started in that direction. Of course, neither of us realized what had been going on all day.

It would appear that somehow, for some unknown reason, people began talking about us being friends. It's not difficult to imagine the wide variety of reactions to such news, but if I had known those reactions were going to lead to so much trouble, I would have kept us in my room forever. Instead, we were walking along minding our own business when suddenly. . .

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"How dare you!"

Harry turned quickly, to search for the owner of that voice and found himself looking at none other than Preston Bates, seventh year Hufflepuff. This was confusing. Harry knew Preston, he'd spoken to Preston a few times over the years. He knew that Preston was good in Herbology and not so good in Transfiguration. He knew that Preston had started dating Cho Chang last year. None of this knowledge explained why Preston was suddenly, very obviously, in a complete rage over something Harry had done.

"How dare I, what?"

His calm tone and perfectly innocent expression seemed to anger Preston even more. The fury was a bit startling to everyone around (and by this time there were at least two dozen people around), because it's not often that you see a Hufflepuff get THAT upset about anything. Before Preston could answer, though, he was joined at the front of the crowd by Megan Diggory, a third year Hufflepuff. She had been quickly liked by most everyone and gained the support and protection of many, having come to school the year after her brother's death.

"Harry," Megan said calmly. "Tell us what's really going on, please?"

"I'm sorry, Megan. I don't know what you mean."

"People are saying that you've become friends. . . with . . ." she flicked her gaze in Draco's direction, refusing to actually look into his eyes. "Malfoy."

"Yes, actually. That's true." Harry looked from Megan to Preston, then skimmed across the waiting faces in the ever-growing crowd. "Draco is my friend," he announced, loudly enough for everyone to hear him. "He's not a Death Eater, and he's not Voldemort," he paused for the obligatory gasp that came after saying that name. "I'm sorry for those of you who have a problem with this, but maybe someday, you'll understand."

With that, Harry turned, glanced at Draco for a moment to assure himself that the boy was all right, and they continued their path toward the great hall. Or, rather, they started to. The booming voice behind them brought them to a quick halt after only a few steps. It was Preston again.

"You should know better, Potter." The disgust with which he said Harry's last name could easily have rivaled every confrontation Harry'd ever had with Draco. "You, yourself, told everyone that Lucius Malfoy was there when You-Know-Who came back. His whole family is guilty, including his son. By befriending him, you're supporting what they stand for. You're belittling Cedric's death."

Harry turned on Preston, green eyes stormy and dark, and slowly began to advance on the Hufflepuff. His face seemed perfectly calm, the only indication of his unhappiness was in his eyes, now growing so dark that they appeared nearly as black as Snape's, but with just a tint of green.

"I will say this again, but only because I like you, Preston." The tone in Harry's voice clearly said that his 'like' for the boy was quickly fading. "I'm sorry if you have a problem with this. Draco is not his father. Aside from childish teasing, he's done nothing to you, or anyone else here. Draco's never killed anyone. He is not at fault here."
"Honestly, Potter. Don't you think anyone but yourself these days? No, what am I saying. The Great Harry Potter doesn't have to think of anyone else. Everyone loves the Golden Boy, everyone will ALWAYS love the Fucking Golden Boy. Who cares if our precious Golden Boy Harry Potter is supporting the enemy. Who cares about all the people that are dead now. Hell, Potter, you might as well start the killing yourself. You might as well have killed Cedric yourself."
"And Justin." Cried a voice from the crowd.
"And Charlie Weasley"
"And . . ." there were murmurs running throughout the crowd now and Draco was now beyond irritated with the way they were treating Harry. He was about to let Preston Bates know exactly how irritated he was when Harry's booming voice caught everyone's attention.
"STOP IT!" As they all looked at Harry, Draco picked up on something the rest of them didn't notice. Harry was levitating. Not much, but an inch or two off the floor. Draco wondered, not without some trepidation, what was going to come next. He stayed still, watching, silent, yet prepared to step in and defend Harry if the need should arise.
Harry stared intently at Preston, making sure he had the boy's complete and undivided attention.
"Preston. You've always been a nice kid. And I've always been proud of my understanding and forgiving nature. Because of that, I'm going to give you the chance to apologize nicely so I can decide whether or not to forgive you for that statement." Draco was shocked and a little confused at the tone of his boyfriend's voice. It sounded NOTHING like Harry. It sounded much more like Crabbe's father, or even Draco's own father.
Oddly enough, Preston didn't back down. He seemed to be completely oblivious to the power with which he was dealing. He glared at Harry with the hatred of the betrayed and said quietly, yet firmly, "I won't apologize for the truth. How do we know you didn't kill them all?"
In a flash, time seemed to stand still for Draco. He saw the following events in slow motion, saw Harry take a deep breath and slowly raise his hand. He saw Preston flinch ever-so-slightly, and then relax when he realized Harry was not holding his wand. He felt himself reaching forward, desperate to pull Harry away before. . . before something. Before whatever Harry was about to do. Just as his fingers brushed Harry's sleeve he heard the near whisper, "Cruc.."
"NO HARRY, NO!" Draco pulled Harry around, desperately seeking eye contact, believing that he could keep Harry distracted and keep that curse from being completed if only he could connect with Harry's emerald green eyes. After mere moments, it seemed to work. He could feel Harry slowly come back to the ground, he could see the darkness in his eyes begin to lighten, he could sense the tension draining from Harry's muscles. Without taking his hands off the young man or breaking the eye contact, he quietly suggested to the rest of the students that they leave the corridor immediately, which they did.
Once the hall was completely empty Draco pulled Harry to him, holding him tightly and waiting for the angered shakes to subside. As he felt his boyfriend beginning to calm down, he finally allowed himself to take a much needed deep breath.
"What were you doing, Harry?" Draco's voice was very quiet, just above a whisper. He searched Harry's face and eyes for an explanation, seeking an answer to the question he was almost afraid

to ask.
"I was arguing with Preston. I thought that was rather obvious." Harry's expression and voice gave no answers, no explanation, no emotion of any kind. He stood like a statue, eyes cold, face hardened. It frightened Draco, the image of his Harry, closed off and emotionless, much like the fathers of his friends often appearing at Malfoy Manor after a Death Eater meeting.
"Harry," Draco glanced around the corridor, and decided that it was too open for this conversation. "Come on, let's go back to my room for a little while." Harry narrowed his eyes momentarily, then seemed to snap out of his . . . mood, mask, trance, whatever. He grinned, suddenly looking perfectly boyish and joyful, eyes twinkling and everything. "Wow, Dray, I thought we agreed to wait a while," he teased.
Draco didn't move. He simply stood in shock, amazed at the complete and sudden change he had just witnessed. He vaguely remembered hearing about some Muggle disorder where a person has more than one personality in their head. He hoped sincerely that this wasn't going to be the case with Harry. He honestly didn't think he could handle it. Meanwhile, Harry released himself from Draco's grasp, caught the blonde's hand and began to move in the direction of the Head Boy room they had just left. Draco felt he had no choice but to follow.
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At the other end of the castle, in a large, round office behind a hidden staircase guarded by a stone gargoyle, the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry sat quietly, analyzing the surge of power that had just run through his school. Realizing that the 'something' he'd been waiting for during the last twenty years was finally coming to pass, he looked to his fireplace and called for Professor McGonagall to join him in his office.
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Back in the privacy of Draco's bedroom, Harry pulled his boyfriend into a sweet and explorative kiss. Draco's first reaction was to break away but his intentions were quickly squashed by the firm hands on his waist and the gentle tongue flitting across his lips. When Harry paused for a moment, Draco opened his mouth to speak, but gasped instead at the tingles caused by Harry's lips gently brushing the corner of his mouth.
'How can something so innocent make me feel so excited?'
Draco had no further time for thought as he felt Harry tangle his fingers in the loose blond hair again. Diving into the moment, Draco pulled Harry closer, thrilling in the feel of the warmth along his body. As their kiss deepened, lips caressing, tongues exploring, hearts pounding, souls joining, they lost themselves completely in that moment.
Finally, breaking apart the two young men stood, intrigued, aroused, completed.
Harry spoke first, "wow".
Draco replied, "yeah".
They knew. Each of them knew that they needn't go any further into the physical aspects of the relationship. Not just yet. Each of them also knew that something had changed. Just when they thought there was nothing greater, invisible forces seemed to show them differently.
After untold moments standing there, staring into each other's eyes, Draco finally remembered his real reason for suggesting they return to the room. His eyes darkened noticeably as he thought about what he had almost witnessed, that image burning in his mind's eye, the one image he thought he would never see.
Harry noticed. He knew what Draco was thinking about. He was so overcome with his own emotions that he couldn't quite 'hear' Draco's thoughts, but the look on the Slytherin's face was

enough of a clue. Harry walked to the armchair and sat down, took a deep breath and then looked up into the upset face of the one he loved.
"Go ahead, ask."
Draco stood, silently, considering. After a moment, he walked over and knelt in front of the chair, searching the green eyes he had come to know so well. "I don't think I want to."
"But you feel you have to, don't you?"
"Harry, please, just tell me I was wrong. Tell me you were just upset and you were going to yell at him or something. Please, just tell me you were not about to cast an unforgivable curse on that guy."
"I can't." The two of them sat in silence for a few more moments. Harry was caught up in the thoughts of how angry he was with Preston Bates, how close he'd come to breaking the law and - though he couldn't tell anyone this - how exhilarating it had felt. Draco was caught up in the thoughts of how much Harry had changed and how he wasn't sure how he felt about those changes. The idea of Harry being dark had entertained him for years, but the reality of it was a bit frightening. Perhaps he could talk to Harry's friends about it, they knew him better, after all. Still considering these thoughts, the two of them finally headed out to get dinner, sitting at their individual tables with little conversation.
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Dumbledore looked across the desk at Minerva McGonagall with a touch of sorrow in his sparkling eyes. He knew that she couldn't understand, at least not yet. As headmaster (not to mention the most powerful wizard in the world) he had the ability to sense shifts and changes in power, almost as easily as the scales held by the Ministry.
"It's happened, Minerva."
"Albus, there have been many things to happen in this school, especially since Harry Potter first entered it nearly seven years ago. I'm afraid you'll need to be more specific as to ~what~ precisely has happened."
"The darkness. To be completely specific," here he paused a moment and reached for a bag of lemon drops, offered it to the Professor, and then took one for himself. "About half an hour ago, I felt a powerful surge of power from one of the students in this school. The unusual thing, is that it was a shift in power as well. I believe this to be the shift in power seen on the Ministry scales. We should be expecting some unusual events around here until this is straightened out."
"You still believe that James Potter and Lucius Malfoy will be able to do something about this? And that it won't cause havoc within the school?"
"I intend to catch them as soon as they arrive and place some mild appearance charms on them so they won't be recognized. It obviously wouldn't do for anyone to know who they are. We'll also need to keep their contact with the students to a minimum so they won't learn too much about their future. We wouldn't want to change any major events in history, now, would we?" His tone and the ever-present twinkle in his eye showed that he clearly would love to changes some major events.
"I'll be watching for them. Ironically, I have to meet their sons for detention tomorrow evening. They were caught trying to sneak into the kitchens. It seems they have indeed become quite good friends."
"That's something I had almost expected, though I have to wonder if that's the reason for this power shift."
"Sir, are you saying the shift was within Harry Potter? That boy couldn't possibly be involved in

the Dar - oh" Her eyes went wide as she placed all the puzzle pieces together. "Oh, Merlin." Neither of them said another word as the implications of the 'Savior of the Wizarding World' being on the wrong side were too heavily hanging around them.

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It was nearing midnight when Draco heard a knock at his door. He jumped up, happily running to greet his boyfriend. He spoke as he swung the portrait hole open. "Hey sexy, I didn't know you were coming by tonight!"

Only after the statement was out of his mouth did he realize that he was speaking to a worried looking red-head. Ron stepped into the room, not bothering to wait for the invitation he felt sure would never come. "Okay, Malfoy, listen," he spoke quickly, hoping to all the gods that Harry was right when he said Malfoy could be trusted. "I know you and Harry are friends, and he trusts you. Harry's my best friend and I feel like I should trust his judgment and all, but I'm getting a little worried now because I can't find him. And, see, well," he paused, unsure how his friend would react to this particular secret being exposed.

After a moment, he decided it was worth the backlash, so long as Harry was safe, and right now he saw two possibilities for help; Malfoy or Dumbledore. With that thought, he pulled a rolled up piece of parchment from his robes, along with his wand. At the sight of the wand, Draco's eyes narrowed slightly, but he made no move for his own wand, deciding to trust the frantic red-head.

"I solemnly swear I am up to no good." Draco watched in awe as the map of Hogwarts appeared on the parchment. "Now pay attention Malfoy. This map shows where everyone is on the grounds. See, here's you and me. There's my dorm mates in our room. There's Filch. There's Hagrid in his cabin. The thing is, Harry's not on here. I can't find him anywhere and I don't know what's happened to him. I thought about going to Dumbledore, but I was afr. . ."

"Weasely, Stop!" Draco looked over the map carefully, checking some of the places he knew that Harry like to go to get away from things. He checked the lake, the pitch, the broom shed by the pitch, the Astronomy Tower, the alcove behind the third knight in the North corridor, then just to be certain, checked Harry's bed and his own room. He didn't see a dot labeled Harry Potter anywhere.

"Maybe he's got his invisibility cloak with him," Draco suggested. He knew that the cloak was safely folded in his own trunk, but he wasn't about to tell Ron that Harry could disappear at will.

"No, the map sees the person, no matter what form they're in. Even if he were transfigured into an animal, it would still know it's him." Ron was getting more and more upset. He couldn't face the possibility that something bad could have happened to his best friend.

"Okay, let's do this," Draco said. "Let's look through the map and see if anyone else is missing from the grounds. Maybe that will help us figure out what could be going on."

Ron looked at the concern on Draco's face and felt more worried than before, yet comforted at the same time. He realized that Harry had been right about Draco, the Slytherin really did care for him. Cared for him as more than a friend, if Ron's observations were correct. His worry increased, though, once he saw it validated by someone else. The two of them sat down together, carefully scanning the map and mentally categorizing the people they found.

Ron found all the Gryffindors in their beds, all the instructors appeared to be accounted for, and there seemed to be an adequate number of Hufflepuffs. Draco was highly unsure about the Ravenclaws, having never paid much attention to them in the past. He felt certain that all the Slytherins were present, though. Scanning the grounds, he noticed something rather odd.

"What's this?" Draco pointed to the edge of the map where it appeared that someone was at the

very edge of the Hogwarts grounds. Ron looked, watched closely as a dot halfway appeared, then disappeared again. It was so quick that the name didn't completely show up, but Ron saw enough to know. That dot was familiar to him. That dot had lived with him for years. That dot was most certainly NOT supposed to be on school grounds.
"Peter Pettigrew"
TBC
~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Firstly - to all of you wonderful readers, THANK YOU! And, though I know it was mean of me to tease like that, I'm glad to know that you wouldn't want me to stop!
Woo-hoo! 60 reviews, that's an average of 4 per chapter! And to think that just about 5 chapters I was averaging 2 reviews per chapter!
Peach: I agree completely and if I can ever get over the fanfic obsession and back to writing my original stuff, I think I'll be a better writer for it!
She-Who-Is: Wow, I'm totally flattered. Please don't curse me, I promise to continue. I couldn't stop anyway because this story is way to prominent in my head. I DREAM about it for Pete's sake!
Menecarkawan: I'm glad you liked Harry in Chapter 15, I'm waiting now for your screams and vicious shaking as a result of this chapter.
ShaeLynn: Thank you! :) I'm very flattered. I hope you'll follow it through the end and the sequel!
Delie: Yes, I think you are a suspicious person, not that it's a bad thing to be - especially when dealing with Malfoys, but in this case, Harry needn't worry, at least not about Draco.
Jade Maxwell: I really wish you hadn't lost your computer, too. I hope you'll be able to update your own work regularly, cuz I like it! I'm glad you liked Ron and 'Mione in that one. If you like to read something that no one expects, then I would presume you liked this chapter too. Unless of course, you were expecting Harry to try that!
Cassa-Andra: I'm not sure how that sounded in your head but it sounded a little threatening and just a touch kinky in mine =) I'm going to try the quick summary with the next chapter, but I'm not sure I'll be able to fit EVERYTHING in. I'm not doing it now because I'm anxious to get this up before I leave work. (yes, I write this at work, don't tell anyone.)
Aramani: Yeah! Thank you so much!
For the record, everyone here should read 'Whispers in the Rain' by Aranami. It's a great story!
Okay, that's my promotion for this chapter (I've decided to try promoting one of my favorite stories with each of my posts. These great authors deserve it!)
I hope you all enjoyed this and I hope to have chapter 17 up within a week. Like I promised, we're going on a time-trip to see what James and Lucius have been up to in the 70's. ~gr

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Chapter: 17

Review: James and Lucius are working on a dark-detecting-preventing project as a punishment. Lucius has a thing for Snape but is promised to Narcissa. In the present, Draco & Harry become

friends, then secretly boyfriends. Hermione hates Draco, Ron is accepting. Harry is studying dark arts and wants to meet with Voldemort. He's got a hidden agenda that he believes will help him save those he loves. In the last chapter, he's missing; Ron and Draco find out Peter Pettigrew is at the edge of the grounds.
Now, without further delay. . .
Chapter 17
1976
James took a deep breath and looked around at the carefree group gathered in the Gryffindor common room. He knew this was going to be difficult, but he also knew that it had to be said.
"Hey, guys?" He paused, waiting until he had the attention of the other three. "I, uh, I have something to tell you."
Sirius looked at his best friend and carefully took note of the nervous expression on his face. "You finally did it, didn't you?" He smiled widely, certain the he knew what James wanted to tell them.
"Did what?" Peter looked from Sirius to James in confusion.
"Don't you pay attention to anything, you silly git," Sirius replied. "He finally asked Lils to marry him!"
"No, Padfoot, I didn't," James looked around nervously. "It has nothing to do with that. I mean, I love her but, marriage is pretty heavy, you know?" He glanced around again, mild panic in his dark eyes. "It's about the project for Dumbledore."
Remus leaned forward then, still concerned that his friend was using such strong magic with Lucius Malfoy. "What about it?"
"I can't tell you everything, Dumbledore said it would be too dangerous. But I wanted to tell you all that this big plan, the final stage of the project, we're doing it tomorrow evening. I don't know what to expect, and I'm still not sure why he chose us, but it's some Dark stuff," he paused, looking around at the three best friends anyone could ever wish for. "It's really big, this step. It could. . . well, it could change things. And I just. . ." His voice cracked like it hadn't done since he entered puberty. He cleared his throat and looked down at the floor as if it held the answers to the universe.
Remus and Sirius moved to the couch, finding places on either side of their friend. Peter followed suit and kneeled at James' left. The three of them understood exactly what was happening here. James was afraid. The recent deaths and the continuing war had not gone unnoticed by the students at Hogwarts, no matter how much their Headmaster tried to hide it. Anything this serious and connected with Dark Arts activities could be disastrous. Simply put, James was afraid that he wouldn't survive this 'project'.
Peter seemed concerned, yet slightly relieved. Sirius was very obviously shaken by the prospect. Remus, however, was once again beginning to show signs of the easily-angered wolf within. "I can't believe that fool would put you in this position. You're a student! Has he informed your parents? Do they know that he's putting you in danger?"
"Stop Moony. I'll be fine. He's not forcing me. . ."
"What do you call this, if not force?"
"He asked. It's as simple as that. He requested that we work on it, and he's requesting that we try to use it. We've tested it once, on something small, and it was fine. This is a bigger event. It's major, Dumbledore says the future depends on it."
"I thought changing the past was against the law?"

"It is, Padfoot," James replied. "But in case you missed it, I'm not going to the past, I'm going to the future."
"Wait, you're actually GOING - TO - THE - FUTURE?" Moony was dumbstruck. He looked at Padfoot and Wormtail, hoping to see something calming from one of them. He relied on his friends, after all they'd been through together, to keep his rage under control. This time, however, he saw his own disbelief and anger being reflected on the faces of his friends.
"Prongs," Sirius began in a quiet tone, "you have to think about this. Dumbledore may be a good wizard, but. . ."
"Dumbledore's a GREAT wizard," James interrupted.
". . . but he still doesn't know everything. He can't even tell you if you'll come back safely! And to send you with Lucius Malfoy? That's utterly and completely daft! It's insane to think that Malfoy would actually help you with anything, especially anything that won't directly benefit him!"
"Malfoy's not really that bad, guys. I've spent a lot of time with him on this project and I think he puts up a front because of his mother. You know she's a direct descendent of Magnus, right?"
Peter swallowed hard at this news. "Magnus, the dark wizard? Morgan Le Fay's son? Malfoy is related to them?"
James nodded. "I'd heard rumors, but Lucius told me about it, too."
"LUCIUS?" Sirius and Remus spoke in unison. They looked at each other momentarily before Sirius continued. "You seem awfully defensive of him, James. Is there - ehm - anything . . . ELSE - going on?"
James looked at his friends, one at a time, in utter confusion. 'What's he getting at?' he wondered. Finally, realization dawned on him. "You think I'm shagging Malfoy?" He looked from Sirius to Peter and finally to Remus in complete horror. "Listen guys, you know I'm as open and accepting as the next wizard, but even if I were interested in shagging guys, I would never do that to Lily!"
Realizing that James was being honest about that, his friends relaxed and went back to the issue at hand - his safety and their belief that he should turn down this project. As the discussion began to heat up again, James stood up and quietly walked out of the common room, effectively quieting the other three Marauders.
~*_*~
Lucius quietly walked into the Slytherin common room, grateful that the rest of the Slytherins were still in the Great Hall celebrating something or other. Severus was the only person in the room and luckily, Severus was the only person Lucius wanted to see right now. He smiled at the dark- haired boy who was staring at absolutely nothing and completely lost in thought.
"Sev?"
The onyx eyes that turned to him shimmered in the flickering firelight. The future Potions Master smiled at his closest friend. "Lucius, I thought you would have been celebrating with everyone else, and spending the evening with Narcissa."
"I'm not in the mood for celebrating, nor do I feel like subjecting myself to the likes of Narcissa Black this evening." He smiled and joined Severus in front of the fire. "I need to talk to you Sev."
Severus Snape had always been quick to pick up on emotions, especially from those he cared about. This was no different. He could feel the anxiety and fear rolling off of Lucius in waves. He turned to the blonde with concern on his face. "What's wrong?"
"I'm a bit - well - nervous about this project with Potter. We're supposed to finish it tomorrow evening and I've got the distinct feeling that it's not exactly the safest of detention assignments."

"You don't think the headmaster would allow you to get hurt do you?"
"I think he would if he honestly believes in this project."
Severus considered that statement for a moment before speaking. "I think it's time you told me the details of this project. You can't expect me to understand what you're nervous about if you don't tell me what it is that you have to do."
Lucius took a deep breath and proceeded to explain the project in detail, the work they did, the test, the incident with the Pritchard girl, and Dumbledore's explanation about the Scales of Power and something that would happen in 21 years.
"He won't tell you what's going to happen?"
"He claims he doesn't know, that they can't see the details, only light turning toward darkness."
"And he expects a couple of students to fix the future?"
"Apparently."
~*_*~
Lily's vibrant green eyes filled with tears but she refused to shed them. She had to be strong, had to be supportive where his friends weren't, at least for now.
"You'll be careful, won't you?"
"Of course I'll be careful. And I'll be fine," he added with a little more confidence than he felt. The one thing he couldn't stand was to see Lily upset.
"Do you know how much I love you James Potter?"
"About have as much as I love you Lily Evans." He smiled at the familiarity of their 'I love you' routine. He honestly felt it must be true because he didn't see how anyone could love anyone else more than half as much as he loved Lily Evans. It was this thought that prompted his next question to her. "Lily? Will you marry me?" He watched as the unshed tears that had almost disappeared made a sudden reappearance and started quickly running down her cheeks. "Oh gods, I'm sorry Lily, I didn't mean to . . . I was just. . . I know we're young and all, and it's not because of this project, I just love you so much and I want to know that we'll be spending the rest of our lives together."
Lily smiled, the dazzling smile that melted his heart, and leaned towards him for a gentle, yet thorough, kiss. "Of course I'll marry you. Haven't you heard? Girls are supposed to cry when they get a proposal!"
They laughed together and lay on the bed wrapped in each others arms, thankful once again that Lily had her own room as Head Girl. As they talked and kissed into the night, they both tried to focus on the joy of being in love, rather than the uncertainty of what was to come.
~*_*~
James and Lucius offered cordial nods to each other the next evening. One look told both young men that they were not alone in their anxiety over this project.
"Now, Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, you do understand the situation?"
"Yes sir," Lucius said.
"We're to follow where the charm leads us, and trust our instincts," James repeated.
"You must also trust each other implicitly. I hope that will not be an issue?"
They looked at each other. This project, though it had started as a one week detention, had been dragging on for nearly two months. They had spent a great deal of their free time in each other's company and had grudgingly become friends. But implicit trust? Brown eyes met blue and both recognized that the trust was, surprisingly, solidly there. The tiniest of smiles graced both faces as they turned back to Dumbledore.

James was the first to speak, "I don't think it will be an issue, sir."
"Very well, then. I'll leave you now. I understand this is a big step you're taking and you may want a few minutes before you drink the potion. I won't rush you, but I will implore you to drink at the same time. I believe it will make the transition easier." He smiled at the two of them and his eyes still held their familiar twinkle as he turned and walked out, leaving James Potter and Lucius Malfoy alone in the Transfiguration classroom.
"Do you need more time?"
"No, I just want to get it over with."
"Do you really trust me?"
"Is there a reason I shouldn't?"
"Aside from the fact that I'm a Slytherin, and a Malfoy? No."
"Are you saying that I should base my trust on your house or your name instead of your trustworthiness or my intuition?"
"No, just. . . Listen, Potter. I want to get this over with too, and I'm hoping it works out the way that old coot thinks it will, but, well, I guess I'm just trying to say thank you."
"For what?"
"For looking past my name and my house and getting to know me. Not many people would honestly trust me, not even my own housemates. I appreciate it."
"You deserve it. Especially for what we're about to do. Are you ready to drink up?"
"You bet."
They drank the potion, shuddering at the bitter taste and slimy consistency of it. They stood there, looking at each other, brown and blue eyes locked together as they both reflected on this newfound friendship and respect, and both wondered if their other friends would ever understand or accept it. They were so caught up in their thoughts that neither of them noticed the swirling lights around them. Both boys snapped to attention at the voice that intruded their thoughts quite suddenly.
"Ah, I'm pleased to see you are both still here. I apologize for being late, but perhaps waiting will teach you to respect the school rules. Now, I think polishing the suits of armor on the third floor will be sufficient punishment. I won't be hovering tonight, I've no time or patience for that. Please be assured that I will check your work and I don't expect to see either of you sneaking into the kitchens again." With that, Professor McGonagall turned and left the room, completely oblivious to the confused looks on both faces in front of her.
~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Jade Maxwell - I honestly enrapture you? I'm so honored! Wow. And of course, by now you know where Harry got off to.
Lanevaly - I'm so glad you decided to read it again, only because you like it! Coming from you, that's more than a compliment!
*****IF ANYONE IS LOOKING FOR AN ABSOLUTELY FANTABULOUS STORY, PLEASE READ LANEVALY'S "IMPERIO" IT'S TRULY GREAT AND ONE OF MANY THAT HAVE INSPIRED ME TO WRITE FANFICTION!**********
Cassa-Andra - I hope you liked my recap at the top. Please let me know if it helps. And for the record, I'm now at work 34 minutes past quitting time because I just couldn't bare to go home without posting this chapter!
BlackHawk - thank you!
ShaeLynn - Glad to hear that! I only wish I had time to write it as fast as it runs through my head.

Characters from the sequel started running through my head earlier today and I had to take notes so I wouldn't forget what they said!
Otaku Freak - thank you, thank you very much!
Delie - You are the only one to comment on Peter, which surprised me. I thought I was being all cool and cliffhangery when I ended that chapter, but no one else seemed phased by it. Did you notice that Draco doesn't really compare Harry to Lucius himself? Don't worry about Dumbledore, he knows what he's doing. *evil grin*
So, that's it for chapter 17. You'll notice there are two additions to the story today. Don't get too excited about it, it's not another chapter, but I felt it HAD to be there, go on to "Harry's Mind" and you'll understand it all when you get th

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Chapter: 18

Okay, before you all freak out, let me say that I'm not turning this into a songfic or anything. I just keep hearing this song on the radio and it is SO EXACTLY describing Harry and his friends and his feelings and his outlook and everything. I HAD to put the lyrics in here so you can all get inside Harry's Mind the way I am.
Enjoy!
"Unwell" by Matchbox 20
All day staring at the ceiling Making friends with shadows on my wall All night hearing voices telling me That I should get some sleep Because tomorrow might be good for something
Hold on Feeling like I'm headed for a breakdown And I don't know why
[Chorus]
But I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell I know right now you can't tell But stay awhile and maybe then you'll see A different side of me I'm not crazy, I'm just a little impaired I know right now you don't care But soon enough you're gonna think of me And how I used to be...me
I'm talking to myself in public Dodging glances on the train And I know, I know they've all been talking about me I can hear them whisper And it makes me think there must be something wrong with me Out of all the hours thinking Somehow I've lost my mind
[Chorus]
But I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell I know right now you can't tell But stay awhile and maybe then you'll see A different side of me I'm not crazy, I'm just a little impaired I know right now you don't care But soon enough you're gonna think of me And how I used to be
I've been talking in my sleep Pretty soon they'll come to get me Yeah, they're taking me away
[Chorus]
But I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell I know right now you can't tell But stay awhile and maybe then you'll see A different side of me I'm not crazy, I'm just a little impaired I know right now you don't care But soon enough you're gonna think of me And how I used to be
Yeah, how I used to be How I used to be Well, I'm just a little unwell How I used to be How I used to be I'm just a little un

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Chapter: 19

Review: James and Lucius are working on a dark-detecting-preventing project as a punishment. Lucius has a thing for Snape but is promised to Narcissa. In the present, Draco & Harry become friends, then secretly boyfriends. Hermione hates Draco, Ron is accepting. Harry is studying dark arts and wants to meet with Voldemort. He's got a hidden agenda that he believes will help him save those he loves. James and Lucius explain to their friends that they'll be completing the 'project' and express their nervousness, they drink the potion and are suddenly (and inexplicably) faced with a punishment from McGonagall. In the last 1997 chapter, Harry's missing. Ron and Draco find out Peter Pettigrew is at the edge of the grounds.

Chapter 18

"That rat. That bloody evil rat! I can't believe he'd be here again, how could he even, aaaarrrg that bloody rat!"

Draco stared at this outburst, not sure what was going on. "Weasley, would you like to tell me about the rat?" he asked in amusement.

After a very rushed and not completely coherent explanation of exactly WHO Peter Pettigrew was in relation to Harry, and Draco's admission that he knew Pettigrew as a Death Eater, Draco grabbed Harry's invisibility cloak (much to Ron's surprise) and the two of them got under it and started out of the castle toward the edge of the grounds. They were, of course, headed directly toward the dot marked Peter Pettigrew.

Once they got outside, both boys pulled out their wands and whispered "lumos" so they could continue to watch the map. What they saw at that time put even more fear into both their hearts. Pettigrew was still hovering at the edge of Hogwarts grounds not far past the Whomping Willow. The new problem took the form of the five other dots that were also flickering off and on the map. Those dots were labeled Arnold Parkinson, Ares Crabbe, Miles Pritchard, Ian Goyle, Lucius Malfoy and Harry Potter.

Draco and Ron paused in their trek, examining these labels carefully, both seeming to possess a need to read and re-read these names until they changed. Unfortunately, the names didn't change. Blue eyes met grey eyes and both of them realized that this was much bigger and more dangerous than they ever imagined.

"Should we get Dumbeldore?"

"Honestly," Draco said as he looked at the read-head. "What do you think Dumbledore can do against seven Death-Eaters?"

"Seven? I only see six there."

"Fine. Six Death-Eaters and one in training."

"What the bloody hell are you getting at Malfoy?" Ron's temper was getting out of control at the suggestion that his friend would be planning to join the rest of that group. He was having a great deal of trouble keeping his voice down.

"Harry asked me a couple days ago to set up a meeting for him."

"With these people? And you did it?"

"No, with Voldemort. And I didn't do it. I didn't set this up either, he must have done it himself."
"But why. . ."
"I don't know, exactly. I've been trying to figure that out. I've noticed some changes but I didn't think he was this serious about it."
"Malfoy, look!" Ron interrupted, pointing the lit end of his wand toward the map. The group seemed to have dispersed. Pettigrew and Potter were the only ones left. They watched closely as the two dots went toward the Whomping Willow and paused. "It looks like they're talking. I don't understand why Harry would be talking to the man that betrayed his parents and got them killed. It doesn't make sense. It's like he's under the Imperio curse or something."
"He's not. You know he can fight that. You've seen him do it."
They stopped speaking again as the map showed Harry walking directly toward them. Looking out, they saw Harry walk by, pause and look directly at them, then turn and walk into the castle. Once he was completely gone and the heavy doors had closed behind him, Ron turned to Draco quietly. "Did he know..?"
"I think so."
"All right, Malfoy, I think it's time you tell me exactly what's going on around here."
"Honestly Weasley, I wish I knew." Ron could tell by the look in Draco's eyes and the expression in his voice that he was being honest. Draco walked away, heading toward the castle and taking the invisibility cloak with him. Ron stood silently watching the Slytherin leave, wondering what bizarre things were going on with his best friend, then finally realized that it was nearly one o'clock in the morning and he was standing around outside after hours with no invisibility cloak to keep him from getting caught.
"Shit."
~*_*~
When Draco arrived at his room, he was somewhat surprised to find Harry sitting leisurely on the edge of the bed, waiting.
"Harry! I thought you'd be asleep by now." He walked over to kiss his boyfriend, hoping that Harry hadn't actually known they were there. Something about that meeting and those names had Draco on edge.
Harry returned the kiss somewhat casually (as casually as two hormone ridden 17-year-olds can) and smiled somewhat sadly at the blonde Slytherin. Draco caught the look and was afraid to mention it, but at the same time felt that he most definitely should. Before he could get too deeply embroiled in an internal argument, Harry spoke.
"Why don't you trust me, Dray?"
"What?" Standing by the bed, wrapped in Harry's loose but comforting embrace, Draco hadn't expected such straight-forward confrontation.
"I said, why don't you trust me, Dray?"
"I heard you; I just don't understand what you meant."
"Okay, it would seem that you have a lack of faith in me for some reason. It's rather odd, I must say considering you're the one named 'bad faith'. Anyhow, I would like to know what has caused this absence of trust."
"Stop trying to show off like your bookworm friend, Potter," Draco kept his tone light and teasing, hoping to avoid this conversation, but he could see from the determination in those green eyes that he was to have no such luck. "I do trust you. Why would you think I didn't?" He failed to realize that his nerves and concern for the raven-haired Gryffindor were causing his voice to

drop to a near-whisper.
"Because you were outside looking for me earlier."
"Have you developed a Mad-Eye Moody ability to see through invisibility cloaks now?" Draco knew that was really of little relevance and was as good as a point-blank admission that Harry was right, but he was still anxious to delay or avoid this conversation by any means necessary. He had suddenly decided that he didn't give a good God damn what his boyfriend was doing in the woods with six Death Eaters in the middle of the night. He didn't want to know. He really didn't.
"Not quite," Harry smirked. 'Merlin, he's really starting to look cruel when he does that,' Draco thought uncomfortably. "I just knew. It's one of those 'seer' things, I can tell when people are watching me. What I thought was really odd is that Ron was with you. Since when are you two civil enough to be under the same cloak together?"
"Since he came here worried about his best friend and dragged me out of the castle muttering something about a rat that you needed to stay away from."
"Oh, so he had the map with him?"
"Yes."
"I'll need to make sure to keep that away from him in the future. I can't have him looking for me all the time. It's not safe."
"Harry, we saw you, we saw who you were with. I don't. . ."
"Wait," Harry interrupted him with a finger on his lips. "Don't bother to ask, I'm not going to tell you. I can't. It's not safe."
"SAFE! How DARE you talk about what's SAFE when you're running around in the middle of the night with Voldemort's cronies!"
"Please Dray, just don't ask. Just trust me, please?" Silver eyes filled with anger and fear met with pleading emerald eyes. Draco took a deep breath and felt tears of frustration beginning to pool in the corners of his eyes. Blinking quickly and looking around the room he attempted to calm himself down.
"Fine." The response was so quiet, so calm, that it sounded like surrender.
Harry tightened his embrace and pulled the Slytherin close for a kiss. When their lips met, Draco felt the anxiety begin to fade away. He found himself simultaneously comforted by the contact and disturbed by the ease with which his worries disappeared while he was in Harry's arms.
"C'mon, Dray. Let's get some sleep." Harry kicked off his shoes and pulled Draco onto the bed with him.
"You're not worried about staying here all night? What about your dormmates?"
"I'll deal with that tomorrow. It's not like they'd turn me in, so there's no problem. Unless you don't want me to?"
"I do. I'd really like it." Draco smiled, probably his first genuine smile since Ron first knocked on the door, and kicked off his shoes as well. Too tired to worry with changing clothes, the raven-haired Gryffindor and his platinum blonde, Slytherin boyfriend, simply collapsed on the bed and fell asleep in mere minutes, still wrapped in each other's arms.
~*_*~
Breakfast was a rather uneventful time, despite the angry and worried looks Harry kept getting from his best friend. Ron wouldn't dare mention his knowledge or his company of the previous evening - not in front of Hermione - but he could certainly give Harry some looks that expressed exactly how he felt.

Harry was pleasantly distracted from Ron's glare when the post arrived and Hedwig dropped a letter from Remus on the table. He wondered briefly why she flew away so quickly (Hedwig always stayed for a treat and bit of petting, but today she still seemed angry with him, even more than before) but was too intent on reading the letter to think on it long.
Son of Prongs,

I am well, and missing you greatly. Don't worry with the rat, it will fall into a trap eventually.

I would love to hear more about this relationship of yours. You seem very unsure of it in your letter. You know, don't you, that you can tell me anything. It doesn't matter how you feel, who you feel it for, or what you do, I'll still love you. I don't know why you feel that you can't talk to your friends about it, but I'm glad you can talk to me. I'm also glad to know that it's not extremely intimate just yet. I don't think you need to rush into anything. Don't get embarrassed by my saying that, it's my duty as an authority figure, you know.

I've had word from Fawkes as well. I'll be working on the mission, but doubt I'll be able to come visit at this time. Please take care of yourself, remember who your parents are and that you make them proud by being yourself. Think long and hard about decisions, it's important.

Moony

Harry read and re-read the letter, wondering if it was his imagination or if Remus was hinting that he knew things Harry hadn't told him. Things Harry hadn't told anyone, with the exception of Draco.
At the thought of his new boyfriend, Harry looked up to find those grey- blue eyes looking directly at him. They smiled at each other across the Great Hall and Harry found himself wondering how Draco would react to being kissed senseless in front of the entire staff and student body of Hogwarts. After a quick wink and a brief nod to Draco, Harry excused himself from the table and left the room, headed directly for the Observation room of the Astronomy tower.
As she watched him go, Hermione was finally able to put a meaning to the strange feeling she'd been having. She looked at the Boy-Who-Lived, or Harry as she preferred to call him, and wondered when and why the Harry she'd known and loved like a brother for six years was suddenly gone.
"Ron?"
"Yes?"
"Would you mind terribly if I asked you to come back to my room with me?"
Ron took the briefest of moments to ponder the way most teenaged boys would react to that question coming from the mouths of their girlfriend, no, fiancée. He realized in that brief moment that the war had indeed had a strong affect on him and his fellow students. They had been forced to mature mentally much earlier than most children would. He could hardly imagine most 11-year-olds going through the myriad of obstacles that he, Harry and Hermione had faced in their first year, not to mention the battles and losses they'd endured since then. Snapping himself back to attention, he smiled at Hermione and reached over to give her hand a reassuring squeeze. "Of course not." As an afterthought, he tried to lighten her mood by adding, "if we stay

there long enough I can skip transfiguration." It worked, almost. She did smile a bit.
Once inside her room, however, Ron realized that the smile was fleeting. His initial thought that Hermione had something very serious on her mind was right.
"Something's wrong with Harry."
"Why do you think that?" Ron looked at her carefully, trying to hide his feelings as much as possible. He knew that if Hermione were to find out who Harry had been meeting with last night, she would be more than upset. So much more than upset that he didn't even know a word for it.
"I don't think it, Ron, I know it. There's something not right about him. His aura's changed. His energy is sparking and zapping all over the place. His moods are weird. And don't even let me get started on the insanity of him being FRIENDS with Malfoy."
"Okay, I'll admit to the moods and the whole Malfoy thing being a little unusual, but . . ."
"Stop. Sweetie, listen to me. Remember how Harry used to be? How he was silly and fun and pretty much, for Harry anyways, NORMAL? Remember on the train this year, how he was trying to hide from the first years because they kept staring at him? How he's always just been Harry and it seemed like the fame and the power was just a side effect or something, but he never acted like he was better than others? Remember that?"
Ron nodded.
"Close your eyes and think back to the last time you hung around Harry, just a normal average friendly conversation."
Ron closed his eyes and thought, and thought and thought. Finally he was able to remember a fun evening playing Chess with Harry. It was late September or early October. 'Wow, I didn't realize it had been that long,' Ron thought. They had been discussing the next Hogsmeade trip and the pranks they wanted to buy from the twins' shop while they were there. It was an all together relaxing time and Ron felt better just thinking about it.
Hermione could sense the change in Ron's moods. She knew that his memory was relaxing and enjoyable, which is just what she'd been hoping for. "Now, pay attention to the energy you feel from Harry in that memory, how does it feel just to be in his presence."
Ron thought, he visualized the game board, the empty sweets wrappers around them, the smile on Harry's face as he laughed at a joke. It felt good. It was comfortable, like your favorite slippers and light-hearted, like a really good joke that would just leave you in a good mood. It was cool, Harry calmed people. Ron, immersed in this memory, had a sudden image of being surrounded by a calming, comfortable blue-green light.
"Now, think about Harry at breakfast today and tell me how it felt to be in his presence then."
Ron switched his brain to remember breakfast, Hermione's downcast eyes, his own anger and worry for Harry, the letter that Harry didn't even talk about. "It feels cold, bleak. Like there's something big, like there used to be a really big fireplace with a roaring fire in it and it gave off lots of warmth and comfort and now it's been put out and the fireplace is boarded up and the cold wind and snow have crept in and if you stay there too long. . ."
He opened his eyes in shock. "I never knew you could do that, that I could do that! I actually felt it, the energy. Can I do that with other people too?"
Hermione smiled slightly at his enthusiasm. She kissed him sweetly and nodded, "yes, once you know you have the ability. I always thought you would. But about Harry, what were you saying?"
"He feels cold," Ron repeated. He didn't want to think about it too much. It was a very uncomfortable feeling.

"You said 'if you stay there too long' but you didn't finish it. What would happen if you stay there too long?"
Ron stared very pointedly at an apparently obvious invisible spot on the floor. He didn't want to continue this conversation. He didn't want to continue this line of thought. On the other hand, he knew what he'd felt and he knew Hermione felt it too. Surely others had, would? Something would need to be done, something could help Harry and in the past it had always been him and Hermione to help Harry when he was in danger. They could do it again, right? But only if he were willing to face up to the facts. He raised his head slowly, looking deep into Hermione's chocolate brown eyes. He saw her love for him reflected there, and her concern for Harry. His own blue eyes began to water as he took a deep breath to prepare himself for what he needed to say, if only to hear it spoken aloud. "if you stay there too long, you'd die."
~*_*~
After one very passionate snogging session in the Astronomy tower, two hours of potions with the Slytherins, three reminders from Draco that they had detention with McGonagall that evening, four excuses to Ron to get out of Exploding Snap, five more classes that were way to boring to concentrate on and six concerned looks from Hermione, Harry was beginning to feel like he was trapped in a Muggle Christmas song.
"C'mon Dray, let's fly a little."
"Harry! It's freezing out there! Are you daft?"
"No, I'm not crazy, I just want a little fresh air. And there's no one more fun to fly with than you," he added with a slightly suggestive tone.
"Would you be terribly upset if I turned down the invitation? It's just, we've got that detention in an hour and I'm falling behind in my homework thanks to all the time I spend with lips attached to yours."
"Well, if you insist. On one condition,"
"What's that?"
"That we meet in the Transfiguration classroom a few minutes early so you can attach those beautiful lips to mine before McGonagall gets there."
"You've got a deal! And then after detention we can go. . ."
"I can't. I have a meeting after. . . er 'Mione and I are meeting to study tonight." Harry mentally kicked himself for that near slip. It would do no good for Draco to worry about him again and go off looking for him. "I'll see you in an hour."
"Sure." Draco watched as Harry took off running toward the front entrance.
~*_*~
Having spent his 'study' time reviewing the minor dark skills he'd begun to pick up, Draco was rather pleased with himself. Levitating, both of himself and of objects, had become nearly second nature to him now. Glancing out his window, he watched the distant silhouette emerging from the broom shed and knew that it was time to meet Harry for a quick snog and a boring detention. He nearly ran down the corridors, anticipating the rush of Harry's lips on his.
~*_*~
Harry rushed into the castle, hoping to get there before McGonagall did. He'd spent a little more time flying than he had intended to, but it was such a freeing experience, second only to kissing Draco.
Turning into the Transfiguration room, he saw the familiar silver-blonde hair and paused to take notice of the fact that it seemed to be just a bit longer. 'Must be a trick of the lights in here.' Harry

never noticed the person standing in the other corner of the room, nor did he realize that someone was quickly walking toward that room with a smile on his face. Harry's eyes were focused solely on the young man with the platinum hair that held his attention.
He quietly walked over to the Slytherin, a sly smile on his face, and waited until he was directly behind him to speak. "Malfoy" he said softly, almost teasingly.
Malfoy turned and his mouth was instantly captured by the soft lips of the Gryffindor. The blonde was slightly shocked, but didn't resist immediately. The kiss was broken, however by two shocked voices behind them.
"Lucius!" James said at the same time as. . .
"Harry!" Draco's voice was obviously a little hurt, but as he heard the other name his facial expression changed to one of shock and confusion and more than a little fear.
"Draco?" Harry was confused, he'd been kissing Dray, but suddenly the boy was in the doorway of the room.
"James, I, uh" Lucius frantically searched his brain for an explanation that wouldn't involve James knowing who Lucius THOUGHT he was being kissed by, or for that matter, who Lucius WISHED he was being kissed by.
The room went deadly silent as the four young men looked around at each other. As each of them took in the appearances of the ones they didn't know, three of them began to form conclusions. Harry, however, had lost all ability to think.
He was staring across the room, unable to believe his eyes. His breath came in short, uneven rasps, his throat felt as if he had swallowed a quaffle, his legs felt like he'd been put under the jelly-legs jinx and his eyes became suddenly blurry as they began to fill with tears. When he spoke, his voice was filled with emotions, every emotion he'd ever known and some he'd always missed were pressed together into the only word he could form.
"James?"
~*~*~*~*~*
Okay, please don't think I'm evil, but I'm (once again) at work and was DYING to get this posted. It's now 6:37 (I got off at 5:00) and I'm starving and want to go home, but I can't bare to leave without posting this, sooooooooooo, I'm not replying to any reviews tonight. I'll make up for it in the next chapter. I hope you all liked this one. I've been waiting for weeks to get to the point when Harry would see James.
Love and socks to you all, please click that little button and review me!

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Chapter: 20

Review: James and Lucius are working on a dark-detecting-preventing project as a punishment. Lucius has a thing for Snape but is promised to Narcissa. In the present, Draco & Harry become friends, then secretly boyfriends. Hermione hates Draco, Ron is accepting. Harry is studying dark arts and wants to meet with Voldemort. He's got a hidden agenda that he believes will help him save those he loves. James and Lucius explain to their friends that they'll be completing the 'project' and express their nervousness, they drink the potion and are suddenly (and inexplicably)

faced with a punishment from McGonagall. In the last 1997 chapter, Harry's missing. Ron and Draco find out Peter Pettigrew is at the edge of the grounds. Harry's meeting w/ Death eaters and won't tell Draco anything about it. Sirius writes back and people are noticing Harry's energy has changed. Harry & Dray plan to meet for a snog, but Harry snogs Lucius instead (eww) and then they all realize that the younger James and Lucius are in 1997~!

That Moment

James:

I couldn't quite understand what had happened, but was beginning to think we had gone to the wrong time. That was the only explanation I could think of for McGonagall's behavior. Of course, when I tried to explain this to Malfoy, he scoffed and said there was no way his work would have gone wrong, therefore if we were in the wrong time, it was my fault.

I certainly didn't want to get in more trouble, so I suggested we go ahead and start on the armor, then find the Headmaster later and see if he could tell us what had happened. The great Lucius Malfoy (I had begun to think he was a decent guy, but he was really being a prat about this) refused to do any detention that he felt sure he hadn't earned. This disagreement led to us standing in opposite corners of the room.

I saw the boy come in, watched him walk over to Malfoy. After Malfoy turned around, I watched this boy kiss him. I must admit, it was a bit surprising, which, of course, is why I yelled "Lucius!"

Just at that moment, I heard a voice from the door say "Harry?" So, I logically came to the conclusion that the dark haired boy kissing Malfoy was named Harry. As Harry turned toward that voice, I looked over there as well. Much to my surprise, it appeared to be Lucius Malfoy's twin brother. I can honestly say I don't know that I've ever seen two people look so much alike, they even had the same hairstyle!

What really shocked me, though, was when the first boy turned around. Once I got a look at his face, I suddenly knew exactly why Professor McGonagall had acted the way she did. This boy, Harry, looked so much like me that it was like a mirror. But it was a mirror with the vibrant green eyes of Lily Evans. I knew without a doubt that I was 21 years in the future and I was looking at my son. What I didn't know is why he seemed so emotional when he saw me.

There seemed to be a lifetime of meaning in the way he said my name, "James?"

Lucius:

James Potter is a bloody insufferable git! I couldn't believe he had the audacity to presume that my potions work would be anything less than perfection! Just the implication of that was enough to drive me into a state of fury. If he had ever paid attention in class he might realize that potions is an intricate science and that someone, such as myself, who excels in that science would know if their potion is appropriate for the desired results.

I heard the slightly teasing tone in the voice that said my name. I have to admit to a certain level of curiosity at that. I wouldn't have expected Potter to use a tone like that with me, especially when we'd both been so angry moments earlier. Before I had time to respond, his lips were on mine.

Now, I suppose I should explain that I have no romantic notions towards Potter, nor do I have any sexually driven lustful thoughts of him. He's not completely vile, I suppose, but that by no means constitutes a desire to shag him.

That kiss, however, was a bit of a milestone for me. It was the first time I'd had the sheer joy of kissing someone of the male persuasion. As such, it was the first time I was able to truly confirm

the suspicions I'd had about my sexuality for quite some time. Now, while the kiss was nice, I must admit that I would have thoroughly enjoyed it and thrown myself into it further if it had been Severus. The simple physical confirmation of my orientation was enough for me to begin entertaining the ideas of being with Severus, kissing him, loving him. Of course, Narcissa would provide a bit of difficulty, what with the plans of us be married after graduation.
Ah, but I digress. At that moment, the kiss took me by surprise and these thoughts had just begun to form in my mind when I heard Potter's voice from across the room. As the boy kissing me opened his eyes, I saw that they were bright green, not the dark brown I was used to seeing from Potter. The rest of the face, however, was a skillfully designed duplicate of James Potter. Following the gaze of those green eyes, I saw a Malfoy standing in the doorway. I knew at first glance he was a Malfoy, the dashing good looks and sophisticated air gave it away.
I decided quickly that I should explain this to Potter. I certainly wasn't prepared for Potter to tell people that I was interested in boys, or worse, him!
"James, I, uh.. . ." I faltered, not sure what explanation I could give. The truth seemed the most believable, but I wasn't interested in telling anyone about my feelings for Sev until I could tell him myself. Before I could formulate a reasonable explanation, the Potter look-alike seemed to panic in front of me. As I looked from him to Potter, to the new Malfoy in the doorway, I finally began to understand that my potion had indeed done exactly what it was supposed to do. (As if I ever doubted myself) We had traveled into the future, but unfortunately, it appeared that we had run into our own children. Furthermore, if the kiss were any indication, it appeared that my future son had the same sexual leanings as myself.
Draco:
I forced myself not to run to the Transfiguration classroom. It would show too much excitement. It could possibly draw attention in the halls and I certainly couldn't pass off the idea that I was running in excitement and anticipation of detention with the tabby cat teacher.
I couldn't tell anyone just yet, but I was highly anticipating the surging, needing sensations of Harry's lips on mine. I imagined he would have that crisp, clean outdoorsy smell, like the wind that whipped past him while he was flying. I couldn't wait to take a deep breath surrounded by the scent that would be purely Harry.
With a smile on my face, I walked into the classroom. . . and froze. Harry, MY HARRY, was kissing someone else. I couldn't speak for what seemed like hours. I think it was then that I realized I was getting in pretty deep. If the sight of him with another person could make me feel like a Death Eater had ripped my heart out and I was watching it beat in front of me, I could be in serious trouble.
"Harry?" Oh, I hated the pain that I heard in my voice. I'm a Malfoy, I'm not supposed to show pain or vulnerability. I'm certainly not supposed to let anyone know that they hold any control over me. Malfoy's are always in control. And even putting the Malfoy name aside, no child of Narcissa should ever allow a weakness like this.
Just as I spoke, I heard another voice. "Lucius!" Oh Merlin, no. My father couldn't see me like this. I didn't even want to think about what he would do, how he would react to any of this. Just as I was silently panicking, Harry turned to look at me in shock. That's when I got a look at the person he'd been kissing. I looked from this familiar blond to the dark-haired person in the corner, then, back to the blond.
"James, I, uh. . ." the blond said. James, Lucius, familiar blond, that guy in the corner looks like Harry. My mind was telling me the impossible. It somehow came to the completely illogical yet,

at the moment, highly believable suggestion that these two people were our fathers. Younger, of course. (And in James' case - alive)
/Every time lately that I think I'm having a vision, it's you and my father./ Harry's words crept into my mind, his visions proving the plausibility of this situation. Harry's seer skills weren't wrong, our fathers were here.
Upon accepting this revelation, I looked to Harry, hoping he would have an explanation for it. Not to mention an explanation for kissing someone else (ew, it was my father! I'll have to think about that later). I realized, though, that Harry was in no condition to explain anything. And if I were entertaining the notion that he knew something of this arrangement, that notion was blown straight out the window at the expression on Harry's face.
He was, for lack of a better word, dumbstruck. I could see that he was delighted, frightened and very, very sad all at once. I could also see that he was very confused. The emotions running across his face were nearly tangible to me as I felt his jumbled energy hit me in waves. It was as though some part of his soul was reaching out to me for comfort, the way he might have reached a hand out to me if I'd been standing closer. I realized simultaneously that I was sending my energy to him as well, offering subconscious support and understanding. It seemed to be what he needed, because he finally found his voice again. I'm certain I wasn't the only one in the room that heard the raw emotion dripping from his voice when he said his father's name.
"James?"
Harry:
The exhilaration of flying around in the cold had left my skin slightly tingly. As I nearly ran through the castle, I was warming up from the inside, but I knew my skin was still cold to the touch.
All I could think of as I headed towards the Transfiguration classroom was extending this euphoric thrill by kissing Draco. I was really starting to feel completely addicted to the taste of him. He tastes just a little bit like cinnamon and just the tiniest bit like chocolate, and the rest is something that's just Dray - 100 percent pure. I knew that he was still a little upset about the Death Eater meeting, and I certainly wasn't going to tell him that I was taking the Dark Mark after our detention that night. My biggest problem would be finding a way to hide the mark from him, especially once we got past the "waiting a while" point of things.
/Be careful Harry. I was very fond of your parents, felt like they were of my own blood. I would hate to see you do anything you'd regret when seen through their eyes./ Dumbledore's words came back to me. I knew that my parents wouldn't want me working with Voldemort, but if they had lived my life, I thought they would understand my reasons for joining him. I had to believe that. Merlin knows, I'd never have the chance to ask for their approval, and by the same token, I'd never have the responsibility of facing their disappointment.
I finally made it to the classroom and was delighted to see Dray's familiar blond hair shimmering in the torchlight. It looked a little longer, but not enough for me to put any further thought into it. I loved the fact that I was able to sneak up on him. And the way he turned to me when I said, "Malfoy" was just perfect. Finally, those lips! I had just enough time during that kiss to register that something seemed slightly different, slightly wrong. Then I heard those voices behind me.
"Lucius!"
"Harry?"
When my eyes popped open I was staring into the grey eyes of. . . someone. I could tell that it wasn't Dray but it looked so much like him that my brain wouldn't function properly. I turned

and saw Dray standing by the door.
"Draco?" I was so confused. The non-Draco-blond that I'd been kissing spoke.
"James, I, uh"
It was at that moment that I realized there was someone else in the room. The someone who said 'Lucius' from behind me. The someone this blond was looking at. The someone in the corner of the room. That someone stepped out of the shadows just enough for the torchlight to brighten his face. I knew that face. I'd seen it in my dreams, in my prized photo album from Hagrid, in the mirror of Erised. I saw a slightly different version of that face every time I looked into the mirror. Some part of my boggled mind put together the last thing I'd heard ('James, I, uh') with the image in front of me. Suddenly I couldn't breath. I couldn't think. I wasn't sure how much longer I would be standing upright. All I could think was 'That's James' and 'I need Dray'. I think I was trying to reach out for him, knowing that he could help, that he would understand how I was feeling. He was the only one there who could understand the way this made me feel. My eyes were starting to tear up and I felt a surge of energy from Dray, like he was trying to help, reaching out to me from a distance. It was just enough for me to try speaking.
I had a million things to say, a million questions to ask, but I couldn't form the words. I couldn't begin to choose one question, one statement. My father was standing in front of me, presumably in the flesh. I was fairly certain it wasn't the onset of insanity, yet I couldn't bring myself to call him dad or father. I couldn't put that much faith in it. Not yet. With everything I'd ever wanted to say to him, and all the love and happiness I'd missed out on, I took a deep breath and asked the question, hoping to verify what I was seeing before me.
"James?"
~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Okay, I wasn't planning this chapter at all, but the voices in my head were quite insistent that you wonderful readers needed to know exactly how all four of them viewed that final few moments of the last chapter. I hope you aren't too disappointed to find that the story hasn't progressed yet, but if you read carefully, you will have seen at least a clue or two about what's going on. It's wonderful to get inside the character's heads every once in a while.
Jade: *Picks Jade up from the floor, waving smelling salts in her face* I was hoping to get a strong reaction from that cliffy ending, but I hope there was no bodily harm when you fell! And for the record, I think it may have been your review (and Aranami's) that sparked the voices to tell me that I HAD to let the readers know what was in their minds. Now you know for sure where Harry's happy ass was! As for a different word for praise: The MS Word thesaurus offers 'admire, commend, exalt, congratulate, go into raptures over, acclaim' and many more. I'm beginning to get used the praise. Okay, not really, I get all giggly and silly when I read these wonderful glorifying reviews, but I love it! I'm glad you got the message in the song lyrics. I find myself almost quoting it at times, like 'Mione saying 'remember how he used to be?' and Harry saying 'I'm not crazy' . . . Oh, and I loved Someone Told Me! Of course, I told you I loved it in the review.
Azhure: Thank you again and again. I can't promise to stop reading yours, though. I have to know what will happen next! And for the record. . . EVERYONE HERE SHOULD READ 'SATURN RETURNS' BY AZHURE - IT'S AWESOME! I'm glad you liked the muggle Xmas song. I think my fave part was in Sirius' letter 'the pot calling you black' I actually laughed at that one myself. It's not often I make myself laugh.
Delie: thank you. Glad you are working on that new fic. I'm watching, waiting, anticipating. No,

you don't have to plead anymore. Oh yes, the consequences! Those will be interesting. (hint - many won't be known until the sequel)
Rebuky: don't fall off the chair! I hope you've gotten these updates!
PeachDancer82: don't worry about chapter 18. It's just lyrics. It's something that makes me think of this fic when I hear it on the radio, so I posted it almost like recommended listening while you read. You can just pretend it didn't exist. And now you know about them meeting up - glad you think they can handle it. They'll just have to, now won't they?
Aranami: As mentioned in Delie's reply above, your review sparked some responses from the characters themselves and became the inspiration behind this chapter. Especially Lucius. He was non-to-happy about the idea that someone would think he wanted any James booty. *grins* I, however, was very glad to hear from you again. I was beginning to worry that I had bored you or something.
Menecarkawan: Oh yay! You called me evil! That means I'm doing a good job! *jumps around and around and trips over the office chair* A- hem, sorry about that. I know this chapter wasn't the 'aftermath' type thing you were looking for, but we're getting there, I swear we are! Now, get back to work on Pheonix!
Cassa-Andra: I'm glad you liked the review thingy. Don't feel bad about not reviewing earlier. I'm just glad you came back! 'You like me, you really like me.' Okay, so yeah, questions, I'm sure, have now been answered, and other questions can't be answered yet, so, um, yeah! As for the song- it's not really song-fic, just seems to fit. At least in my head. Maybe that's because I know how this is going to end and you don't! Mwahhhhh-haaa-haaa-haaa-haa

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Chapter: 21

Before I start this chapter, I have to tell you all to read the most touchingly beautiful songfic ever written (in my humble opinion). It's called Somebody Told Me and it was written by Jade Maxwell (you should be able to find her in my reviews and you can get to her fics from there.) I've read it three or four times, including just now with the accompanying music playing in the background. The lyrics themselves along with the story she wrote around it are enough to make most people cry, but if you have the CD or you download the song (Hero by Chad Kroeger) and listen while you read, you'll be almost certain to need a tissue by the end. It's absolutely fabulous and deserves lots of readings and reviews. I highly recommend it, even if you don't like songfics. Now, on with the show.
Review: James and Lucius are working on a dark-detecting-preventing project as a punishment. Lucius has a thing for Snape but is promised to Narcissa. In the present, Draco & Harry become friends, then secretly boyfriends. Hermione hates Draco, Ron is accepting. Harry is studying dark arts and wants to meet with Voldemort. He's got a hidden agenda that he believes will help him save those he loves. James and Lucius explain to their friends that they'll be completing the 'project' and express their nervousness, they drink the potion and are suddenly (and inexplicably) faced with a punishment from McGonagall. In the last 1997 chapter, Harry's missing. Ron and Draco find out Peter Pettigrew is at the edge of the grounds. Harry's meeting w/ Death eaters and

won't tell Draco anything about it. Sirius writes back and people are noticing Harry's energy has changed. Harry & Dray plan to meet for a snog, but Harry snogs Lucius instead (eww) and then they all realize that the younger James and Lucius are in 1997~!

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Harry stood there in shock, refusing to accept what he was seeing before him. 'I know everyone thinks I've gone crazy, maybe they're right.' He could think of no other explanation for seeing his father. Yes, of course, this is the wizarding world and seven years ago he would have denied the possibility of most everything he'd seen and done since coming to Hogwarts, but even so. . . Even in all that he had seen and done in that seven years, he'd never heard of the dead being brought back to life, or time travel, or ghosts suddenly coming 'round to visit after sixteen years (not to mention this was obviously a corporeal body, not the shimmery ghosts he was used to.) No, there was definitely no explanation other than insanity. During these thoughts, Harry felt as though he were standing on a cloud so far up in the sky that no sound could reach him. His body was numb, and his mind was racing. Time seemed to stand still as he stared into the eyes of the hallucination of his father. Then, that hallucination took a step towards him. That step, the small movement and the sound of the foot on the stone floor and the rustle of his robes, were amplified countless times as the sound waves made their way into Harry's mind.

Suddenly, Harry began to hear the thoughts and feel the emotions of the other three people in the room. His soul was open, raw and confused from the sights around him, and the thoughts and emotions rushing at him felt like sandpaper grating against an open wound and sounded like being in the middle of the Quidditch stands when the fans have all amplified their voices.

/. . . Merlin, this must be my son. . ./ /. . .I don't understand how . . ./ ~confusion~ /. . .why would the Potter boy be so shocked. . ./ ~pride~ /. . .our fathers are here. . ./

/. . . wrong with him?. . / /Dumbledore knows?/ ~worry~ /couldn't possibly. . ./ /change time/ ~joy~ /Severus. . ./

/so grown. . . / ~hope~ /his mother/ /my father/ /he'll know/ /Malfoy was right/ /together?/

"Stop it!" Harry's scream broke through the silence and cause the others to jump in shock. "Just stop it!" Draco ran over to Harry and took his hand, gently leading him to one of the desks to sit.

"Harry," he began quietly. "It's okay, it's okay to be confused. But I don't understand what you want us to stop."

James walked over and sat opposite Harry, watching silently, amazed at how quickly his son was comforted by this boy. He could practically see the magic and energy crackle between them.

"Harry?" James said hesitantly. "Harry Potter?"

Hearing his name, Harry looked up. As he gazed into the face so like his own and heard his father (his DEAD father) speak to him, all Harry's coherent thoughts ceased to exist. His mind in turmoil, his chest aching as though he'd been underwater for hours, he could do nothing but stare into the dark brown eyes. When his own green eyes began to fill with tears, it stirred an anger in Draco. He glared at the newcomer.

"Of course he's Harry Potter, you bloody git!"

At that statement, before anyone else could speak or even breath, Harry stood up. He was funneling so much energy that the entire room seemed warm and in the dim torchlight the others could see a crackling glow surrounding him. The power was palpable, but his facial expression and voice showed nothing but utter calm.

"I'm not sure how or why, but it's obvious that Dumbledore sent you here to impersonate my father and attempt to control me," he paused, considering some new possibility as the others

(especially James and Draco) looked on in surprise and confusion. "Perhaps you ARE Dumbledore with a PolyJuice Potion or a glamour charm or something. Whatever. I am not amused, nor am I that easily fooled. I don't intend to be subjected to this farce any longer." With that he turned and started toward the door pulling Draco by the arm. At the door he paused to speak quietly to Draco. "Please don't come after me. I need some time. I'm fine, I just need some time. I'll see you in the morning, okay?"
Draco nodded slowly, not agreeing, but accepting. "I love you Dray."
"I love you too. Come see me if you change your mind, okay?"
"Of course."
Draco hugged his boyfriend, still very aware of the excessive amounts of energy coursing through and around him. He stood quietly and watched as Harry left the room and promptly became invisible as he walked through the corridor. He took a deep breath, willing himself to believe that Harry would actually come to him when he was ready to talk. Draco decided that some explanations would be helpful to the both of them, so he turned to James and Lucius and offered his trademark sneer with one eyebrow lifted. "So," he drawled, "how old are you and how did you get here?"
"Seventeen" both of them answered at the same time. "I think further questions should be saved for a meeting with Dumbledore," Lucius continued. "He is still the Headmaster?"
Draco nodded.
"A few things seem to be obvious," James said. He looked from Draco to Lucius, then back to Draco before speaking again. "You are the son of Lucius Malfoy?" Draco nodded again. "And that boy, Harry, his parents are James and Lily?" Draco nodded again.
"You know we should be talking to Dumbledore before we ask too many questions, Potter."
"Stuff it Malfoy, there's something important that I need to know." Draco looked at him, not speaking. He marveled at the resemblance between father and son as he waited patiently for James to speak again. James' brown eyes were filled with sorrow and pain as he met Draco's icy blue ones. He seemed resigned to his fate as he plaintively asked, "How long ago did I die?"
No one spoke. Draco, James and Lucius looked at one another in the silent classroom. Draco still had no idea why or how these two had come to his time, but he was quick enough to realize that if too much was revealed, it could change the world as he knew it.
With the perfect sense of timing that only comes in action movies and suspenseful dramas, Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall walked into the classroom at that moment.
~*~*~*~
Harry went to the lake and wandered around a bit, then walked up to the Astronomy tower to gaze mindlessly, and finally ended up in his dorm room, staring at the ceiling, watching the shadows flickering around the room as a result of the one small candle by his bed. Though Harry never even realized how tired he was, he was sound asleep by the time Ron came in that evening.
"It's a lie, you're not my father." Ron looked at the sleeping boy. He was fairly used to Harry talking in his sleep, but it wasn't usually that clear. He had to wonder what his friend was dreaming about. "You won't change me, I'm going."
"Going where?" Ron wondered aloud.
"You don't need to know," Harry's sleeping form replied.
Ron was intrigued by this. He'd known for some time that Harry was up to something. He and Hermione had tried desperately to get closer to him again, the way things used to be, but found that he was rarely around and never quite seemed himself. "Why?" He thought a conversation

with Harry's subconscious might clear up some of the questions he had.
"Because I won't tell anyone. It's not safe for them. And you can't fool me. You're not my father."
"Okay," Ron said calmly. If he got Harry too agitated, it may bring him out of the dream. "When are you going?"
"Tonight. They're coming to get me tonight."
"Who?"
"Hrmmph"
"What?"
"Not telling you. Won't even show your face." With that, Harry rolled over and seemed to be finished with the conversation. Ron thought over his statements and decided he needed to talk to Hermione right away.
~*~*~
Draco paced the hallway outside the stone gargoyle impatiently. He didn't understand why he couldn't be involved in the discussion taking place in the Headmaster's office. Well, he did understand, he just didn't like it. After all, what could he possibly learn from the past that would change his future? Finally, the gargoyle moved over, revealing the spiral staircase. Draco looked up, curiously, and waited. After a moment, he decided this was an invitation to him, so he ascended to the office and found Professor McGonagall waiting for him at the door.
"Come in Mr. Malfoy. Please, sit down." She motioned to a seat facing the fireplace, to the left of the time-travelers. "We'll begin in a moment. There's one other person we're waiting for. A glance at Lucius and James told Draco that they had no idea who this other person was to be. Draco briefly wondered how Dumbledore could have contacted anyone without them knowing who, but the professor's next words answered the question for him. "It's almost time for a standard meeting anyway, he should be here shortly."
The headmaster smiled with his ever-twinkling eyes and picked up a bag of crawling sour worms to offer to the others in his office. "Help yourself, they're quite excellent, really. You have to chew them properly, however. If you don't, they'll crawl back up." He shook his head in a 'you don't know what your missing' manner as all those present declined the candy worms, mildly disguising their distaste.
After the briefest moment of awkward silence, the door opened and the Hogwarts potions master walked into the room. He paused noticeably at the sight of the blonde and raven heads in front of him, not yet noticing an almost identical blond head sitting slightly behind him to his left. "Good evening Albus, Minerva," he began politely. "Might I ask what Misters Potter and Malfoy are doing here this evening?"
Albus Dumbledore smiled and Snape found it annoying to see that the old man's eyes were twinkling even more than usual. Dumbledore loved the opportunity to surprise people, especially people who were typically difficult to surprise. After silently offering the sour worms to the potions master, (who declined and waited for an explanation somewhat impatiently), Dumbledore spoke. "Of course, Severus. They are here as the result of a very special project assigned to them a very long time ago. It appears to have been successful during tests, and if all goes well, they will be putting the Wheel of Time in its proper order."
Needless to say, Snape was quite confused by this answer. He turned to look at Minerva and finally caught site of Draco. Raising his eyebrows in surprise, he quickly whipped around to look at the other two boys. He glanced at James for a moment, registering that something seemed very un- Harry about him, then finally looked at Lucius.

If Snape had been anyone else, his jaw would have hit the floor, his eyes would have clouded with confusion and emotion and he would have found a seat quickly to hide the weakness in his knees. Snape, however, was not anyone else. He was Severus Snape. Death-Eater turned Spy for the Order of the Phoenix. He was a veteran of many battles, a grudgingly respecting friend to Harry Potter, a former pawn of Voldemort. He was a potions master unmatchable in skill and a professor who believed that students must be challenged. He, above all, was someone who had learned long ago to hide his true feelings. Feelings leave one open to pain, rejection and lack of control. Severus Snape had learned this as a teenager when he first fell in love with someone who could never love him back and who had eventually been changed into a cold, heartless bastard by Narcissa Black. The boy Snape had loved was as good as dead nearly twenty years ago, yet he was staring into Snape's eyes in the Headmaster's office.
"Lucius?"
~*~*~*~
Ron sat on the edge of Hermione's bed, looking anxiously into the caramel colored eyes of the girl he loved. "We've got to do something, don't we?"
"Ron, he was dreaming. He didn't even say who was coming to get him or who was pretending to be his father. It was just a dream."
"You don't know that, though. Do you?" He glanced down, fidgeting with the seam of his robe. "You said Harry told you he's a seer. What if he's seeing something in his sleep?"
"Even if he were, he wouldn't listen to us. You know how he's been lately."
"But, 'Mione, I don't think I can stand it if. . ."
"If what?" She scooted closer to him and wrapped her arm around his torso, leaning her head on his shoulder. It was a gesture that seemed to comfort them both.
"If someone DOES take him away. . ." he took a deep breath, "like they did you" Ron wrapped his arms around her in return and felt the tension that seemed to be constantly present in her body. "Will you tell me something? Please?"
She sighed, resigning herself to comply with his wishes, but yearning for the time when there would be no more questions. "Yes, what is it?"
"When Harry told us about Malfoy," he began to trace loving patterns on her back, trying to keep her calm, "you said something about keeping Narcissa Malfoy entertained. . ." He paused, suddenly unsure he wanted to hear the answer, but finally asked it. "What did she do to you?"
Hermione closed her eyes tightly, wishing she'd thought before speaking after Harry's revelation. She knew that Ron loved her and would do anything to comfort and help her, but it didn't make talking about it any easier. "Narcissa put me under the Imperious curse. I tried to fight it. I know it can be done, but I couldn't seem to find the strength." Her voice dropped into a very low monotone, almost as if her mouth was speaking but her soul wasn't there. "She told me to do things. . . to her. She said Lucius was never good at loving a woman, and she thought another woman would be better at making her feel good."
Ron tightened his hold on Hermione, trying with all his might to provide her with calm acceptance while inside he was raging. On top of the torture, the various hexes and curses they'd put on her, the pain they caused, the starvation, the times they threatened her life, the way they'd tried to get her to trick Harry into coming for her, this news was sufficient to break the last bit of reserve Ron had. No one would get away with torturing and violating Hermione Granger. Not as long as Ron Weasely was around!
Hermione eventually fell asleep in his arms, so exhausted that she didn't realize when he laid her

down on the bed, covered her gently and left the room. Ron quickly ran through the common room and burst into the seventh year dorm. He walked directly over to Harry's bed, intending to convince him that something must be done to Narcissa. He knew Harry still cared. Deep inside, he knew Harry would help him get revenge for what had been done to Hermione. "Harry, get up. It's important," he said as he pulled back the curtain, reaching in to shake his friend awake. His voice fell on an empty mattress and his hand reached only blankets.

A quick survey of the bed and bedside table told Ron that something was wrong. Harry's glasses and wand were on the table. His shoes were by the bed. His school robe was draped over the end of the bed. Harry might have gone to the bathroom or the common room without his robe or shoes, but he wouldn't go anywhere without his glasses and wand. There was only one explanation. Someone had taken him away.

~*~*~*~*~

A/N: I was going to add more to this, but I decided to stop here and begin writing the next chapter while you are all reading this. I really was hoping to surprise you all with a wonderful, long, detailed chapter, but I'm so anxious for reviews that I couldn't control myself. Please forgive me. I'm hooked on the reviews, it's like oxygen! I have to say, whenever I'm feeling down about my life and think I can't do anything right, I read through my reviews and you are all so flattering and wonderful and praising me and my writing and my plot and my stories and it just makes me smile and almost makes me cry. It's the best feeling in the world! (okay, aside from sex and chocolate and hugs from my daughter)

Thank you all for being such wonderful and amazing and dedicated readers! I'm going to try replying to a few reviews here, but please don't be offended if you get left out. I lost about 8-9 of my reviews when had that drug problem last week.

Jade Maxwell: I'm so glad that last chapter helped. I'm even more glad you like Lucius. Believe me, there's more of "non-prat Lucius" to come! Wow, I didn't realize a review from me would get that kind of reaction. I think that's how I would react if Frizzy ever sent me a review, though. *grins*

Menecarkawan: Ooops, sorry. I certainly didn't mean to tease you! *sly, evil grin* Siriusly, I didn't! *wide innocent eyes* LOL, prized cow. That was a good one!

Azhure: time paradoxes? No. . . that couldn't POSSIBLY happen, could it?

Cassa-Andra: Wow, you are so flattering to my ego. I hope this one had enough plot in it for you.

HP IceAngel: Wow, all in one sitting! I'm so excited a new reader and you read it all at once! I do hope you like this chapter too.

Louise: Yes, Narcissa is a baddie, a royal supreme bitch like none other, if you must know. No worries, James never had eyes for anyone but Lily. Thank you for the praise and compliments. I love it!

Aranami: thank you so much! I do hope you like where it's going to go!

Delie: well, this sort of answered one of your questions, but not really. I have to say I love the interest and it makes me giggle to know that many readers are going to be asking some of the same questions all the way to the sequel! Glad you liked the 'tabby-cat teacher' bit. I was a bit shocked that no one picked up on the other joke I put in there. Hint - go back and read the letter from Snuffles. Remember while you read it that it's written to Harry Potter from Sirius Black. Then let me know if you see what I laughed at when I wrote it! *grin*

Amethyst Shard: love your name, and I loved Bad Faith but I'm upset that it hasn't been updated. Have you given up on it? Please don't! And like I said before, WOW - you read all this in one

sitting? *jumps around with excitement thanks to her faithful readers and her brand new readers* Soooooooooo - click that little blue button down there and leave me some comments or cookies or whatever you feel like leaving. I'm working on the next chapter already! And many, many thanks to all of you who have put me on your favorites list. It's such an ho

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Chapter: 22

A/N: I am currently reading OotP and would like to thank all of you who are still taking the time to read my work when the Goddess of the Wizarding World (aka J.K. Rowling) has released such wonderful reading materials for our enjoyment. I have not yet finished the book (it's 6/22/03 now) and do not know major events or who dies. Please keep this in mind as you send me reviews. On the same token, I don't want to spoil anything for those of you who haven't read it yet, or haven't reached chapter 6 or so, but I WAS RIGHT! Oh, My, Gods! I couldn't believe it when I read something in canon that I had put in here. Some of you will know what I'm talking about because you've asked me (Delie - I told you he owled me.)
Anyway, thank you all more than you can imagine. I hope this chapter is acceptable and up to standard for all of you. I'm not putting individual replies because (yet again) I'm having trouble accessing some of my reviews and I'm in a hurry to post this. Please do review, let me know what you think and if it's still holding your interest. I know some things aren't going to match the canon now that we have a new canon, (brief mentions of 5th year events in my story that I'm sure won't be showing up in hers), but at this point I'm not going to take them out. After all, if you can suspend disbelief and read fanfiction, you can continue to suspend it, right? You're all wonderful, I'll post again soon.
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As Albus and Minerva finished their explanations, Severus Snape and Draco Malfoy found themselves utterly speechless. Snape had long since found a seat, deciding that the ensuing conversation warranted some sort of physical support of his body. The sight of a seventeen year old Lucius (especially after the recent thoughts of him) had taken its toll on him and the information that followed only intensified the confusion and emotion boiling inside him.
The two time-travelers seemed to be the least phased by these events, with the exception of Headmaster Dumbledore, of course. Professor McGonagall was subconsciously wringing her hands and had decided that she would welcome the opportunity to transform into her cat form and curl up in a ball for a nap. At least then she wouldn't have to worry about what would happen.
"Albus, I can't help but think that something bad is going to come from this. They never should have seen each other. How could I have been so careless? It's quite obvious that these young men are. . ."
"Minerva," Dumbledore interrupted. "It's quite obvious that these young men are extremely similar in appearance to their sons and it would have been incredibly easy for anyone to make the same mistake. It couldn't have been helped. Perhaps it shouldn't have been helped."
"Headmaster, certainly you aren't insinuating that Potter and Malfoy meeting up with James and

Lucius," Severus paused a moment, willing himself to stay calm as he spoke, "could be a beneficial event?"
"I'm saying, Severus, exactly that. Perhaps that meeting will be the beginning of the changes."
"You do expect changes, then?" Snape looked at the Headmaster thoughtfully, then glanced at Lucius ever-so-briefly before speaking again. "Could I speak with you in private for just a moment Headmaster?"
"Of course, please excuse us," he stood, motioning Severus toward a door in the back of his office. Once they had both step through, Severus felt the magic surrounding the small room he had just entered. Dumbledore saw the recognition and explained the purpose. "It's highly secure, the strongest of spells could be performed here without anyone knowing, and the silencing charms are never removed. Anything you need to say, it's perfectly safe to say it here, Severus."
"Albus, just before I left my quarters this evening, I had a very odd experience. It was as if I were remembering an event from my youth, but it was an event that never happened. The knowledge of it is still in my head, the experience is every bit as real to me as the rest of my youth, every bit as real as eating dinner this evening, but some part of my mind remembers that it's a new memory. A newly formed memory of something that happened twenty years ago."
"And does this have anything to do with our visiting Mister Malfoy?"
Severus glanced up, his familiar cold stare effectively covering the surprise he felt at that question. "Why do you ask?"
"It only seems logical," the old man's eyes twinkled merrily. "They've just arrived this evening. They met up with their sons within moments. It's possible that something in that meeting spawned an event that they will react to differently once they return to their own time."
"So, the longer they stay here, the more of our past they may change?" Only a powerful wizard as perceptive as Dumbledore could see the hope flicker in the coal black eyes.
"It's very possible. Do you feel this new memory of yours is valuable to the project or the mission at hand?"
"No, sir, not at all." Severus Snape failed to notice that Dumbledore was obviously doubting that statement. He was too caught up in reliving this new memory. The sudden, unbidden images of himself and Lucius and their one night stand in seventh year stirred emotions that Snape had thought no longer existed for him. He'd closed himself off, built walls around his heart, after Lucius got married. His experience in Voldemort's service had added calluses to his already hardened heart. These new memories and suddenly seeing that younger version of Lucius were wreaking havoc on his senses.
~~~meanwhile, back in the office~~~
James was quiet. He had listened to the Headmaster, had heard McGonagall's concerns and had watched the interaction between the older Snape and Lucius. He hadn't said a word. No one would actually answer his questions. He looked at Professor McGonagall, noticing how she avoided his gaze. Despite the lack of eye contact he could tell she was sad. He looked at Draco Malfoy, seeing the sorrow glinting in his blue-grey eyes. Draco had never answered his question, but no one had denied it, either. James was beginning to wonder how he was supposed to go on with his life, knowing that he wouldn't be alive to see his son grow up and have a family of his own.
"Draco?"
The blond looked up quickly, his eyes connecting with the dark brown eyes of James Potter, one man he thought he'd never see. He knew James had questions, knew James had made some
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conclusions and wanted verification of them. He knew, without looking at her, that Professor McGonagall was waiting, anticipating, and that she would not let Draco answer any questions too serious. "Yes?" he answered with resignation.
"Is he. . . can you tell me. . . is he happy? What's he like?"
Draco looked at McGonagall, hoping for a sign from her, something that would tell him how much he could reveal. To his credit, McGonagall simply offered a sad smile and a knowing look. She trusted him (imagine, McGonagall trusting Draco Malfoy under any other circumstances), knew that he was intelligent and thoughtful enough to watch what he said.
Taking comfort in her silent confidence, Draco took a deep breath and looked back at the young man who would one day be the father of his boyfriend. "He's not always happy, but he always finds happiness again. I think he accepts things well and has a reverence for life and fun. He gets in trouble a lot, but it's usually for a really good reason. He's. . ." Draco paused, realizing that he was revealing his impression of Harry, the way he saw him through love. He'd never really thought about it before. That question, 'What's he like?' seemed so open-ended, so broad. He knew that no simple answer could completely express it, and he knew that the details would be too much to share with the time travelers. Looking back at James, connecting with his eyes again, Draco suddenly knew exactly what he needed to say to this man. "He's the most valiant, courageous and wonderful person I've ever known and he has the most beautiful heart and soul ever. You'll be proud of him."
If there had been any doubt about that statement, it disappeared as soon as he saw the look in James' eyes. Pure love and pride of a happy father-to- be. Draco had to look away before he allowed himself to contemplate what Harry's life might have been like if he hadn't lost his loving parents. Then, as he was contemplating loving parents, and what it might be like if he'd ever experienced that himself, Lucius spoke.
"You seem like a strong young man to be proud of, as well." It was a simple statement, an honest observation. It was spoken in a quiet, thoughtful voice with just a hint of curiosity and uncertainty behind it. Draco heard none of that. Draco heard the voice of his father, dripping with disdain and disappointment. It was only some small portion of his mind that realized he was imposing those emotions on the statement. He, however, refused to acknowledge that small portion of his mind.
"Thank you sir," Draco spoke eloquently and proudly, looking down all the while. He'd been taught that direct eye contact with his elders was a sign of disrespect. Though he knew that this Lucius was the same age as him, it was still his father.
Lucius was a bit taken aback by Draco's actions. He seemed so easy-going with Potter and Potter's son, but Lucius picked up on hesitancy and something like fear when Draco spoke to him. He noticed that this future son of his had not once met his eyes, and had failed to so much as speak to him unless directly spoken to. This began to worry him greatly. Was he dead in this future as well as Potter? What other explanation could there be for Draco's actions?
Lucius considered this and decided that if anyone from this time could (and would) answer his questions, it would be his best friend (and secret love) Severus. He'd noticed some changes in Severus' behavior during their brief meeting, but the familiarity that flashed in those coal black eyes could never mislead him. He knew Severus well, and knew by that look that this Severus still cared for him and would understand his concerns about Draco.
He looked up, making contact with those same coal black eyes once again as Severus and Headmaster Dumbledore came back into the room.

"It's apparent that your presence here has already begun to make a difference, however, it's been a difference in our past. As I'm sure you both realize," Dumbledore looked at each of the boys as he addressed them, "your assignment was to assist in repairing the balance of power. As I recall, my instructions before you left were a bit cryptic at best. I know that Minerva and explained our seeing abilities, however they are not infallible. The Dark power we discussed has indeed risen again. In fact it rose nearly three years ago and has been getting stronger ever since. The Light power that has been foreseen to join it, well, we now know where that power is coming from. He is indeed extremely strong, possibly stronger than any other."
"Excuse me sir," James interrupted, "but can you tell us *how* this wizard got so strong, or who either of these powers are?"
"Yes, I believe you are familiar with Voldemort?"
At the sound of the name, James scowled, expressing his dislike for Voldemort in his facial expression. Lucius seemed rather indifferent which both confused and intrigued Draco. Why would his father have been so apathetic about his Lord's power? Why would he be here attempting to stop his Lord? It seemed to be completely against the patterns he had seen from Lucius and Narcissa in the past. He drew his attention back to the conversation as Dumbledore continued.
"Voldemort nearly died in 1981. Most of the wizarding world believed him dead, and his body was in fact gone, yet his essence managed to stay here and he eventually used a very complicated ritual to gain a new body in 1994. Many people still refuse to accept his return, despite the fact that we have been in war and lost many lives in battle during the last two years. The most unfortunate thing is that the one person who has been able to face Voldemort on many occasions and survive. . . he is the strong Light power that we discussed earlier. The one that is, even as we speak, adjusting his allegiances."
Draco once again found himself lost in thought. He knew of none other than Harry who had faced Voldemort and survived. Something in Dumbledore's words reminded him. . . that night in the Potions classroom, the night they first shook hands.
~flashback~
"Perhaps you were right. I'm thinking it's time I re-evaluate my allegiances." With that surprising statement, Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who- Lived, the one who faced and battled He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, the proclaimed Savior of the Wizarding World stepped forward and offered his hand to Draco Malfoy, son of Lucius Malfoy - a Death Eater and rumored to be Voldemort's right hand man.
Draco looked at his hand, looked into those deep green eyes again and realized that something VERY important and VERY real was going on here. He offered Harry one of his very rare genuine smiles and accepted the handshake.
"You realize, Potter, that this changes everything?"
"Of course, Malfoy. That's my goal."
~end flashback~
Draco looked up into the twinkling blue eyes of his Headmaster, still wrapping his mind around the information he had just gathered. "You mean, sir, that Voldemort. . . that our fathers came here because. . . You're saying you knew he would turn to the. . ." He realized that communication would be much easier if he could somehow pick one sentence at a time and actually complete them. The shock, worry and anger prevented him from doing so. When he finally found his voice again, Draco could say only two words, two words which Dumbledore

and McGonagall were expecting, but which brought surprise from Snape and Lucius and utter despair from James. Those two simple words spoke volumes.
"It's Harry?"
Before Dumbledore could answer that question, there was a sudden thunder of footsteps racing up the spiral staircase to his office. An urgent voice approached with the footsteps. "Headmaster! Headmaster! Something's gone wrong! He's. . ." the frantic, red-headed owner of the voice appeared in the doorway. "gone. He doesn't have his glasses or his wand or. . ." Ron froze and allowed his words to fade away. He was looking at James, Lucius and Draco. His expressive face registered a myriad of emotions quickly; relief, shock, confusion, anger, fear. "Um, sir?" he looked up at Headmaster Dumbledore. "What's going on here? Do you know where Harry is?"
"No, Mr. Weasely, I'm afraid I don't. If you'll have a seat, I'll make sure everything is explained to you in just a moment. Why don't you tell me exactly what happened?"
"Well, Harry was having a dream. He was talking about. . ." Ron paused, understanding beginning to form in his mind, connecting the sights in front of him with the statements from Harry's dream. "He was talking about someone who's not his father," he said quietly. "Then he said 'they' were coming to get him soon, but he wouldn't say who or where. I left the room for a little while, and when I came back, he was gone."
A quiet hissing from Professor Snape drew the attention of everyone in the room. Snape looked at the Headmaster pointedly and said "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to go, sir." The nearly imperceptible glance toward his left arm was enough for Dumbledore to know that Snape was being called.
"Please be careful Severus, and report back to me as soon as you are able." Snape nodded and quickly left the room.
"Perhaps we should find somewhere for our guests to sleep, Albus," McGonagall said. "It seems clear that this issue won't be resolved tonight and it's getting late."
Dumbledore nodded his assent, and allowed the Gryffindor headmaster to lead the visitors out. He then looked at Ron and Draco. "I see that the two of you have come to some sort of understanding," they nodded in response. "I would like to ask you, Mr. Malfoy to please explain things to Mr. Weasely. I don't think I need to explain to either of you that this knowledge is to be kept quiet, completely quiet. There will be great danger to everyone, more than you can possibly imagine, if this information is spread around the school. Mr. Weasely," Dumbledore turned his kind gaze on the red-head, offering all the comfort he could, "thank you for alerting us to Harry's disappearance. I assure you that we will all be working tirelessly to find him. In the meantime, I would ask that you bring his wand and glasses to me for safe-keeping. I expect that you'll both be getting to bed soon. After all, we do still have a curfew here." His smile and the sparkle in his eyes told them that he didn't TRULY expect them to obey curfew, but was saying that out of duty.
The two seventh-year students simply nodded and left the office together, each caught up in their private worries of someone very important to them. Neither of them saw the worry that crept into Albus Dumbledore's pale blue eyes after they left.
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Harry awoke to the shooting pain in his scar. 'I don't even remember dreaming this time.' He tried to reach toward the nightstand that always held his glasses, but found that his arm couldn't move that far. It was stopped by something around his wrist. Slight movements informed him that he had restraints on both wrists as well as around his ankles. 'Dray, if you're playing a joke on me,

it's so not funny.' He was careful to keep his thoughts unspoken, aware that he didn't seem to be in his dorm room, and the bed certainly wasn't as soft as Draco's. As he attempted to survey his blurry surroundings, he began to remember that he was scheduled for a meeting that evening. He'd fallen asleep after the confusing incident with those people. . . he couldn't think about that now.

Closing his eyes, Harry willed himself to concentrate on his other senses. He could feel nothing but the bed and restraints at first, but finally began to feel the difference in the air. It seemed slightly damp, as if he were outside in the night air, but the biting cold of December wasn't present. 'I must be in a dungeon or something.' He could hear the sounds of someone else breathing steadily and could smell something vaguely familiar but was unable to put his finger on it. Realizing that taste would be a useless sense at the moment, he focus instead on the sixth sense he'd been developing. There was energy, the energy that went along with the breathing he heard. Reaching out with his aura, Harry felt a prickle of something familiar. It was someone he'd met with last night. Harry took a guess as to who it would be, which of those people would be sitting in the dark with him. "Pettigrew?"

"Yes, Harry. I'm glad to see you're awake. Our Lord will be pleased."

"Did you take me from my room?"

"Yes."

"I don't have my glasses. Wouldn't it be better for me to be able to see during my initiation?"

"I'll fix that." Pettigrew walked towards Harry and raised his wand. Harry tensed slightly, anticipating pain. Much to his surprise, Peter simply muttered a few inaudible words and the room came into focus. Blinking his eyes, Harry quickly surveyed the room, taking in the layout, the furniture, the exits and the form of Peter Pettigrew. Harry felt the familiar anger rise within him at the thought of his parents and their friendship with this man. He waited just a moment, then felt the familiar guilt over their deaths and the deaths of so many others.

Shaking out of his thoughts, he brought his attention to the issue at hand. "I can see clearly. Is this permanent?"

"It should be. You realize that our Lord will have to test your faithfulness before you are initiated, right?"

"Of course, I wouldn't expect anything less of him," Harry replied evenly. "But honestly, Peter. Is it really necessary to leave me tied up like this? I don't even have my wand with me, what could I possibly do?"

"I suppose that's true," Pettigrew said slowly. He seemed to think about it for a few moments, then made up his mind and released Harry from the restraints. Harry sat up slowly, rubbing his forehead in an attempt to sooth the pain in his scar. This drew Pettigrew's attention to the lightning bolt. "Does it really hurt after all this time?"

Harry looked up in shock, wondering what the rat was referring to, then realized that he'd been rubbing his scar. "Yes. Only at times. Honestly, I'm worried about how that will affect my service. It hurts when he's near."

"We'll just have to discuss that with our Lord," a voice from the door interrupted. Harry looked over and felt his heart flip-flop as he found himself staring into the grey eyes of Lucius Malfoy. His first thought at that reaction was that it was because of the resemblance to Draco. Lucius turned his attention towards Peter. "It's time. Our Lord awaits his newest follower."

Peter grasped Harry firmly by the wrist and pulled him up and towards the door. Harry followed, attempting to exude much more confidence than he felt. 'I can do this. It's what I've been training

for all year. It's what I need to do. . . for them.'
Harry repeated this mantra as they walked through the corridors of the dungeon and finally entered what was obviously a meeting room. Nearly a dozen people were gathered in an open circle wearing black robes and Death Eater masks. Harry was roughly pushed into the center of the circle. When he looked back at Peter, he saw that both Peter and Lucius were donning their masks as well. 'This is it. He's here somewhere.' Harry slowly turned in a circle, searching for Voldemort among the matching figures that surrounded him. He felt the magic coursing through him and knew that he would be able to protect himself if need be, but he was trying to keep it under control and prevent his captors from seeing the confidence he felt. They thought him unarmed and it would be to his benefit if they kept thinking it.
Finally, after turning his attention on each figure there, individually feeling the energy of these people (and retaining some of it for future use) he found what he was looking for. Taking a slow, casual breath, Harry walked purposefully over to the figure that was two spaces left of Lucius Malfoy. He raised his eyes to look directly into the masked face and, setting a mental block against the pain in his head, spoke clearly without hesitation. "My Lord, it is my honor to finally face you for the right reasons."
Harry's heightened senses heard the slight gasps from a handful of the observers. He could feel the ripple of surprise but was unsure if they were shocked that he'd been able to pick Voldemort out of the crowd, or shocked at the words he spoke.
"Harry Potter," the serpent-like voice said. "I must say that it took a great while for my servants to convince me of your sincerity. Tell me boy, why is it, after all this time, that you choose to join me?"
"Because I am tired, My Lord. I am tired of fighting something that I can't win. I'm tired of living up to the expectations of others. They think me a golden child, their savior. I no longer have the desire to be altruistic. I have come to believe that pureblood wizardry and the power that comes with it are privileges which should be utilized to bring joy into our lives. I've not seen that happen in my years of fighting with Dumbledore. I've seen it in your followers."
"You've been observant. It's true that my followers want for nothing. You are currently in the company of the most powerful and wealthy wizards in the world. It's no coincidence that they are my followers."
"I know this, My Lord."
"Tell me, then, how do you know that I won't simply kill you now that you stand here defenseless before me?"
"I have no way of knowing that My Lord. I only hope that you will give me the chance to prove myself to you before you kill me."
"And how do you intend to prove yourself to me?"
"In whatever manner you request."
"It would seem useless to ask you to perform any magic considering your wandless state. Have you any other suggestions? Anything to convince me that you would be useful in my fold?"
"Of course, My Lord. I am highly trusted by everyone you fight against. I know those who stand at Dumbledore's side. They withhold nothing from me. I'm certain you would find this information useful in battle. And, I have other skills that could prove useful as well."
The confident young Gryffindor watched as Voldemort peered across the room. Shifting his focus for the briefest of moments, Harry realized that they had been joined by another Death Eater, none other than Severus Snape.

"Ahh, Severus, I'm glad you were able to join us this evening. I understand the circumstances occasionally delay you, but this evening promises to be very special. It seems that young Mr. Potter has decided he wants to join our ranks and he is currently explaining why we should accept him." Voldemort wasn't perceptive enough to feel the concern, anger and fear that rolled off of Snape, but Harry caught it. He chose to ignore it, however. There was nothing he could say that would make Snape feel any better. He would have to speak to him after the meeting.
Harry stood silently, waiting to be addressed again. Voldemort looked at him curiously, as if he were a puzzle to be solved. Finally, he spoke again. "What other skills do you believe you could provide to our services, Harry Potter?"
"I believe these skills would be best understood by demonstration, My Lord. If I may have your permission?"
Voldemort seemed to weight the situation, then motioned to the entire circle of Death Eaters to raise their wands on the boy. "If I say the word, kill him," his voice left no doubts. "Go ahead, Harry. Show me what you can do."
"I must specify that the demonstration would include harm and torture of your followers, but I promise not to kill them."
"My dear boy, without your wand, I see no way to accomplish any of this, but if you feel strongly about this *demonstration* of yours, please proceed. I'm certain I'll be entertained no matter what the outcome."
Harry took a step back, toward the center of the circle and began to turn slowly until he was facing Parkinson. With a brief flick of his eyes, Parkinson was dangling upside down from somewhere near the ceiling, his robes dangling unceremoniously toward the ground. Before anyone could react to that, Harry turned toward Pritchard and whispered "Imperio" then ordered the man to strip to his underwear. While that show was still in progress he turned again, facing Malfoy and with a casual, almost bored flick of the wrist and the whispered word "Crucio" Lucius Malfoy found himself in the grips of excruciating pain.
Harry spared a glance at Voldemort to gauge how this show was being received. He was pleased to see that the Dark Lord looked impressed, but also noticed that a few other Death Eaters seemed to be getting uneasy and were gripping their wands a little too tightly for his comfort. "I would hate for any of you to lose control of your wands before I've completed my demonstration." With that he silently raised his hand and every wand in the room flew directly into it. He glanced at Lucius, ending the Cruciatus curse. He almost absentmindedly pointed at Pritchard, after which everyone else could see that the man had come back to his senses and he quickly reached for his robes. Finally Harry turned to Parkinson and glanced from his inverted form to his empty spot in the circle. The intent coming through the power he held was enough to bring Parkinson down and set him rightly on the ground.
With that he turned to Voldemort and held out the handful of wands. "I presume you'll want to return these to their owners. I can continue to demonstrate if you'd like, but I'd be more inclined to believe you want to have some of your own orders carried out, My Lord."
"I must say I am impressed Mr. Potter. And trust me when I say that I am not easily impressed. I have a difficult time believing that you would be willing to turn this power on others, on Muggles and Mudbloods for example. Wouldn't that be rather unlikely behavior for someone of your reputation and house standing?"
"With all due respect, My Lord, my reputation is based on my survival abilities. I was known for defeating you before I could walk. I was famous for surviving and I knew nothing about it. I've

followed the expectations of those who've taught me. Now, I'm old enough to decide things for myself and I've decided that I want to be taught by new people. I want the power that you possess. I want to control things and have people look up to me, not for dumb luck, but for actual power that I possess. You see that I have the power, that was but a small glimpse. I hope to someday command the same respect that you enjoy now, My Lord. As for my house standing, the sorting hat wanted to put me in Slytherin. It was only the fear implanted in me by others that caused me to plead for a place in Gryffindor instead."
"Slytherin, eh?"
"Yes sir. Which I suppose is logical, since I've recently discovered that I'm a descendant of the dark wizard, Magus, who was also related to Salazar Slytherin."
"Is that so?"
"Yes My Lord. I'd be happy to bring you the scrolls detailing my heritage, if you'd like to see them."
"Perhaps. . . but for now, I would like you to return to your room. I need to speak with the others. Snape, would you escort him? I trust you'll think carefully before divulging any information to the boy. . ." Voldemort said pointedly, obviously unaware of the fact that Snape was a spy and that Harry already knew of his Death Eater status.
Snape merely nodded and led Harry out of the room. He didn't say a word until they reached the room where Harry had been held earlier. Once they were inside and the door was closed, he turned to Harry with fire blazing in his coal black eyes.
"What in bloody hell did you think you were doing in there, Harry?" Severus refused to believe that what he had just seen had come from the same young man who fought with the Order and healed him after battles. The young man he had begun to respect and trust like few others.
His raging emotions, however, allowed his thoughts to be open to Harry. Harry realized that Ron had found him missing from his bed and that Dumbledore and the others were concerned about the abduction. He used this information to formulate his explanation, hoping that Snape wouldn't question too deeply about his abilities.
"I woke up strapped to a bed with Peter Pettigrew standing over me. I had little choice Sev," Harry reverted to their casual friendly basis in part because he felt comfortable with Snape and in part to keep Snape feeling comfortable with him. "I had to do my best to convince them I was interested in joining, otherwise he would have killed me."
"You could have fought him, you know that."
"I didn't have my wand. . ." Harry began.
"You obviously didn't need it," Severus interrupted.
Harry had had enough. He couldn't possibly explain his actions to Severus, much less expect them to be understood. He couldn't take the chance that Severus would dispute anything he'd said or that the Potions Master would somehow reveal his own status as a spy. That would do nothing but get him killed and Harry would die himself before he would allow anyone else he cared about to be killed. He said the only thing he could think of that might save the both of them in this situation.
"Listen Severus," Harry's voice was firm and unyielding. "You saw a bit of what I can do. You know I didn't need my wand for that, including the Unforgivables. There's another one. Would you like to see if I can cast that one wandless as well?" Snape simply stared at him in disbelief.
"I have my reasons," Harry continued. "I don't expect you to understand, therefore I refuse to explain. If you do anything to mess this up, I can guarantee that Voldemort will know who's been

leaking his information to the Order. Now, I would like you to back off and give me a few moments of peace while we wait for our Lord."
Severus stared in amazement at the wizard he'd once known as Harry Potter. It was finally beginning to make sense to him. Only something of this magnitude could tip the Scales of Power strongly enough for Dumbledore to send students into the future to change it. Now, Severus could do nothing but hope they would succeed.
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Okay, now, don't be too hard on Harry. He's acting up and all, but I can promise he'll come around. . . . . eventually. Just click the little button that says "Go" and let me know what you th

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Chapter: 23

Review: James and Lucius are working on a dark-detecting-preventing project as a punishment. Lucius has a thing for Snape but is promised to Narcissa. In the present, Draco & Harry become friends, then secretly boyfriends. Harry has been studying dark arts. He's got a hidden agenda that he believes will help him save those he loves. James and Lucius drink the potion and are suddenly (and inexplicably) faced with a punishment from McGonagall. Harry goes missing, Ron and Draco find out Peter Pettigrew is at the edge of the grounds. Harry's meeting w/ Death eaters and won't tell Draco anything about it. Later, Harry & Dray plan to meet for a snog, but Harry snogs Lucius instead (eww) and then they all realize that the younger James and Lucius are in 1997! Harry leaves, Draco, Lucius & James meet w/ Dumbledore, McGonagall & Snape. Ron finds that Harry's missing again. Harry's with the Death Eaters, trying to prove his worth. Snape is called and asked to stay with Harry while Moldie-wart talks to the DE's.
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Voldemort seemed to have forgotten about Harry and Severus. They had been sitting in silence for hours when Harry finally fell asleep. Severus watched him, taking the opportunity to examine Harry, both in appearance and in aura.
It wasn't difficult to know that the young man had changed. His energy had been changing and when Severus made the conscious decision to reach out, he could sense a darkness that he knew Harry hadn't had before. 'Just what has this fool boy gotten himself into?' He'd been hoping somehow to find that Harry was attempting to play spy. It would have been foolish to do so, but at least there would have been some comfort in it. From what Severus could see and feel, however, Harry had indeed gone dark.
As he, too, fell asleep, Severus was worrying about this, much more than he cared to admit.
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At the headmaster's request, Ron raced toward the Head Girl's room to catch Hermione before she could go to the great hall. Ever the inquisitor, Hermione was quite reluctant to follow blindly and was therefore asking a dozen questions.
"Why can't this wait until after breakfast? Is something wrong? Is someone hurt? It's not my parents, is it? Well then, Harry? Did Voldemort do something - Ron do stop your gasping - did he

do something to Harry?"
"'Mione!" he shouted. She jumped slightly, a rare showing of the nervousness that plagued her since her capture. Rod immediately felt sorry for causing such a reaction. "Sorry, love. Listen, I can't tell you just yet. Dumbledore just wants us to meet him in his office. It's important."
The two of them spent the rest of the walk in silence. As they reached the gargoyle and Ron said the password (ice mice) Hermione finally narrowed down her worries. "It must be Harry. Something's happened to Harry. That explains why he's not here with us, why I haven't seen him all morning. Ooo, I just know Malfoy is behind it. Oh, why didn't Harry listen to me? He knows what kind of people the Malfoy's are. . .'
Before she could continue that train of thought, they were entering the Headmaster's office. As soon as she entered the familiar round room, Hermione's eyes were drawn to the thin figure staring out the window. As she took in the build of the boy, the messy dark hair and that familiar profile, Hermione nearly cried in relief.
"Oh, Harry!" she ran to him, throwing her arms around the surprised young man. I was so worried something had happened; that Malfoy had. . ."
"Miss Granger," Dumbledore said firmly, affectively drawing her attention. "Please have a seat. I've got a great deal to explain to you."
Hermione's relief turned to interest at Dumbledore's words, then to anger at the sight of Draco Malfoy. Before she could react to this, Ron subtly motioned toward the young Lucius Malfoy, indicating the empty seat next to him. Her confusion mounting at the sight of the two Malfoys, Hermione sat (reluctantly) and looked at Dumbledore expectantly. She sat in complete silence as the Headmaster explained what had been happening. She looked up at James Potter in awe when she realized it was indeed James, not Harry. She looked to Ron for comfort and reassurance at the news that Harry had apparently been taken from the dorm the night before.
"We had hoped that both Harry and Professor Snape would be back by now. I'm very concerned that they may be together," the Headmaster finished.
James looked up, concern evident on his face. "Sir, you said that Snape was called by Voldemort. Do you think Harry would have gone willingly? Or, if they captured him against his will, do you think he's still okay?" His train of thought was getting him highly upset at the possibility that something could be wrong with his son. 'Funny, thinking of my teenage son when I'm still in school myself.'
"I believe Harry is fine, though I wouldn't want to speculate as to his willingness to go with them," Dumbledore said. "In the mean time, I believe it would be beneficial for James and Lucius to spend some time with Ron, Hermione and Draco." He directed his gaze to the time travelers. "These three know Harry better than anyone else here. I believe they would be the best chance of finding what has driven Harry to this path, thereby allowing the two of you to find your opening to repair the damage."
"Excuse me, sir," Lucius said. "If our purpose is to prevent the imbalance, but Harry's already gone to the dark side, then haven't we arrived a bit too late?"
"Perhaps. That's something you'll need to determine after speaking with his friends, here. Minerva, would you please take them to the lounge on the fourth floor? I believe that would be a good place for them to discuss things, and it will keep Misters Potter and Malfoy from being seen by too many people in the school."
Professor McGonagall nodded and led the five teenagers from the room.
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After a little sleep and a brief meeting with Pettigrew and Malfoy, Snape and Harry were released and told that there would be another meeting in exactly one week. Harry was to be prepared to take the Dark Mark at that time and they would be heading out on a mission immediately afterwards.
As they walked to a safe Apparition point, Severus looked at the boy, hoping that he could get some straight answers out of him this time. There had to be a logical explanation for these drastic changes. "Harry?" He purposefully used the gentle, friendly tone of voice that had been normal between them when not surrounded by students. This tone had developed naturally after Severus developed a great deal of respect and attachment for the boy. Despite their age differences and student/teacher status, Severus had begun to think of Harry as a friend, one of very few real friends he'd had throughout his lifetime. Thinking of this in light of the current situation made the Potions Master very sad; more than he would ever admit. He didn't want to think of anything bad happening to the young Gryffindor, but he couldn't bear the idea that Harry would willingly betray Dumbledore, and the order and his friends, and even his Potions professor. It went too far against the virtue that seemed to be an ingrained part of Harry's physical make-up.
The young man hadn't answered, so Severus tried again. "Harry, please. . ."
"Yes, Severus?"
"Tell me what's going on here."
"Why, so you can stop me?"
"No, just so I know. I'm your friend. I want to know what's on your mind."
"Protecting the people I love." The response was so quiet that Severus almost didn't hear it.
"You're doing this to. . . protect people?"
"Yes. I'm doing this to protect the people I love." Harry seemed to be stressing the group of people he planned to protect. It didn't seem to be a generic protection he was seeking here. Snape thought on this a moment and a sliver of understanding began to dig its way into his mind. He seemed to have a clear idea of what - exactly - Harry was planning to do, but it was just too much to be believed.
"What about the other people? Those you don't know?"
Harry stopped walking and grabbed Snape by the wrist, turning him so they were looking eye to eye. As Harry's emerald eyes flashed, Snape saw that any connection he may have made was broken now. Harry was pissed!
"Why are you asking me so many questions, Sev?" he stressed the nickname through his anger. "Since when have you been my friend, or wanted to know what's on my mind? You'd be scared shitless if you were in my mind for ten minutes. I don't intend to *share* any more of my *feelings* with you, so stop thinking about it - NOW! I know what you're up to, Snape. I know you want to pick my brain so you can run to Dumbledore and tell him all about The-Boy-Who-Lived turning to the Dark Arts. He thinks he can stop me. He thinks he can control me. Well, I hope it won't take long for you and him both to figure out that I won't be controlled anymore. I'm through being Dumbledore's puppet. I'm through seeing all the people I care about fighting for this *cause* and getting hurt or killed because of it. Anything I do from now on, I'll do MY way, got it?"
Severus regarded the young man through a mask of indifference. He pulled on the cold despair that had settled into his soul years ago to allow him to project complete apathy. "I most certainly have," he replied in his coldest, intimidating voice. He quickly turned and began the journey again, in silence. Little did he know that Harry could hear his thoughts, could feel the emotions

swirling inside him like a tornado. Harry thought about this for a moment, wondering at the strength and sincerity of concern he felt from the professor. Shaking his head, he decided it didn't matter. Snape was just another person he'd grown to care for, which meant he was just one more person to protect.

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James, Lucius, Ron, Hermione and Draco gathered in the unused lounge on the fourth floor of the castle. It had been made clear to them that they were not to leave the room, meals would be sent to them, their absence would be explained to the other student should the need arise, and they were to work together diligently. Dumbledore left a note for the restricted section of the library (just in case) with instructions that a house elf get any necessary books for them. Hermione, for her part, was extremely reserved toward both the Malfoys, and chose to sit on the opposite side of the room from them. Ron sat with her, one hand resting gently on her back in a comforting gesture. James decided to join them, his primary thoughts being that he could find out more about his son from his close friends. He had temporarily forgotten that he was supposed to be working on solving the imbalance problem.

"How long have you two been friends with Harry?"

"Well, we all met on the train, but I think Harry and I hit it off better at first. It was after we all fought the troll together that Hermione joined the team," Ron replied with a nostalgic smile.

"You fought a troll? When?"

"First year."

"You mean to tell me that three eleven year old children fought a troll - alone!"

"Yes. That was just part of it. We've found ourselves in quite a lot of scrapes, but we've always pulled out of them together."

"So far," Hermione's comment was so quiet that it almost went unnoticed. James glanced at her and looked back at Ron, questioning with his eyes.

"There've been some, well, some pretty close calls," Ron explained. "And we've been the lucky ones." The sadness and loss was evident both in his voice and in his eyes. "Some of our friends haven't made it through the last couple years."

"Because of Voldemort?" James asked.

"Yes, Voldemort and his," Ron glanced at Lucius for the briefest of moments, "Death Eaters."

James caught the look and turned to follow Ron's gaze. The atmosphere around the Malfoys seemed to be charged with tension. It was obviously not a comfortable situation and James couldn't help but hope that things would go smoother for him and Harry if the opportunity ever arose. Ron's words rang in his head, but Lucius' expression seemed to take precedence. In the past weeks, as they worked together, he'd come to realize that Lucius could possibly, eventually, be a friend. More than that, he'd come to strong suspect that Lucius desperately, unknowingly NEEDED a friend. At this moment, though, he decided to try asking the other Malfoy for information.

"Draco?" James walked across the lounge, hoping that Draco wouldn't be any more difficult to deal with than his father was.

"Yes?" The look in the silver-blue eyes was unmistakable relief. He seemed anxious for something to pull him away from his father, making James wonder what they had been talking about.

"Could I. . ." he motioned towards a door that led into a small office at one end of the lounge. "Could we speak, privately, for just a moment?"

"Certainly," Draco said, maintaining the upperclass personality with which he had been raised. He stood and led the way through the door, James following and placing a mild silencing charm on the room. Once James turned around he realized that Draco was not quite as 'in control' as he wanted to appear.

Draco watched every movement, every gesture, every facial expression, still awed by the extreme similarity between father and son. James reminded him so much of Harry that the Slytherin wanted to cry. He couldn't talk to anyone about his concerns, no one knew of the relationship between the seekers and therefore they couldn't understand *why* Draco would be *quite* so upset at Harry's disappearance. Lost in these thoughts, Draco didn't notice the sad smile that had crept onto his face. Nor did he realize how much he was being scrutinized by the other young man in the room.

James walked toward the blond, observing, thinking, wondering. He'd seen the familiarity between Harry and Draco just before Harry stormed from the classroom. He'd seen the comfortable and casual way that Harry approached Lucius, obviously mistaking him for Draco. He'd noticed the concern and tension surrounding Draco since Harry's disappearance. He'd paid close attention to not only Draco's description of Harry, but also to the light in his eyes during that description. It wasn't difficult to surmise that there was a relationship between the two. It was equally simple to see that no one else seemed to know about it. Something told James, based on all the information he'd gathered since arriving here, that Draco Malfoy could tell them all more about Harry than they'd ever imagined. At least, more about the person Harry had recently come to be.

Standing there in silence for a few moments, Draco paid no attention to James until the other man spoke. "Draco?"

"Yes?"

"Why don't you have a seat? I think we should talk."

"Certainly," Draco sat without hesitation. James was so much like Harry that Draco couldn't help but feel comfortable with him. He had yet to figure out his father, though. This Lucius, well, he seemed quite different. Turning his attention to James, Draco asked the inevitable. "What do you want to talk about?"

The conversation flowed easily, fluently, both young men expressing their thoughts and feelings and fears with complete honesty. They discussed Harry and Draco's relationship (Draco was a bit embarrassed at first, but James convinced him that he wanted his son to know love, no matter where he found it), the recent changes in Harry's magic and the probability of Harry having gone to Voldemort last night. They skirted around the issue of Harry's childhood and the deaths of James and Lily, though James did ask for verification that Lily was indeed Harry's mother.

"When Harry comes back, I think it would be best if we used some other explanation for why you are here. He's not going to want to cooperate if he thinks any of us are going to stop him from what he feels he needs to do. If Harry's becoming a dark power, well, angering him will only make it worse."

"Do you know what would have caused Harry to become dark?"

"I have a pretty good idea. Perhaps we should talk about it with the others. After all, we're supposed to work on it together, right?"

"Yes, of course," James stood, removed the silencing charm and went back to the lounge. Draco slowly followed, not looking forward to this discussion. Upon entering the lounge, he found his nerves settled slightly by the sight Professor McGonagall and the Headmaster. At least he

wouldn't be asked to convince a roomful of teenagers on his own. James cleared his throat and waited patiently until he had everyone's attention. "I've been talking to Draco and it seems that he's got some ideas as to why Harry's turning to the Dark Arts. I think we should listen to what he's got to say. He seems to know Harry pretty well."
"Bollocks!" The outburst from Hermione was quite unexpected by the professors, but Ron knew and understood why she would have a hard time believing this. "Malfoy doesn't know the first thing about Harry. We've been his friends for nearly seven years while Malfoy's done nothing but make his life a living hell!"
"I'm sorry, Hermione," James interrupted. He took a deep breath, knowing that she was not going to like what he had to say. "I have to disagree with you. You may have known Harry for six years, but can you honestly tell me that you've felt as close to him this year? That you and Ron have spent as much time around him this term as you have in the past? That you know what's been running through his head to cause these imbalances?" He saw that Draco, Ron, McGonagall and Dumbledore were all nodding in agreement, as though they were silently agreeing with his observations.
"Okay," Hermione said reluctantly. "I'll admit that Harry's been a bit, closed off this term, but that still doesn't mean Malfoy has anything to do with this. For that matter, I don't see why either of them are here. I'm sure Lucius," her voice dripped with distaste as she said his name, "has already been attending the Junior Dea. . ."
"Miss Granger!" Dumbledore interrupted quickly and sharply. "You will control your temper and watch what you say, or I'll be forced to obliviate your memory of this situation and send you back to your room."
"Yes sir." Hermione answered meekly and seemed to sink into the sofa she was sitting on. Only those who'd known her well could tell that this meek acquiescence was not her normal personality. It was yet another affect of the capture that had disturbed her so much.
At the subtle nods from James and Headmaster Dumbledore, Draco began speaking. "I know that none of you realize how close Harry and I have become this term, but I can promise you that we're quite good friends now. He's asked me for help in a couple of classes and we've spent a lot of time studying together and talking with each other. Harry's been learning a lot of new magic and he has mentioned a number of times that his interest is due to a desire to protect those he loves. He feels responsible for all the people who have died or been hurt, injured, tortured. He's lost so many people, family, friends, schoolmates, dorm mates, and he just wants to find some way to keep anyone else from getting hurt. He seems to think that if he finds a way to get close to You-Kn-, Voldemort, that he'll be able to protect the rest of us."
Draco paused to glance at everyone in the room. Ron and Hermione seemed to be thinking through what he'd said. 'I'm glad Granger can actually hear me out, I just hope she believes me and doesn't cause trouble.' Dumbledore was nodding his head as if he'd suspected as much all along. McGonagall had a slightly distant look on her face, as though she were trying to sort out what would come from this. Lucius, in the brief glance Draco spared in his direction, looked intrigued and sympathetic (much to Draco's surprise). It was James, however, who seemed to have the most emotional response to this information. Draco suspected that was to be expected. He looked nearly distraught, and was obviously wondering about these other losses his son had suffered. He appeared to be internally blaming himself for not being around longer, which made Draco realize where Harry got that habit from.
"I explained to James, er, Mr. Potter," Draco looked at him questioningly, realizing that it seemed

odd to refer to the man as James, as if they were equals.
"It's quite all right, Draco. You can call me James, I prefer it. I may have a seventeen year old son here, but I'm still seventeen myself, you know." He spoke with a smile, though the smile didn't quite reach his eyes. He kept reminding himself that his son was lucky to have someone to love him this much, even though he didn't have his father around.
"All right, I explained to James that whenever Harry does come back, I don't think we should tell him the real reason that these two are here. If he thinks we're going to stop him from his plans to protect his loved ones, he'll only get angry."
Snape entered the room just as McGonagall spoke. "If we plan to make this work, I believe it will be pertinent for Mr. Potter to know the details. If he gets angry about it, he'll just have to get over it quickly. We hardly have the time for childish temper tantrums."
"If I may, Minerva," Snape drew the attention of everyone in the room, but was still caught up in the events of the previous evening and didn't realize the surprised looks he was getting from the others, especially from James Potter. He was only interested in getting the attention of Minerva and Albus. "In all honesty, and with the expectation of complete confidence, I must say that an angry Harry Potter could be more of a problem than we'd ever imagined."
"Why do you say that, Severus?" Albus looked concerned, and it was one of the few times that he didn't have an amused twinkle in his pale blue eyes.
"Because I have been with him since I left your office yesterday. I have seen the results of the difference in his aura. I have seen his new abilities - or at least some of them."
James stood up, wondering why he found himself intimidated by Severus Snape in this time. He hoped Snape wouldn't be holding a grudge against him for their conflicts during their school days. "What new abilities does he have? Where have you been with him?"
Snape turned slowly, glancing at everyone else in the room, his eyes lingering slightly on Lucius, then turning to James with a completely indifferent look. "We were both at a meeting for Voldemort's followers. It appeared that he was trying to convince the Dark Lord that he would be a valuable addition to the Death Eaters. As to his new abilities," he turned back to Albus, "it's truly quite extraordinary. I don't think he even realizes how special this power is."
"No kidding," Draco muttered almost inaudibly.
"He was. . . oh, for Merlin's sake, Albus," Snape was quite flustered, especially for Snape. "The boy was doing wandless magic. Very powerful wandless magic, and highly advanced . . ." he trailed off, not willing to tell the entire room that Harry Potter had used two of the Unforgivable curses.
The room was so quiet, the silence was almost tangible. Six pairs of eyes were trained on Severus, unblinking, widened in awe. Any unseen observer would have noticed that Hermione and Ron were looking a bit frightened, no doubt wondering how their friend had become so powerful and why he would want to join Voldemort. Draco was simply amazed that Harry had faced the Dark Lord and, presumably, come back to school in one piece. Dumbledore and McGonagall were slightly less amazed, but acutely aware that there was something Severus wasn't telling them. James, who had quickly reclaimed his seat, seemed to be highly concerned about his son's apparent Dark tendencies and was beginning to wonder if anything could be done to help him. Lucius was torn between amazement at the power of this child and being distracted by Snape's presence.
After a few moments, Dumbledore stood up. "I believe, Severus, that it would be wise of us to find young Mr. Potter. He has yet to hear the details of Misters Potter and Malfoy's visit. I think

it would be best for him to hear this soon, but without a barrage of people. I would suggest that the rest of you discuss any possibilities that come to mind as solutions to our problems."
He turned toward the door, but was stopped quickly by Draco. "Excuse me, sir. I think it might be easier for Harry to hear some of this from someone closer to him. Especially if the Professor was with him at the Dark Lord's meeting. . ." he glanced at Snape, hoping that he would understand, that *someone* would understand. He knew this needed to come from him, knew that Harry would listen to him better than Snape. He looked from Snape to Dumbledore and finally to James.
"You know, sir," James said. "I think he might be right. I haven't had the opportunity to speak with Harry much, but when I saw him with Draco they did seem close. I think it's a good idea."
"Very well," Dumbledore said. "Severus, I trust you'll be all right with staying here to assist with the plans?"
Snape nodded, Dumbledore and Draco left the room and everyone sat in total silence until McGonagall finally decided to bring them out of their stupor and start working on the issues at hand.
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Draco was so lost in thought that he didn't realize whether it was him or the Headmaster leading the way. Either way, he was a bit surprised to find that they had ended up in a quiet corridor on the seventh floor. They stopped in front of a door and Draco watched as the older wizard held one hand up to the door and looked at it closely, as if he were looking through a window. After a moment, he nodded slightly and opened the door.
As the two of them stepped inside the door, they were faced with a nearly empty room. There was a pile of blankets in one corner, a simple chair on the other side, and the floor was scattered with what appeared to be dead bugs and rodents. It took Draco a few moments and some close looks to verify that these were indeed dead bugs and rodents. It took him even longer to realize that the lump of blankets in the corner contained his boyfriend.
Dumbledore stepped back out to the corridor. "Perhaps you should speak with him first. I'll wait here. Let me know if you would like me to join you."
"Thank you sir." Draco walked in and heard the door close quietly behind him. He went directly to the corner and knelt on the edge of the blankets. Harry was asleep, his wild, dark hair even more unruly than normal. Draco watched him for a few moments, wondering what the Gryffindor had been through in the past sixteen hours or so. He raised one hand and allowed his fingers to trail lightly over his boyfriend's face. He smiled when Harry hummed quietly in his sleep and subconsciously moved closer to the touch. Brushing the hair back a bit (in a pointless attempt to tame it), Draco leaned forward and brushed his lips across Harry's cheek. It was just enough to make Harry turn toward the kiss in his slumber and allow Draco access to claim the lips he'd been missing. It took mere seconds for the contact and subsequent electricity that coursed through both young men to wake Harry. As soon as he felt Harry respond to the kiss, Draco flicked his tongue gently across the lips of his boyfriend, seeking entrance and permission to explore.
Harry granted entrance eagerly, his hands snaking up to grasp the blond by the back of his neck and pull him closer. He seemed almost desperate for more contact, for deeper passion, for MORE. Draco found himself a little surprise and aroused by the urgency of this kiss. Before he could think about it, Harry had pulled him down and wrapped one leg around Draco's thighs, pulling them closer together. They were aligned together, arms wrapped around each other,

hearts pounding in unison. Some part of Draco's mind told him that this was unusual when compared to their other 'make-out sessions'. Another part of his mind reminded him that he and Harry hadn't spoken since running into their fathers and he needed to explain the situation to Harry. Grasping that reminder, Draco forced himself to break off the kiss, showering Harry's face with tiny, gentle kisses before pulling back just a bit and looking deep into the green eyes he loved so much.
"How did you find me?"
"I had some help. What is this place, anyway?"
"It's called the Room of Requirement. It becomes whatever you need when you're looking for something."
Draco thought about this for a moment. He glanced around the room again, and finally asked the question that was burning on his mind. "What did you need when you got here?"
"A place to be alone and a place to. . . a place to do some work."
Draco looked at Harry carefully. He could tell the Gryffindor was hiding something from him, but knew that it would do no good to push the issue just yet. He decided to start with his explanations and hope that Harry would offer explanations of his own at some point.
"Harry, yesterday when we met for detention. . ."
"I'm so sorry, Dray. I don't know who that was, but I swear, I just saw the blond hair and I thought it was you. I never would have kissed someone else on purpose, I swear."
"I know. It's okay Harry, I know. I mean, I was a little upset at first, but once I found out what was going on, I knew that you didn't realize who he was. It was very - confusing. It's still a little confusing and it's hard to talk to them because you have to be careful what you say and what you don't say. We can't let them know too much, but we've got to figure out how to get them home, so we have to talk to them some."
"Who are they?"
"James Potter and Lucius Malfoy."
"No, I mean who are they really. You know it's not possible that my father could be here. He's been dead for sixteen years. He can't be here."
"It's true Harry. I know it's sounds unreal, but it's true. Both our fathers have come twenty-one years into their future. It was some potions project that appeared to have gone wrong," he laughed a bit, trying to keep everything as casual as possible. They had to let Harry believe it was pure dumb luck, but also convince Harry that the help would be useful in fighting Voldemort. "Can you imagine Snape if we did something like that?"
"Uuggggghhh," Harry groaned. "Gryffindor would have less than zero house points if I were to screw something up like that. Are you sure, Dray? Is it REALLY them?"
"I'm sure Harry. And they're still here. You can talk to him if you want. You can sit down and talk to your father!"
Harry sat in total silence, contemplating the possibilities. His father. His father was here. Really here. He could talk to him, have dinner with him, ask questions about mum. He could fly with him! It was almost enough to make up for the losses he'd had to deal with. It was undoubtedly the best opportunity he would ever have to spend time with real family. His eyes brightened slightly as he smiled at Draco. "Where is he?"
Draco returned the smile, glad that Harry had accepted this and seemed happy about it. "I'll show you in a minute, but I have something else to tell you first." He quickly reviewed the explanation Dumbledore and McGonagall had agreed on, knowing that Harry's cooperation was vital in order

for this to work. "You see, after you left last night, Dumbledore and McGonagall found us. I swear, it never ceases to amaze me how the old man knows so much about what's going on around here. Anyway, so he talked to our fathers and found out how they got here, and then he explained to them some of the stuff that's going on here. Nothing much, just the basics of Voldemort, how we've got to get rid of him. Dumbledore seems to think that if you and I work together with our fathers it will provide enough power to kill Voldemort."
"Okay, whatever. I just want to see him. Dray where is he?"
"Come with me. Dumbledore's waiting for us outside."
The two of them stood up and started across the room, but Draco paused at the dead body of a particularly large rat. "Where did all these come from, Harry? Why would the room think you required a bunch of dead animals?"
"They weren't dead when I got here. I required a way to practice the killing curse. I have to make sure I can perform it without any problems."
"Oh Harry, what have you gotten yourself into?"
"I can't tell you, Dray. It wouldn't be safe. Can we please just go. I want to see my father. I. . . I have to apologize to him, I have to talk to him."
"Okay, okay Harry, we'll go." Draco put a comforting arm around Harry's shoulders and the two of them went out to the corridor to meet Dumbledore and head back to the lounge.
~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Okay, now I was shocked to see the getting so long and it could have gone on, but I didn't want you all to wait forever. Next chapter, Harry finally gets to talk to James!
Delie: I told you, didn't I? No, I'm not JK, and I don't blame you - I'm really upset about that death, too. Thanks for your praise, I hope you liked this chapter. You're really addicted? I hope you haven't been having withdrawal symptoms.
Menecarkawan: yes, you're probably right.
Rarity88: are you a new reader? Welcome and thank you!
Amythest: thanks!
Aranami: Oh nothing major, but I hope you've had a chance to read it by now.
HP IceAngel: thank you soooooo much, you really mean that? *blushing*
Grey Malwell: Thanks, I wrote that chapter about two months before OotP came out.
Stupid Kid: awwww, thank you!
Malfoy Snogger: oh yea, I think much will happen with the fathers. Keep reading, I'm beginning to realize that there are many chapters to go. I can't answer most of those questions (of course) but the answers will come. I'm glad to see that you came back to it. Did you have a good trip?
Jade Maxwell: all I can say is "you'll see". There's more wandless stuff to come. Glad you're enjoying it. Oh, that song-fic deserved a recommendation. I'm sorry you didn't like chap 21, but I hope 22 and this one made up for it. There's a lot of stuff happening right now and I'm trying to keep some "explanation" in the midst of all the action and dialogue.
Webweaver: don't worry, you aren't the only one who doesn't understand what Harry thinks he is doing. Just remember, he's not crazy, he's just a little unwell. It'll all make sense eventually.
Azhure: You've GOT to be kidding me! That was the absolute best compliment anyone could ever give me throughout my entire life! I swear I was bouncing for days after I got that review! As for your question, you hit it right on the nose!
Lanevaly: Thank you for reviewing all those chapters. I hope you continue to enjoy it!
Peach Dancer82: thank you!

A/N: As you can see, the Room of Requirement is from book five, but I've been careful not to include anything else that would be a major spoiler. I'm considering making one small change to reflect the death of book five, but I haven't decided yet. If you all, as readers, have any opinions on that, please feel free to let me know in your reviews. I know you're going to review. You know you want to. Click the little but

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Chapter: 24

Jekyll: Thank you so much, I hope you enjoy the rest of it. Jade is awesome, personal friend?
Jen: I hope you were able to finish catching up without getting your head chopped off. Yes, I've read Junk no1. Thanks!
Aranami: Yes, I cried at that death, too. I'm thinking of going back to change the tiny mentions in this fic to include that death, after all, this Harry's had so many other deaths, that would just add to his emotions, right? What you think? Oh, and if you're waiting for James and Harry to talk, this should give you something.
Lanevaly: Yes, you're not the only one waiting for the father and son to talk. And the Lucius thing, well this chapter will do that for you as well. I'm so glad you like it. I just have one request for you. Please write more on Imperio soon. I'm anxious and I've really been missing it!
Party Girl: Please don't hurt me. I'm sorry this took so long. Glad you like it, keep reading!
Louise: Never fear, all Harry's motivation will be revealed soon. Just remember that things are not always what they seem and you can't take anything for granted.
Menecarkawan: Thanks for still reading, I love it when readers tell me what they hope will happen and that they have real emotions from this - makes me feel like I'm doing a good job!
Peach Dancer82: Yes, Draco's powers will be mentioned, I promise. Hope you enjoy this one, too.
NayNymic: Sorry he bugs you, I know he seems stupid. I can't tell you if he'll get better soon, because that'll give away the ending, but please do keep reading!
Azhure: Thanks so much for pushing me in the right direction and beta- ing this chapter for me. You rock woman!
~*~
Harry and Draco followed their Headmaster in silence. None of them seemed to notice (or care) that the young men were holding hands as they walked through the corridors. Harry thought back to the moment he had seen James. He still felt highly uncomfortable with the fact that he had kissed Lucius. He was still quite confused as to how James and Lucius came to be there. And he was more than a bit nervous at the prospect of facing his father again. The swirl of emotions and thoughts that ran through that room came back to him and Harry began to worry that he wouldn't be able to handle it again.
"Um, sir?"
Dumbledore stopped and turned to Harry. "Yes?"
"I'm a little, well, I'm concerned about this. I don't want to panic like last time."

"You know what to expect. That should alleviate your fears, don't you think?" The familiar twinkle and the tiny smile that was nearly hidden behind the Headmaster's beard told Harry very clearly that Dumbledore knew there was more to this, more that Harry wasn't sharing.
"It's not just seeing him, sir." Harry waiting for the nod to continue, a nod that said 'I knew that but I'm glad you're going to tell me now'. "It's the emotions and thoughts. I felt them, heard them, all at once. It was very . . . charged."
"You'll need to block that. I could have been working with you if you had told me you had this ability," Dumbledore paused, obviously thinking about Harry's habit of keeping information from the others in his life. "Nevertheless, I've no doubt that you can create a mental shield to limit the amount of 'leakage' you get from everyone else's thoughts and feelings."
"Yes, sir." Harry was struck by a sudden reminder of his 5th year, and the confrontation with Snape over the Occlumency lessons. They had managed to patch things up later on and Harry had continued his studies with Snape until they were both satisfied with the results.
Unbeknownst to others, Harry had been studying Legilimency as well, and that combined with his natural seer abilities had allowed Harry to gain a great deal of information from Voldemort and his followers last night.
Pushing aside his bad memories of the past, Harry tried again to focus on the prospect of seeing his father. He knew there must be some explanation for James Potter and Lucius Malfoy to travel into the future. He also knew that if he and Draco were being led to meet with their fathers, that meant that Dumbledore knew how and why this time traveling had occurred.
He tried reaching out to gather information from Dumbledore's mind, but the older wizard was far more skilled at Occlumency and obviously had his guard up. Draco's mind would be easier to access, but his primary thoughts were of relief at Harry's safety, love for Harry and nerves due to Lucius' presence. To dig into deeper thoughts would be much too invasive, Harry loved the blond too much to intrude upon him like that. He could only hope to keep his cool and get some information from someone else.
"Before we continue," Headmaster Dumbledore paused in the corridor again, purposely ignoring the giggles from a nearby painting. "I would like to ask you both to tell me a bit about your new skills."
Harry and Draco paused and looked at each other in something akin to fear. What if Dumbledore decided their wandless skills were Dark? What if he was forced to expel them? Harry knew his reasoning and intent behind each and every bit of magic he did. He felt confident that he knew where he stood in connection to the Dark side. Draco, however, was less certain. He felt that he was fighting for the right side, but he knew that many people connected wandless magic with Dark Arts, no matter what. Finally, after many silent moments, Dumbledore spoke again.
"I already know more than either of you have said. There could be much to be gained from recent events, but not if all the involved parties continue to deny these events. You'll both need to be prepared to admit your actions, both to yourself and to the others who can help. You do understand this, don't you? You'll need to admit **many** actions."
The pointed glance that traveled from Harry's eyes to their clasped hands and up again to Draco's eyes made it quite clear. Dumbledore knew about their new skills and their new relationship. More than that, he expected both of them to talk about it in front of him and their teenaged fathers.
"Sir, I understand what you're saying," Draco spoke up, knowing more about the meeting they were about to enter, he felt it important to ask this immediately. "But will this need to be

discussed with **everyone** in there? Or just with James and Lucius?"
Harry turned quickly, wondering who else Draco was referring to. How many people would Dumbledore have pulled into this situation?
"I believe the more the knowledge is spread around, the safer it will be for all those involved. However, we do have a couple of students, aside from yourselves, who most likely will not be involved for their own safety. Any revelations to them will be at your discretion. Now, would either of you like to tell me how strong you are and what you are capable of doing?"
Draco spoke again, before Harry had the chance. "I have learned to levitate and do a few minor curses and hexes without my wand. I can levitate objects quite well and with accurate movement, but I have a harder time with levitating myself. I haven't been studying very long, though. I think I can improve with practice. Harry's been studying much longer and is much more powerful, sir."
He glanced at his boyfriend, wondering how he would take this news. "He's the most powerful wizard I've ever seen, and he doesn't even realize it. He can do amazing things without a wand and I believe it would be completely accurate to say that with just a bit more practice and focus, he would be able to do absolutely anything. Forgive me sir, but I think Harry's more powerful than you and Voldemort combined."
Harry scoffed at this notion, still caught up in the idea that he wasn't doing anything that special. These new skills came to him too easily to be that powerful and impressive. To his surprise, Dumbledore didn't deny the idea of excessive power, nor did he get upset with Draco for saying it. He didn't even seem upset with their private studies. In fact, the Headmaster simply nodded his head and offered that tiny little, partly-hidden smile again, before turning and muttering a password to the giggling painting.
As they stepped through the entrance into the unused lounge, Harry felt a rush of emotion come toward him. Before he could even see anyone he knew his father was here. He could feel Hermione and Ron here. He was mildly surprised to feel Snape's presence and mildly irritated to feel Lucius' presence. The group of people gathered here did offer one source of comfort to Harry. He could use this opportunity and the various minds in the room to gather the information that people were hiding from him. Honestly, he didn't see how anyone expected him to be trusting or to accomplish any great victories if they wouldn't tell him the truth. But now he had the means to take the truth, and take it he would. He would just have to have one on one time with everyone. Too many thoughts and emotions at once would not be conducive to his plans of gathering information. No, that would simply cause a repeat of last night's disturbing overload.
~*~*~*~
Harry did indeed know how to put up a shield to buffer the emotions and thoughts that were raging throughout the room. It was a shield no one wanted to see, however. The only way he knew of, was to tap into his own darker thoughts and emotions. Those deep-down, private thoughts that were too dark, too twisted for anyone to know about. The late-night desires to cause pain to everyone who threatened him, to be cruel to those who worshiped him, to have wild, random sex with everyone who caught his fancy. Those characteristics of his personality that he didn't admit to himself until recently were probably the very things the sorting hat had seen when it tried to place him in Slytherin.
When Harry tapped into those characteristics he became very Snape-like, for lack of a better term. He expressed anger and disgust, offering a tempestuous glare to anyone who dared interrupt his train of thought. Deep inside, Harry knew that this wasn't all there was to him anymore, but it made it so much easier to pretend he didn't care. Some part of him seemed

convinced that if he stopped showing his concern for others, he would eventually stop having any concern for them. And if that happened, then he could no longer be hurt by the torture and death of his classmates, friends and family. It was an appealing idea, but not a level of apathy he could reach that quickly.
In this Snape-like manner, Harry decided that he was going to take control of the situation at hand. "I understand that there's something to be gained from this bizarre turn of events. I presume these benefits have something to do with Voldemort?" He glanced at the Headmaster and received a verifying nod. "Since we all know what this will eventually boil down to, I believe I should gather as much information as possible. I would like to know which of you are truly involved and speak to you on an individual basis." He turned to his best friends, ignoring the look of disbelief from Ron and the pure anger radiating from Hermione. "I know you probably want to help, but I think research is the best way for you to do that. Please don't argue with me Ron, I don't have the time or the patience for it. I'll explain things to both of you later, but right now it looks like you both need some rest."
Harry waited in silence as Ron and Hermione looked at each other and then turned to the Headmaster and their Head of House. Both Dumbledore and McGonagall nodded their heads, prompting the two Gryffindors to follow Harry's advice (or orders) and head back to the dormitories. Once they left, Harry headed toward the smaller room as he said "Professor Snape, follow me, please."
Draco nearly laughed in spite of himself. The incredulous look of shock on Snape's face quickly gave way to a glare of utter contempt. Draco was a bit surprised to see Harry acting this forceful and demanding, but he was even more surprised to see that Dumbledore, McGonagall and especially Snape were not only allowing it to continue, but were following his demands!
~*~*~*~
SEVERUS SNAPE:
Yes, I followed the boy into the other room. It was in no way an act of weakness, nor was it an example of bowing to a child. He was right. As much as I may have disliked Potter in the past, the respect he had garnered from me was well-deserved. And in this situation, there was no doubt that it would be useful for us to share information and work together leading up to a final confrontation. We all knew - those of us from this time period - that Potter would be the key figure in that final confrontation. So, in a flash of comprehension and acceptance beyond his seventeen years, Potter had come to this conclusion and was preparing himself. That's why I followed the boy into the other room.
As we sat I saw that he gave a quick glance and a mild wave of his hand toward the door. I knew at once that he had placed a locking charm and silencing charm on the room. I could still feel the power radiating from him, but the surges weren't as high as they had been the night before. *'His powers are connected to his emotions, of course. That's why it's not as strong now.*'
"Why don't you start by telling me your version of what's going on around here?" Harry's question was spoken with the casual tone expected of an equal, but still held a touch of respect, as one might offer to a mentor. That thought frightened me a bit. I couldn't imagine anything I had done in my life to deserve a mentor position in anyone's life. He sat there quietly, waiting for me to answer. A nagging feeling in the corner of my mind told me there was something I should be paying attention to, but I ignored it for the moment.
"Well, I'm extremely curious about your involvement with the Dark Lord and his followers. I'd like to know how long you've been in contact with Pettigrew and where you learned those skills."

"Sev, I asked you to tell me what's going on here, not question me on my own dealings. I'll answer all your questions in time, but right now I need to know what you know."
"I know very little. James and Lucius arrived here last night. I was called to the meeting shortly afterwards. I came back with you little more than an hour ago. I can tell you that considering the strength of magic in both James and Lucius, having their assistance could very well prove beneficial in overpowering Voldemort."
"Thank you, Severus. I appreciate your honesty. Please ask Professor McGonagall to come in next."
With that, Harry waved his hand again to unlock the door and I knew I had been dismissed.
MINERVA McGONAGALL:
Young Mr. Potter and his friends have been among my favorite students in all my years at Hogwarts. It's never been any secret that Harry Potter was destined for great things, and once he and Draco Malfoy reached their second year I began to see the power that Albus had mentioned so long ago. I had nearly forgotten about that time travel project until I was faced with the very sons of those two boys. Of course, realizing that Harry was the force that had been foreseen, the very reason that James Potter and Lucius Malfoy were here, that was something that I found extremely disturbing. Harry Potter has more power than our world knows how to deal with. His power and strength is a result of many things including his ancient ancestry, the strength of his parents, the power transferred to him from He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, and most recently - if Albus was right - his bond with Draco Malfoy. I worried about it. Power of that magnitude is not something you want to have on the opposing side.
"Professor McGonagall, would you please tell me what you know about this situation?"
'I feel like I'm being interviewed by someone at the Ministry.' I took a deep breath and tried to speak to him as an equal. It's not easy. He may be a great wizard, but he is still seventeen years old. "The elder Misters Potter and Malfoy were transported here through a potions project gone wrong." I couldn't tell him that we sent those two into the future to stop him from following the wrong path. "The Headmaster and I have determined that they may be able to supplement your power in preparation for your next meeting with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. We thought it a good idea for you to work with them whilst we determine the best way to send them back to their own time."
He looked at me simply for a moment, as if he were trying to evaluate my answer. Apparently satisfied with his conclusions, he smiled.
"Do you have any specific knowledge as to why Dumbledore would think these two can help me fight Voldemort? At their current ages, I dare-say they've never faced him, not once."
"I believe you're right about that. In 1976 there wasn't any reason for either of them to have faced him yet. However, the magic that runs through both families has made you and Draco Malfoy two of the most powerful wizards of our time. Your fathers are extremely powerful as well."
"So you think Draco and I should work with our fathers to combine our magic and this will be enough to defeat Voldemort?"
"I think it's a good possibility and it wouldn't hurt to make use of the opportunity while we work out how to send them back."
"Thank you professor. I'm sure I'll be speaking with you again later on. I'd like to speak to the Headmaster now."
I watched as he released the charms on the door, then walked out to pass that message on to Albus. I hoped Mr. Potter would be able to calm himself soon. The magic radiating from him

nearly crackled through the air and the cold, heartless attitude he was presenting was disconcerting to say the least.
ALBUS DUMBLEDORE:
As I faced Harry, I found myself thinking how sorrowful I felt because he had to deal with so much tragedy and pressure. He'd grown up much sooner than any child deserved to. Nevertheless, the boy was handling it better than most.
"Sir," Harry said. "Is there anything you feel you should tell me?"
I smiled at him. I'm certain my eyes were twinkling. Oh yes, I know about that twinkle. I know that it bothers a great many people. I know that my staff, especially the more dour members of my staff, find it highly irritating that I seem to be amused by so many events. The reality of the situation is that I **am** amused by many events. I have an uncanny ability to find humor in all but the gravest of situations and I encourage that within myself because I believe that some sense of levity is important to good quality of life. At this moment, I found it interesting to see that the boy seemed to be using one of my tactics on me. He didn't want to ask me any specific questions until he had some idea what information I had to offer. Quite wise of him.
"My dear boy, I'm sure there more pointed questions you would like to ask."
"Perhaps. But this is the one I'm asking."
"Well then, Harry, the answer is yes. I feel that I should tell you that I have every confidence that things will be made right. As my seer skills are limited, even with Minerva's cooperation, I cannot be more specific. I can, however, assure you that the appropriate measures have already been put into place to ensure that all will be as it should. Any actions you take now will only alter themselves to fit into the solution."
"You realize, Headmaster, that your answer doesn't really make any sense to me, don't you ?"
"Yes, my boy, but it will. Someday."
With that, I stood and walked toward the door.
"I presume you would like to see Lucius Malfoy next?" I could feel the crackle in his aura that told me he was ever-so-slightly irritated that I had retained any semblance of control.
LUCIUS MALFOY:
He's just staring at me. He's sitting there, staring at me and it's highly disconcerting. It's amazing how much he looks like James. Oh, I've come to realize during our work together that James is not a complete loss as a person, despite his friends and his Gryffindor status. He seems to be growing out of his childish prankster phase. If only he would leave Severus alone, I could even imagine considering him among my own friends. But this boy, Harry, from what I can tell, his similarity to James begins and ends with his looks.
He's distant, and angry. He seems to have more similarities to the Severus of this time when comparing their attitudes. That's another thing I don't understand. What in Merlin's name could have happened to make Severus so closed off. And why does he look at me so strangely?
"Potter," I said.
"Call me Harry. I think it will be easier if we all use first names, since there are currently two Potters and two Malfoys here."
"All right, Harry. Can you tell me something?"
"Perhaps."
"Am I dead?"
"It's my understanding that you and James were brought here by a potions project gone wrong. Seems odd that a Malfoy could screw up a potion that badly." He smirked at me. I wanted so

badly to correct him, to explain that I most certainly did not screw up a potion, and in fact that McGonagall and Dumbledore seemed highly impressed with the advanced work that James and I had done together. I couldn't, though. I wasn't supposed to tell him that, or the reason they sent us here in the first place.
"No, I mean, in this time. Am I dead in this time? Will I die in the next 21 years?"
He honestly seemed surprised. "No, why would you think that?"
"The way people are looking at me, behaving around me, it seems like they've never seen me, or not seen me in many years. It's not quite as drastic as people seeing James, but it's still there. My own son," I had to pause a moment. I still couldn't get used to the idea that I would have a son. I'd been hoping I wouldn't actually have to marry Narcissa. "My own son won't even look me in the eye. And Severus barely speaks to me either. He seems to have an evil heartless thing going on, but every once in a while, he looks at me, and there's a deep sadness hidden somewhere underneath it all. He's my best friend. I want to know, if I'm not dead, then what else could make him - and Draco - act like this around me?"
"Draco doesn't look you in the eye because he's not supposed to."
If this boy thought that would answer my question, he was severely mistaken. And that smirk! That insolent little smirk just proved that he knew exactly what was happening here and simply refused to tell me. Unless maybe he was told that he couldn't tell me, just as I wasn't supposed to tell him the truth.
"Why is he not supposed to? Is this something I - his father, the future me - taught him?"
"I believe so. It's a sign of respect among the ranks."
"Ranks? I'm in a military group?"
"You could say that."
"Is Draco afraid of me? He seems so much more at ease with other people, even other adults, even James. I can't imagine that I would be a parent who would instill that much fear in a child."
"I don't think he's afraid of you, but he might well be afraid of your master, and the orders you might be given."
"Master?"
He didn't say anything. I suddenly have the feeling that I could stare at him all day long and he still wouldn't expand on that statement. Not unless he decided he was bloody good and ready to. This young Potter is definitely one for standing firmly by his decisions, it seems. I continued running that last sentence through my mind, the words flipping and twirling around each other in the jumble of other thoughts I was already dealing with. Suddenly, something clicked and everything seemed to fall into place.
"You can't honestly be telling me that I'm going to join that psychotic dark wizard and do his bidding?"
"I don't recall telling you that."
"It's true, isn't it?"
"Yes." How could he be so calm about it, so nonchalant, as if he hadn't just given me this horrible image of my future? A future serving a dark wizard, married to a woman I would never like, not to mention couldn't love and raising a son who seemed caught between fearing and hating me. Oh, this was not how I'd imagined my life going.
"You're involved with Draco, aren't you?"
"I'm sorry, sir. I'm sure this is because of the way I - er - greeted you last night. I am so sorry for that, I hope you understand. . ."

"Harry," I knew if I didn't interrupt him, he could have gone on and on. "It's quite all right. I can understand the confusion. It was a bit confusing for all of us. But, you haven't answered my question. Are you and Draco involved?"
"Yes, just recently."
I smiled. I was beginning to feel like a father, oddly enough. I was pleased to hear that my son had found, would find - whichever - someone to care for. My thoughts turned to Severus again. It was apparent that I would have to marry Narcissa after all, I certainly didn't want to give up having a son. But my thoughts of last night were expanding. After that brief kiss and my initial thoughts of Sev, I had decided that once I got back to my time, I was going to make sure another day didn't go by without me letting Sev know that I found him to be the equivalent of sex on legs. What would happen after that, I could only guess - and hope. Now, however, I was beginning to think one night would never be enough, that it would only make me ache for something I could never have again. Snapping myself back to the present, or future as it were, I looked back to Harry.
"Did you have any questions for me? I thought this was supposed to be a chance for you to gather some sort of information for this big 'mission'."
"No, thank you, Lucius. You've told me more than you know." He gave me that little sly smile that made me realize he meant exactly what he was saying, which of course left me to wonder what I might have revealed without realizing it.
"Could you please ask Draco to come in next?"
DRACO MALFOY:
I sat in that room, watching as each of our professors went in to talk to Harry, then came out and told someone else he had asked to see them. After Snape came out and joined the rest of us, I saw some strange looks pass between him and Lucius. I've seen Snape with my father many times, but I've never seen anything like this. I've never seen Snape like this, he seems a little softer. Well, softer in Snape terms, which primarily means that he seems like he might have once had a heart hidden underneath that cold exterior that he portrays to everyone.
Lucius, this young version of my father, confuses me as well. I've tried to watch him a bit when he's not paying attention to me. I've gotten fairly good at this after watching the full grown version of him for years. This Lucius is different. He seems human, almost like me, or at least, like I would be if I weren't afraid of my parents' reactions. My mother - she's really the dominant one. I think I've always known that on some level, but could she really be so dominant that she turned my father from a normal teenaged boy who seems decent and genuine, into a cold-hearted Death Eater who kisses Voldemort's robes and lets him make plans for me?
After waiting through McGonagall and Dumbledore, Lucius went in to meet with Harry. It's hard not to wonder what's going on in that room. Now that he's come out and I'm finally going to get the chance to talk to Harry, I'm ecstatic. I need to see him alone, need to find out what he's trying to do here. That mask of his bothers me. I don't think I've ever seen Harry so distant and cold. It's a deeper, darker version of the old darkness that I used to find exciting. It seems impossible to believe that so much has happened within the last week or two. I'm sure it was just a few days ago that I was thinking of how exciting and sexy he seemed when he behaved in that forceful mildly dark manner. Now I'm sitting across from him in an unused meeting room and I'm seeing the darkest, coldest, angriest look on his face. It reminds me so much of Snape on his worst days, or my father, or Pansy's father - yes that's it. He reminds me of Pansy's father - full of hatred and disdain, ready to severely injure anyone who crosses him.

"Harry?"
"Yes?"
"Did you need to talk to me, or were you just going to sit there staring at me?"
No answer. All I wanted was to bring the Harry I love back to the surface.
"The surface of what?"
"Harry, I hate it when you do that. Do you really have to answer my thoughts?"
"I'm sorry. I'll try not to do that. It's difficult at times, especially right now. I'm trying to…" he trailed off. I watched in awe as that mask began to crumble away. The firm set of his jaw softened a bit. The tightness in his lips seemed to loosen up. His shoulders sagged just a bit, then shook a little. But it was the eyes where I could really see the change. The cold hatred seemed to dissolve, bringing a bit of that familiar light back into his eyes. The anger and disdain went away, to be replaced by a sadness that made me want to cry. The depth of emotions suddenly swirling in those emerald orbs was breathtaking. The overall transformation was so distinct, so incredibly complete that I had the odd feeling I was watching him morph into a completely different person.
"Oh Dray, what am I going to do?"
I nearly ran the few steps between us and knelt in front of him, resting my hands on his thighs.
"Harry what is it? What's going on?" I was completely unprepared for the broken look in his eyes when they met mine. I can't imagine what sort of mental anguish would create a look like that. I'm not sure I want to know, but for Harry, I'll have to.
"I'm sorry Dray, you don't have to do this."
"I'm going to pretend you didn't just respond to my thoughts against my explicit wishes. A person wouldn't need to be a mind-reader to understand and recognize that you're in pain Harry. I love you. I want to be here. I want to help, if that's possible."
"I don't think it is," his whisper sounded so dejected and defeated. "I don't think anything can help anymore. I have to face him, Dray. I have to sit here and talk to my father like it's the most normal thing in the world. And then I have to take all this information and put it together to form a plan for killing Voldemort. And then, presumably, I have to face losing my father all over again. I can't talk to the only people who've been friends to me for most of my life, because there's no way they can understand half of what's going on here. And Dumbledore, that old coot is just getting battier by the day. Oh sure, he's got some great knowledge of something wonderful and detailed, but I can't get at it and he won't offer it to me, no matter that it might be necessary to make this work. No matter that I have a plan of my own and I might need that information to make sure that my plan works as it should. No matter that I deserve to know."
I reached around, wrapping my arms firmly around his torso and pulled him close to me until my head could rest against his chest. He seemed extremely tense, but slowly relaxed into the embrace and wrapped his arms around me in return.
"You can rely on me, Harry. I know it's hard to believe you can trust people, I know you don't want to care about people. . ."
"How could you possibly know that?"
"Because I know you, and I can tell. But I can also tell that you **do** care, in spite of yourself, just as I care about you, just as your friends care about you. And your father cares about you."
"My father's dead, Draco. That boy in there is not yet my father, and if anything goes wrong, he never will be and I'll cease to exist."
I pulled my head up to face him, seeking contact with his eyes, hoping he would see the truth in mine. "He may not be your father, yet. But you are already his son and he recognizes that. I've

talked to him. Harry, those visions of yours, when you thought your seer skills were going wonky, that was you seeing this. Your father and I, working together, talking together. If we're all going to work together to defeat Voldemort, then your father and I will have to practice together and discuss things. And this morning, before you came back, we discussed you. He cares, Harry. It's true. And, for the record, he knows that I love you, and he's glad."
"Really?"
"Yes, Harry, really. You should talk to him. No masks, no hiding, just talk to him. Everything else will work out in the end. Somehow, it's all going to be made right, I can sense it."
"You know, Dumbledore said the same thing."
"As much as I've talked about him, I've always known he's a smart man. And we know I'm of superior intelligence." I flashed him my best grin, "so you should believe us both."
I was rewarded with the tiniest of smiles as Harry leaned in to capture my mouth with his own. As with our previous kisses, it seemed that all coherent thought flew directly out of my head the moment our lips touched. The power that surged between us was almost frightening. In that emotionally charged moment, I felt a connection to Harry on a deeper level than we had ever had before. In fact, it seemed that the connection went a little deeper in this manner each and every time.
After we separated, we realized we were surrounded by sparks and crackles of light. Streaks like blue lightening seemed to light the entire room for a few moments, then it dimmed into a pale blue glow around us. I looked at Harry, somewhat grateful to see that my amazement was reflected on his face. "What just happened?"
"I don't know, Dray. I've never seen anything like it."
"We should ask Dumbledore about it."
Ooh, that brought the bitterness back into his face. "Why? So he can hide something else from me? I see no need for it."
"Harry, just trust him. Or at the very least, trust me? We can talk to Dumbledore, you can talk to your father, please Harry."
He put one finger over my lips. It's funny how people do that to get others to stop talking. As if I couldn't very well keep talking around his finger, or move away from his hand and keep talking out of his reach. As if one little finger pressed against my lips could . . . but, it did. I stopped the moment he touched me. Not due to force, but desire. Not sexual desire, but his desire for me to stop.
"Okay, Draco. I trust you. I - we should - I should do this - now, I mean. You should go back out there and I should talk to my - talk to James now."
"Sure, Harry. I'll tell him." With the briefest and lightest of touches, I pressed my lips to his and turned to leave the room.
JAMES POTTER:
Oh, I'd been waiting for this. I walked into the room, not having a clue what to expect. I can't even begin to explain how nerve-wracking it was to sit in that outer lounge, waiting, wondering, anticipating. Oddly enough, it seemed that everyone else in there was waiting just like I was. They didn't talk - about anything. I would have expected Dumbledore to discuss something with his staff members, or talk to the younger of us about what we could expect. Something about the situation, the plans, the reason Harry was taking control like this and no one was arguing with him.
I'm still amazed by how much he looks like me, but those eyes. He definitely has Lily's eyes, but

I hope I never have to see such pain in hers. I wish I didn't have to see it in his. Of course, since I'm going to be dead before he grows up, I'm not supposed to be seeing it, am I? I can't help wondering what's going to happen to take me away from my family. I've always wanted a son. A few children, actually. Lily and I have joked about having our own Quidditch team. I wonder if we ever got to have any other children. If only Lily had survived, maybe Harry wouldn't have had such a hard life.

I've learned a lot about him and his past from Ron, Hermione and Draco. It's unbelievable that someone so young has gone through so much. He's fought so many battles, lost so many friends and loved ones, and yet - somehow - he's survived.

He's survived, but he seems - strange. Sitting across from him, I get the sense that he's a bit nervous, but you could never tell it by the look on his face. He looks guarded, distrustful and extremely cynical.

"So, are you feeling better today?"

He offers a sad smile and nods quietly. I wonder what I've been brought in here for if he doesn't want to talk to me. For that matter, I wonder why he doesn't want to talk to me. I can understand the shock from our first meeting, but now that he's had a little time to get used to it, I wish he could relax a bit so we can just talk. I want to know him. I want him to know me, even though I'm sure I'm not the same person I will be by the time he's born. I don't even know how old he was when we. . .

"A year."

"What?" That must be the most arbitrary statement I've ever heard spoken.

"A year. I haven't seen you since I was a year old." Merlin, can he read minds? "I'm sure no one's given you any details, but it appears you already know about your death."

"I figured it out."

"I'm sorry."

"No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry we weren't there for you. Can I ask where you grew up? Do you have godparents?"

"A godfather, but I didn't get to meet him until the end of my third year here. I grew up with the Dursleys."

"Who?"

"Petunia Evans and her husband."

"Oh, I've only met Petunia once, and it was very brief. It wasn't entirely pleasant either, did she get better?"

"No."

"Why didn't you get to meet your godfather? Why wouldn't you have been living with him?" I was wondering who I would someday offer that position to. I can't imagine anyone but Sirius, though. He's like the brother I never had. I would think Sirius would take something like that seriously (no pun intended) and make sure he was around to fulfill the duties. I can't imagine leaving my son in the care of someone who would disappear for thirteen years.

"He was in Az. . . he was unavailable."

"Azkaban? Were you about to say your godfather was in Azkaban?"

"Damn." He seemed to be mentally kicking himself now, obviously thinking he shouldn't have allowed that slipup. "Well, Dumbledore is planning to obliviate your memory before you go back, anyway, so I suppose I might as well tell you. He was in Azkaban because he was wrongly accused of murdering 13 Muggles and one Wizard, as well as being in league with Voldemort

and betraying two other wizards. He escaped in my third year so he could protect me from . . ." he seemed unsure how to finish the sentence. "From a rat."
A rat? I didn't bother asking any questions. I could tell he wasn't going to give me any more information on that subject, not now anyway.
"Is there anything you want to know about me? Or your mum?"
"How did you get here?"
I blinked. I was expecting much more personal questions, but I suppose it was a matter of importance, and there was work to be done.
"I took a potion that Malfoy and I were working on together."
"Why were you and Malfoy working on a potion together? Are you friends?"
I had to think about that for a minute. Would I consider Lucius Malfoy my friend? I wouldn't have before, but somewhere in the midst of the hours spent working on this project, I had come to respect him, or something like that. And something about traveling forward in time and meeting up with your sons, well, that brings people closer together in ways you never would have imagined. So did that make him my friend? Harry seemed disturbed by my hesitation.
"Gods, please don't tell me you and Lucius Malfoy are involved!"
I couldn't help it, I laughed. "No. Absolutely not. I'm madly in love with Lily, and I've got a sneaking suspicion that Lucius is interested in someone as well. But to answer your earlier questions, we were working on it as part of a detention, and I'm not sure we're friends, but I think we might be one day. How about you and Draco? I understand that you used to fight a lot?"
"You could say that, but we don't anymore - as much."
"You do still fight?"
"Well, we disagree on things, he disagrees with some of the things I do, or plan to do."
"Is it true that you were trying to join Voldemort's army last night?"
"Yes."
"Why?"
"I can't tell you anything about that just yet. It's for your own safety."
I can't help but see the irony in that, my son, keeping information from me in the name of my safety, despite the fact that to him I've been dead for sixteen years.
"Is there any other information you needed from me, I mean, in regards to this. . . mission, or whatever?"
"No, I don't think so, unless you have some ideas on how we can accomplish this."
"I don't, yet. But I'm sure once we all put our heads together, we can come up with something. Harry, are you all right?"
"Yes, why?" Oh yeah, that was believable.
"Just asking. Do you, I mean, can I talk to you for a minute?"
"Certainly." He hardly seems interested, but I have no way of knowing if I'll get this chance again.
"I just want you to know, even though it seems a little odd and it's taken some getting used to, I do think of you as my son. I. . . care about you, it's automatic, like breathing. That's how I've always imagined I would feel about my kids, just something deep in my soul telling me that they're important and wonderful and valuable. I was planning to propose to Lily on her birthday, in February. I spontaneously jumped that gun right before I came here and she accepted. We've been very happy together and we've talked about our kids, just hypothetically, of course. But those talks have always brought images of lots of love and happiness. It's really hard to believe

that I won't get to see you grow up, and I won't get to give you that love and happiness while you're a child, but I can now. I can tell you now that I love you, Harry. Draco told me about you, and how you're brave and kind-hearted. He told me about your friends and how close you are to them. It reminds me of my friends. I'm glad you have that. I'm glad you have Draco, too. He really loves you. I know that nothing can make up for the things in your past, but if you hold on to that love from Draco and your friends, and even from me if you'll accept it, I think it might make your future a happy one. I know you're powerful, and I probably don't know the half of it, but if you use that power to enforce those good things, to bring out the love in those around you and let that overpower the darkness, I think maybe everything will be all right. Just don't let the sadness and anger twist your intentions, Harry. You're better than that. I can tell."
I'd been looking down at the floor during most of that rambling, feeling a bit embarrassed to be saying these things to someone my own age. Looking up at Harry again, it's quite surprising to see that he's been silently crying. It's instinct. I pull him out of that chair and into a hug. It's an odd thought for me to be hugging my son, but I can tell by the sudden shudders that the emotions run much deeper for him. Of course! This has to be hard for him to accept, to understand. But I hope he finds it to be a good thing as well.
"Thank you . . ." he whispers. Then, even quieter and very hesitantly, "dad".
Wow, now that was intense. I only wish I would be allowed to remember this moment.
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Chapter: 25

Authors Notes: I'm more sorry than you can know that it's taken this long to get another chapter out. Real Life sucks sometimes, and when you deal with two stomach viruses, adjusting to school schedules and the normal crap of work, it gets a little overwhelming. **I could never have done this without the continued support, urging and occasional threats of my beta, Azhure.** Oh, I'm in the process of going through each chapter to make little corrections and minor adjustments (found myself contradicting myself a couple times) and updating a couple letters to reflect OOTP. If you notice contradictions, feel free to mention them if you want, but know that I may be in the process of correcting them already.

There's still more to come (obviously) and I most certainly **WILL** finish this! Please keep reading and reviewing. I have to tell you all, I finally got the upgrade and started checking the number of hits on my chapters. I'm amazed to see that there have been 395 hits on chapter 24. I had no idea that my fic was being looked at that much, especially since I don't get **THAT** many reviews! To the 15 of you who did me the honor of reviewing that chapter – an extra special thank you and a chocolate frog to each of you! (Specific replies at the end of the chapter.)

Warnings: This is slash, but if you didn't catch that in the summary or the earlier chapters, or the scenes with boys kissing each other, there's no hope for you.

Summary: Up to this point, James and Lucius have been sent from the past to work with an imbalance in power. Harry's been studying dark arts and is making plans to join Voldie and the Death Eaters in an insane attempt to protect his loved ones. After the big confrontation, Harry's spoken to everyone involved (including those indirectly involved) and that's where we pick up! Enjoy the read!

End of Last Chapter:

James speaking to Harry: Just don't let the sadness and anger twist your intentions, Harry. You're better than that. I can tell."
I'd been looking down at the floor during most of that rambling, feeling a bit embarrassed to be saying these things to someone my own age. Looking up at Harry again, it's quite surprising to see that he's been silently crying. It's instinct. I pull him out of that chair and into a hug. It's an odd thought for me to be hugging my son, but I can tell by the sudden shudders that the emotions run much deeper for him. Of course! This has to be hard for him to accept, to understand. But I hope he finds it to be a good thing as well.
"Thank you . . ." he whispers. Then, even quieter and very hesitantly, "dad".

New Chapter:

'*Dad*.' Harry liked saying it. He never thought he'd get the chance to say it to James and now he was glad he hadn't passed it up.

Stepping out of the embrace, the two young Potter men regarded each other somewhat hesitantly. It had been an emotionally charged moment and Harry worried he had overstepped some invisible boundary. James worried that he'd said too much, or perhaps he hadn't said enough, or worse yet, that he wouldn't have the chance to say anything else.

When he looked at Harry though, *really* looked at him, he felt an instinctive sense of love and peace flow through him. '*This is my son! I'm a father - or at least I'm going to be a father. Ahh, bloody time confusion.*' Opening up his heart, he said the first thing that came to mind. "Your mother's going to love you so much. You've got her eyes, you know."

Harry smiled. It was a small and very sad smile, but triggered by joy. Harry had often been told that he had Lily's eyes, and he knew it was his mother's love that saved him from Voldemort, but hearing it this time was different. He was hearing it this time from the one person who knew Lily better than anyone. Harry choked, "That means a lot to me, especially coming from you, Dad." He paused to regain his composure, a slightly melancholy look on his face. "What's she like?"

That question only drove home the fact that Harry would grow up without his parents. James knew this, after discussing the Dursley's and Harry's absent godfather, but it hadn't really hit him that Lily would die, too. He felt a lump form in his throat at the thought of Lily's death. '*Harry needs happy thoughts*,' he reminded himself. Taking a deep breath to settle his emotions, James

thought a moment, searching for the right words to describe Lily Evans. "She's great. She's really smart, always hounding me and the guys to keep up with our schoolwork. Of course, she hardly needs to bother Remus about it, he's by far the most studious of us all." He paused, a thought occurring to him. "You do know Sirius, Remus and Peter, don't you?"

Harry wondered how to go about answering that. "Yes, I know them." He couldn't tell his father that he'd run into Peter just last night at the Death Eater meeting, couldn't talk about Sirius' death, and just didn't know what to say about Remus that wouldn't lead to questions about the others. "Not extremely well, but I've met them all a few times." There, that was truthful, yet vague.

James didn't question it, he was still thinking about Lily. "Well, your mum's just great. She's the first person who's ever made my stomach flutter. I think I first noticed her in our third year, but it was the end of our fifth year before I had the guts to ask her out. You see, by our fifth year Lily had gotten close to all of us, and was almost like one of the guys, but I couldn't help being attracted to her. We've been together ever since and I've never dreamed I could be this happy."

Harry smiled at this and felt a certain comfort at being told first hand how much in love his parents had been. He looked down, thinking. He wanted more. Sighing, he tried to resign himself to the fact that there was much work to be done and explanations to be given, but right then, all he wanted was a normal conversation with his dad. The realization of just what that conversation should be finally came to him.

"Excuse me a moment," Harry said as he walked to the door. Releasing the locking charm, he stepped into the lounge and faced Dumbledore. "Sir, could you have Ron and Hermione brought back here? I think they deserve to be involved." He turned to faced his boyfriend, "Draco, could you come in here, please?"

Draco stood and went to join Harry and James while the Headmaster whispered quietly with his professors. Minerva left in search of the absent members of the Gryffindor Trio.

Once Draco had entered the office and Harry was satisfied that his charms were properly reapplied, there was an awkward moment as the three teens looked at each other. Harry broke the silence.

"Dad?"

Draco and James both looked at him with relief mixed with pride and love. Draco took a deep breath, thankful that Harry had truly listened to him and was giving James a chance while they could spend time together.

"Yes?"

"I'd like to introduce you to my boyfriend, Draco."

Draco opened his mouth to remind Harry that they'd already met, but paused when his mind

finally caught up with Harry's words. *'He called James Dad. He called me his boyfriend.*' Draco suddenly understood that this introduction was a formality, a bit of normalcy for a teen and his father. It was something Harry had missed out on throughout his life.

Draco stepped forward, offering his hand, and smiled at James. "Pleased to meet you, Sir."

James smiled back and accepted the handshake. He, too, recognized the significance of this. It was as meaningful for him as for Harry. Maybe even more so.

"Nice to meet you, too, Draco."

Harry simply beamed in joy. He felt happier than he had in years. His last memory that even came close was the brief time in third year when he thought he would get to leave the Dursley's and live with Sirius. Something in the back of his mind connected that happy memory with Sirius' death and this one with James' death. He found himself wondering if **everything** in his life had to revolve around death. '*No, I'm not going to think about that right now. I'm going to enjoy the time I have with my Dad.*'

He sat down, motioning for the others to do the same. Looking at James, he thought about what he imagined would be a normal conversation. "Draco is the Slytherin seeker, Dad." He wanted to share information about his boyfriend, and even brag about him a bit. "He's never lost a game against Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff. Even when Cho Chang was the Ravenclaw seeker – and she was really good - but she could never beat Dray. And he's at the top of our class in Potions, it just comes naturally to him."

"Harry - stop," Draco felt himself blushing, wondering why he was embarrassed by these compliments. "He doesn't want to hear all this stuff." He tried to sneak a glance at James, only to realize it wasn't possible as James was looking directly at him. James smiled at Draco, looking for all the world like the happy father of a seventeen year old. '*Harry would have been a happy kid if he'd grown up with his parents*.' Draco was certain of this.

"Don't worry, Draco. I do want to hear it. I'd like to learn more about you both. And you should be flattered that he wants to brag about you." James turned to Harry, "What about you? Do you play Quidditch?"

"Yeah," Harry answered quickly. He felt a sudden wave of modesty, not sure of a good way to mention his winning streak. "I play for the house team."

"I noticed that Gryffindor is the only house you didn't mention as unable to beat Draco. Is that because of you?"

"Well, we have a pretty good team."

Draco rolled his eyes dramatically. "Oh yes. They have a *decent* team," the sarcasm was dripping from his voice. "You could say that their keeper is well trained and they've always had good

beaters and talented, driven captains. Their old captain, Wood, is playing for Puddlemere now. And I think his replacement, Johnson, is playing for the Cannons – might give them a hope of a good season. Even the newest Gryffindor captain, the Weasley girl, she's much better than any of us ever thought she'd be." Harry sent a reproachful look at this statement, which James grinned at and Draco blatantly ignored. "Of course," Draco cast a pointed glance in Harry's direction, "their seeker is the reason I've never been able to beat them."

James grinned at this. "So, Harry, you're the unbeatable Gryffindor seeker?"

"Yes." He was suddenly quite interested in something unseen that was apparently resting on the floor near James' feet. "Dray got me the position."

"How's that?" James was interested. He'd never heard of someone from one house having any say over the team of another house.

"In our first flying lesson, he stole a Remembrall from one of my house mates. I took off to try and get it back from him, then he threw it and I managed to catch it before it broke. Professor McGonagall saw me and put me on the team."

"Your first flying lesson?" James considered a moment, thinking back to his first flying lesson at Hogwarts. "Don't they start flying in first year?"

"Yes," Harry answered.

"So, they've raised the ban against first years on the teams, then? It's about time!" He'd wanted to be on the Quidditch team in his first year, but was never given that opportunity. He felt it was highly unfair and had put up quite a fuss about it.

"No, actually, they haven't."

Draco sighed. He'd never seen Harry so modest. He could understand modesty in regards to being the Boy-Who-Lived. That was something he really had no control over. But Harry's talent in Quidditch wasn't just happenstance. Even as a competitor, Draco had to admit that Harry had a natural skill and was very good as a seeker. Deciding that someone needed to speak up for Harry, Draco interrupted. "Harry was placed on the team as seeker because of his natural skill. If I remember correctly, that day with the Remembrall was his first time ever on a broom, and it was simply amazing. He was the youngest seeker in a century and he's brought Gryffindor their best record in over a decade."

There it was again, that fatherly pride welling up in his chest. James wondered if there would be any chance for him to fly with Harry, maybe play a little one on one, before he went back.

The conversation eventually went around to other topics; pro Quidditch teams (James was partial to Puddlemere United), schoolwork and favorite subjects (Harry's was DADA, James preferred Transfiguration), previous relationships (Harry's brief thing with Cho, Draco's unspoken crush on

Seamus), goals after Hogwarts (Aurors, they all wanted to be Aurors) and various anecdotes from their individual lives and their adventures with their friends. Overall, it was a wonderful time spent together and both father and son felt much closer when they reluctantly decided (nearly two hours later) that they should get back to the issues at hand.

They walked back into the main lounge and found that lunch had been delivered and everyone was still there, waiting.

"Harry, my boy," Dumbledore said. "I trust the three of you had a nice visit?" At Harry's nod, Dumbledore turned his attention toward Draco and James. "We've already eaten, but perhaps you should all have some lunch." He gestured toward the mounds of sandwiches, pastas, fruit and sweets. Also waiting were large pitchers of still cold pumpkin juice. It appeared to be enough food to feed half of Gryffindor, yet there were only nine people in the room.

Harry grinned, "Seems the house elves have outdone themselves again."

"Indeed. You should have seen it when it was first brought in." Dumbledore smiled at Harry. The wizened old Headmaster had obviously recognized the need for a bit of casual, light-hearted normalcy. Harry was grateful for that, especially when he turned to make eye contact with Hermione. Judging by the look on her face, Harry was dangerously close to learning exactly what if felt like when she slapped Draco in third year. He closed his eyes to mentally steel himself against the onslaught of thoughts and emotions running rampant through the room. It wasn't going to be an easy afternoon.

Draco and James each gathered a plate of food and a glass of juice, sticking to an unspoken agreement to wait for Harry's lead in the ensuing discussions. Neither of the had any idea what Harry was planning, but they both knew they loved him deeply in their separate ways and were thrilled that – despite the situation – they had been able to share in some joyful conversation and bonding with him.

Meanwhile, Harry viewed the actions of each person in the room, staying mindful of the reaction he would have if he forgot to distance himself. His distant observations, however, offered a bit of insight into their emotions, without exposing him too much.

Lucius and Severus were in the midst of a power struggle. Lucius was trying to make eye contact and hoping that they could talk privately. Severus, however, was purposely oblivious to these attempts and seemed to be highly intrigued by his fingernails at the moment.

Ron sat quietly, holding Hermione's hand and hoping she wouldn't lose her temper.

Minerva and Albus seemed to be taking everything in, simply observing the odd combination of people in this gathering, not to mention the conflicting body language among the lot of them.

After his mental role-call, Harry felt slightly more secure in his plans, though he was still a bit anxious about the reactions he would get from some of them. He helped himself to a glass of

juice and pulled a chair across the room to sit near Hermione. He knew she would be the most difficult to convince. One more glance around the room verified that everyone was waiting for him. Harry took a sip of juice, followed it with a deep, calming breath and addressed the group. "I've learned a lot recently. A lot about magic, my skills and powers, a lot about Voldemort and a lot about each of you. I've probably learned more than many of you realize. I think I know what needs to be done in order to defeat Voldemort, or at least what needs to be done first, but I could really use some help preparing for it. There are a lot of explanations that are long overdue and many things revealed today may be difficult for some of you to deal with. I ask that you all be prepared to shove your personal feelings aside so we can focus on the issue at hand."

He looked around the room, pleased to see that he had everyone's attention. Hermione and Severus seemed skeptical, as did Lucius. Ron, Draco and James looked proud and trusting. *'I'm not sure I deserve that trust,*' Harry thought. '*We'll see if they still trust me after I explain it all.*' Dumbledore and McGonagall appeared expectant. Harry thought back to the harsher, Snape-like attitude he's adopted that morning. It was a lot easier to hold on to that defense before talking to his dad and Dray. '*I'm caring again. I have to be extra careful because when I care too much, people get hurt.*' He shook his head slightly to regain his focus.

"Headmaster, you do plan to erase their memories before you send them back, right?"

"Knowledge of that which has not yet come to pass could pose a danger to that which we know as history, don't you think?"

Severus rolled his eyes and Harry smiled at the confusion on the others' faces. Albus Dumbledore had many ways of avoiding direct answers. It was almost an art form and he took great pleasure in it. Harry was used to it, however, and felt that he knew the Headmaster well enough to interpret (at least sometimes.) "I'll take that as a yes," he paused in case Dumbledore wanted to correct him. "All right then. I think we should plan on sharing everything among those in this room. No one here can really be helpful to this mission if they are left partly in shadow."

"I guess I should start by making sure that everyone here understands the roles of everyone else here. I'm sure I'll be covering ground very familiar to most of us, but since Lucius and Dad don't know our history, I have to explain it." He took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a moment. '*I can do this, I know I can. It's just details, a story, ancient history.*' He opened his eyes and turned to James. "I have been extremely well known throughout the wizarding world since I was a year old. You and Mum are quite famous as well, but for different reasons. You see, you're famous for being my parents, and I'm famous for surviving the killing curse."

"You survived the – but that's not possible!" James was obviously quite shocked by this revelation. "How?"

"Well, Dumbledore suspects that it was because of the love sacrifice, Mum died trying to save me, right after he killed you. I've heard it. When Dementors get close, I hear the whole thing. He told her to stand aside, but she said '*Not Harry, please no, take me, kill me instead*' and he just laughed." Harry again felt that familiar anger boil up inside of him. He didn't even notice the

tortured look on James' face. "He murdered you and Mum and then hit me with Avada Kedavra. But because Mum tried to sacrifice herself, it actually did save me. It sort of killed him, but his spirit stayed around and he came back a few years ago."

"I believe," Snape interrupted, "that the remainder of the historic details have been covered, Mr. Potter."

"So I guess you all want to know what I've been doing, right?" The expectant silence confirmed his suspicions. "Okay, I discovered over the summer that I am a bit of a seer. It's gotten stronger since then and I can also pick up on emotions and thoughts if I try. Sometimes I don't have to try. Sometimes I have to consciously block it. I also discovered I can do wandless magic. I mean, I guess I did some when I was a kid, making sweaters shrink or making my hair grow back. But lately I'm doing directed magic. Just before fifth year, when the Dementors came to Privet Drive, I lit my wand when I wasn't even holding it. The summer before sixth year, I used *Incendio* to light some candles without my wand. I realized the Ministry can only recognize certain magic. I don't know how they picked up on the hover charm that Dobby, the house elf, did. But they didn't pick up the *Lumos* or *Incendio* spells. Only the Patronus I sent at the Dementors."

"You can produce a Corporeal Patronus? We're learning that now. When did you learn it?" James was impressed, and by the look on his face, Lucius was impressed as well.

"I cast my first fully formed Patronus at the end of my third year," he looked at his father, wondering. Finally deciding that there was no reason not to reveal this, he spoke again. "My Patronus takes the form of a stag." James simply widened his eyes a bit. A silent look of understanding was shared between father and son.

"So, anyway, I've been practicing more this year. I approached Draco a few weeks into the new term and we started studying together." No one spoke. A pin-drop could have been heard as Harry spent the next thirty minutes or so detailing the events of the last few months, up to – and including – the meeting with Voldemort. Before he had the opportunity to explain the nature of his relationship with Draco, the group was interrupted by a highly apologetic Dobby.

"Headmaster, sir, Dobby is very sorry to interrupt, but Dobby has an urgent message for the Headmaster and Mr. Harry Potter, sir."

The timid house elf walked toward the Headmaster and gave him a roll of parchment. "It's from Mr. Arthur Weasley, sir. He's waiting for Headmaster and Mr. Harry Potter in Headmaster's office, sir."

Harry moved to look over the parchment with the Headmaster, worried about what might cause such an urgent interruption.

~Albus & Harry,

I regret to inform you that the most recent mission of the Order has not been successful. Some of

the operatives were caught in opposition crossfire at Buckingham Palace. I would like to meet with you as soon as possible as I feel this should be discussed in person. I've addressed this to Harry as well, because I believe he's in the position of family in this case.

Sincerely,

Arthur Weasley~

"No." Harry's denial was quiet, barely above a whisper. "No, it can't be. He's fine. He's got to be fine." He felt his throat constrict and his eyes burn with forming tears. His mumbling became louder. "He's got to be fine. He just wrote me a few days ago. It'll all be fine. He said he'd see me soon." Draco got up, deciding that he didn't give a damn what Granger thought of it, and went to collect Harry in a comforting embrace. That embrace seemed to trigger something, causing the tears to fall and Harry to nearly collapse against the blonde. "No, not Moony. Moony can't be gone. Please, not again."

At the name, Moony, James stood up quickly. "Headmaster, whatever news you have, might I be allowed to know it, too?"

Albus acknowledged this request with a slight nod, then turned to the waiting house elf. "Dobby, would you please escort Mr. Weasley up here?"

"Of course, sir." With a low bow, Dobby promptly disappeared.

Jeanniiee - aww, thank you! I love that you see these characters in the same manner I do. Please don't go mad, because if you do, you'll never know how it ends!

Jen Red Robe – Ahhhh, you *think* that's a problem. Don't you?

HPIceAngel – Does this fulfill some of the bonding you were looking for?

Aranami - Thank you, thank you. I can't tell you how pleased I am that James' bit and Harry's last line were so moving to my readers! Makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Took your advice, hope you like it.

Lanevaly – Oh, thank you! I'm so glad you like it! Now, where's that chapter of Imperio you promised me?

XOX – Awwwww, you are just tooo sweet for words! If only the publishers would react to my original works the way you react to this! I'd be rich! Sorry to make you beg, but hope you enjoyed this chapter...

ShaeLynn – Well, as he said in this chapter, "Knowledge of that which has not yet come to pass could pose a danger to that which we know as history, don't you think?"

Cassa-Andra – Oh thank you so much! It just thrills me when you guys comment on all the things I liked best. Makes me really feel like I'm doing a good job. Thank you for continuing to read it

Jekyll – Oh so you're the one who wrote that sequel. I sent her a review on it, and later realized that she said someone else wrote it. If I can find it, I'll try to send you a copy of the review…

Malfoy Snogger – oh thank you! You are so flattering it makes me feel like my head is getting larger and larger and larger! I'm really glad Harry's coming across as forceful here – I worry sometimes that he's not as forceful as I want him to be. As for the crazy thing when they kissed, you'll have to wait and see. I can't be giving away all my secrets, now can I? And Lucius, don't worry, there's more to come in that department as well. The Hermione bit should be coming up in the next chapter, you aren't the only one waiting for it, trust me!

menecarkawan – thank you! Yes, he's got some confusion going on, but he's dealing with it rather well, all things considered.

Moony-Black – Why thanks! I'm quite proud of that father-son moment, and feeling better about it with every review!

NayNymic – Is this getting any easier for you to deal with? Sorry it wasn't sooner, but Harry's working through a lot of things and that takes time, you know. J

PeachDancer82 – I tried to expand on the Harry/James stuff, hope you liked it. Thanks for the continued reviews!

Azhure – I can't even come up with the words to say thanks to you. You rock! I'm gonna give you your very own sweet shop full of goodies! Oh and never fear, those bits you've been obsessing about – they'll be here eventually!

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Chapter: 26

As Dobby went off to find Arthur Weasley, the occupants of the lounge fell into an uncomfortable silence.

Ron suddenly found himself in the role of observer. He watched as Dumbledore led James and Lucius to the other side of the room and began speaking with them in hushed tones. Ron watched as Snape's eyes finally left his highly compelling fingernails to follow the path Lucius took across the room. Ron watched as McGonagall joined Dumbledore to discuss something quietly as they glanced periodically at Harry. Finally, Ron turned his head toward Harry to see what the

professors might be discussing. Harry was shaking with emotion and Ron couldn't help but notice how Malfoy reacted to Harry's distress. He saw the comforting expression, the honest concern in the boy's gray eyes, the loving caresses as he held the shaking Gryffindor. Ron watched as Harry clung to Malfoy for support, accepting the embrace as though it were completely natural and familiar. Ron watched as Harry began to take deep breaths, allowing himself to be calmed by whatever words of comfort were being whispered by Malfoy.

As the youngest of the Weasley boys, and the closest to his sister, Ginny, Ron had learned to look at events from an unbiased perspective. Although his hot temper had often prevented it, he was getting much better at forming the logical connections that are usually limited to the female mind. Now, watching all the activity in the room, especially the interactions between his best friend and Draco Malfoy, Ron felt a nagging sensation, as if his brain were trying to tell him something. The comforting, the embrace, the murmured words – it was the same way he consoled Hermione when she was upset. It was *not* the same way he would console Harry. It was more intimate. All at once, Ron stopped watching. His brain finally clicked and he closed his eyes, gasping at the realization that Harry and Malfoy were acting like a couple. That gasp was, unfortunately, a bad slip on Ron's part. Though completely unnoticed by the rest of the room, it drew Hermione's attention.

Only Ron knew when Hermione moved. When he felt her slowly pull away from his side, he opened his eyes and reached for her hand again. Too late. She was standing up, fists clenched. He followed her gaze and found it aimed directly at Malfoy. '*Oh, this isn't good.*' He knew he needed to calm her down, find a way to keep her from losing her temper. Standing with her, Ron placed his hands on her shoulders, hoping he could lead her in a different direction and take a few moments to calm her. As soon as she opened her mouth, Ron knew there was no chance.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing? Get your filthy, evil hands off him before I *cut* them off!" Hermione's voice was so loud that those present couldn't help but wince. All three professors tensed, ready to prevent serious harm should things get out of control. James and Lucius froze, turning to see who Hermione was yelling at. Before anyone could speak or react, she had pulled her wand and taken two steps toward Draco. **"I mean it, Malfoy. I don't know what kind of sick game you're playing or what sort of curse you've got him under, but it's going to stop and it's going to stop NOW!"**

Draco was looking at her in annoyance, but there was a hint of trepidation hidden in his gray eyes. He had pissed her off like this once before. He knew without a doubt that she was stronger, physically and magically, than she had been four years ago. He also knew a bit of what Narcissa had put the girl through during her time in the Malfoy dungeons. Draco was beginning to regret the fact that he'd never told Harry what he knew about that. At least that might have helped to convince someone that he wasn't a part of Granger's torture.

Harry reluctantly stepped out of Draco's embrace and moved toward Hermione. He'd known she wouldn't respond favorably to their relationship. Despite that, he'd been holding onto the hope that he could reveal it slowly, cautiously, and make her understand without blowing her top. Somewhere deep inside he wondered if he had enough strength to deal with Hermione's anger

while still waiting for the news on Moony. He bit back a sob. Just thinking of Moony brought back the despair he'd felt after Sirius died. He'd been so angry that year, and it took an extreme outburst of that anger during the summer to finally tap into the sorrow beneath it. He didn't know if he could handle that again, but seeing Hermione's anger, he was beginning to think that's what she needed to get through her pain as well.

"'Mione," he started.

"It's okay, Harry. Dark magic can be very powerful. It's perfectly understandable that you could be controlled by someone as evil and underhanded as a *Malfoy*." She spat out his name with utter contempt and threw a tempestuous glare of death in the direction of both platinum Malfoys in the room. "Come over here, Harry. We can find out what he's done to you and reverse it. You'll be fine."

"Hermione," Harry tried again. "Listen. Draco doesn't have a curse on me."

"**Draco?**" Somehow the use of the Slytherin's first name was enough to send Hermione's temper and voice over the top again. "**First you say you've become friends with him, now you're calling him by his first name? You're letting him hold you? Merlin's beard, Harry! He's touching you like a… like a… *boyfriend* or something! Harry, that's Malfoy. He is just like the rest of his family, evil to the core. We've always known that his high and mighty attitude is a front and in the big picture he's not worthy to lick your shoes. You can fight *Imperio*, Harry. You're stronger than he is, better than he could ever dream. Give him what he deserves, Harry. Fight the control he's got over you – he deserves to have his eyeballs plucked out and the bloody sockets filled with undiluted bubotuber pus. He should be forced to swallow baby blast-ended skrewts and then have his heart ripped from his chest and pickled as a souvenir.**"

No words were spoken for several minutes. The professors seemed unsure how to react to this highly unusual behavior from the bright girl. Lucius couldn't help but wonder why she was so adamant about the Malfoy's evil tendencies. Ron and James simply watched in silence, both realizing that it would be fruitless to interfere. Hermione left no doubt that she was one pissed off witch and would be not be ignored. It was quite an outburst and had left many of them, especially Draco, squirming at the thought of her suggestions. Harry felt a burst of energy from deep inside and closed his eyes – seeking the power to control it. He didn't want to hurt Hermione. He knew why she felt this way, especially after her emotionally charged outburst. He now knew *exactly*, in much more detail than he'd ever wanted, what had affected Hermione so strongly. To the other occupants of the room, the visibly crackling magic coursing through the lounge was highly unusual and quite surprising. When Draco took a few steps towards Harry, the magic seemed to increase exponentially. While the younger members in the room seemed confused by this, an outside observer would have noticed that the three professors seemed to take this fact as a confirmation of sorts. Dumbledore, especially, seemed quite pleased by it, nodding his head ever-so-slightly in satisfaction.

Harry took a deep breath, drawing on the calming energy that Draco was subconsciously

offering, and stepped forward to embrace Hermione in the hopes of calming her before she started shouting hexes. "Shhhhhh, 'sokay 'Mione. Shhhh." He murmured the calming sounds and looked to Ron in a silent plea for his help and support. He knew that Ron had made the same observation as Hermione, and hoped that his old friend would continue to offer support, just as he had when Harry revealed that he and Draco had become friends.

Stepping back just a bit, Harry looked at Hermione. He searched her face, waiting until she made eye contact with him, waiting again until he felt that he could see a sense of calmness in those dark eyes. "I need your help, 'Mione." He knew that this would be just the thing to capture her attention.

"Of course, Harry. You know I'll help you, anything you need. We've always been there to help each other."

"Yes, I know, and I can't tell you how grateful I am for that. Listen, here's what I need you to do," he subtly led her back to the sofa, sitting her next to Ron again. "I need you to close your eyes and listen carefully."

"But Harry…"

"No, listen, Hermione," Harry glanced around the room quickly, suddenly aware that his every movement was being watched. He drew his attention back to Hermione without skipping a beat. "Just trust me on this. Close your eyes." She did. "Now, I know that you're upset, but I want you to take a few deep breaths and make sure you feel calm. I want you to concentrate. I know you've been learning a lot about auras and sensing energy. Can you sense mine?" Hermione nodded. "How does it feel?"

"Umm, strong. It feels strong and … comforting. Just a few days ago you felt cold – dark and cold and frightening, but now you feel warm and safe again. Still a little darker and much, much stronger. But, overall you feel like you care, like you're back to being the way you used to." Hermione opened her eyes, "what's changed?"

"Let's just say I've had a little sense knocked into me today." He cast a telling glance toward Draco, then James before turning his attention back to Hermione and continuing. "Now close your eyes again and reach out to feel the other energy in the room. Tell me what you feel." Everyone was silent and seemed to be waiting interminably to see what she would say.

Hermione sat with her eyes closed, reaching out as Harry had asked. She was astounded by the realization that she could readily recognize Ron's energy, and distinguish it from Harry's. Once she had mentally labeled their auras, she reached out further, sensing the presence of the Headmaster, the professors and the time travelers. Finally, taking a deep breath in an attempt to steady her pounding heart, she 'felt' Harry's aura again, following the crackling energy that connected him to what she perceived as Draco. Surprisingly, Draco's energy felt concerned, slightly timid and very protective. Hermione furrowed her brow, concentrating, pulling her focus in so she could start over. '*I've got to be mistaken.*'

"No, you're not mistaken, Hermione."

His voice startled her slightly, but not as much as what he said. Her eyes flew open in shock. '*Harry seemed to have read my mind!*'

"Yes, I can hear your thoughts; I can sense your emotions. I have to close myself off from it at times, or it overwhelms me. Right now, waiting for Mr. Weasley, I can't handle much. I need you to trust your own instincts. You didn't feel any cruel, subjective or dubious energy in here did you?"

She silently shook her head no.

"So will you trust that? Can you trust me?"

"But Lucius Malfoy…"

"Lucius Malfoy *will become* a Death Eater. He will do this at the insistence of his wife and will follow her commands just as much as those of Voldemort." Lucius raised his eyebrows at this bit of information. He'd been wondering what would make him join Voldemort. "But you've got to remember that the Lucius Malfoy in this room has not done those things yet. He's seventeen years old just like we are. You know I can hear thoughts – I've heard his." Several people inhaled sharply at this news; probably all wondering what thoughts of theirs Harry had been hearing. "He's appalled at the knowledge of what he will do. He's extremely upset with the nature of his future self as a father. He's worried about Draco." Draco turned toward Lucius automatically. The silent question in his eyes was answered by the nearly identical gray eyes of his father's younger self. "He's disgusted by Voldemort and he wants to help us. There's no reason not to trust him."

The room went silent again, but Harry heard the silent reactions among the group. Lucius was surprised at the precision of Harry's statements. Draco was astonished by the revelations that his father cared about him and by the proof of that concern evident on Lucius' face. Hermione was reluctantly digesting the information.

The Headmaster broke the silence after a few moments. "I believe Arthur will be here soon. I'll step into the hallway to explain our guests, so as not to surprise him. Severus, if you would please check in at the staff lounge and make sure everything is going well in the school? We are fortunate that the holiday break starts tomorrow, but I believe there are a few classes that will need to be cancelled or covered by other professors for the remainder of the day. I trust you can handle that for me?"

"Of course, sir." Snape glanced across the room at Lucius before turning to leave. Lucius caught the look and made a mental note to do whatever he could to speak to Severus privately – as soon as possible. Dumbledore murmured something to McGonagall before following Snape into the hallway. Once the door closed, the silence became deafening once again.

With an encouraging nudge from James, Lucius stepped toward his future son hesitantly. "Draco?"

"Yes?" Draco was still attempting the collected ambivalence he'd always portrayed when dealing with people. It faltered somewhat, though, due to Harry's revelations about his father. He couldn't help wondering again how his life would have been different if he'd grown up with loving parents. Of course, if Harry's statements were completely true it was only his mother who set the course of his childhood, so better yet, he wondered how things would have been if his father had been allowed to live his own life and make choices without Narcissa's influence.

"Could you come with me, please?" The anxiety Lucius was feeling was quite evident in his voice. Draco had never heard his father sound like that. Not even when anticipating a meeting with the Dark Lord. And '*please?'* – Draco didn't think that was in Lucius' vocabulary anymore.

"Of course," he answered. He felt a sudden desire to ease the mind of this young man who would one day be his father. The two of them walked into the next room and quietly closed the door behind them.

Professor McGonagall, Hermione, Harry, James and Ron watched them go. It had been such a poignant moment, even to those who weren't able to pick up on the high-strung emotions running rampant. Harry could only hope the two Malfoys would have a good conversation and that things would work out somehow. Turning his attention back to his friend, Harry finally spoke up. "'Mione? Are you all right? Can you trust what you're feeling?"

"I don't understand it. I know the Malfoys. This doesn't fit, it's just...it's strange."

"You know Lucius and Narcissa from our time. You knew the Draco who harassed us for years. You've never had the opportunity to know the Lucius and Draco who are here with us now. Draco's changed. He's someone we can trust and he deserves a second chance. And Lucius, he just wants a first chance."

Professor McGonagall stood and walked toward the trio. "If I may, Mr. Potter?" She waited for Harry's nod in a manner which acknowledged that he had control of this conversation. Harry, of course, recognized that the older witch might have some helpful insight and encouraged her to offer her input. "Ms. Granger, you should know," she paused and glanced at Ron, Harry and James. "You should all know that the young man in that room was a student of mine during his years here. I can tell you that he was not without fault, participating in his share of detentions and normal student scuffles. I can also tell you that despite what any of you know about the Lucius Malfoy of this time, he was by no means an evil or dark wizard. He was at worst a troubled and sometimes misguided teen, at best a potentially wonderful person just waiting for the right sort of influence. I hope, Ms. Granger, that you can trust in your own perceptions, but if nothing else, perhaps you can trust in mine."

"Okay," she took a deep breath, steeling herself for what she was about to say. "I'll give it a chance. After all, a person's aura can't lie, can it?"

"No, Ms. Granger, I don't believe it can." Professor McGonagall smiled down at her best student with pride. She'd never had reason to be disappointed in Hermione, and was glad to see that the girl had compassion and faith, as well as intelligence and bravery.

The atmosphere seemed slightly relaxed and the few people left were momentarily content to sit back and enjoy a few moments of quiet. Minerva conjured up some fresh pumpkin juice and a platter of fruit for everyone to munch on. Harry was doing his best to idly chat with his friends, but couldn't keep his mind off Moony and the impending news from Mr. Weasley. James, too, seemed preoccupied and finally approached Harry about it.

"Do you think he's all right?"

"Yes. He's got to be." The strength of his statement suggested that he simply would not accept any other outcome. Moony had to be fine.

"So, you know about…" James paused, remembering that Professor McGonagall was in the room. "Moony and Prongs?"

"Yes. And Padfoot and Wormtail." Harry smiled sadly, thinking of Sirius again. He simply couldn't lose another one of them. He just couldn't. If only Moony hadn't gone. If only he hadn't followed that trick from Voldemort in fifth year. If only his parents had trusted Sirius instead of Peter. If only he could change history. His eyes widened. Suddenly realizing that he had a bit of history here in front of him, he pulled his father to a quiet corner, away from everyone else.

"You've got to listen to me. Listen closely, because I want to make sure some part of you remembers this even after you've had your memory erased, okay?"

"What do you..."

"If you listen and remember with your heart and your soul, then it won't matter that your mind doesn't remember. You'll just know it when the time comes. It's more important than you can ever imagine. Just trust me and listen, dad. Please?"

"Okay, of course. What is it Harry?"

"I want you to know that no matter what you think, no matter what anyone else says, no matter what reason you have to believe otherwise, you have to trust your first instincts. Always trust your first instinct and remember that canines are mans best friend. Canines are loyal and brave, like Gryffindors. Canines will stick by you, but rodents are nothing but filthy vermin. Remember that always. Canines are loyal and rodents are vermin."

James was looking at Harry with a cross between confusion, humor and 'someone put a chicken on your head and it's doing a salsa dance'.

"I know it might not make sense, but just trust me."

"Rodents – canines, is this about Padfoot and Wormtail?"

"Yes. Just promise me you'll remember."

"Okay, I promise. I'll remember."

Meanwhile, another father-son duo was having its own heart to heart. They had stood there uncomfortably in relative silence for a few moments after moving to the adjacent room. Eventually, Draco decided that someone would need to speak first.

"Was all that true? What Harry said in there?"

"What he said about me was true. The me that I am now. I don't know about my future self, but knowing Narcissa, I'd say it's a highly probable outcome. I'm disappointed in myself though. I hate to think that I would be so easily controlled by her."

"Love can make you do strange things. That's what I've heard anyway."
"Love has nothing to do with it. I'd say that if Harry's explanation is correct, I'm going to marry Narcissa because my mother expects me to. We're going to raise you together for appearances and by the time you're three or four she'll have complete control over me. She's never hesitated to use magic to get what she wants from people. She certainly wouldn't see anything wrong with cursing me if I don't do as she asks. Yes, I'd say my only chance would be to avoid it all together. I'll have to find a way to get out of it sometime between 1981 and 1983. That'll be my only hope."

"Why not just refuse to marry her?"

Lucius looked honestly surprised at the suggestion, but didn't hesitate to answer. "Because if I don't marry her, I'll never have you."

Draco was speechless. That simple statement, as casual as it was, told Draco that he was loved. His father was willing to walk knowingly into an unhappy marriage with a dark, controlling woman and hope for a way out, just so Draco could be born. Lucius watched the stunned expression on Draco's face as it faded into reverence and respect. He saw the glimmer in Draco's eyes as they watered slightly.

"Yes, Draco, I'm willing to marry her. Even with my memory obliviated, I can't help but hope that some part of me will remember this and maybe it will make a difference. Maybe I can raise you better, without working for that psychotic git, without catering to your mother's darker desires. I know we aren't supposed to change your past, but I can't help hoping maybe we can anyway."

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For saying that. I'm sure Dumbledore's memory charm will make all those possibilities non-existent, but it means a lot to me to hear you say these things and I'll be able to remember it, even if you don't. I'll have this memory and this knowledge for the rest of my life. Knowing that you were once like this, maybe I can even try talking to you now, see if there's any of this compassion and goodness left. It gives me hope."

"I'm glad. Everyone needs hope, especially during times like these."

"I suppose you're right."

They stood in silence, yet again, until Draco gave in to his sudden urge to hug this man who would become his father. He didn't recall ever being affectionate toward his father. It wasn't considered appropriate. Lucius didn't have time for it. Voldemort would disapprove. There were a number of reasons, but none of them mattered, because those reasons didn't apply to the seventeen year old Lucius that was here and was showing Draco that he wasn't all bad.

Lucius hugged back, tightly. He was overwhelmed with emotion, caught up in the sensation of hugging his son and allowing his brain to play with the whole future/past/memory/father/son thing for a moment. "Thank you," he whispered.

Draco leaned back, stepping out of their embrace. "For what?"

"For giving me a chance. From what I've heard of your father, I'm surprised you would speak to me."

"Harry said you cared," Draco shrugged. "I know Harry well enough to know that he knows what he's talking about."

Before Lucius could respond, they heard an agonized scream inside their heads, and a series of explosive sounds from the next room. Looking at each other for the briefest of moments, they ran into the lounge to find that the lunch dishes and the two windows were all shattered. Dumbledore and Arthur Weasley were there. Ron was quietly trying to comfort Hermione. James was seemingly in shock. The air was crackling with magical energy and Harry was levitating slightly, just as he had in the hall during the confrontation with Preston Bates.

Draco ran over to Harry, intertwining their fingers together, and focusing his energy into the palms of his hands, attempting to connect with Harry's energy where their palms were touching. As Draco focused, a light began to glow around the couple. Just as it had done when last they kissed, the room lit up with streaks of blue and a solid glow seemed to emanate strongly from the couple. Harry gained control of his magic, bringing himself back to the floor, but couldn't get hold of his emotions. He locked eyes with Draco and choked back a sob. "He's gone, Dray."

Draco led Harry to sit on the sofa, wrapping the distraught boy in a comforting embrace. The two of them sat in silence as Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall began to take care of the room and its other occupants. A few wand waves and muttered spells cleared away the broken dishes and repaired the windows. A few more spells healed the minor abrasions suffered by those hit with flying bits of crockery and glass. Arthur turned to Dumbledore in confusion as one of his own cuts was being healed. "I don't understand. He blew up the moment I walked in the room. He seems to know what happened."

"There's a great deal about Harry that you aren't aware of Arthur. The simplest explanation is that he's become the powerful wizard we all knew he one day would. One aspect of this is that he's developed seer, telepath and empath abilities. He knew what happened because he sensed your sorrow and heard your thoughts when you walked in. Mr. Malfoy will have him calmed down momentarily, and then perhaps we can get a full report from you."

Arthur nodded, watching the interaction between Harry and Draco, then turning his attention to his son and Hermione, wondering how Ron felt about these new developments. Seeing the tired but understanding look on his son's face, Arthur decided that it seemed acceptance had been achieved. His head spinning with all the information Albus had given him in the hall, he turned to look at the others. James Potter, just as he remembered him from their early days in the Order. And Lucius Malfoy – Arthur had never really paid any mind to Lucius unless forced to, but he could tell that this was not the same Lucius that had managed to get released from Azkaban last year.

Arthur was startled out of his mental wanderings when Harry spoke. "How did it happen?" Harry's voice was so calm and steady he might have been asking how to make a sandwich. James looked at his son with concern. Holding emotions in like that couldn't be good. He supposed it was necessary, though, under these circumstances. James knew that he would have to disconnect the Moony of this time with his long-time dorm mate and friend if he were to get through the next few days and accomplish this mission.

"He was trying to...it was...Tonks. She was stunned by McNair and he was taking her...Lupin wanted to capture him, but Nott cast the killing curse," he paused, tears glittering in his blue eyes. "I'm so sorry Harry. I know how hard this must be for you..." the eldest Weasley looked away, raw emotion evident on his face and in his voice as his sentence trailed off, incomplete.

"Sir," Hermione spoke up, through her tears. "Are you certain? I mean Professor Lupin actually got hit?" She knew it was pointless, but her intellectual side had to verify the facts.

"Yes, Hermione. I'm sorry, but we were quite certain."

Some part of James' mind took note of the term 'Professor Lupin' and found it to be a source of teasing for his old friend. The foremost part of his mind then reminded him with a surge of emotion that this was a discussion about the death of that friend. James reached for Harry, intending to offer a comforting hug (though James was in truth seeking the comfort as much as he was offering it) but realized that Harry had completely closed off any sorrow he might be

feeling. There was no grief-stricken expression, no more despair or tear-filled eyes, only pure anger and determination.

"What of the rest of the team?" Harry's voice was all business, like a general who knows the war is not over despite one battle being lost.

"McNair disapparated with Tonks. George and Bill are fine. We did manage to capture Bellatrix LeStrange. She's been restrained and placed in custody. The Ministry has officially charged her with the capture and torture of Neville Longbottom and Lavender Brown, the several counts of attempted murder, escape from Azkaban and, of course, Black's murder. Don't worry Harry, she won't get away from us."

"Black?" James swallowed hard at the lump in his throat. "Sirius Black?"

"Yes, dad," Harry pulled on his resolve to not get emotional again. He didn't have time for emotions right now. He also didn't have time for beating around the bush. "Sirius was killed about a year and a half ago."

James was reeling. He thought of his friends, the four of them planning pranks, serving detentions, discussing their futures. Knowing that three of them were dead in this time was nearly incomprehensible. He paused, wondering. He had to ask.

"Peter?"

"Pettigrew isn't dead. I just saw him last night."

This earned Harry a surprised look from Mr. Weasley who hadn't been informed about Harry's meetings with Voldemort and the Death Eaters. James was slightly confused, knowing there was something he was missing, some connection he should be making between Peter and Harry's activities, but he was still distraught over Moony and Padfoot – trying to remind himself that this was the future and the friends he knew were still safe in the school at his time.

"Might I suggest," Dumbledore said, "that we all retire to our rooms and get some rest? It's been quite a long and tiring day and I daresay we're all a bit emotional and could use a little quiet time." He glanced at Ron and Hermione, then at Draco and Harry. "I understand that in times of high stress, a little peace and quiet with a special loved one can work wonders for the spirit." They knew this was the Headmaster's way of giving permission for the couples to spend the night together.

The occupants of the lounge slowly filtered out, some lost in their emotions, others exchanging understanding glances. It had indeed been a long day, but they all knew that the next few days were going to be busier and longer than they'd ever imagined.

TBC

author ducks to avoid the flying objects that are no doubt heading her way from various parts of the world, "Please don't kill me!"

Author's Notes: I feel the need to tell you all that you are the most wondermous readers ever! Your reviews keep my muse going and make me do the happy dance every time they appear in my email!

Azhure: You are the most wonderful, fantastic, out of this world, super beta ever! Thank you soooooo much for that power surge bit. It was exactly what they all needed and not at all a weak suggestion! Looking back, I don't know how I wrote the first parts of this without you! Multi-colored Huggles and Malted Milk Balls to you!

REPLIES:

Mmboo1 – Thank you! I love it when I get new readers!

Jen Red Robe – I'm so sorry. I almost changed this chapter after your email – visions of the emotional reunion of Moony and Prongs danced in my head for a full day – but in the end I felt that it was necessary do to events that have yet to be written. Please keep reading though, and make plans to read the sequel, I hope you'll forgive me.

Miss Lesley – I hope your fears about Lucius not getting used have been taken care of. You have some great suggestions, but for those things I 'could have done', I doubt I'll be adding them. I would, however, love to use your idea about the funny scene with Lucius and Draco… J Sorry about the thoughts and lack of dialogue – that's just the way I write. I'll keep it in mind, though and try to add more dialogue when I feel it works. Please keep reading and reviewing – I find the detailed reviews very helpful in the writing process!

Louise4 – I giggled at your *naïve smile followed by horrible realization* bit. That was too cute – thanks for reviewing again, hope to hear more from you!

NayNymic – Awww – I can't believe you still think Harry's being a prick! I hope you see him as a little less bastardy in this chapter.

Azhure – I didn't think I was doing anything wicked! *feigns wide-eyed innocence*

Menecarkawan – I'm sorry, again – you nearly made me change this chapter. Yes, Harry has dealt with enough, but this isn't necessarily a happy fic. I'm really sorry - *passes tissues through the monitor*

Yolande – Yippee! Another new reader! Wow – thanks for the high compliment! And no worries about sounding like a teacher – I was the original Hermione in school, always thrilled beyond words when I got praise for my work.

HP Ice Angel – Again – sorry I couldn't grant your wish. Your review was yet another that made

me reconsider. You guys don't know how much you influence me with these reviews!

Vampire Goddess Jekyll - *passing out more tissues* I'm sooooo sorry. I have to wonder if JK felt this bad after killing Sirius. I have to wonder if she's got a better reason than I do. *sighs* Anyway, please don't die. There's still much to live for, I promise!

ShaeLynn – Yes, I HAD TO STOP IT THERE! J At least this chapter doesn't have a cliffhanger. Sorry to keep you waiting, but hopefully it was worth it.

To all my readers – including those who don't review: I'm sorry to have taken over two weeks for this update. I keep hoping I can update weekly, but I'm beginning to come to the realization that I just don't have the time to get a chapter written, re-written, sent to my **fabulous beta, Azhure**, get it back, edit and correct it, add notes and replies, format it and post it – all within a week! At least, not with everything else going on in my life. So – I'll be shooting for an update every two weeks, but it may fluctuate depending on how things go and whether the muse cooperates. Remember – the muse is more helpful to me when we get lots and lots of reviews! I don't mind the short ones, I love the long ones, I thoroughly enjoy the mid-length ones. I accept anonymous reviews so you don't even have to sign in! Even if you have a complaint – I want to know, that's how I can try to please my readers. After all, if I didn't have readers, I wouldn't be making all this ego-gold from it! ***(For those of you unfamiliar with it, ego-gold is an invisible yet nearly tangible substance felt in the creative soul of a person who has just received comments, constructive criticism, praise and recognition for their creative works. Creating more of these works uses up some of the ego-gold and the supply must then be replenished with more comments, praise and recognition.)***

Click that button – feed my ego!

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Chapter: 27

Author Notes: I would like to apologize for once again taking so long to update. I swear to you all that I think about this fic every day and work on writing it as often as possible. It's just that it's difficult to find the time in my increasingly busy mundane life and coordinate that with those times when the muse is actually willing to work with me.

You are all so amazingly awesome. Thank you to everyone who reads. Thank you again to everyone who reviews. Extra big double thanks and hugs to everyone who has me or my fics on their favorites lists. You rock, you're awesome and I am writing this for each and every one of you! Please keep the reviews coming – I love to know what you all think of this craziness that comes out of my head!

H&D~H&D~H&D

Harry spent the evening laying on Draco's bed staring silently at the wall. He was lost in his thoughts, somewhat expecting to feel anger, sorrow, trepidation, something. He felt nothing – numb. Draco spooned behind him, holding him closely and silently offering his strength, his comfort and his love. Somewhat caught up in his own thoughts of the bizarre situation, and his conversation with Lucius, Draco didn't pressure Harry with questions. He knew that Harry would talk when he was ready to. He could feel Harry's emotions radiating from him and knew that just being there was the best thing he could do to help. They slept that way, a deep and dreamless sleep for them both despite the lack of potions. The events of the past 48 hours had exhausted them; mind, body and soul.

Hermione cried. She didn't sob or scream, but shed a stream of tears for that which had been lost. She told Ron how stupid she'd been, and how she hoped Harry could forgive her. Ron held her, offering comforting murmurs and soothing touches. Eventually he leaned back on the bed and tucked her head under his chin, wrapping his arms around her tightly. They were both flabbergasted by the revelations of the day and saddened by the death of a beloved former professor. Lost in thoughts of time travelers, Professor Lupin, Harry's new powers and his startling relationship with a perceived rival, it was approaching the early morning hours when they finally fell asleep. An exhausted, but restless sleep.

James and Lucius went back to the guest room Dumbledore had prepared for them. They sat in near silence for hours, contemplating the deep and emotional discussions they'd had with their respective sons. Every so often, they shared a snippet of conversation, a revealing bit of emotional thought, a random observation or a theory on the project. James didn't seem comfortable with the fact that his son was the "big bad" they had come here to stop. Lucius didn't seem comfortable with the fact that his future self was associating with and influencing the Dark Lord he'd heard so much about. Fatigue finally took over, forcing them both into a few hours slumber. James slept rather heavily despite his misgivings, but Lucius' sleep was fitful, his dreams alternating between images of dark curses cast by hooded figures and sensual activities involving himself and Severus.

Morning came all too early. Harry slowly came to consciousness, realizing that he was wrapped tightly in Draco's arms and that there was nowhere on earth he would rather have been at that moment. Draco seemed to sense his thoughts, as he subconsciously held Harry just a bit tighter. Harry opened his eyes, verifying that it really was Draco holding him. It was nice – the opportunity to observe the Slytherin as he slept, memorizing the softening effect that a relaxed sleep offered to the face he had come to love. Harry's gaze focused on the pale pink lips, stirring up thoughts of kissing and licking and sucking and the feelings that Draco brought on when he bit Harry's neck. Harry was so consumed by the memories of his stirring hormones that he didn't even realize the blue-gray eyes had opened and begun watching him in return. He was pulled from his reverie by a low, sleepy chuckle.

"Need I ask what's on your mind?"

Harry raised his eyes to Draco's, "you think you know?"

"Harry, it's obvious. I recognize that glazed over, aroused look in your eyes, not to mention the fact that you're lying very close to me and my hip seems to have been invaded by your, erm, *thoughts*." Draco grinned and captured Harry's mouth before there could be any retort.

Mere moments passed before the kiss was abruptly cut short, both of them trying to withhold their embarrassment. "I, uh…" Harry wasn't certain how to express what he saw as a problem. He didn't want to offend Draco and was feeling a little self conscious himself.

"Yeah, me too," Draco responded with a grin. He reached to the bedside table and grabbed his wand, bringing confusion to Harry's eyes. "You don't mind do you?"

"Um, mind what?" Harry said, careful to angle his face slightly away from Draco's. He wasn't sure what Draco needed his wand for, but then, he was so focused on what he could transfigure into a toothbrush, that he was barely paying attention. Just as he was about to get up he felt a tiny surge of magic come toward him, followed by a tingle and minty flavor in his mouth.

"Breath charm – it's much easier, more convenient and often more thorough than a toothbrush. That is why you stopped, isn't it?"

Harry relaxed, grinning in embarrassment. "Yeah, should have thought of that myself. How'd you know?"

"It's why I stopped too. Besides, Harry, I know you. I may not be able to read minds or feel emotions like you do, but I'm beginning to be able to read you. I almost feel like I *can* read your mind at times. And I'm starting to predict your reaction to certain things. I understand your feelings better than my own sometimes. I think…I'm not sure, and I've never paid as much attention to this kind of thing as I should have, but I sort of think there's some sort of bond between us. That glow, the way our magic feeds off each other, the connection, I think it's something we should talk to Dumbledore about – see if he has any information for us."

"Oh." Harry paused a moment to let that sink in. He made a mental note to return to this topic later, but quickly set his mind back to the issue at hand. "We can do that later, right?" Draco nodded. "Good. Because right now, I want to get back to that good morning kiss."

Harry grinned as Draco closed the distance between them and captured his lips once again. The kiss was loving, affectionate and comforting. The moment Harry sucked gently on Draco's top lip and then traced Draco's mouth with his tongue, the kiss became hot, needy, devouring.

Licking, sucking, tongues tracing burning trails on sensitive skin. Teeth nipping earlobes, lips, necks. Hands fumbling, pulling clothing, revealing skin, some pale, some tanned. Gasping, moaning, holding tighter, tangling long elegant fingers in dark tousled hair. Full moist lips closing over pale pink nipples, licking, flicking, teasing. Hot short breaths catching in throats as hips thrust without conscious thought.

Devoid of shirts, hands free to explore bodies that hearts love and loins desire. Kisses become explorations, caresses make way for discoveries. Breathy gasps bear voice to names and moans offer declarations of love. Titillating sensation of whispered words stimulate bodies, minds and souls. Hearts burst with love and fuel more desire, a passion born from the depths of a soul.

No patience for shyness, nervous hands blunder about, seeking buttons and zippers to remove all barriers. Eyes feast on love's perfect form, beautiful to the heart of each beholder. Looks question, kisses answer, caresses and feathering touches elaborate on desires, needs, permission and acceptance.

Uncharted lands bring discovery and joy; anticipation heightening each new sensation. Each soul speaks desire, each body answering wordlessly as they become one in this heated conversation. No words need be spoken as bodies and souls instinctively know what is needed and wanted.

With sighs of completion, sated libidos ebb like an ocean tide, making way for the peace and fulfillment of desire and passion, destiny and love. Driving, devouring need gives way to gentle, tender, exploring touches. Shivered gasps at sensuous kisses, erotic touches send lightening shivers through sensitive, stimulated bodies. Slow, deep desires build exponentially, bringing bodies to new heights once again.

Newly charted territory is explored once again, leisurely, reverently, lovingly. Lingering kisses and subdued coupling brings languid thrusts and deep throaty moans to fill the senses with fervor.

Twice satisfied, arms holding shivering bodies, souls connected eyes and hands and lips expressing depths of love eternal.

New young lovers bring new meaning to 'afterglow' as their magic combines and swirls throughout the room, before the charged currents permeate their bodies emit unconsciously to declare the strength of the completed bond to other powerful wizards.

Ron woke and quietly slid out of the bed, hoping he could shower and dress before Hermione woke up. She'd been so exhausted last night, so upset at the loss of Professor Lupin; so worried about Tonks and so angry at herself about her reactions to Malfoy that she berated herself long into the night, until sleep finally claimed her. Ron wondered when they might get some news on Tonks, fervently hoping she'd be returned safely.

Ron tried to keep his focus even as his tired muscles began to relax under the hot spray of water. He didn't want to lose himself in the shower; Hermione needed him. He wondered briefly if it was wrong for him to enjoy the feeling of being needed. Before her capture she had wanted his company, enjoyed it, maybe even wished for it. Nothing so strong as need, though. He felt guilty when her need stirred happy thoughts, comforting, warm and loving thoughts and feelings. He felt as if he were somehow benefiting from the torture and kidnapping that had created the need within her. *Stop it, Ron. You'll just drive yourself crazy with that. You love Hermione, it's okay to*

worry about her and it's okay to feel happy about being able to make her feel better. He hoped that someday he would be able to convince himself that these statements were true.

Re-entering the bedroom, he saw that Hermione was awake and seemed to be lost in thought once again. "Morning, love. Did you sleep well?"

"I've slept better, but at least I slept." She smiled slightly, her eyes large and sad when they met Ron's. He joined her on the edge of the bed and offered a chaste kiss and a comforting hug, hoping to relieve some of her sadness.

"What do you think of it, Ron?"

"Think of what? Yesterday was bloody crazy and I've been thinking about all of it. Which part are you thinking about?"

"Well, right now, Harry. Harry and … Malfoy. They're…a couple, aren't they?"

"Looks that way."

"Doesn't that seem a little, I don't know, a little strange? I mean…he's Malfoy!"

"I think we might as well start calling him Draco, Herm. And you're the one who felt his aura and said there was nothing bad there. I know it'll take some getting used to, but I really think he makes Harry happy. He deserves to be happy, don't you think?"

"Well of course he deserves to be happy, but it's dangerous. I mean, even if Mal-Draco isn't up to something, just being with him could give Lucius or even Voldemort a chance to hurt him."

"With all those new powers he has now? You heard what he said yesterday; you saw what happened when he got upset. Do you really think it's going to be that easy to hurt him?"

They were both silent for a moment, recalling the explosions, the crackling magic and the tangible energy that had emanated from Harry.

"You're probably right. I just worry about him. I am glad he's getting the chance to know his father though."

"Right, it's gotta be good for him." He knew that meeting his parents had always been one of Harry's biggest dreams. He remembered their first year, when Harry discovered the Mirror of Erised, and all it showed him was his parents. Despite being glad for his friend to have realized a part of that dream, Ron couldn't help but worry about the possible repercussions of the whole time travel predicament.

Lucius had woken in the quiet hours just before dawn, shaken from yet another jumbled dream. He decided there was no point in trying to go back to sleep, opting instead for a walk through the

deserted castle. As he moved silently through the halls, he found himself nearing the entrance to the Slytherin common room. Knowing that it would be fruitless to continue in that direction (as no one had given him the current password), he turned down a hallway to his right. He barely had time to wonder where this hallway led to when he found himself facing (and nearly knocking over) a very handsome and thirty-something Severus Snape.

"Sev!"

"Mr. Malfoy," Severus' voice held the coldness and formality that his students had been familiar with for years. Most anyone would have thought nothing of it, but Lucius had heard that tone before. It was the tone Sev used to cover up his real feelings. And Lucius had always been good at hearing those covered feelings as well.

"Sev, what's wrong? You sound nervous…and sad. You've been acting so strange since I got here, so different from the way you were…"

"Mr. Malfoy, I assure you that many things have changed in the past two decades, and yet some things have not. I would not presume for a moment that you could understand the reasons for my behavioral contrarieties. I will say, however, that one who acts the same at 38 as he does at 17 would have an incredibly difficult time adapting to and dealing with the struggles that adult life brings upon us. I dare say your elder self understands completely. If you will excuse me now, I have things to do."

Severus moved quickly, trying to walk around Lucius. Before he could take two steps, he was pressed against the wall by the young, lithe blond. "I have to tell you something first, Sev."

Severus chose to hold his tongue, focusing instead on maintaining his internal walls. He had to keep up the façade. This was the Lucius of his dreams; the Lucius he had loved so well, who was not a cold, heartless bastard; the Lucius who had not yet married and taken away the last of Severus' hope. This was the Lucius that Severus had fallen in love with, and being this close to him was sheer torture.

"I don't know if I've ever told you, I mean my future self, I don't know if I'll ever tell you…" he paused. Trying to explain things with such circular references was getting increasingly difficult. He looked into the obsidian eyes that had plagued his dreams and decided to just say it. "I have a problem, Sev. I've always felt there was something wrong with me because I know Narcissa is a beautiful woman and I should be looking forward to marrying her, but I kept picturing something different when I imagined myself *with* someone. I miss you, I dreamt about you last night, and the night before. When I first saw you in the Headmaster's office I was so glad, so happy to see you. But you wouldn't look at me. You seemed like looking at me would burn you or something. You still seem that way, so nervous, so guarded. I want to know what happened to cause that reaction to me. I want to know why you won't meet my gaze. I want to know if I've done something wrong – or will do something wrong – so I can prevent it. I want…"

He took a deep breath, eyes scanning Sev's face, recognizing that there was still a mask there.

His desire to get behind that mask caused his thinking to cease. His voice dropped to a purring whisper as he voiced his thoughts and desires for the first time. "I want to know what you taste like. I want to know if your lips are as warm as they look. I want to know if your hands would feel the way I imagine them running over my skin. I want to know if there's ever been a chance, or ever will be a chance that you could love me?"

Severus Snape; stoic professor, revered Potions Master, high-level Death Eater and valued spy had never felt such fear in his entire life. The mere proximity of the object of his desires brought that bizarre new memory to the surface. He had no doubt that the one night he remembered was somehow a result of Lucius being here in this time. With the intensity of that pleasurable memory, he wanted nothing more than to respond to those words and the desire and hope he saw in the glittering blue eyes. He knew, deep inside and without a doubt, that responding, accepting that invitation even for a moment, would crumble his resolve and, based on his current positions in the world and his daily dealings with Voldemort and the elder Lucius, it would probably mean his death.

Intellectually reminding himself of this, he made the decision to push Lucius away and retreat to his chambers until he could regain control over these alien emotions. Something in him was obviously a bit behind in following those orders, however. Before he accomplished that goal, he found himself ever so briefly and ever so gently pressing his lips against those that he'd dreamed of since the tender age of 14.

The contact was heavenly. Lucius was thrilled, even while a part of his mind was reminding him that he still had to marry Narcissa – for Draco he had to. But kissing Severus, it was like coming home. A surge of emotion ran through both men, triggering a similar surge of magic. Severus allowed himself to cup Lucius' face, his thumb tracing the smooth jaw, his fingertips reveling in the silky blond hair. They broke apart and stared at each other, eye contact allowing for a connection deeper in their souls than they realized.

After a moment, Lucius closed the gap between their lips and sighed at the contentment he felt in his heart. Before he could deepen the kiss, he was roughly pushed away and faced with stern resolve in the black eyes of the Potions Master. He knew those protective walls were coming up again.

"No." Severus left no doubts about his meaning. "This is not appropriate or acceptable for any number of reasons. Mr. Malfoy, I suggest you return to your room until breakfast." He turned, with his characteristic billowing robes, and quickly reached a portrait, which opened to let him into his chambers, leaving them both a bit cold and shaken. In the midst of their emotional turmoil, neither wizard noticed the crackle of magic that charged the air around them and surged quickly throughout the castle.

Dumbledore asked the house elves to take a brunch tray to the rooms of everyone who had been in yesterday's meeting. Along with the variety of breakfast foods, fruits, juices, teas and sandwiches, each tray included a note requesting that the recipients be in the Room of Requirement at noon.

Once everyone had eaten their fill, and refreshed and dressed themselves for the day, they made their ways to the Room of Requirement. James and Lucius, however, were met in the hall by Professor McGonagall so she could show them the way.

"What, exactly, is the Room of Requirement?" James asked.

"Precisely what it sounds like, Mr. Potter. It's a room that provides the seeker with whatever they require at the time. As the Headmaster called this meeting, the Room will use his plans to determine the current requirements."

"What do you think this meeting will require?" Lucius found the idea of such a room highly intriguing and wondered how one would go about acquiring a similar room in their own home.

"I honestly couldn't say, Mr. Malfoy. Having not planned the meeting, I have no way of knowing the proffered items for whichever events the Headmaster has scheduled."

She stopped just in front of a tapestry depicting tutu-clad trolls and seemed to be waiting for something. Just as James was about to ask if there was a problem, the Headmaster arrived and quickly walked a few feet down the hall, then back, and repeated this three times. Much to James and Lucius' surprise, a door appeared opposite the tapestry. Amazed and curious, they entered the room, closely followed by the others they were expecting.

Within moments, everyone was settled in the room which had been furnished with comfortable chairs surrounding a low table. A buffet table stood against the wall in preparedness for lunch (they knew it was going to be a long day). A rather large assortment of books was currently strewn across both tables.

Dumbledore stood to address the group. "I hope you all had a good night's sleep," he glanced around the room, the twinkle in his eyes showing that he knew quite well that some of them were not well rested. "It seems we have precious little time before Harry is expected back into the Death Eater's circle and will most likely be expected to take the Mark." Severus raised his head, prepared to intervene on Harry's behalf.

"I have no intention of this happening, never fear." Dumbledore continued. "I understand the implications and the possible ramifications of such an action. This is why I believe it to be of the utmost importance to find a way of killing Voldemort within the week." He looked at Harry. "We'll need your input on this, as well as your power. You know from the prophecy that Voldemort will ultimately have to die at your hands. However, there's no doubt in my mind that the joint efforts and joint power of the Potters and Malfoys will be the determining factor in your ability to get rid of him once and for all."

Harry simply nodded, wondering what would be the most effective course of action. He was so lost in thought that he nearly missed the Headmaster's next words. "The newly completed bonds will be of great value in this endeavor as well." It was James who spoke up first, voicing the

question of most everyone in the room.

"What bonds are those, sir?"

"Two separate bonds between very powerful wizards. These particular bonds have been predestined for generations and once completed will combine the magical auras of those involved and bring about an unheard of level of power. It is my understanding that one of these bonds reached its final conclusion this morning and another is well on its way. There are many types of bonds; marriage bonds being the most common, also mind bonds are frequently seen. Most every bond, regardless of type, is a result of a conscious decision and a spell or ceremony using magic and will to forge the bond. This type of bond, however, is stronger than any other. It's called *"du anima cordis junctum aeternus"* which loosely translated, means "two souls and hearts joined for eternity." Many people simply refer to it as *"junctum aeternus."* It's created on a subconscious level by the hearts and souls of the wizards involved, usually building over a period of months or years and completing itself at a highly emotional time of faith and trust in each other. The fact that it's a subconsciously formed bond is a part of what makes it stronger. And once this bond is formed between two souls, it will stay intact forever, through death, reincarnation, even an alternate universe. This wizarding bond was actually the inspiration for the Muggle theory of soul mates."

Harry and Draco looked at one another; both somewhat hopeful yet terrified that Dumbledore might be talking about them. Everyone else seemed to be at a loss for information and there was a resulting group gasp of surprise when Dumbledore continued. "The Potter-Malfoy bond will allow Harry and Draco to join their magic which increases the strength of their magical auras exponentially. The Malfoy-Snape bond, though not yet completed, will provide extra power when used in an area of their natural strengths, such as Potions." The meddling old Headmaster offered a twinkle and a grin to his favorite staff member, knowing the Potions Master would be loath to admit his feelings despite this announcement. Snape responded with a simple patented glare before turning his eyes surreptitiously toward the other member involved in that announcement.

Harry and Draco looked at each other in wonder while Severus looked at Lucius in fear. Lucius, for his part smiled and gazed into the dark eyes with hope. Everyone else in the room seemed unsure who to watch, which bit of news was more surprising, or where to start working with the information given.

Gods, Harry and Malfoy are bonded? Ron couldn't seem to completely wrap his mind around that idea – it just seemed like too much irony for one sentence. *Bloody hell, how's Mione going to take this?* He quickly turned his attention toward the brunette, pleased to see that she didn't seem upset, just a bit shocked.

I've heard of that. The junctum aeternus isn't very common. They must really love each other and have a lot of faith in that love for that to have happened. Hermione wracked her brain, mentally reviewing everything she'd read about the ancient wizarding bond. *Oh!* Her eyes widened in surprise as she was struck by a sudden realization. *If Lucius and Snape are bonding too, that*

could very well change our past in so many ways!

It's simply not possible. Albus has finally gone off his rocker. There's no way I've begun a bond with Lucius. Severus Snape had quickly thrown his attention into the nearest book; refusing to look into the hope-filled blue eyes of the one he was **not** forming a bond with. *I don't even have feelings for him anymore. It's been years. Really!*

Sev, look at me. Come on Sev, you have to face me eventually. I'm not going to let this go. I love you Sev. Come on, give in. I love you. And now that this bond has begun, even going back to my time won't erase it. We will be together. Lucius had never felt so sure of anything in his life. He knew that one day this bond would be completed and nothing would separate him from the one true love of his life.

Harry and I are bonded? Wow. Eternity. Gods and goddesses, that's big. I mean, damn, I knew I loved him and I thought there was something going on with our magic but I never would have guessed…oh, I hope he's not freaked out by this.

He's so cute when he's amazed by something. I love that wide-eyed expression on his face. It reminds me of the surprised look he had this morning when I…oh for heaven's sake, Dray. Harry leaned close to his lover and whispered quietly "I'm not freaked out. I'm happy about it, *very* happy." He looked deep into Draco's eyes, sensing the nervousness and hopefulness. "I love you."

Draco twitched at first, startled to be brought out of his internal musings, but quickly relaxed and smiled at Harry upon hearing what Harry was saying. "I love you too. I'm glad you're okay with this."

"Even if I were inclined to be upset about it, what good would it do me?"

"None – it's eternal."

"Good. That's what I was hoping for anyway." They refrained from kissing in front of the others, but sat there smiling at each other in that goofy lovestruck way.

I wish Lily were here to see this. Harry deserves to be happy, and he certainly looks like he floating on cloud nine right now. I wonder if Lily and I will have the junctum aeternus, too? I wonder what completes the bond? Oh, yeah, I probably don't need to know.

Once everyone had taken a few minutes to sort through those internal reactions, Professor McGonagall spoke up. "Well, now that we have that straightened out, what say we get down to business and determine how to get rid of this little Dark Lord problem we have?"

TBC

Thanks so much to all of you for the wonderful reviews! And thank you to all the invisible

readers as well, I appreciate each and every one of you!

Ters: I just got your review as I started writing these responses! I offer my deepest and most heartfelt apologies for not updating sooner. You know how muggle life can be. I hope this was quick enough to keep you from going insane!

Bob-marly: Geez, thanks! I think Harry and Draco are pretty happy together in this chapter, don't you? I hope you keep reading and keep enjoying!

Tangled-hair: Hey there! I'm so happy you finally got a chance to read it! Thanks so much for the review; I absolutely love reviews! Yes, I'm aware of those inconsistencies that occurred when I adopted the OOTP canon. I'm trying to correct them a little at a time (and have been doing a little editing as I post on schnoogle). I hope this wasn't too long of a wait!

Lanfear: oh thank you thank you thank you! You're so flattering!

Delie: Sorry to disappoint you, but I felt the need to stick with canon as much as I could. If you keep following through the sequel, I can try to offer a little something that might make up for it in some small way. I'm glad you're still reading, and don't worry about catching up. I seem to be taking a while to update so we're about even. (This is in response to your review of chapter 23.) Thanks for sticking with me!

Menecarkawan: I know, you miss him. You're not alone, but it'll be okay. Harry has to deal with things in his own way right now, but never fear – Draco is there for him to lean on. (Passes out more tissue).

TGP: Okay, I wrote more. I wasn't actually going to, but since you said I HAVE to, I changed my mind (grin). Seriously, though, there's still a few more chapters to this and a sequel planned as well. Thanks for reading!

Louise4: Here's a new chapter, hope your head hasn't exploded yet. I do sincerely hope you will all forgive me for what happened to Moony. As for Lucius, well, I can't spell everything out for you or you would have no reason to continue reading my updates, right? :)

Peachdancer: Thanks so much! I hadn't really put much thought into Ron's power. He's not a central figure in this world and not a part of the primary team. Nothing against Ron, you understand, it just didn't work out that way.

Vividian: I'm soooooo sorrryyy. (passes out more tissue, makes mental note to buy stock in Kleenex). I didn't even know they made little Remus plushies!

Azhure: I'm so glad you liked the canine-rat bit! That was in my head from about chapter 3! I'm having lots of fun with Lucius, too. It's amazing how much a cold-hearted, controlling witch can change a decent man! ;) (And that statement has nothing to do with my ex-husband and his current wife.) As for Snape's fingernails, what movie did you say that scene was in? I need to

rent it.

HPIceAngel: I know, it was horrible. I'm so sorry. But I had to do it. You'll understand, I hope. I'm glad you liked the chapter despite Moony's untimely demise.

Malfoy Snogger: I'm glad you like Ron and Mione's roles in this. I was so happy when the aura thing popped into my head and gave me the perfect device to bring Hermione around without wasting lots of time. I hope you enjoyed this peak behind the closed doors and the confrontation between Lucius and Sevvie!

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Chapter: 28

Welcome back, everyone! I'm so glad you could return for yet another installment of Blast from the Past! I know this chapter is a little shorter than my recent ones, but it just screamed to be ended where I ended it. Sooooo, I'll get to work right away on the next chapter and plan on it being a longer one. I don't want to even hint at a date for the next chapter, though, because RL is kicking my ass right now (and I don't mean Remus Lupin). Aside from my normal uber-busy life, I found out today that my brother has cancer. Any healthy thoughts and well-wishes would be much appreciated.

Thanks again to all my readers and reviewers and a big extra-special thanks to my wonderful, fantabulous beta, **Azhure**! Lots of Butterfinger BB's to you! (See individual responses at the end of the chapter.)

The Room of Requirement rarely saw such 'round the clock action. Albus, Minerva, Severus, Arthur, Harry, Draco, Ron, Hermione, Lucius and James spent all their waking moments working on their plan. It had been suggested that a multiple-layer plan would be most effective in ridding the world of Tom Riddle once and for all. In light of the logic and reason behind this suggestion, Hermione and Ron spent hours at a time pouring through the stacks of books that littered the room, researching the *junctum aeternus*, just how powerful it could be and how Harry and Draco could use their new bond. They were also searching for the strongest curses they could find that weren't Unforgivables, various potion ingredients and anything else that crossed their minds. Harry and Draco began practicing curses and hexes and, using Hermione & Ron's research, they were learning how to join their magical auras to increase the strength behind their spells. Severus, James and Lucius began discussing the idea of developing a potion to weaken Voldemort, (though Severus insisted that if it could be done, he would have done it years ago.)

Albus, Minerva and Arthur spent their time contacting people, verifying Ministry records, checking in with Order members and – in the case of Albus and Minerva – attempting to do some amateur scrying for anything else helpful.

Their big breakthrough had come just after dawn on their second day in the Room. Harry and Draco had succeeded in consciously joining their auras a few times. Finally, they tried directing the visible blue lightening streaks toward James (who was momentarily playing the guinea pig). As the blue streaks reached James, he was simultaneously immobilized and levitated, eventually floating closer to the joined wizards and hovering as if waiting for instructions from them. They set him down carefully and looked at each other with a silent, understanding glance.

By this time, everyone else in the Room had stopped their work and were watching Harry and Draco. Draco quirked a questioning eyebrow at Harry, to which Harry smiled and nodded his assent. They focused on joining their auras again and sent the energy throughout the room. Each and every member of their small group was immeasurably surprised to find themselves simultaneously rising a few feet from the floor. There was an impish glint in Harry's green eyes as he flicked his hand. Everyone started revolving around the room, floating in a slightly misshapen circle. Draco smiled at this, an amused smile that seemed to express his own sneaky thoughts. A similar flick of his hand, and the levitating crowd began to alternate up and down as they rotated around the room. It was the perfect imitation of a living merry-go-round.

Finally tiring of that, the bonded wizards set everyone back down and walked over to the large window that faced the lake. Their recent guinea pigs were still somewhat gob smacked, amazed at the display of power and coordinated control. They watched as Harry and Draco opened the window and stood directly in front of it, side by side, almost touching – but not quite. The Headmaster walked back into the room, closely followed by Professor McGonagall, and both instructors simply stood in silence and joined the watchers as Harry and Draco once again looked at each other, seeming to communicate without words. With two nearly imperceptible nods and a couple of mischievous smirks, they turned in unison to face the lake. Immediately, the crackling blue auras were visible again, but this time something was a little different. This time, it was a darker, denser blue. Those in the Room began to feel the slightest of breezes and had to wonder if it was coming from the window or the surge of power they were witnessing.

As the swirling, crackling blue light reached the darkest point just before black, it shot out the window and within seconds, everyone saw the intentions of Harry and Draco. The lake seemed to split down the middle, water rising straight up creating a liquid wall on either side of the divide. Directly in the midst of the walls of water, seated at the bottom of the now-dry lakebed with a very odd expression on its squishy face was a rather uncomfortable giant squid. Heads, arms and fins were seen disappearing into the horizontal surfaces as the mer-people frantically catapulted themselves into the water.

No one made a sound, afraid of breaking the concentration that was obviously needed to perform such strong magic. After sustaining their hold on the water for nearly five minutes, Harry and Draco glanced at each other again and ever-so-slightly reached toward each other. Standing there, each with one hand held out, their fingers just a breath away from touching, the joined wizards seemed to alter the purpose of their magic. Those observing in the room could feel a difference in the atmosphere and saw the glowing auras brighten up a bit. Moments later, as evidence of this change, the walls of water began to separate. At first there were random sized

blobs flipping off the tops of the walls and falling into the lake. These blobs got smaller, becoming more directed until the walls were simply the foundation for two great waterfalls on either side of the divide. The observers could almost make out a very perplexed expression on the squid's face as the lakebed began to fill up again. Eventually, the lake water was completely re-deposited and the lake looked as if nothing had changed. Harry and Draco closed their eyes momentarily, breathing deeply as they both pulled the power back, grounding excess energy and releasing the connection between their auras.

Harry turned, looking at James like an excited child seeking his father's approval. James, for his part, was awestruck. He smiled at Harry, stepping toward him, all traces of his earlier exhaustion gone in the wake of this amazing display of power. James was once again overcome with a feeling of being older than his seventeen years as he gathering Harry into a warm hug.

"You're unbelievable. You'll do so many great things, I know you will."

Harry blushed slightly at the compliment, but reveled in this chance to feel close to his father. He turned to smile at Draco, only to find the blond was still staring out the window.

Draco never saw the look of veneration from Lucius. He didn't notice the pointed look of encouragement James offered to Lucius. Lost in his own thoughts; thoughts of realization, fear, loneliness and worry, he was startled when he felt a hand on his shoulder. Draco turned into the touch, certain that he would find Harry's smiling face and be comforted by Harry's arms. Instead, it was Lucius who offered that comforting smile. It was Lucius' arms that enveloped Draco, offering security and love. Draco stiffened for a moment, then relaxed into the unfamiliar embrace. *It's okay. This isn't the same Lucius I'm used to. He cares. He's kind. It's okay.*

Hermione decided it was high time to share her most recent discovery. "I was about to tell you, I guess this would be a good time… Er, well, I was reading and…" she paused, the now familiar anxiety clawing its way through her system again. She turned quickly to the table and grabbed the book she'd been reading. This allowed her the security of intellect and information, as well as placed her in a position that was just a bit closer to Ron. She felt much better when she could take comfort in his close proximity. "I found some information about your bond. It says you can join your powers, and like Professor Dumbledore said before, this will increase the strength of your magical auras. It's not just going to give you double the power, it's nearly immeasurable, especially if the wizards involved are highly powerful on their own." She looked up, glancing from Harry to Draco and back, not needing to comment on the strength of their individual powers. Everyone knew these were the most powerful wizards of their generation, possibly of their time. "I think it's obvious now that you've gotten the hang of that trick. But you have to be careful, especially at first," she was interrupted by Draco's outburst.

"You think we don't know how to handle some power? Are you afraid we're suddenly going to turn evil just because we can part the lake?" He sneered at her, bringing back memories of a very similar sneer coming from the face of an elder Malfoy. Hermione didn't even realize she was shaking until she felt Ron step up behind her, gently placing his hands on her waist to offer comfort. She took a deep breath, reminding herself that this was exactly what she should have

expected.

"No, Draco. I'm just trying to explain that there could be some negative emotional effects of using such high levels of power. My research suggests that you might feel a let-down, with insecurities, fears and anger building inside and a decrease in your ability to control such emotions." Hermione worried that with Harry and Draco's past influences, these emotions could very well lead either of them to violent tendencies. She wasn't about to admit that aloud, of course.

Lost in her worries, she had forgotten that Harry could easily know (and probably did) exactly what she was thinking. This seemed highly probably, especially when Harry chose that moment to levitate (higher than he ever had before) and gaze in turn at each person in the room. Once he had everyone's attention, he slowly lowered himself to the floor and began to say what had been avoided for days.

"Hermione, a little moodiness is not going make either of us homicidal. Stop worrying." He turned to include the rest of the group. "If we're going to succeed, we have to all be honest with one another. Completely honest. Half truths, in this situation could get someone half killed, or worse. Now, for those of you who either didn't know this, or have forgotten it, I have some relatively new abilities that should be taken into consideration. I've developed my Occlumency to nearly the level of my instructor," here he nodded in deference to Severus.

Severus gave a slight nod and a barely audible utter of "better, actually."

Harry chose to ignore that statement, continuing with his prepared statements. "I've also been studying Legilemency. You may remember that I discovered during the summer that I have seer abilities which have since then evolved to include empathic and telepathic abilities. When I spoke with each of you a few days ago I tapped into your emotions and thoughts. I know what's really going on here." He paused, looked around the room and took mental notes on who seemed worried by this information, who seemed confused or surprised and noticed that Draco was the only one who wasn't concerned. Draco wasn't hearing anything new; he was aware of Harry's powers, and felt that it would be nearly impossible for Harry to have any secrets from him now that they were bonded.

Harry looked at James and Lucius. "I know that you aren't here by accident. You were told to do this so you could stop me." Harry took note of the looks of concern and embarrassment from James and Lucius, but choosing not to react, he turned toward Dumbledore. "I know that you and Professor McGonagall sent them here and you were afraid for me to know the truth. I understand that." He looked around a bit more, directing his next statements at the entire group. "I turned to Draco in September to help me learn more powerful magic so I could protect everyone I love."

Dumbledore and McGonagall glanced at each other; silently berating themselves for not have done *something* differently.

"After Cedric, Sirius and Charlie, Ron's capture, Neville's sacrifice to protect me, Justin,

Lavender, Hermione's torture," both Hermione and Ron were sobered by the inclusion of their names in his list of concerns and motivations. Harry continued, "Snape's injuries, everyone else who's been hurt or affected or threatened during this war, and now … Moony," he choked. "I just can't handle the thought of losing anyone else. I wanted power to protect you all, and I started studying, developing these new skills. I knew that Voldemort had transferred some of his power to me."

Ron still flinched slightly at the name of the Dark Lord. Everyone else seemed mostly immune to it by now. No one moved; no one spoke. It was an unspoken understanding that this release was important to Harry. He couldn't be interrupted. "I learned about my Gryffindor heritage some time ago. It's no secret that Godric was powerful, and as his heir it would be expected for me to be rather powerful as well." There were a few silent nods around the room. Harry's explanation of his power made sense, but there was obviously something he hadn't yet revealed.

Taking a deep breath, he pushed himself to divulge the biggest secret, the one piece of information that he knew would leave them all speechless. "I've recently discovered that my mother wasn't truly a Muggle-born. She was simply the first witch in a long line of squibs. It's no wonder my Aunt Petunia is so unpleasant and attracted someone like Uncle Vernon. The Evans family is descendent from Magus – Merlin's dark wizard twin brother. Magus was also related to Salazar Slytherin. I believe Salazar's distant cousin Morrigan was my great grandmother many times over."

The shock from this information was evident on every face in the room. Harry Potter, actually related to a dark wizard! Not Slytherin himself as many people had believed back in second year, but a dark wizard, Magus – an extremely powerful dark wizard.

"So, I guess it was because of this heritage that it was pretty easy for me to pick up these new skills. Draco explained that my studying the Dark Arts wasn't the reason I could do this stuff. He told me I was just powerful and didn't realize it. That's when I started researching my family tree. You see, Quirrell was right, actually Voldemort was right. Only I never realized it 'til now."

Snape quirked an eyebrow at this statement. Ron and Hermione looked on with curiosity, seeming to know there was something logical behind that statement. James was more than a little concerned by this announcement, wondering if Harry had managed to fool them all and was honestly in league with Voldemort.

"In my first year," Harry continued, "Quirrell told me about how Voldemort found him. He said he had been a foolish young man but Voldemort taught him that there is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it. Since then, I have realized that those strong enough to seek the power are also strong enough to add their intent to that power. Dark intent brings dark results. When I first started building on my powers, my only purpose was to protect those I love, make sure I wouldn't have to lose any more family or friends. I thought that I might be able to best protect you all by making a deal with him. I was planning to work my way into his inner circle and then find an opportunity to get rid of him. I know now that it wouldn't have worked."

"Why wouldn't it have worked, Harry?" Dumbledore was the first to break the silence.

"Because I…" he paused and his breath hitched in his throat. Draco moved closer to him, hoping to offer comfort. Harry gripped Draco's hand tightly and gave a slight smile of thanks. "Because I couldn't have followed through with it. I wanted so badly to protect everyone that I nearly forgot about my own standards. I didn't think it through. I didn't truly consider how I would react if Voldemort asked me to hurt or torture some innocent person. I also didn't think about how I could possibly kill Voldemort on my own. Because of the brother wands, we can't duel each other. I doubt the killing curse would actually kill him, even if he didn't raise his wand to fight back." This stirred curiosity in Harry's audience, especially James and Lucius who didn't know as many details as the rest.

"He's done far too many things in his attempts to gain power," Harry continued. "He's not even truly human anymore. He was reduced to Merlin knows what when he tried to kill me. Then he drank the unicorn blood," James gasped at this, shocked at this despite knowing that Voldemort was evil. "…And Firenze – the centaur – told me about how that curses a person, slaying something as pure as a unicorn. And the spell he had Wormtail do to bring him back in my fourth year," he didn't even seem to notice James' shock and despair at hearing that his good friend was involved in this. "That can't have been normal. No one could really be human after all that, could they sir?"

Dumbledore shook his head, silently conceding Harry's point. James and Lucius mulled over this new information, wondering what the Dumbledore of their time had been thinking when he sent them to fight this. Hermione began a mental list of books and references to check, planning an endless search for *something* to destroy this Dark Wizard. She wasn't about to let his humanity-challenged status stop her!

"Harry?" Ron said timidly. "I think there's another reason. You know, why it wouldn't have worked, there's something you maybe didn't think of."

"What's that?"

"Well, you said there's only power, but the intent of the user can affect the power, right?"

"Yes." Harry waited patiently, somewhat intrigued by Ron's train of thought. Ron was known for being an outstanding strategist, but was not typically proficient in analyzing puzzles such as this.

"So dark intent would bring dark results?"

"Yes." Harry said again.

"You couldn't have truly followed him then. You didn't have dark intent. Your reasons for being there were love, loyalty and a desire to protect. Those aren't dark. You couldn't have successfully hurt innocent people as long as you had those desires in mind, right?"

Again the room fell into silence. It was the simplest, most logical explanation of all, but none of them would have thought of it. Hermione beamed at Ron's insight and understanding. Harry smiled at the faith and trust from his long-time friend. Dumbledore secretly thought of how lucky they all were at the truth in those statements. McGonagall privately worried about what would happen if anything were to take those desires out of Harry's mind, especially with the bond increasing the strength of his power.

~TBC~

Okay, like I said, I'm really sorry for this being so short, but hopefully the next chapter will be longer!

Shena – welcome to the club! I'm glad you read, hope you continue! I also hope my reviews of your fic were helpful! Keep writing!

Vividian – wow! I would love a little Remus plushie! That's so cool. Here's your update, hope you liked it.

Menecarkawan – beautiful? You really think so? Wow, thanks!

Fearless Kitty – thank you! I'm so glad you like it! Those inner monologues are often a source of anxiety for me. I tend to be a very introspective and wordy person and I'm always worried about boring my readers when the characters adopt those traits. Patience on the Sev/Lucius thing, remember – good things come to those who wait. J

Louise4 – don't worry, I know how can be. I'm just glad you updated and that you reviewed! Please update again, and for that matter, please review again, too! Hmmm, Harry back? Jinxes? Can't say, because then I'd have to kill you!

Charmedz – Thank you! I can't begin to express how great it makes me feel to know that people like this so much. As for the Lucius and Severus thing – what confuses you, the age difference? Remember they had a thing for each other when they were both in school, and the 17 year old Lucius is planning to go back to his own time where the 17 year old Severus is. Of course, whether or not that happens, and what will come of it, remains to be seen.

HPIceAngel – yeah, Draco cheers Harry up quite a bit. I think now that he's facing things and accepting the support from those who love him, he'll be able to handle things better…we hope. J

Malfoy Snogger – I think you're the only person who commented on the "official" completion of the bond between Harry and Draco. I was trying to make it subtle, yet steamy hot and sensual at the same time. Guess I need to work on that, huh? As for the rest of your review – I am so glad you like it and that you care enough to wonder about things, but I can't answer a single one of those questions yet and you bloody well know it! (grins) Keep reading, though. The answers are coming!

Web Walker – I know you were reviewing much earlier chapters, but just wanted to say thank you for reading and reviewing! It's wonderful to get new readers. I hope you've continued to read and enjoy! (otherwise you'll never see this reply).

Shadow Bandit – Wow – such incredible flattery! You are too kind! I've really enjoyed A Moment in Time and probably wouldn't have seen it if not for your review, so Thank You for sharing such wonderful talent with ME! Hope you enjoyed this chapter as much as the rest…

Azhure – Awww, thanks, but I couldn't have done it without you. Hmmm, Jason Issacs, yes, hmmmm. Oh, right responses… J so here we are again and with more foreshadowing to boot!

NayNymic – I'm very glad you liked Harry better. I knew he would come around eventually. Now tell me this, how would James and Lucius change the future when Dumbledore's planning to obliviate their memories before they return to their own time? *WEG* About that snogging idea, I like it! I think I'll try to fit it in the next chapter or so, if you don't mind me using it for real!

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Chapter: 29

Attention all readers. This is indeed the final chapter of Blast from the Past. Whether you've been following this since I started writing, picked it up somewhere in the middle, or just finished reading it all in one sitting, I thank you. Whether you've reviewed nearly every chapter, reviewed just a few, or not reviewed at all, I'm very glad you've read it. I've had over 25,000 hits on this fic and it thrills me to no end.

I can't help but notice that I posted my first chapter on April 30th, exactly seven months ago today. It's been my first fanfic, my first slash and the longest thing I've ever written. I know, without a doubt, that it would never have been finished without your interest. I also know that without my beta, Azhure, it would have royally sucked at times. She's given more to this than she can possibly imagine.

I must give credit where credit is due. Azhure actually wrote chunks of this chapter, making it exponentially better than it was before. She somehow knew exactly what I was searching for and recognized the missing element that I couldn't seem to put my finger on. This is the result. I *literally* couldn't have done it without her.

Azhure – you're the best. Words can't describe…

I do have a sequel planned, and hope to have the first chapter posted by the end of the year. I hope you'll all stay tuned for that.

Sooooo, without further delay, I offer you…

"The Final Countdown"

For the next forty-eight hours or so, the two Potters and the two Malfoys spent their time training, sleeping and eating. Harry and Draco continued to feel the emotional let-down after their major power surges, but the sense of urgency compelled them to continue with the training.

Experiments had shown that when the four of them worked together, they could exert even more control and withstand the surge longer. They practiced hexing each other and blocking those hexes. Even James and Lucius were able to handle a simple wandless protection shield. Dumbledore had explained that they were all capable of wandless magic to varying degrees. It was in their blood; they'd just never thought to develop it before.

"You all have a very powerful heritage," Dumbledore had said. He was trying to explain the leanings of power to the four teens. They had asked why the scales of power showed Harry going dark. "My belief is that the blood of your ancestors gives James and Lucius their power. As for you," he turned his attention toward Harry and Draco, "I think you're stronger because of the bond between you. The *junctum aeternus* is known to increase the power of those involved, as we've already seen. It doesn't simply add your powers together; it's more like a multiplication of them. As to the intent that influences your power, and the reason it was foreseen that Harry would become a dark wizard, I think it's visible in your lives. Due to your pasts and the obstacles you've both faced, there are tendencies for dark intent. It's simply the love within you both; specifically the love you have for each other, that keeps you on the right side. That kind of love is pure, and purity like that cannot bring dark intent."

The next activity for the boys to practice was aura sensing and merging. It was a very direct merge, more controlled than their previous experiments, and closely related to the aura sensing that Hermione had been practicing.

They stood facing each other and listened to the Headmaster's calming tone as he gave the simple instructions.

"Close your eyes for a moment and consciously feel your own energy, the spiritual, intangible aspect of your being," he paused a moment. "Now with a conscious thought, hold your hands up to face each other and reach toward one another until you feel the energy that faces you."

Those observing were awed by the strength and steadiness of the glowing auras that surrounded both boys once they focused on their energy. Harry's was a deep aquamarine color, while Draco's was a paler sky blue color. As they reached out, those auras reached with them, tentatively, almost like a cat sniffing out a new creature before determining if it's safe.

"Once you have reached slightly into one another's auras, play with that energy. Move your hands around, swirling the energy as you go, blending the auras together. You can open your eyes and watch the results if you'd like, or just make eye contact, which will likely strengthen the

connection."

They did open their eyes, and looked deeply into the eyes facing them. As they moved their hands around, the others in the room could visibly see the swirls of aqua and sky blue as they twirled, reached, moved and tangled together. Harry and Draco both had small, satisfied smiles as they stood there, gazing in wonder into each others eyes and deeply experiencing the interaction between their auras.

By unspoken agreement, they both stopped, moving their hands back to chest level and allowing their auras a few moments to disengage and settle. Once it was over, they both felt re-energized and immediately moved toward each other to embrace in that odd afterglow-type feeling.

The training and experimentation brought about results directly from the boys' imaginations. Anything they could dream up, they could usually make it happen.

Finally, training had reached a point that left them wondering what to do next. Snape billowed into the room, drawing silent attention to his presence. Lucius, especially, seemed absolutely mesmerized by this proximity to the Potions Master. James saw the look and felt sorry for his friend. Lucius had confided to James about the kiss, but there'd been no opportunity since then to approach Severus.

"It would seem that there is a need for more practice."

Harry looked at Snape, trying to determine whether the Potions Master was being facetious. "You don't think we've been practicing enough?" His voice gave away the incredulity he felt at this accusation.

"On the contrary," Severus said. Harry looked closely, wondering if that expression could be correctly interpreted as a smile. "I simply believe it's time that there were a more realistic run-through of battle conduct."

"What exactly are you suggesting?"

That almost-smile expression quickly changed to a devious smirk and Harry immediately understood the suggestion being made. He threw up a shield before the professor could even reach for his wand, but was nevertheless impressed by the strength behind the *caecit repentinus* curse, the sudden blindness curse they had created three days ago. Harry's vision blurred slightly, but he was able to shake it off and increase the strength behind his shield.

Lucius, Draco and James took action and quickly put up their own shields, wands at the ready, in preparation for whatever Snape was about to throw at them. Curses and hexes flying, Snape did try to steer clear of anything that would cause permanent harm. He used various immobilizing spells, bindings, blindness, silencing spells, and even minor controlling and pain-inducing curses. After their shields were proven effective in most cases, he decided to try the Imperius Curse. He cast it on Harry first.

"Imperio!"

Harry recognized the carefree, floating sensation he had first felt in his fourth year. He welcomed the relaxing happiness until he heard Snape's voice in his head: *take off your shoes…take off your shoes…*

No, thought Harry. *I won't do it.* He realized that Snape hadn't been around when Crouch/Moody placed the Imperius Curse on the entire fourth year class, teaching them how to resist it.

"Very well," Snape said, turning towards the others. He looked at Draco. *"Imperio!"*

The run-through continued with Snape testing the Imperius Curse on each of them. Draco could fight the effects of the curse for a few moments, but the only long term resistance came when he drew on the bond between him and Harry. James and Lucius had little success with full resistance, but were at least able to fight internally. They could only hope that would offer enough time to make a difference.

No one was prepared for Snape's next action. He turned back to Harry, paused for the smallest of moments, raised his wand and spoke. *"Crucio!"*

Gasps of surprise came from everyone else in the room, and there was an instantaneous sense of everyone bracing themselves for the screams that would follow. But those screams never came. In fact, Harry didn't make a sound. He had raised his hand toward Snape and was amazed to find that the curse wasn't affecting him. He could feel the power of the Cruciatus hovering around him, tingling on his skin as it tried to get inside and trigger the torturous pain it was meant for. Somehow, though, he was effortlessly holding it at bay.

Snape lowered his wand and looked at Harry with something akin to awe. "Well done, boy. You've become more powerful than you know." And with that, he left the room.

The boys were meeting with Dumbledore and McGonagall, reviewing all the training they had put themselves through and discussing possible options for killing Voldemort. Their heads snapped up as Snape entered the room.

"Albus, I believe I may have worked out a potion to aid them in their mission."

"Oh?" The headmaster looked very pleased at this news. "What would be the effects of it?"

"If done properly, it will temporarily remove all magical aspects from the Dark Lord, leaving him in a simply human form and as powerless as a Muggle. This should be a sufficient window for a well-placed killing curse to finish him off."

The silence was palpable. Finally – as the only person there whose potions knowledge could ever compare to Snape's, Lucius broke the silence. "What are the problems with it?"

"Well, for one thing, we have no way to do a test run. The potion will have to be somehow designed to specifically affect Voldemort. Also, we'll need to develop a way to turn it into a gas. We can't rely on getting him to drink it, but if we break a phial and he's forced to breath a mist of it, it just might work," he paused, considering Lucius momentarily. "I'd like you to work with me, if you would. I have asked Granger and Weasley to develop the incantation to go with it."

Hermione, Ron and James were reaching the breaking point of their concentration. They'd been working on this project for hours, combining incantations and charms work, along with heavy doses of magical theory. Even Hermione was about to give up for the time being, when Ron's exceptional strategy skills kicked in.

"Oi! All we need is to direct it to him, right? Listen to this. 'Any potion can be directed toward a specific focus with personalized incantations and three drops of blood from four people connected directly to the focus.'" Ron put the book down and looked up, obviously satisfied with his discovery. He was somewhat surprised, then, to realize that Hermione and James didn't see the significance in that passage.

"All we need is four people connected to Voldemort to write a personal incantation directing the potion to do its job. Then they say the incantation while they add their blood to the potion and it's ready!"

"And how do you think we're going to find four people connected to him that are willing to do this?" James' tone indicated that he was barely paying attention as he continued to study the magical theory text in front of him.

"We've already got them," Ron responded confidently.

"Who?" Hermione thought she was beginning to understand. She also knew that she had vastly underestimated Ron.

"Harry, James, Draco and Lucius."

James looked up, shocked. "Me?"

"Yes, you," Ron chuckled a bit. "You are related to him because you're a victim. I know it hasn't happened yet in your lifetime, but in his you are already connected. Harry is connected, almost like a relative because of the power shift when he deflected the killing curse. Lucius is connected because of the dark mark and therefore, Draco is connected through Lucius and Harry."

Hermione's eyes lit up with understanding. "Because of his love for Harry and his father, and Voldemort's destructive plans for them both, Draco has become his enemy – personal reasons, so it's a personal connection. Ron, you're brilliant!"

They ran directly to the dungeons, anxious to share this discovery with Snape and Lucius, who

would need to implement it into their work. None of them were prepared for what they found there. James was first, barging through the door of the potions classroom, straight through into the private laboratory that Severus saved for his personal work. He had already opened his mouth and said "We've done it!" before realizing that Severus was backed up against the wall, his mouth being thoroughly explored by Lucius. At the sound, Lucius pulled back to see who had interrupted.

Severus took advantage of the moment and collected his thoughts, the slightly dazed look in his eyes disappearing almost immediately. "I've told you, young Malfoy, that this behavior is unacceptable," he muttered, just loud enough for Lucius to hear him. James stood by, watching the interaction, judging the looks that flashed between the two men, knowing that the Potions Master hadn't meant a single word.

"Err, um, yeah. Sorry to interrupt, but we have some great news."

Lucius flashed a look of pure mortification, glaring at James for his audacity in bringing attention to the situation. Snape simply cleared his throat and straightened his robes a bit, then turned to the recent arrivals.

"What, Mr. Potter, have you discovered?"

James and Hermione deferred to Ron, allowing him to fully explain his theory.

So there they were, James, Harry, Lucius and Draco. The four of them formed the inner circle around the cauldron in preparation for the most important potion they would ever make. Surrounding them were Severus – intent on overseeing the process, Ron and Hermione – prepared to chant the detailed incantations that would accompany the preparations, Professor McGonagall and the Headmaster – simply because they were the ones in charge. The only sounds in the laboratory while the basis of the potion was being made were the quiet requests to chop this ingredient or strain that one and the muttered chants defining the purpose of the mist.

Finally it was ready. It was time to make it personal. Harry stepped up to the cauldron, picked up the potions knife and cut a small slice in each palm. He passed the knife to his left, where Draco stood, and held both hands over the cauldron, allowing the blood to drip into the potion.

"Powers of one, shared by two,
reflective convergence, no one knew,
prophecy states that neither shall live,
blood of the kin, I freely give."

Draco followed Harry's lead, slicing his palms in the same manner before passing the knife to James. As his blood dripped into the cauldron, he spoke clearly and with conviction.

"Robbed of love and raised to judge,
always taught to hold a grudge,

true love does an enemy make,
I give my blood for freedom's sake."

Draco offered a poignant look to both Lucius and Harry as James reached for the knife. Once he had followed protocol and added his blood to the potion he spoke his portion of the incantation.

"Orphaned child by cursed death,

family gone with single breath,

revenge for both myself and wife,

victim's blood will take a life."

There was a slight pause as the four of them looked at each other. Harry and Draco both felt the sharp reminders that their time with their fathers was growing short. James and Lucius were lost in their own thoughts of fatherhood, love and all that they had learned about what their future's would take from them. As the four of them breathed a collective sigh, Lucius gripped the knife and made the cuts on each palm.

"Evil found within my mate,

curses and habit develop hate,

purity found in love and son,

with servant's blood the battle's won."

After Lucius' words, the four of them joined hands, pressing their still bleeding wounds together, and focused their magic directly into the potion, infusing it with the intent from their very souls.

It was mere minutes later that their cuts had been healed, the potion had been bottled and the entire group was ready to leave the laboratory. They knew the battle was not far away now.

Harry and Draco were enjoying a quiet evening in the Astronomy tower, staring at the stars and wondering at the vastness of the universe.

"It's hard to believe one little person like Tom Riddle can cause so much trouble in a world this large."

"I know," Harry said as he scooted closer to Draco, wrapping his arms around the blonde from behind.

Draco sighed as he leaned into the embrace, relishing the warmth and safety he felt in simply knowing that he and Harry belonged to each other and would be together for eternity. "I love

you."

"I love you, too." Harry smiled against the back of Draco's neck, breathing in the scent that he recognized as uniquely Draco. It was a mixture of his soap and shampoo and something he couldn't quite pinpoint. He flicked out his tongue, tasting the skin in the curve where Draco's neck and shoulder met. He had hoped a taste of it would help him identify the other aspect of that scent, but all it did was leave him wanting to taste more.

Draco turned slightly, catching Harry's eyes. "How do you feel about this? I mean, in just a few hours we'll leave Hogwarts and voluntarily walk into the most intense conflict of our lives."

"I feel anxious, but I trust what we've all done. We'll succeed. I don't have any doubts about that. In fact, I 'saw' it, him, I mean. I 'saw' him go down, surrounded by the same green light that killed my parents. It will all be over soon, Dray."

"Then what?"

"Then we live," Harry said simply, as if it were the most obvious answer in the world. "We'll finally be able to just be happy."

"Do you think you will be?"

Harry paused a moment, wondering how Dray could even come up with such a question. Of course he would be happy when Voldemort was gone. What person in their right mind wouldn't be? As Harry gazed into those crystal blue eyes, he felt Draco opening up to him, mentally inviting Harry to see and understand his fears.

"You're afraid that I'll be restless and bored without a purpose?" The idea was so foreign, yet it made a great deal of sense when Harry thought about it. For the past six and a half years, he'd had a purpose. It would be strange to simply go through his days without worrying for his life or the safety of his loved ones, without researching and studying and training and plotting in the hopes of someday defeating a powerful dark wizard. The prospect of facing such an alien lifestyle did make Harry feel a little apprehensive, until he remembered that he would be facing it with Draco. The nervousness disappeared right away, allowing him to feel the calming sense of oneness that existed between him and Draco.

"I'll be fine as long as you're with me," Harry finally said. "This bond between us, I feel like I'm truly alive for the first time. I don't know how I survived without knowing you for eleven years. Even when we hated each other, you were there, a focal point in my world. And now that I understand that, and I've completely experienced it, it's like your soul, your essence, got twisted and tangled with mine and now I would be broken without you."

"Well, thank Merlin that's something we don't have to worry about. I couldn't leave you if I wanted to and if you ever get the notion to leave me I'll have to tie you to the bed or something." Draco grinned as his words caught up with him and he got a mental picture of Harry tied to the

bed. Little did he know that Harry was still tapped into his thoughts and emotions and knew precisely what Draco was thinking of as well as the affects of that image on his libido.

Harry leaned in for a kiss, looking forward to the time when Voldemort would be gone and he could focus on spending hours exploring Draco's body. He gasped slightly as he felt the feather-light touch of Draco's hand on his waist and the familiar surge of excitement that occurred whenever they were together.

Severus was sitting in his office, making notes on the potion and the various incantations that had gone with it. He took particular interest in Lucius' part.

"Evil found within my mate," had to refer to Narcissa. Severus had always believed that Narcissa was largely responsible for Lucius' actions over the years. "Curses and habit develop hate," – Well, this would certainly make sense. If the hatred Lucius displayed was a result of habit, born from years of being controlled by the Blacks, then perhaps the kind Lucius he'd loved as a teen wasn't a figment of his imagination after all. "Purity found in love and son, with servant's blood the battle's won." That last bit was obvious. Lucius, as a future servant of Voldemort, was giving his blood to complete the potion and defeat the Dark Lord. Severus recognized that a nexus had formed between Draco and Lucius in the days they'd worked together. He was pleased, for Draco's sake, that this younger version of Lucius could open himself up to fatherhood in a manner of speaking. Severus found himself dwelling on the word 'love' in that incantation, though. He presumed it was in reference to the love of a father and son, but had to admit on some level that he wished it spoke of the feelings between himself and the blond.

"Severus?"

The Potions Master looked up from his journal and was startled to see the object of his musings standing in the doorway of the office.

"Yes?"

"I need… I mean, could you… I'm sorry to bother you, but could you spare a few moments? I would really appreciate it."

Severus wondered at the obvious uneasiness Lucius felt in asking for some time. He nodded, mentally telling himself to reign in the snarky attitude he tended to reserve for class-time.

"I just wanted to know if there was ever a chance for us? Back in school, when we were both teenagers, did you feel anything for me? Anything at all?"

"Lucius, I'm sure you know that we were the best of friends." He had to stay calm. It would do no good to reveal his feelings, that chance was gone and chasing after an illusion of it would only hurt more.

"Yes, of course we were friends. I need to know if we could have been lovers. Were you ever

attracted to me? Sexually, romantically? Anything, Sev, lust, infatuation, attraction, curiosity…" he trailed off for a moment, then ever so quietly added, "love".

"Why do you ask, Mr. Malfoy? You won't remember this conversation once the memory spell has been performed on you."

"I know, but I just…I don't know if I can face tomorrow without knowing how you felt, or how you feel now. Something. I need to know that I haven't been imagining this connection between us."

Severus swallowed around the newly formed lump in his throat and took a deep breath. "No, Lucius. You haven't imagined it. Not then, and not now. But as it's something that your older self was forced to ignore and then seemed to forget, there's no need to discuss it further." Even as Severus spoke these words, another new memory seemed to insinuate itself into his mind. A group of memories, actually, of a short lived affair leading up to the marriage of Lucius and Narcissa. A promise that he was loved. Sorrowful sacrifice in the name of true love. Shaking his head momentarily, he looked up at Lucius. Severus could almost see the wheels of planning as they turned in his mind. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask Lucius if there was some plan to keep his memory.

Before he could form the question, Lucius was advancing on him. "Well, since I won't remember this, and it appears I won't take advantage of it in my own time, I suppose I'll have to make a move now." With those words, Severus once again found himself in the arms of his lifetime love. It wasn't that Severus had ever considered Lucius to be his one true love (though Dumbledore appeared to think so), or that he had denied himself any sexual relations in the hopes of 'saving himself' for Lucius. There was just something between them, even when they were pre-pubescent first years. It was something that couldn't be identified or categorized, something that would grow with them, yet lie dormant if never acted upon.

Severus lost this train of thought as he momentarily gave himself over to the kiss. He relished the softness of Lucius' lips, the moist tongue that battled with his own, the firm grip of the arm that was wrapped around his waist, pulling him closer, deeper into the embrace. He treasured the soft, reverent manner of the gentle fingers stroking his jawbone, the crystal blue eyes that looked deeply into his own dark ones before closing and approaching for another kiss. When he felt the surge of power, that current that shot between them at times, it startled him. He knew what it was, of course. No self respecting fully grown wizard (especially one as educated as he,) could be unaware of the details of the *junctum aeternus*. Severus, however, was intent to fight it. He knew that if the bond was not given the chance to complete itself, then he would be able to go on with his life even after Lucius went back to his own time.

"No." He couldn't bear to look Lucius in the eye this time, not when he knew the pain he would find there. "I'm sorry, but I can't do this." Without another word, Severus left the office and headed straight for his quarters, hoping Lucius wouldn't try to follow him.

James wandered from the Room of Requirement to the unused lounge where they'd met earlier in

the week. He traipsed through the castle to Gryffindor tower, grateful that the other students were home for the holidays. He strolled out toward the Quidditch pitch, keeping his eye open for a broom in the air. Finally, he mentally smacked himself to not thinking of this sooner, pulled out his wand and did the locator spell that he and Harry had created yesterday. Following the pale purple trail, James went through various corridors, past Sir Cadogan, up many moving staircases, and eventually recognized the path as leading to the Astronomy Tower.

It occurred to him on some level that Harry might be up there in search of some time alone, but James felt that these last few hours were too precious to pass up. He fully expected to be obliviated and sent back as soon as the battle was over. There were things he wanted to say to Harry now, while he still had the memories and the opportunity.

He rounded the corner and walked into the room where the purple trail ended, only to stop short at the sight of his son – future son, but still, his son – and Draco Malfoy. They were locked in a heated embrace, obvious somewhat titillated by the attentions they'd been giving to one another, and both quickly nearing a state of half-undress. He cleared his throat, not so much to get their attention as for lack of any other ideas. He realized belatedly that it would have been less embarrassing for all those involved if he had simply retreated before they noticed him. He could have pretended he never saw it, and by tomorrow, he wouldn't even know otherwise.

Harry and Draco looked up, their lips slightly fuller than usual and glistening from the passionate kisses, their eyes glowing with a combination of passion and the magical effects of their bond. Both robes were on the floor, both shirts unbuttoned. Draco noticed a faint purple tinge on Harry's shoulder, evidence of the biting that Harry loved so much.

"Dad" Harry was somewhere between embarrassed and frustrated, but hid both feelings rather well.

"Er, sorry. I can come back later." James turned quickly.

"No, that's okay." Draco understood why James was here. It was the same reason Lucius had tracked him down less than an hour ago. It was a chance to express all the things they feared their sons would never hear from them. "Come on over, have a seat," Draco gestured to an armchair nearby and then reached for the buttons on his shirt, determined not to freeze if they were going to be having a chat.

James approached the chair slowly, fingering the memsphere secreted in his pocket. He and Lucius had created the small sphere that resembled a remembrall. They were modeled after the traditional pensieve, in the hopes that they could store the memories of what they'd learned here and that they would somehow activate them later on to bring back the memories Dumbledore would take away.

He sat, looking at the now-dressed boys sharing the chair across from him. "I just wanted to say a few things, you know, while I still remember what's happened." Harry nodded solemnly, offering James more confidence to continue. "I don't think I've ever had the chance to know

people so quickly. In the week that I've been here, I feel like I know you both as well as I know Padfoot and Moony at home." They both smiled at him, nodding to indicate that they understood and that they recognized it too.

"Harry, I can't begin to tell you how proud I am to be your father. I've always wanted kids but I never imagined the intensity of emotion I would feel. You've obviously grown into a wonderful young man, with a great heart and loyal friends. You've got your head and your heart in the right place and I'm glad of that." He looked from Harry to Draco and back again. "You know, it's good to see the love between you two. You should know, Harry, that your mother and I have that kind of love, too. Oh, we're not bonded, at least not yet, but I wouldn't be much surprised if it happens in the future. Don't kid yourselves. The *junctum aeternus* is pretty rare, which just means that you have an exceptionally special love. Add that to your individual heritages and your unprecedented levels of power, you'll be a formidable team. I feel sorry for the wizard that goes against either of you."

"Dad, aren't you exaggerating just a bit?" Harry couldn't help the immediate modesty that seemed to attack when he was under such intense scrutiny and praise. "We're just a bit above average." Even Harry knew that was an understatement, but there seemed to be a silent understanding that he would prefer not to be placed on a pedestal, especially by James.

James just smiled. "That bond is more than a bit above average, though. It's special. Your love is pure. It shows the good that's ingrained in your souls. But it's more than that. You're both great people. You're the type of guys that would be my best mates if we attended school together. I can see Moony and Padfoot taking to you quickly. Wormtail is a little different, but I'm sure he'd come around." He couldn't help but notice the sudden tension at the mention of Wormtail. He filed that away to consider with Harry's earlier comments. He was certain that he could work out the details with just a little time.

"Thanks, James," Draco leaned over to clap James on the shoulder, hoping to give Harry a moment to collect himself. He could sense the emotion triggered by that statement.

"Dad, you can't imagine how much this means to me. After all the shit I've dealt with in my life, it's nice to have some really clear positive memories, especially involving you. I'll cherish them forever."

The small group who had optimistically nick-named themselves "The Victors" stood quietly in the Room Of Requirement, reflecting over all that had occurred in the week since James and Lucius had first appeared. They had learned more about each other, and more about magic, than they had ever thought would be possible in such a short time. Having perfected a number of hexes, curses and even so-called 'Dark' curses, as well as creating many new ones, the four primary members felt they were ready to enter this battle. They had a strong, offensive strategy and many tricks and skills that the Death Eaters would not be aware of. Most of all – they had the potion.

James was doing his best to <u>not</u> be embarrassed about having walked in on Harry and Draco. It

was bad enough that he's walked in on Severus and Lucius the day before. Of course, how was he to know any of them would have been in the midst of a make-out session? He glanced at Harry and was both surprised and saddened at the emotion he saw there. Harry was obviously trying his best not to worry, but seemed to be torn between gazing at James, the father he'd never known, and drinking in the site of Draco, as if it were his last chance to see him.

No one seemed to realize how long they'd all been standing there until Severus finally broke the silence.

"I don't believe there is any reason for such doomful dispositions. I have every confidence that the potion will work and I've seen the strength and accuracy with which Mr. Potter can cast a spell these days. I hope none of you will find it too far out of character for me to say that I think in calling ourselves 'The Victors' we have been aptly named."

"Yes, yes, thank you Severus," Dumbledore said before turning to Harry. "Now then, my dear boy, it must be getting to be about that time, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir. I expect he'll be waiting for me."

"Potion vials at the ready?"

"Yes" came from the four of them as they all held the vials up for their headmaster to see.

"Portkeys?"

Each of the boys and Severus held out various little inconspicuous items which were keyed directly to the infirmary. They were to be used as a means of escape if necessary, but would also provide a quick way home once all was said and done.

"Albus" Severus interrupted any further questioning. "He's calling, it's time." The grimace on his face drove both sympathy and fear into Lucius' heart.

I'll be dealing with that one day, that total loss of control, forced submission, pain inflicted by a madman, he thought. *But right now I just wish I could take the pain away from him.*

With quick goodbyes, mostly unsuccessful attempts to hide their fears and emotions and repeated statements of 'good luck' and 'we have faith in you', the five 'victors' headed out to the gates so they could Apparate to Riddle House.

When asked about the specific events of the battle, it would be nearly impossible for any of them to recount it all in detail. There were, however, some details that were irrefutable.

Moments after arriving, Harry faced off against Voldemort and was immediately asked if he was prepared to prove his loyalty. Harry, thanks to the love and acceptance of his father (and subsequently, his friends), was in a much better state of mind than during his previous visit and

therefore had to rely on his acting skills to convince the Dark Lord that he would still be useful. He decided that cleverly worded responses would be the best way to handle this.

Confident that Draco, James and Lucius were well hidden for the moment, he focused on the immediate task at hand. "I have spent a great deal of time training, My Lord. I have practiced the Unforgivables as well as a number of other curses that I believe could be extremely useful in achieving your goals, My Lord."

Across the room, shrouded by his Death Eater robe and mask, Severus was highly impressed with the confidence behind Harry's words and the strength of his focus. It had been decided that Snape would be available to help boost his mental shields and assist his Occlumency if needed, but Harry's power had grown beyond that. Drawing his attention back to the meeting, Snape realized that Harry had been performing another demonstration for Voldemort and the Death Eaters in the circle.

Nott is writhing on the floor, his faced contorted in silent screams. Severus thought. *I can only imagine that Potter cast Cruciatus and a silencing charm together. I can't help but feel some level of gratitude in seeing that Potter has used the Cruciatus on Nott rather than Lucius. It's difficult, considering the past week of dealing with a younger Lucius, to see the Lucius of my time being subjected to Harry's demonstration in any way. Despite the fact that it's nothing painful, I can tell by the discarded robes and the odd way in which Lucius is shaking his arse that Potter has cast Imperius on him and is getting some silent joy from the resulting humiliation. I can see the flicker in those green eyes as he faces McNair, and moments later I recognize the cloudiness in McNair's eyes that represents the newly created blindness spell. Aside from the Cruciatus Curse, Potter seems to be sticking with those curses we used in training – only ones that will not cause real harm. I would take this to mean he isn't truly dark – there is too much good in him for the dark intent to come out, just as his friend Weasley observed. Ahh, finally, it seems that Voldemort has seen enough.*

"Well done, Harry." The gravelly voice of the Dark Lord did little to hide his pleasure at this display of power. "I will, of course, require further tests before determining that you are worthy of my mark."

Harry bowed his head, pleased at the perfect opening handed to him. He'd been wondering when he could use the signal that would bring the others out of hiding. "Of course, My Lord. I know that one test would be to ensure that I am actually capable of using the killing curse. I ask your indulgence, if I may," Harry paused, glancing up to see the snake-like eyes watching him in interest. "I realize this may be presumptuous, but I would very much like to call in a debt from one of your followers."

"You must be referring to Pettigrew. He's been one of my most loyal followers, the only one who remained loyal enough to seek me out and aid me in regaining my body."

Hidden in the shadows, James forced himself to keep back a gasp at the mention of Pettigrew. Suddenly, all Harry's comments made sense. He had seen Peter during the Death Eater meeting.

"Rodents are vermin" had to refer to Peter's traitor status. The tension at the mention of his name made it obvious that there was conflict. Most likely, when Peter joined the Death Eaters it somehow affected the other Marauders. He reached for the memsphere in his pocket, wishing there were some way to put this memory into it. He couldn't do it without drawing attention to himself, so he had to settle for hoping he would make the connection again when the memsphere was activated.

"Yes, My Lord. But had I not saved his life, he would never have had the chance to aid you."

Severus silently blanched at the pure audacity of the boy, defying Voldemort in such a manner. He was quite surprised when Voldemort nodded his head slightly in agreement. "Wormtail."

The other Death Eaters were shocked by this as well, and there was a bit of a scuffle as Wormtail moved toward the Boy-Who-Lived. For just a moment, no one noticed the other three seventeen-year-old boys as they moved out of hiding. Just as Wormtail reached Harry, Avery glanced at the unknown figures moving out of the shadows.

"My Lord!" Voldemort turned toward Avery. "Intruders!" Before anyone could think again, the four teens had erected their joint shield and Avery had stepped forward and pointed his wand toward the young Lucius.

"Avada Kedavra!"

Without wasting a second, Snape lunged towards the teens. As time seemed to slow down, there was a moment of recognition among the occupants of the room that the killing curse seemed to pause at an invisible barrier. After only a few moments, though, it did continue on its course toward the seventeen-year-old Lucius Malfoy. Draco looked on in horror, not even having enough time to wonder if he would cease to exist. Lucius, however, saw nothing but the love in Severus' eyes as the Potions Master stepped between him and the green light of the killing curse. Having struck a target, the curse was depleted. As Severus fell, however, there was a surge of power through the room, connecting Severus to both the older and younger versions of Lucius.

The elder Malfoy looked up, blue eyes stricken with grief and confusion. He had no explanation for the sudden connection he felt with Severus. He knew, deep in his soul and without doubt, that he and Sev were deeply in love and their souls were intertwined in an eternal sense, but he was extremely confused by suddenly having two sets of memories in his mind. He locked eyes with his younger self, attempting to sort out the current events and the surge of sorrow that was threatening to make him collapse.

Young Lucius fought back tears as he felt James grab his hand in a gesture of comfort. They all knew and understood what had just happened; since they'd seen the evidence of *junctum aeternus* in Harry and Draco, it was easy to recognize that Severus had just completed that bond between himself and Lucius by giving his life in love. The four teens shared a few glances, and simultaneously raised their glass vials of potion. Voldemort and his Death Eaters were a bit slow to react, and therefore could do nothing before the vials were shattered and the potion's mist was

engulfing them all. There seemed to be no effect. Nothing, not even a cough from those who inhaled it. Of course, they were only concerned with Voldemort's reaction, but even he exhibited no change.

Nevertheless, Harry had to try. He raised his wand, connected his aura with Draco and then with Lucius and James, and surprisingly felt the older Lucius offering his strength to the power surge as well. Gathering his resolve and thinking of all the loved ones who had died at the hands of this man, he found the intent he needed and spoke the words he'd never spoken to a human being.

"Avada Kedavra"

And it was as simple as that. The green light shot from his wand, the rushing sound of death flew throughout the room, the light hit Voldemort and he went down. Harry couldn't help but think, despite his joy that it was over, that it seemed a bit anticlimactic. He was much more sorrowful over Snape's death than he would have expected to be. It was this line of thinking that delayed his planned binding of all the Death Eaters.

Unfortunately, since he didn't bind them, a couple of them decided to make a break for it. McNair and Goyle were running through the door and just as Harry moved to stop them, Bellatrix LeStrange raised her wand and shouted his name. As he turned toward her, he saw both Lucius' – one on either side of him – struggling with tears. He saw his father trying to comfort the younger Lucius and keep him inside their shield. He saw Draco; recognized the look of satisfaction on his face that could have only come from the death of the Dark Lord. And he saw Bellatrix. The one who had tortured Neville's parents and later tortured Neville himself. The one who had killed Sirius when she cursed him through the veil. He saw her lips move, but she didn't make a sound. He saw the green light from her wand and watched in horror as it lit up the area, momentarily delayed by the shield. Draco, his back to Bellatrix, knew nothing of the curse as he walked towards Harry with a smile on his face.

"Harry, your eyes are so green they're lighting up the room with it!" The curse hit him in the back then, and though the smile was still on his face as he fell, the light had gone from his blue eyes. Harry felt his chest being ripped open and his heart pulled through the gaping hole. He felt his soul sliding out, attached to his heart. He knew he couldn't go on. Not without Draco. Not without his soul.

James watched this in horror and felt a surge of anguish for his young son who'd already suffered so much loss. He began to feel strange pulses of magical energy shooting past him and finally realized that they were coming from Harry.

"Voco Alecto, Tisiphone, Megaera – ipse odium, aspiro, possido!"

The Death Eaters seemed frozen, unable to react, and it took both James and Lucius a few moments to translate the Latin. Lucius finally realized it and looked at James in horror. They seemed to have the same thought – *Gods help us, he's invoked the Furies to possess him!*

Despite the fact that Harry hadn't moved, he was casting wandless curses on the remaining Death Eaters and seemed to have placed an invisible block on the door so none of them could leave.

James glanced around the room in shock and revulsion, *Good Godric, what's happening?* He watched in detached fascination as both the LeStranges seem to be suffering from a slow working severing charm. It was more than a little disconcerting to see an invisible force taking slices from their arms and legs, one after another. They had both fallen to the floor; Bellatrix's limbs were half gone; while Rodolphus has just lost his hands and feet. *That's grotesque. I've never seen anything like it. I wouldn't have thought Harry could be capable of such dark intent, even in grief. Sweet Merlin Harry, what have you become?* James felt the bile rising as he tried to look away.

Harry's eyes darkened until they were nearly black with just a hint of a green outline as he flicked his gaze around the room, exacting his revenge on everyone present. Wormtail had been placed in a body bind and was being forced to watch everyone else. His eyes had been hexed open; the moisture leaking a combination of tears and a lack of blinking. He looked over at the young James, a pleading look sent to the young Marauder. James' eye held no sympathy for this monster, his former friend.

Crabbe was slowly being consumed by meticulously directed magical flames. Nott was being magically kept alive while a dull knife slowly carved out his heart. Avery seemed to have either lost his skin or been turned inside out. Parkinson was bleeding from his eyes and seemed to have fire ants crawling under his skin. Finally, Harry released Wormtail from the body bind, only to slice off the silver hand, cut along his elbow, stab him in the back and place him under the Cruciatus Curse. After making sure he had dealt with each and every Death Eater in the room, Harry magically levitated them, lining them all up along one wall and about four feet from the floor, then he started shooting the killing curse at them, one at a time. He paused for the briefest of moments when he reached Malfoy, considering the younger Malfoy and what he had come to mean to Draco.

Lucius watched in the same detached fascination as James. He was still feeling the grief from the loss of his son, and his one love; he could sympathize with Harry, but was still stunned with the veracity of Harry's hatred and despair.

It was upon noticing Harry's considering look toward the elder Malfoy, that both James and Lucius finally broke out of their stupor and moved to stop Harry in his grief and rage. Before they could act, they felt the odd disorientation and ethereal sensation that meant the potion was moving them through time again.

The last thing Lucius saw in that future was a bolt of green that left Harry's fingers and crossed the room. He didn't need to see the end result to know that it had been aimed at his older self.

Before they knew it, they were alone in the potions classroom. They sat there, looking at each other in shock for a moment. Then Lucius promptly burst into tears, unable to deal with the loss of Severus and Draco in the same small time span. James simply stared, unsure of his role in this,

unable to accept what his son would become. "We failed." He whispered quietly. They both looked up as the Headmaster and Professor McGonagall entered the room. They waited in silent and almost welcoming anticipation for the Obliviate spells that would take these memories away from them.

Harry felt numb. He gathered Draco's limp body in his arms and staggered through the carnage he'd wrought at the Riddle House. Something in him thought of a levitation spell, but he held Draco closely, needing the physical weight to keep him focused on what must be done. As he reached the edge of the property, Harry paused a moment, drawing on the power of the Furies and silently invoking fire energy. He allowed the power and energy time to build. A large fireball swirled in front of him, growing and burning until it was nearly five metres in diameter. That's when he let it go, directly to Riddle House.

He didn't stay to watch the destruction. Harry drew on his inner power and intuition to lead him to the nearest lake. Harry held back his pain as he mechanically went through the motions of magically conjuring a funeral pyre, placing his beloved on top of it and setting it gently on the water. He drew on that inner power again to light it on fire as it drifted languidly across the water, the serenity of the lake contrasting sharply with the tragic situation. As he watched the drifting pyre and said his silent goodbyes, he didn't even notice the tears that slipped from his eyes.

Finally, he turned and walked away from the waters edge. He paused just a moment, considering his next move. There was nothing left for him back at Hogwarts. He couldn't go back there. There was nothing he could learn, no one he could relate to, nothing he wanted to face. In fact, without Draco, it seemed there was no one who could ever understand him. And with the new powers he and Draco had developed through their bond, Harry was now the single most powerful living wizard. Rational thought had left him when the bond was shattered.

The only emotion Harry could sense was pain. Surely those who had made his life a living hell deserved to feel it too. Staring at nothing in particular, he noticed the faded scar on the back of his left hand. Umbridge. That bitch. Fudge's puppet. Yes, surely they should feel the pain too. He Apparated to the Ministry. He already had his first victims in his sights.

He could feel the power of the Furies as it coursed through his veins. He'd learned enough in History of Magic to know that the Erinnyes, or Furies, were known as the "personification of vindictiveness and retribution." That was precisely why he'd called on them. Harry knew he could look forward to dealing out a great measure of vengeance so long as the spirits of the Furies were infused with his own. *Hell,* he mused, *perhaps I'll become a god myself – the god of vengeance and pure evil, DeMalus.* He grinned malevolently at the thought. *Maybe later on.*

He was in and out of the Ministry before anyone knew he had been there. The Daily Prophet was next. Rita Skeeter and the other reporters never knew what hit them. That would teach them to make a mockery of him. Privet Drive was next on the list. The Dursleys needed to know just how much pain they had caused him. He took great satisfaction in relaying it back to them one hundred fold. What was left of them didn't even fit into the cupboard under the stairs. That is, if

he had left the cupboard under the stairs intact. The muggles would have trouble even identifying that there had ever been a residence at number 4 Privet Drive, let alone what had happened to its residents.

He could still feel the pain at the loss of his partner, his life. He knew that he had to keep going – everyone had to pay. Hogwarts. Yes, Hogwarts. The place where Preston Bates accused him of murder, where the majority of Slytherin house ridiculed him; where the students forced him and Draco to keep their relationship secret. He would return there. Not today, but someday. Someday soon.

Dumbledore: the almighty. The feeder of lies. Harry never forgot the truth he scryed when he read the thoughts of the great manipulator. One lie after another; all fed to Harry for the greater good. What greater good?

Even his so called friend Ron turned on him at Hogwarts out of suspicion and jealousy. Hermione too. Her actions toward Draco were unforgivable. Yes, even they would have to pay someday. They would all pay. The list was ever growing. For Harry Potter was through with being the Boy-Who-Lived.

No more silly titles for him. The-Boy-Who-Killed. How lame. Harry Potter. What sort of power was in that name? No, he would now be Lord DeMalus, in preparation for the day he would become a vengeance god. Everyone would know his name, especially those who got in his way. After all – who would dare stop him? Who even had the power?

The End

Charlotte Web: Well, in all actuality, the last page in that challenge did change a bit, but I'm sure that's not what you were hoping for. I hope you enjoyed it anyway and will return for the sequel. Thanks for reading! I'm really glad you liked it!

Luci Shadow: Wow! It still amazes me that people are so into my fic that they'll stay up reading it all night and finish 28 chapters in one sitting! I hope you've enjoyed this chapter as much as the rest of the story. Thanks so much for reading, and I'm honored that you signed in "just for me".

Siderius Cimmerii: Thank you! I tend to be a very introspective person, so I write a good bit about feelings and inner thoughts and such. I'm glad you like it.

Louise 4: I'm soooo sorry. I know you probably hate me now, but I hope you can understand that it's just the way things have to be. I'm not trying to be mean, I promise, and as for killing you if I tell you what happens, well – as this was the last chapter I suppose that's no longer necessary. Thanks for the well-wished to my brother. He seems to be doing quite well, responding to his chemo much better than his doctors expected.

OzCrow: Thanks! I hope you'll come back for the sequel!

Jen Red Robe: Oh darlin', I understand business. Trust me. Thanks for the review, hope you liked the end. I'm looking forward to more of BTTP.

Sweetslasher: Wow! What an awesome review! You actually like the story and the writing style! You like the characters! You like the dialogue! I'm so flattered I'm getting twitterpated! Hope you liked the ending as well, looking forward to more of your work!

Menecarkawan: Well, I did as you asked, Moldyfart is gone. Still jigging? Just, please, all I ask is that you have patience until the sequel starts, k?

Prophetess of Hearts: Erm, primarily because it's a fairly rare bond that the couple really has no control over. It sorta runs in bloodlines, or at least the potential for it does (hence James' musings about Lily and Lucius' bond with Sev). Hope that answers your questions. It is not meant in any way to insinuate that Ron and Hermione are not a good fit.

The Shadow Bandit: Thanks! I had a lot of fun writing the parting of the lake scene! I'm really glad you liked it. Thanks for continuing to read!

NayNymic: Well, there you go. Hope you liked the snogging bits. Thanks for the suggestions! No need to discuss the memory thing, either, since you now know the ending.

Azhure: Well, we got the snogging in, and the shockers and the sweetness and thanks to you it's all wrapped up in one neat little Furies package! I mean it, girl – I could not have done this without you. I figure since I was up editing in the middle of the night it was your turn to have the muse anyway, that's why she was feeding you all those great paragraphs. I dedicate this entire work to you!