

(You) Set Me Aflame

Rgemma

Summary:

When snakes emerge from brumation, they mate. Parselmouths are much the same.

Notes:

For greenmegsnoham.

Daddymort 2023 Prompt: Harry fertilizes Tom/Voldemort's eggs.

Also known as the fic that ran away from me and grew arms and legs. Concept loosely inspired by the wonderful „A Rather Useless Inheritance“ by Blood_Stained_Fingers.

Thanks for the prompt, greenmegsnoham, hope I do it justice!

Chapter 1: No good deed goes unpunished

Notes:

(See the end of the chapter for notes.)

Chapter Text

1941

JANUARY

Harry thinks that the first knock is from the storm. The second, he ignores. It's only when it repeats, pounding stupidly loud and insistent, that Harry groans and stomps towards the door.

“I told you—” Harry’s mouth snaps shut. There’s a boy on his stoop, a thin whip of a thing ankle-deep in the snow. The flickering oil lamp illuminates his breath as he shivers, tensing upon himself. His arms retract, curling against his chest; the movement throws face into shadows, jaw a lit and eyes pitch. Harry blinks, then frowns, leaning his weight against the door. “You’re not Fred.”

“Clearly,” the boy says as the door slants open, throwing an oblique slice of light across his face—

And oh. A trill of something scatters down Harry’s spine. Not quite fear, not quite excitement. Anticipation.

What are the odds, Harry wonders, of a child looking so much like the man Merope had run off with all those years ago showing up at his door? He crosses his exposed forearms as the wind pelts them with icy flurries, staring at the boy’s burnished cheeks and nose, at his Muggle lantern.

The pause stretches into an uneasy silence. The boy flickers his gaze over Harry, tracing the puckered scar bisecting his brow, down to his holstered wand, then back up to Harry’s face. “You’re not Marvolo Gaunt.”

(It’s been some time since Harry last heard that time. It hasn’t been long enough.)

“No,” Harry says slowly, then asks, “What do’ya want with him?”

“We’ve business.”

It’s so unexpected, so fucking preposterous that Harry fails to stop the sharp, incredulous bark of laughter. “You?” he wheezes as his laughter fizzles into an snort.

The boy’s face pinches in irritation, mouth tight and white and thin. “That’s between us,” he says icily. Affronted.

“Is it?” Harry teases, mouth pitching up on one side. “You—” The snow kicks up in a gust, smacking Harry across the face with the faint scent of kinship before it’s whipped away by the wind.

Harry freezes. Watches the boy tuck his chin into his thin scarf, cold, and small, and smelling of family. Harry wants to taste his scent again, the rich bloom of safety and den as the fire warms boy’s skin. Find, perhaps, long-denied comfort; even the brumating adder in the den can’t mimic the smell of family.

He licks his lips, then throws the door wide. “Come inside.”

The boy scrutinizes Harry for a moment before thanklessly stepping inside the bungalow. His shoulder pokes Harry’s chest as he passes, sharp even beneath his coat. Harry closes the door. He’s close enough to the boy to scent him, so close that when he stamps the snow from his shoes Harry’s socks are flecked with cold, and Harry gets a second whiff of his skin: familiar, yet strange. Heady.

He leans back against the heavy oak door, watching the boy as he surveys Harry’s home. It’s a coarse space, all bare stone walls and sparse furniture. For all Harry’s skill in transfiguring, spinning discarded remnants and organics into products to sell, he’s never seen a point in gilding his own reclaimed furniture. Restoring fading brocade won’t make his arm chair any plusher. Covering the walls in plaster and paint won’t remove the familial magic imbued in their grit. At the end of the day, it’ll feel like the same sad little space. Normally, Harry doesn’t care, but now, here, he feels strangely embarrassed. It leaves him a little off kilter. He rubs his warm neck, mind whirling.

He clears his throat. “Do you—“

“Where’s Marvolo?” The boy interrupts.

Harry’s arm drops. “Dead.”

The boy's fingers pause on his coat buttons, face flickering with momentary surprise. It's the only acknowledgement Harry gets; a second later, the boy's expression masks as he plucks away the last button before artfully sweeping off his coat and wordlessly extending it for Harry to take.

The boy's moue deepens in displeasure. He keeps the coat aloft between them for several seconds more; when Harry neglects to accept it, he shoots Harry a contemptuous look and slings his coat along the back of the armchair on his way towards the hearth.

For lack of anything better to do, Harry follows. Tipping his shoulder against the mantle, he watches the boy warm his hands, uncurling his bright pink fingers and flexing them against the flames.

"Hope you didn't come all this way for nothing." It's as much subtlety and delicacy as Harry can muster.

The boy ignores him.

He gnaws at the inside of his cheek, then spits out. "What business had you with him?"

The boy tilts his head away from the fire, glancing at Harry. "You really want to know?" he asks.

Harry opens his mouth, then shuts it. There's a teasing quality to the boy's words, a twitch of coy amusement divoting his mouth.

He hates games.

Grabbing the poker, he jabs at the white-hot charcoal, wrinkling his nose at the hot stench. The cinders stink of tar-thick char and bitterness, burning out any hint of the boy's scent. He scowls. "I asked, didn't I?"

The boy's mouth quirks up. "You did."

"You gonna tell me?"

The boy's dark eyes smolder. "Maybe. Maybe I'll show you."

„Fine,“ Harry snatches a few splintered logs, settling them in the fire, setting off a flurry of sparks as he couches them in the coals. „Show me.“

The boy does nothing. Says nothing.

Irritation piqued, Harry straightens from his crouch, looming over the boy. „Now.“

The tiny hint of a smile cracks, exposing a glint of teeth. „That's rather rude.“

Harry glares, barely resisting the urge to snap 'and you're not? Staying unnamed and silent?' He curls his fingernails into his palms, silently watching the fire creep up the edges of the wood, blacking bark and grain, until his frustration dips to a low smolder.

The fire pops. Harry shifts, stealing a glance at the boy as the edges of the bark crackle white. For all Harry looks, he catches little resemblance to their family; there's no hint of Gaunt blood in the high, backlit parabola of the boy's cheek or rapier jaw. Something about the boy reminds Harry of shrapnel and coiled momentum. Fragile, like a bomb.

The boy looks over at Harry.

Harry whips his gaze away, cheeks hot. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry catches the boy draws his body tight, crumpling his hands into fists and settling them at his sides. "You're staring."

Harry's stomach swoops, clenching and twisting. "I—" he stops. It hadn't been admonishment. Peeking back, he lets his eyes trace the curve of the boy's nose, down to his bold mouth, down to his still-covered neck. "You look just like him, you know," Harry says.

The boy slants Harry a look. "Do I?" There's an undercurrent to his words. "Marvolo?"

"No." Fidgeting, Harry shoves his hands into his pockets and rocks on his heels. "Riddle."

"Oh." A tiny, breathy exhalation. The boy's face flickers in a wild circuit of emotion—brows lifting then furrowing then drawing tight and low—before being wiped blank. He takes a half-step towards Harry. "And where is Riddle?"

There's greed in the boy's voice, wanting, when he only offers Harry indifference—

Harry steps into the boy's space. "Why?"

The word comes out too low, too slow, and because Harry can't ever seem to keep his fucking mouth shut, can't ever seem to fully wrangle his temper, he crowds the boy, stepping into his space and asks quietly, "You here to see him, too?"

The boy stares up at him, eyes big and dark. He leans back against the mantle, tipping his head up to meet Harry's eyes. "No." The word is low and round with things unsaid. A warning.

Harry huffs a laugh. "You're a liar."

The boy's teeth glint as he slides out from between Harry and the mantle, flitting away to settle on Harry's couch. In the dim light, there's a tenebrosity to his cut and form, sharp edges softened and warm.

Outside, the wind began to howl.

Pushing himself off the mantle, Harry leans his elbows across the top of a tattered armchair. "Where did you say you were from?"

The boy's fingers pause as he unwinds his scarf. "I didn't."

A wan, forced smile creases Harry's cheeks. "You always this shifty? Or is this a special occasion?"

The boy drops his scarf at his side. "Don't flatter yourself."

"How do I know you're not a fascist or Nazi or something?" Harry says slowly, watching the boy curl up against the cushions and prop his cheek against his fist. He pauses. "Are you?"

"Nein."

Harry squints suspiciously at the boy. "That doesn't mean anything," he says slowly.

"Doch."

"You've a terrible sense of humor."

The boy smiles, mouth twitching wide enough to show his eyeteeth. It interrupts the veneer of pleasantness, setting Harry's mind on edge. "I've been told I'm rather funny," he says lazily. He stretches, hands curling up over his head, and blinks all slow and catlike at Harry, dark eyes are shadowed by his lashes—

Harry's mouth is suddenly very, very dry.

He inhales sharply through his nose and looks away, down at the tattered brocade, instincts seizing with something jittery crawling along the back of his neck, squirming in his belly, too warm and heavy to be unease.

Scratching at the frayed edge along the upholstery piping, he gnaws the inside of his cheek. It's slick against his teeth, and soft. "Do you—" he pauses, eyes flickering over to the boy. "You want anything to drink?"

"No." It's quiet. Soft.

The following disquiet unfurls, electric and lingering between them. Harry doesn't look at the boy, feeling his eyes upon him. Just picks at the threads, yanking at them until they snap, until there's just smooth silk binding against his fingernails.

Harry licks his lips, opens his mouth—

A sudden gust bangs the shutters behind him.

He steps out from behind the chair, picking up his half-drunk ale from the table. He taps his thigh in a quick rap-rap-rap and, when the boy's silent scrutiny continues, toys with the papery label around the bottle, ripping the edge into a ragged strand, folding it back upon itself.

"It'll be a bad one," he says, just to break the quiet.

The boy hums.

Harry tears a large swath of the label away, crumpling the paper into a ball. The glue backing sticks to his fingers; when he tosses it towards the fire, it falls short of the flames. Flushing, he rolls the cool, tacky glass between his warm hands. "You have somewhere to stay?"

There's a rustle as the boy shifts, couch creaking. "It's late."

Hands stopping, Harry's face jerks up. Amidst the agitation, Harry's irritation kindles at the boy's gall, his blatant presumption to claim board in Harry's home. "You haven't even told me your name," he says acerbically. "Why would I—"

"The storm will only get worse," the boy interrupts.

Harry wrings the neck of the bottle, strangling it. "And?" he clips.

The boy looks at him, a devious glint in his eyes. "You wouldn't toss a child back into the storm," he says, and he's not even trying to pretend to couch his presumption in soft overtures or niceties—and the boy's dismissiveness, and his contemptuousness, and his fucking godlike arrogance, walking into Harry's home like he owns it.

He gives the boy a long, lean look. In his hands, the bottle squeals, sliding along his sweaty fingers. "Wouldn't I?"

There's a pause, as the shutters clang and the boy tilts his head, appraising Harry. "No," he finally says, "you wouldn't."

Outside, the wind howls.

Harry's mouth hangs open, then clamps shut. He blows out a gust of air, slamming the bottle on the table before he smashes it. "You unbelievable little—"

"Are you hissing at me?"

It's nearly perfect mimicry of confusion; there's not one whit of recognition in his expression, voice lilting high in monotonal bewilderment—but there's no fear. And everyone Harry has met—Muggle and Wixen alike—fear their kind.

The boy is lying.

Harry presses his palms flat on the table. Exhales. “I know,” he finally says slowly, “you speak it.”

The boy’s face brightens with feigned intrigue, and it’s the wrong reaction, so completely and utterly wrongwrongwrong. “You did,” he says breathily, then leans forward and orders, “do it again.”

“Stop pretending.”

“You know,” the boy says slyly, “I’ve never met someone who hissed like a snake before.” He kicks his dangling foot playfully—and Harry could throttle the boy.

(Had the boy shown up years ago, when Harry was younger and less disciplined, he may very well have.)

“Tell me what it means,” the boy demands.

Jaw tensing, Harry grates, “You know what it means.” He swipes up his beer, scowling into it. Drinks, because otherwise he’ll say something he might—will—regret.

“If you won’t tell me, I’ll think it’s something nasty.”

Harry inhales his ale; sputtering, he pounds his chest. “You—” He wheezes. Nasty. By fucking Merlin. He sets the bottle down and wipes his mouth on the back of his hand. Keeps his hand poised there, as if it could contain the thrumming pressure threatening to unspool between them.

The sharp, piquant bite of his irritation clouds the air, despite his best attempt to stifle it, and the boy’s mouth rounds, parting slightly to scent it.

Beneath the bitter charcoal and Harry's temper, there's a dusky warmth. Delight, maybe. Pleasure of some kind.

Harry presses his fingers against the inside corners of his eyes. The nose pads on his glasses dig into his brow. "Just cut the shit already," he says, voice coming out too low and too tight and too hoarse to pass for unaffected. "I know you speak it. That you're one of us." He pauses. "What I don't know is why you're here."

Why he's here.

Why he's insisting on staying despite Marvolo's absence.

Why he wanted to speak with Marvolo in the first place when he's just another half-blood bastard sullyng the bloodline; were Marvolo alive, he'd sooner be cursed for the crime of being born than accepted into the fold.

Harry sighs and opens his eyes.

The boy is staring at him, brows knitted, still playing mock-confused—

Or maybe, perhaps—perhaps.

Were the boy acquainted with the sound of parseltongue, but lack the capability to speak it, to understand it, he wouldn't fear it. Perhaps the Muggle blood diluted his lineage too heavily for him to inherit anything other than skin-scent. Maybe he just smells of his mother, and her den.

Perhaps, he thinks, recalling the absence of a wand and the boy's Muggle clothes, perhaps he hasn't inherited any magic at all.

It happens sometimes in Old families, so-called stillborn babes with malforms cores. And Merope hadn't used much magic, Harry remembers; her accio rarely caused the

pots and pans to do more than quiver and tip on their axis with potential momentum before tipping over. Perhaps if—if—this is her son, he too is similarly inclined.

Harry's lips part audibly. "It means," he says, "that you should say thank you."

The boy tilts his head. "And the rest?"

"I told you what it means—"

"No," the boy insists. "You told me what one thing meant. But you said a lot of things." His smile shows a sharp edge of eyeteeth. "Tell me the rest."

Harry tries to smile back. It comes out closer to a grimace. "It's all the same thing."

The boy laughs, loud and sharp and sudden. "I don't believe you," he accuses lowly, face flatlining. He slides up onto his feet, over to Harry, and plants his hands on the armrests. This close, the scent of kin is unmistakable. "You're a liar."

Harry's temper snaps. "And you're not?" He shoves himself upright, forcing the boy to take a step back. "I'm going to bed. If you don't want to sleep on the floor—"

"I'm not."

"—then you can have the couch."

The boy's face goes pink with anger. "Such hospitality," he snipes, and Harry—

Harry doesn't know what he'll do, stomach twisting hot and leaden, all because this arrogant, stupid little boy keeps pushing his buttons—

He needs to leave now, before his magic unravels.

Snatching the cushions off the couch, he throws them onto the floor and spells them to the stone with a sticking charm. “Better?” he snaps.

The boy’s anger is putrid, slick and oily on Harry’s tongue. The pink tinging his ears darkens, creeping down his neck. “You—”

“Yeah, me.” He throws the boy’s coat onto the piss-poor excuse of a bed and glues the hem to the cushions for good measure. “And my home. Get comfortable. Enjoy your stay.”

And then he slugs the last of his beer and stalks off to room, slamming the door behind him.

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The strange, squirming sensation pitting Harry’s stomach doesn’t abate even after he leaves the boy. He tracks a quick, aggressive circuit around the room, mind and body unsettled and restless. When that does little to dispel the strange restlessness, he breaks into his cigarette stash. Smokes it down to the quick as he stomps about, tapping his free hand against his thigh in a staccato rhythm. The nicotine does little to quell the energy spooling in his belly and does even less to debride his thoughts.

He has another, just to ease his jitters. Transfigures a mug of tea into an endless cycle of songbirds—chaffinch to a great tit to a thrush to a goldfinch—to release some of his pent-up magic, which quickly ends when the damned thing tries to nest in his hair, at which point it becomes a mug once more.

He paces some more.

By the time the clock strikes one, he’s coiled in a nest of blankets, stripped of all but his sleeping pants and puffing on his last cigarette, even though he knows Marie doesn’t like him enough to sell him the ones stashed behind her counter and John will charge him an arm and a leg for a pack (and only sell him those blasted Spanish

Shawls), but he can't help himself. He feels hot and agitated, and he shouldn't be so irritated at a child, but—

He presses a fist against his forehead. To his mouth. Thinks of how the cushions are too thin to be comfortable, coat and coals not nearly enough to keep such a thin boy warm. Thinks of his bony shoulders and flushed cheeks and snappish tongue and—

And the cigarette snaps between his fingers, scattering ash across his knee.

Harry stares at it for a long moment. Then, he stamps the unlit end into the ash tray, crushing it until it breaks, and uncurls from the sheets to pad barefoot down the hall.

The boy is tucked up against the cushions, knees crooked against his chest to fit his coat across his legs and shoulders. In sleep, he looks soft, and young, curls all mashed up against the side of his head. Younger than Harry had originally thought now that his face isn't twisted up in anger or apathy.

Something visceral tugs at Harry's stomach. He conjures a blanket and lays it over the boy, tucking it beneath his chin. The boy rouses, stirring incrementally before he still, breath slow and deep.

Fire forgotten, Harry returns to his room and finally manages to sleep.

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Harry snaps awake—

—and freezes as something sharp slants along his neck, pricking his skin. In an instant, the rush of adrenaline tunes out everything but the blade and the weight slung over his hips. He's too disoriented in the dark, knows that he's breathing too fast, too loud, but he can't hear it over his pulse ringing in his ears—

And then, just when the panic slicing through his gut begins to quell, he hears: “Grab the headboard.”

Harry doesn't move.

The knife knicks his neck. A hot line runs down the side of his throat, shocking Harry from stillness. He exhales in a woosh. “You,” he gasps.

“Me.”

Harry's thoughts coalesce. He's left even more confused than when he first woke up. “Why—”

“Do it. Now.” The boy shifts forward, splaying a hand wide over Harry's bare chest and levying a little more weight into his blade, deepening the cut. It burns.

Harry keeps his breath shallow, but it's still too fast and uneven. Slowly, he reaches up and wraps his hands around the metal grates of the headboard. “What do you want?” he rasps.

The boy ignores him. He leans forward, ghosting his hand up over Harry's pectoral, up his bicep, then higher—

He tugs on Harry's holstered wand.

The sticking charms hold.

Harry exhales. The boy huffs a hollow, humorless laugh. “I don't give up so easily,” he says, tipping forward into Harry's lap and stretching for the bracer clasps. The holster tugs against Harry's forearm as the boy jerks a strap free of the buckle—

And then it snags mid-air.

There's a beat, and then the soft rasp of fingernails against leather as the boy finds the activated rune set—and this time the boy's laughter is real, deep and ripe with delight. "And to think I thought you dull! You're more fun than Marvolo would have been," he says, and Harry can hear the smile in his voice, can taste how the boy's scent softens with pleasure, warm and arid. It makes Harry's head swim.

He needs to get out of this, now.

He flexes, incrementally. Above him, the boy digs his fingernails into Harry's forearm, knees clenching for balance. His position is precarious; If it weren't for the switchblade, Harry could knock him over, roll and pin him. He needs to get it off his neck or distract him before the boy cuts the wand off Harry's arm.

The second clasp slides free.

Harry's instincts scream at him to fight. Instead, he forces himself to relax against the bedsheets. "I'm a lot more fun," he breathes, voice shaking from adrenaline and fear. "Want to find out how much?" The boy's fingers slow on the third strap, attention split between him and the wand. Harry incrementally slides his unattended hand down and away from the headboard. Just a few centimeters, and then a few more. "Pull the next strap."

"You're bluffing," the boy accuses ... but his movements stop, knuckles warm and firm against Harry's skin.

"Maybe." Maybe not. "Wanna gamble on that?"

There's sharp clenching of the boy's thighs around Harry's sides as he presses the blade firm against Harry's throat. "Stalling won't save you."

"Won't save you either," Harry hisses. And then, just because he's fed up with the little shit, Harry goads, "You're too much of a chuffer."

The boy stares.

Harry. Doesn't. Move. Doesn't even dare to blink, let alone slide his unattended fist against his cheek.

And then Harry feels his gaze slide away, back to the holster, tracing the rune design. Harry bunches his hand against his cheek, waiting, waiting—

The boy twists Harry's arm upright, tilting it into the moonlight to get a better look, and Harry seizes into motion, jabbing the meat of his palm up against the tip of the blade. It sinks into his muscle with a hot, white line of pain before the hilt slips, glancing across Harry's throat and flying out of the boy's grasp—

And the boy falls against him, grabbing Harry's arm for support even as Harry twists, throwing the boy beneath him and seizing his wrists. He bends over to press his teeth against the boy's pulsepoint—and something pre-civilized crashes against Harry's mind, sundering instinct from thought.

There's a whisper of plushness, slow and sweet, teasing at the boy's unripened scent. Harry buries his mouth against the boy's nape, seeking more, needing to—to coax the indolic bloom of the boy's sweat and skin into fullness, to run his tongue along the pitch of his body and taste his nascent reciprocity, to cant his hips forward and nip at his throat. He's so fucking hard it hurts, so hard that he feels his pulse in his cocks—

He inhales the fragrance in sharp, greedy rasps, coating his tongue with it, mouth open and wet and teeth aching—

And caught in the maw of a much larger, much more dangerous predator, the boy sucks in a loud breath and goes limp. A sour fragrance clouds the air, cutting through the primal haze.

Fear.

Harry rips himself away, stumbling back into the rough-hewn wall, digging his bloody fingers into the crevasses. "I—" he stops. Licks his lips and shivers when he tastes an imprint of the boy's skin.

"Lumos," he croaks, waving his hand. A sphere of cool blue light pops between them, throwing the boy into focus.

He's lying there disheveled, chest heaving wildly and legs still spread wide as if Harry was still nestled between them. Oh. Oh, doesn't that do things to Harry? That soft confusion parting his mouth as he stares at Harry with wide, dark eyes? The way he clenches the sheets, a little lost, a little bewildered at his own instincts?

And then his mouth twists into an accusatory snarl. He reaches around himself, scrambling with both hands; there's a refracted glint as he finds the knife, seizing and leveling it at Harry. "What did you do?" he asks, pitch high and thin.

There's a sharp-sweet tang in the air, beneath the musk, that hints at what-will-soon-come-to-be.

(A place to bury his seed.)

Harry swallows back a groan. He digs his fingers into the granular crystals, and hisses at the flare of pain. Something trickles down his fingers and neck and elbow. He's bleeding all over the stone, all over the floor, and the scent of it mixes headily with the boy's slick. The kernel pitting the bottom of Harry's stomach threatens to crawl out. "You're a parselmouth," he whispers.

"Well, aren't you clever?" he mocks; there's a wild, hysterical note in his voice, his eyes still huge. The blade slides further into the dim light as he stands, brandishing it like a shield as he circles towards the door.

Closer to Harry.

“You—“ Harry draws in a ragged breath and his thoughts scatter in the pheromone surge. He grips the rock tighter. Moans from the pain in his hand, but also from want. „Shit. Shit. Just stay—there.“

The boy doesn't listen. He takes another step closer, and another—

Harry lifts a hand—and the boy bolts, darting through the doorway.

Harry's stupefy hits the molding, centimeters away.

“Fuck,” he hisses. “Fuck!”

Shoving himself off the way, Harry darts after him, shoulder knocking into the threshold. The boy's almost to the door, but he looks back at the loud thud—

Had he not looked back, had he not thrown himself aside into the shuttered window, Harry's desperate spell would have gone wide. But he did, and this time, Harry doesn't miss.

The boy crumples to the floor, a shadow amidst the darkness. Harry's heart is pounding in a triphammer arrhythmia, loud over even the howling wind, and he's trembling, hot and sicksicksick from the pain, and adrenaline, and pheromone backlash—

He doesn't quite manage to dismantle the charms holding the shutters in place before he's jackknifing over, spitting bile and sour beer onto the rug. Wipes his mouth, then breaks the spell and unlatches the window.

The wind pelts his face with snow. He tips his head forward, against the metal sill, and gasps at the brittle air. Tries to chase the disgusting taste of acid and oily slick from his tongue, tries to think of something—anything—other than a tight-hot squeeze were he to bully his cocks between the boy's legs, along the crease of his thighs.

He shivers, so rut-sick that he can't tell whether it's from the cold or fever. In the gray light, the blood from his hand is black against the snow.

Is this what Morphin had felt those long years ago, when Merope languished in her heat: blood-scorched and ensnared? High off the civet stink of arousal and sex, more animal than man? For Harry to—to still be so fucking, stupidly, painfully erect? Maybe this is why his father had gone mad, trapped in the house with a fecund little bitch.

Harry groans. He presses the heel of his palm against his cocks, crushing the tented cotton. Thinks of reaching inside, freeing his cocks, slick with blood and precome—

He sucks in a cold breath and leans further out the window. Scoops up a fistful of snow and shoves it in his mouth. It tastes like nothing, and he hates it. Hates it, when there's a boy stinking of fear and slick behind him. Hates how it makes his teeth ache and numbs his lips. Hates how it makes his head pound.

The Muggles in Little Hangleton like to dress up on Sundays and pray to their god for favors or forgiveness. Harry could conjure water. He could stick his mouth beneath the tap and drink minerally well water, but this—this feels like penance. Condemnation.

For all that Harry has tried to revoke his heritage, he still tastes the flavor of fertility, hot off the child's body. Earthy, and sweetly tinged with kin.

He spits the half-melted mixture out onto the snow. Glares out at the dark, arborized shapes of the coppice against the brightening skyline. Swears, then rinses his mouth with another mouthful of snow. Repeats the exercise, until he can't taste anything anymore. Until he feels more man than beast.

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There's a reason why parselmouths are blacklisted from society. To speak as a snake, one must think like one, and whatever twisted, black ritual Salazar cast all those centuries ago has left them beholden to the same stupid hindbrain urges.

For all that the Purebloods will tolerate—incest and sodomy and child brides, among other indiscretions—for all that they claim the Gaunts to be members of the Sacred Twenty-Eight, their so-called acceptance is a farce. Any cyclic drive to rut and fuck and brumate is far too bestial, far too creature for comfort. Harry has his ancestors to thank for that, some stupid cunt who let slip what lie between their legs before the marital vows had been sworn and had been accused of lying with a basilisk of all things, or so the story goes. Regardless of the who or why, the outcome is the same: in preserving their bloodline, over the centuries they've developed a taste for their own kind.

After all, nothing smells sweeter and responds prettier than thine own mate-kin.

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Harry unlatches both windows in his room, airing out the stench of blood and arousal. The sky has just begun to bleach, skeleton trees and bracken subsaturated and dingy in the gray of predawn.

While he waits, he rips away a portion of his blood-crisped pants to bind his hand and pops a handful paracetamol, wishing he had a potion instead. Even a smear of murlap essence would take the edge off the pain better than Muggle drugs, but—

He ties off the make-shift bandage with his teeth. It'll have to last until the clinic opens. In the meantime, he'll deal with the boy.

He cradles the fine points of the child's skull with his fingertips, smearing a bit of blood along his nape as he probes for damage. There's a smattering of bruising along his temple, but little else. Satisfied, Harry levitates him over to the bed and trusses him up like an animal, wrists and ankles bound to the posts.

Against the warming charms encompassing their bodies, the snow filtering in through the windows melts, dampening the boy's clothes and skin. He jolts back into consciousness; he rears, disoriented, jerking wildly against the restraints.

"Not fun being woken like this, is it?" Harry taunts.

The boy's eyes slide to his, slowly focusing. They're not as dark as Harry had thought last night, murkier and lighter than Riddle's. "Is this how you treat all your guests?" he asks, then yanks firmly against the restraints. Already, his wrists are pinkening from the abrasion.

Harry looks away from the fine-boned hands, meeting the boy's glower as he absently taps his wand against the rope. The binding shiver, then contract, dragging his wrists flush against the headboard and forcing the boy flat on his back. "Only the ones who try to kill me."

"If I wanted to kill you," the boy spits, "you'd be dead."

Harry's mouth pulls lean. "Really." He gestures to his neck, still dark and tacky with dried blood. "What the hell do you call this then?"

"Gratitude for my fine sleeping arrangements."

Harry snorts and digs his wand tip into the center of the boy's chest. Appreciation his arse. "Try again."

The boy's jaw works, and then he spits. The fat lob lands on Harry's cheek.

His hand is on the boy's jaw before he realizes it, forcing the boy's head back into the pillows and pinning his mouth shut. "Do that again little cobra," Harry dares, voice low and dangerous, "and I'll show you how gracious of a host I can fucking be."

The boy's eyes blaze cold. He presses up against Harry's hand, resisting the implicit command to bare his throat. When Harry applies more pressure, a contemptuous dribble of spittle trickles out of the boy's mouth, spilling onto Harry's thumb.

Harry's temper snaps, kicking the warming charms kick into overdrive and scalding their skin. His grip turns cruel, bruising the boy's jaw just below where it latches, sending a sharp jolt of fire along his sliced palm. His hiss, intended to be an inarticulate order to submit, is tinged with pain.

The little fucker smiles.

Harry yanks the pillow away, tipping his head back to the point that it's nearly upside down. The boy arches up, trying to twist away from his grasp, but Harry keeps him pinned and still. Beneath his fingers, the boy's skin is flushed, warm and dusted with a fine glint of sweat.

"Do you think your little threat displays are intimidating?"

The boy's lips curl.

Harry snarls his hand in the boy's hair, jerking on his curls. "Who the hell are you?"

He doesn't answer.

"Answer me," Harry hisses, lacing his voice with compulsion and seeping a bit of squalene in his scent—

"Tom," the boy blurts. He blinks, brows buckled in confusion.

Before he can open his mouth to complain, Harry smears his hand over his cheek, wiping off the spit; Tom's face blotches red. "Why're you here, Tom? To steal from me?"

Tom huffs a humorless laugh. "As if I'd want anything from this hovel."

"Then why the fuck are you here?"

"Why, to see family of course," Tom says guilelessly.

Harry's mouth twists. "I'll keep you here all day. As long as I need to," he threatens, and knows that it's a terrible, awful idea from the way his stomach quivers in anticipation.

Tom's smile widens. "I'll get comfortable." He waggles his fingertips, arching against the mattress.

Harry stops mid-stride and whirls around towards the door, ignoring the laughter that follows him out of the room.

*

Hand sutured and temper banked, Harry crosses his arms, watching from the threshold as Tom tries to free himself. "You're gonna hurt yourself," he warns as Tom jerks harder on the bonds in another fumbling attempt.

Tom ignores him, peering up at his bound hands, trying to tuck his thumb into his palm.

"I'm serious."

Tom's gaze snaps to his. "So am I." He jerks violently on the hemp rope. "Untie me."

Harry shoves off from the threshold. "No."

“Then shut. Up.” He braces his weight, tucking his feet flat against the mattress, stubbornly trying to yank the rope loose with his body weight. Harry snatches Tom’s forearms, dragging him upright. He must have started as soon as Harry had left for the clinic; the skin around his wrists is raw and red. For all his efforts, he’s only managed to work the rope a few centimeters up the breadth of his right hand.

Tom kicks out his knees violently, knocking them against Harry’s thighs. The motion sends a wave of scent, the dusty, decaying sweetness of dried slick into the air. “Fuck off!”

Harry’s nose wrinkles. He releases Tom, stepping back and turning his face towards the window. “Answer me, and I’ll let you run back to your mother.”

For several minutes, it’s silent. Tom glowers up at Harry, eyes wild and scent pitching unpleasant and sour. Then, his mouth parts in a low, sintering hiss.

A dare—no, a challenge.

Harry’s head whips around. In two steps, he snarls his fingers in Tom’s curls to wrench him painfully against the bonds, loosening a delightful, half-swallowed sound from Tom’s mouth. There’s a cluster of jammy welts along his jaw and mouth, molting his pale skin bile and mauve. Something hot curdles in Harry’s blood.

There’s more than one way to interpret a challenge.

He touches the plummy thumbprint at the corner of Tom’s lips. “Do’you even know what you’re asking for?” Harry asks quietly.

Tom’s breath protracts as he scents the air, tasting the oils on Harry’s skin. An whiplash of micro-expressions crosses his face, too rapid for Harry to parse.

His exhalation, when it finally comes, is stuttering. It makes his words weak and breathy. "Release me, or I will kill you."

Harry's mouth inches up in a smile. "Yeah?" He slots his fingertip between the knotted cord lashing Tom's wrists together, giving it a tug. "How do you propose to do that?"

Tom's glare turns murderous.

Snorting, Harry sits at Tom's lashed feet, hitching his heel up onto the sheets to unlace his boot. He tugs off his boot, wincing as the force aggravates his wounded hand, and drops it onto the floor. He peeks up at Tom while unlacing his other shoe. "Well go on then, show me."

Tom's jaw ticks. He turns his face away and glowers at the open window.

The bedsprings creak when Harry finally stands. "I've got better things to do than watch you play at being a basilisk." He pauses, then adds, "I'll be back later."

Tom doesn't look at him. Doesn't say a single word.

Harry waits in the doorway, just for a moment, to see if Tom will speak.

The silence hangs.

He leaves.

Notes:

1. Doch: German, to contradict a negative statement. I tried to use this appropriately; if there are any German speakers, suggestions are very welcome!

2. Along with foodstuff and paper, cigarettes were rationed (and likely quite lucrative for sellers on the black market). Spanish Shawls were, apparently, notoriously bad-tasting/smelling: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/25/a2226025.shtml>

3. Tom is referring to the Second Great Fire of London (December 29-30, 1940, ~100,000 bombs dropped).