**"Tears of the Sun" Eriador117**

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take care,

Annette

(Eriador117)

Summary: AU, Harry is rescued from Privet Drive when he is five years old by - a penguin? warnings: angst, child abuse, brief mentions of chan, attempted non-con.

Characters: Harry, Severus, Harry/Severus

Genres: Angst/Tragedy, Romance, Drama, Mystery/Suspense, Alternate Universe, Action/Adventure

Rating: M+

Warnings: Violence, Adult Language, Sexual Situations, Chan, Non-con (rape), OOC-ness

Chapter 1: Tears of the Sun

Part 1

Tell me, did you fall for a shooting star

One without a permanent scar

And did you miss me while you were looking for yourself out there?

Drops of Jupiter by Train

The penguin was dirty and tattered but Harry loved it like he'd loved no other toy. It had been Dudley's first, as all his broken toys had been, but the penguin was his favourite. There were a couple of toy soldiers with arms or legs missing, horses with no heads (Dudley seemed very keen on beheading most of his toys), cars with no wheels or broken doors and a small red dumper truck which only had one wheel missing. It was the most intact thing in Harry's cupboard, including himself. (Smack.)

His bed was little more than a stained mattress on the floor and he had one threadbare blanket, it was so thin that he slept in his clothes just to keep warm, he'd tried asking for another blanket once, but he never did again. Harry soon learned that it was best not to ask for things, best not to draw attention to himself in any way and he became more and more quiet until one day he just stopped speaking completely. (Batter. Throat. Squeeze.)

The penguin had one dark eye missing and one foot was hanging off by a small thread, as if someone had tried to yank it off. He'd sneaked into his aunt's sewing box one day to find a needle to try and sew it back on, but his uncle had caught him. Harry never tried to do it again. He was just very careful with the penguin's foot so that it wouldn't come off completely. He didn't want to hurt Patch. (Punch.)

The penguin was almost completely black except for a small patch of white below its throat and so that's what Harry named him, Patch. He kept Patch with him in his cupboard, but he never took the penguin with him when he was allowed out, for if they knew that he liked the penguin, he knew what would happen. It would disappear like the teddy bear he'd made the mistake of hugging close to his chest when he was younger. The bear was just gone one day and later he'd seen its head in the rubbish bin in the kitchen, its eyes gouged out. He didn't know whether it was Dudley who'd done it, or if it was his uncle or his aunt, but he knew that he had to save Patch from that fate at all costs. (Thump.)

So when he was ushered out of his cupboard to do his chores, he tucked Patch behind the box of Christmas decorations so that none of them would see him. Patch couldn't be hurt. As long as Patch was okay, he would be okay, he could cope with whatever they did to him. As long as he had Patch to cuddle up to at night, he would be fine. Patch was Harry's only friend. Harry wasn't allowed to play with the other neighbourhood children because he was so strange and the Dursleys didn't want the neighbours to find out about him or his strangeness. They never told him exactly what his strangeness entailed, only that he got it from his parents and they would soon squash it out of him.

(Slap. Smack. Punch. Batter. Thump. Whack.)

He was five years old, so his relatives had told him, but he didn't know that for sure as he'd never had a birthday. Harry didn't go to school, they told him he was too stupid to go to school, that the school didn't want anyone so stupid going there. Harry made the mistake of pointing out that wasn't the point of school to learn so that he wouldn't be stupid anymore? He never asked about it again. (Slap.)

He had no doubt that he was stupid, adults never lied, did they? And if his aunt and uncle said he was too stupid to go to school, it must be true.

Dudley came back from his first full day full of stories of all the friends he had made and how wonderful the teacher was and all the great toys they could play with. Harry could hear it all from his cupboard under the stairs, feeling a strange ache in his chest. He hugged Patch tighter to him and just for then, he wished he was still able to talk. He'd lost the knack somewhere along his few years and he didn't know how he was going to get it back. (Wallop.)

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The day his life changed was a Thursday, the reason he knew this was that Aunt Petunia had him make the breakfast on Thursdays. He was too short to reach the cooker, so he had to stand on two upturned Yellow Pages to reach it and fry the eggs uncle Vernon always wanted. Harry hated cooking eggs, didn't like the way the yellow yolk slid all over the place and it always made him feel slightly sick.

They guessed he didn't like eggs and so that's what he was fed, when they decided to feed him at all. Sometimes he never ate and he was in a state of almost constant hunger but he never complained about his lack of food. He knew what would happen if he did. (Thump.)

Sometimes he thought about running away, but where could he go? They were his only family, so they kept reminding him and even if he did have somewhere to go, he couldn't get out of the house. He was too short to reach the door handles of either the back or front door and he even had to stand on tip toes just to get into the bathroom. He'd tried the Yellow Pages trick by the back door, but he was still too short and his uncle caught him. He didn't try it again. (Smack.)

He didn't know why he was so distracted that day, but he burnt the eggs and both his aunt and uncle were livid with him. Aunt Petunia dragged him off the telephone directories by a firm grip on his wrist and shoved him back in his cupboard. She took the light bulb out and closed the door, locking him in the dark. Harry didn't cry or whimper, he was used to the dark and he had nothing else to do but lie down on his bed.

He wondered how long it would be before his aunt or uncle let him out again. Harry didn't know how long he'd been there when he felt the need to go to the loo. He pounded on the door to be let out, but no one came. His tummy was aching with holding back for so long and he sat doubled over on the edge of his mattress. He hadn't wet himself for a long time, but he needed to go. He didn't want to wet himself or his clothes, not after the last time that had happened. (Belt.) Then he remembered the little dumper truck. Could he pee in there and hide it maybe? Sneak it out to empty it in the bathroom later?

It was the only thing Harry could think of to do. He pounded on the door with small fists, but no one came to let him out. He wished now that he remembered how to speak, how to ask them to release him, but he couldn't. He opened his mouth, moved his tongue, but all he managed was a sort of grunting noise, nothing that resembled speech. He just didn't remember how to form words anymore.

Harry stood up and searched the shelf above his head for the toy lorry and then set it down on the floor. The light was so dim, all he could see was a grey shape on the floor, even though he knew the toy was red. It was going to be difficult to aim correctly, if he missed he would end up soiling his mattress. He didn't want to think of what would happen to him if that was indeed the case. (Wallop.)

He unzipped his shorts, Dudley's shorts really, all his clothes had once belonged to his much larger cousin and nothing except the socks fitted him. They'd never bothered to give him shoes, he didn't go anywhere. Harry stood there hesitating, the ache in his tummy getting worse the longer he did, but he felt a bit guilty about what he was about to do. It just seemed so naughty, so dirty, to pee somewhere that wasn't a toilet, but what else could he do? He needed to go really badly. He had to do it. He had to.

Harry started peeing, almost sighing in relief as the stream started.

A block of light startled him and he saw his uncle's bulk standing in the doorway. Harry tried to put himself away before his uncle saw what he'd been doing, but it was too late. Vernon had seen everything. His uncle yanked Harry's hand away from his groin, then pushed Harry's tummy, causing Harry to pee all over himself as he could no longer control it. He felt the wet warmth soak into his trousers and underwear, leaking down his legs and over his socks.

"You filthy brat!" roared Vernon as he took in Harry's now soaked clothes. "You're disgusting! Petunia, come and see what the pervert's done now!"

Harry felt his face heat with shame as his aunt hovered by the cupboard door and pursed her lips. "What are we going to do with you? Time and time again we teach you and teach you and still you behave like an animal! Get out of there at once!" she ordered.

Vernon moved away to let Harry out, he was glaring down at him and staring at Harry's groin. Harry tried to put himself away, he didn't like the way Vernon was staring at him, but then he never had. Petunia waved Harry in front of her with a tea towel towards the kitchen. She wouldn't touch him, not him who was so dirty and disgusting, clothes soaked with pee.

Vernon unlocked the back door and Petunia ordered him out onto the patio. "Get those filthy clothes off!" she commanded. Harry stood on one leg to remove his socks in turn, he was glad to get out of the wet clothes but he wasn't looking forward to what was going to happen afterwards. It was getting dark and he realised he must have been locked in his cupboard for a long time, no wonder he had to pee so badly.

Once Harry was completely naked, Petunia came out onto the patio, a length of hosepipe in her hands. All the lights had come on from the other houses, but none of the neighbours seemed to be outside. Petunia bent down to the wall near the kitchen window where there was a small brass tap. She hooked the hose up and Harry was shivering even before she turned the hose on him. Harry had never had a warm bath in his short life as far as he could recall, the only washes he ever received were these, his aunt hosing him down as if he were a dog. He was not allowed to bathe in their bathroom in case he contaminated it. Harry didn't know what the word meant, he just guessed it was something bad from the way they said it.

Vernon was standing by the back door giving Harry those funny looks again and Harry wished he was somewhere else, somewhere far away from these people who had never loved him. His feet were chilled from standing on the patio stones, there was a bit of frost in the air and he wanted to plead with Aunt Petunia to let him go in and sit by the fire, but he'd never been allowed to sit by the fire and he could not get his mouth to form words anyway. She hosed down his clothes first, as if they were more important than Harry.

When she finally turned the hose on Harry, he was almost knocked off his feet. His breath almost left his body, the water was so cold. It always was, he never knew what warm water felt like. He shivered, his teeth chattered as the water dripped from him onto the stones long before the hosing stopped. Silent tears dripped down his cheeks, he hoped they thought it was water dripping down his face. Petunia turned off the hose and just glared at him, not saying anything. Harry made no move to go back into the house even though he was so cold, he knew there was no way they would let him back in with him so wet.

Vernon turned back into the house and returned a few moments later, tossing something to Petunia. It was Harry's threadbare blanket from his cupboard. She threw it to Harry who caught it in shaking hands. "Dry yourself," she said, her face disgusted with him. Petunia went back into the house and turned around to him. "You can sleep outside tonight, like the disgusting animal you are so determined to be!" With that, she slammed the back door shut and Harry heard the lock turn. He pounded on the door until his hands were sore and bleeding, but no one opened the door.

He was crying and sobbing, the only sound he seemed able to make at the moment. The water was still dripping from him and he tried to dry himself with the blanket, but it was useless, it wasn't thick enough to dry him or warm him. He hung it round his shoulders, shivering as he sat down with his back against the door and wrapped his arms around his knees. He was afraid he was going to die because he was so cold. Hadn't he heard Aunt Petunia time and time again warn Dudley that he might 'catch his death of cold'? Was that going to happen to Harry? Is that what they wanted to do? To kill him? To let him die?

Harry rested his head on his knees and stared out into the darkness, his tears had dried now but he still felt awful, a hollow ache in his chest. His clothes were still wet from the hose, so he couldn't even get dressed to keep himself warm. Something moved on the edge of his vision, near the bottom of the garden. Oh, no. Had one of the neighbours seen what happened? Harry would be in so much trouble if the neighbours ever found out about him. (Thump.)

"Harry, don't be scared," came a voice and the figure stepped out from the apple tree. Much to his surprise, Harry wasn't frightened of the figure at all. It was very tall, dressed almost entirely in what looked like a black dress with full flowing arms that reminded him of wings. Dark glassy eyes stared down at Harry sadly. A long, hooked nose reminded Harry of a beak and there was a small patch of white beneath the figure's throat. Harry stood up, wrapped his blanket around his shoulders like a cloak and started walking towards the figure. He knew now what had happened.

Patch, his penguin, had come to life and was here to take him away.

TBC

Chapter 2: Tears of the Sun

Part 2

"Where are your clothes?" asked the figure and Harry pointed to the jumble of sodden rags. "You can't wear those." The man turned and said something low under his breath, Harry didn't hear what the words were, but when he turned back round he had a small pile of clothes in his hand along with a thick, fluffy towel. He set the clothes down on the patio and then began to dry Harry's hair. After that he rubbed Harry briskly with the towel, getting rid of the remaining droplets of water still clinging to his skin. No one had ever dried Harry like this before, he was expected to fend for himself, even as young as he was and he hoped he wasn't going to cry again. It was okay, he was safe now. Patch would never hurt him, not like the Dursleys.

The clothes fitted him perfectly, even the underwear and Harry was soon wrapped up in a warm pair of long trousers (his first ever pair), a vest, t-shirt and a jumper to keep him warm. Thick wool socks and another first, a pair of black shoes with laces. He felt very grown up in his new outfit and he smiled up at Patch. There was more to come, Patch tucked him up in a heavy coat, with fur round the hood and cuffs. He'd never been so warm in his life. There were bright red mittens and a scarf to go round his neck before Patch held out his hand.

Harry took the hand and they started walking towards the back gate. He glanced back at the house, but all the lights were out so he couldn't even see the shadows of his relatives. It soon wouldn't matter. Harry knew that once they were beyond the gate, he would never see the Dursleys again.

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For those first few minutes after Harry accepted his hand, Severus was sorely tempted to just take the boy and run, somewhere where he could keep him safe. It was a futile wish, he knew nowhere was safe for the boy, not now, not ever. He would have to do what he'd planned all along. He would take Harry to Hogwarts and hope that this time the headmaster would see sense and remove him permanently from the Dursleys' care. For the short walk to Little Whinging station he amused himself with a daydream that Dumbledore would allow the child to stay at Hogwarts, ostensibly with him as a guardian. It was just that, a dream, for there was no way that Dumbledore would allow Severus Snape guardianship of a child, no matter what had been promised to Lily.

It would have been quicker to Apparate to Hogwarts, but he had a feeling that the boy knew little of magic and he didn't want to scare him, so they were going by train. Harry stared at everything around him with wonder, wide-eyed and innocent. At least he hoped he was innocent, Severus hadn't forgotten the gleam he'd seen in the uncle's eyes when he had stared at Harry.

Harry hadn't spoken to him, but he kept smiling so Severus guessed he wasn't scared of him. "Have you been on a train before?" he asked Harry. The boy shook his head. Did he talk at all? Was he just wary of a stranger? "Can you speak?" Severus asked then, wondering how it looked to the other passengers that he was holding a very one sided conversation.

Harry shook his head and pointed to his mouth. He opened it and a sort of strangled grunt emerged. Severus wondered if it was physical or mental. Had the Dursleys traumatised him so much that speech was difficult for him? As they waited on Little Whinging station, a rather large man who resembled Vernon Dursley lumbered past them and Harry's face went completely white. He clutched Severus' leg and could not be persuaded to let go until the train arrived.

Once on the train, Severus removed Harry's coat, gloves and scarf, setting them on the luggage rack. He didn't want him to get overheated on the train. Severus sat Harry down in the seat next to his, but almost before the train left the station, the child had climbed out of his own seat and clambered onto Severus' lap. He curled up like a kitten and feel asleep against Severus' shoulder.

He had no idea that the weight of him would feel so good, would feel so right.

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Harry was now tucked up safely in the Hogwarts infirmary rather than Severus' arms. He was wearing a pair of pyjamas decorated with stars and moons, he'd been so surprised that there actually were such things as pyjamas, clothes you could wear to bed. He looked so small curled up under the blankets, blankets a lot warmer than what the Dursleys had given him.

"Severus, what were you thinking?" hissed the headmaster. "Abducting the boy from his family?"

"I didn't abduct him, I rescued him," protested Severus .

"Ssh, both of you. The boy needs his sleep." They both quietened down after the medi-witch's words. Severus had been very surprised, but relieved that Harry had trusted him enough to come with him and leave the Dursleys far behind. Obviously Harry's relatives hadn't bothered to inform him of the danger of strangers. What would be the point when it was his relatives Harry was in danger from?

"And what were you rescuing him from? Did he have to go to bed early as a punishment?" Albus chuckled as if that was all the child had to worry about. "You know how important it is that Harry stays with his aunt. The protection of his mother's blood - "

"Is fucking useless!" yelled Severus, his temper getting the better of him. They had no idea what Harry had endured at the hands of people who were supposed to care for him for the simple reason that no one had bothered to check up on him. Poppy glowered at him. "Sorry, Poppy. Have you examined the boy?" She nodded.

"It's not good, headmaster. There is no way in good conscience I can allow him to go back to that house."

"They were abusing him, Albus," said Severus. "He's so traumatised he doesn't even talk."

"Actually, Severus, that isn't the reason he's not speaking. Or at least not the only one. His vocal cords were damaged."

"Damaged, Poppy? How?" asked the headmaster."

"Well, as far as I can tell, someone tried to strangle him. It was an old injury, at least a few months."

"Strangled?" repeated Dumbledore as if he couldn't quite believe what he was hearing.

"That wasn't all, headmaster. I've healed them now, but Harry was covered in bruises, some fading, some fresh. He's had his left leg broken twice, it hadn't healed properly, any longer and he would have been left with a permanent limp. There were other bones broken in the past too. His collarbone, scapula, wrist, jaw and shoulder. He is also severely malnourished and if Severus hadn't found him when he did, he would have been suffering from hypothermia."

"So, Severus, Poppy, finding Harry in distress tonight, this was not a one off incident?"

"No, Albus, this abuse has been going on for years. Why did no one check up on him?" Severus didn't bother mentioning that tonight's incident, even if a one off was one incident too many. What were the Dursleys thinking? Leaving a child naked and wet outside in the middle of November? Did they hope to kill him? Was that their intention all along?

"Have you healed his throat, Poppy? Can he speak now?" asked Dumbledore.

"He's able to, physically, yes, but he still might find it difficult to talk due to trauma. He is also in need of glasses, he's short sighted. I'll get an Occulist to come in and see him this weekend. I wouldn't recommend questioning him for a few days yet."

"What do you want to question him for? It's obvious what's happened, isn't it? The Dursleys abused him."

"I would like to hear that from Harry himself, Severus," sighed Dumbledore. "It is not the only explanation."

"No? What else could it be?" demanded Severus.

"That a wizard had been casting spells on Harry so that it looks like his relatives have been abusing him. Then we remove him from their care, from his mother's blood protection. Make it easier to get to him."

"You don't honestly believe that, headmaster? No one besides you and Minerva knew where the boy was."

"And you, Severus. How did you know where to find Harry tonight?" Dumbledore's eyes were cold as he stared at the youngest member of his staff. Severus' past was coming back to haunt him as he knew it would, but his chest still ached with the disappointed way Albus spoke to him. Was he never to be trusted then? Even though he'd - but it was useless to think of that now. Harry was what was important here but to explain he would have to tell them about the dreams. They'd probably lock him up in St. Mungo's before you could say 'Divination'.

"I had dreams about him. About the abuse, I dreamt of the house where he was, the cupboard." Severus shuddered, they were more than dreams, he knew it now. He had felt Harry's abuse, for in the dreams it was as if he'd been sharing the boy's mind, his pain, his humiliation. The little boy in the bed may have been James' son, but no child deserved what the Dursleys had put him through.

"Cupboard?" queried Poppy. "What do you mean?"

"That was where he spent most of his time, they locked him in a cupboard under the stairs. He didn't have a bedroom. He was shut in like rubbish, you can't send him back there, headmaster, you can't."

"Well, being locked in the dark wouldn't help his eyes any," said Poppy softly. "No wonder his eyes are not one hundred per cent."

"I never knew you were a Seer, Severus," said Dumbledore carefully. "These dreams, they were prophetic in nature?"

"No, Albus, I think I was seeing what was happening to him at the time it was happening, not a prophecy."

"Curious," said Albus. "However you are right, he cannot go back there. If his mother's blood does not protect him from abuse by his family, it will not protect him if Death Eaters wish to gain entry. He will have to be sent somewhere else but where? Who can we trust with such a task as to keep him safe? He has to be kept safe, Severus. In every way."

"The Diggorys?" suggested Poppy. "Amos is an Auror and they have a son, Cedric, not much older than Harry."

"I don't think sending Harry to a family with an only child is the best course of action. He needs to feel part of a family, a large family who would look after him like he was one of their own."

"You're not seriously suggesting the Weasleys, Albus?" snorted Severus. He could think of few things worse than being thrust into the middle of that rowdy lot. Then he remembered what Harry had endured at the Dursleys' hands. Yes, there were plenty of worse things. Despite being poor and keen on Muggles to boot, the Weasleys were first and foremost a loving family. Harry could do worse, a lot worse. "Fine," said Severus. "The Weasleys are a good choice."

"So glad you approve, Severus," said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye. Severus knew full well the man would pick who he liked no matter what he'd said.

"You know what I promised Lily," said Severus softly, glancing at the small form of Harry in the bed.

"I know, Severus, but you also know it is impossible. You're unmarried, unbonded, not to mention your workload. How are you going to look after Harry when you teach? It's for the best, you'll see."

"I'd have figured out something," he knew he sounded petulant but he couldn't help it.

"I'm sorry, Severus. My answer would still be no."

Severus nodded. As if he had expected anything else. His past would not be so soon forgotten, by either of them.

TBC

Chapter 3: Tears of the Sun

Part 3

Harry woke up and for a few moments he didn't know where he was, for he was not in the usual darkness of his cupboard, but somewhere bright and white. Then he remembered the castle Patch had taken him to last night. For some reason everyone there was calling Patch a different name, Severus. It had confused him at first. A lot of things confused him but he soon realised that of course Patch would have a different name. He'd heard Dudley and one of his friends outside his cupboard discussing their comics and Superman was an ordinary man by day and a superhero by night. That's what Patch was he realised, he was Severus during the day and a penguin rescuer by night. It made perfect sense.

There was a nice nurse lady who'd given him hot chocolate last night, he'd never had chocolate of any sort before and his mouth watered as he remembered the rich, creamy taste. There'd been a man with a long white beard who was dressed really funny, but Harry didn't want to laugh in case he might get hit. The people he'd met didn't seem to want to hit him, but how could he really be sure? What if he did something wrong? He was always doing things wrong, so the Dursleys kept telling him.

He was lying on a bed, a real bed, not just a mattress and he couldn't believe how soft it felt. He even had a pillow and something fluffy on top of the blankets that the nurse lady had called a quilt. Everything smelled really nice too, fresh and clean unlike his old musty mattress and thin blanket. Maybe they smelled of flowers, but Harry had never seen any flowers or ever smelled them so he didn't know.

He yawned and stretched, his eyes were sore again. They always got very sore in the mornings and it hurt to look at things that were so bright. He was used to the dark. The windows were pretty, with little coloured pictures in them. "Harry, you're awake!" It was the nurse lady, she had on a long frock with a frilly white apron that almost reached the floor. "Do you remember me? I'm Madam Pomfrey, I helped you last night."

Harry nodded and she clucked her tongue at him. "Now, now, none of that young man, your throat is perfectly fine, you should be able to talk properly now. Go on, say something for me."

Harry tried, he really did, but nothing came out. "Hmm, we'll have to work on that. We'll get you some breakfast and then we can get you fitted for glasses. How does that sound?"

Harry's tummy grumbled and she laughed, but not at him, not in that cruel way the Dursleys had, but just because she found Harry's growling tummy funny. Madam Pomfrey clicked her fingers and a few moments later a rather strange creature appeared with floppy ears and a very large nose. "Binky, please can we have some cornflakes and some toast for Mr. Potter along with a glass of orange juice."

"Anything for Mr. Potter, Miss," said the creature and it disappeared again. Harry wondered who Mr. Potter was and it wasn't until the creature returned with a tray and set it on the table over Harry's bed that he realised he must be Mr. Potter. Harry Potter.

It was the first time he knew his full name.

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After Ginny's birth, the Healer had told Molly in no uncertain terms that she should never consider another pregnancy, it was too dangerous. She'd been disappointed, of course she had, she'd always wanted a large family and even though lots of people looked down on them for having so many children Seven? In this day and age? It's outrageous!, Molly never regretted having any of them. Oh, there were days when she was exasperated with the twins' pranks or Percy's tantrums but she loved them all and there was a hollow ache in her useless womb when it finally hit home that she would never have another child.

Until the day Dumbledore informed them that he wanted them to become the guardians to five year old Harry Potter.

Molly's heart ached as Dumbledore skimmed over what had happened to him while supposedly under his relatives' care. That poor boy, there was no doubt in Molly's mind that they would accept the charge of Harry's welfare, but she and Arthur decided to discuss it with the rest of their children. Bill and Charlie were already at Hogwarts and they could find no objections to having another child at the Burrow. Percy was a bit obstinate at first, Molly knew he felt he got too little attention as it was with the twins always making mischief, hence his tantrums, even though he was nine.

"I'm not sharing my room," said Percy with a pout and folded his arms over his chest.

"No one is asking you to, sweetheart," said Molly. "But I'm sure we'll fit Harry in somewhere."

"He can share with me," said four year old Ginny.

Molly laughed. "No, dear, I don't think so. Harry's a boy. Boys and girls don't share."

"Why?" It was Ginny's favourite word of the moment, thank goodness she'd got past the phase of saying 'no' to everything.

"They just can't," said Arthur with a small smile.

"Me then," said Ron. "We can be like twins, can't we Mum?"

"No, we want him to share with us," said Fred.

"That's very kind of you boys, but I think Harry would be happiest with Ron, with someone his own age. Are we all agreed, then? Harry can come and live with us?"

Seven sets of red heads nodded. "Good," said Molly. "Severus is bringing him later today."

Bill and Charlie paled so much their freckles disappeared. "S- Snape? Professor Snape?" they asked worriedly. Dumbledore had allowed the two of them off school for the weekend so that Harry's future could be discussed with all of the Weasleys, but really they should still have been at school. "He's not coming here?" wailed Charlie.

"What have you two been up to?" demanded Molly, her mother's intuition telling her that something was not quite on the level.

"Nothing," they both said at once, rather too quickly for it to be have been anything but a lie.

"Bill," warned Molly, her eyes boring into her eldest child's face.

"Um, okay, before we left to come home we might have - um - done something to Snape."

"Professor Snape, what did you do to him?"

"Bill learned this new charm in Transfiguration, how to turn someone's hair a different colour. We turned his hair green before we left. He doesn't know it was us though."

"You turned your professor's hair green? What is up with you two? When he gets here, you will apologise to him at once, do you hear me?"

"But Mum - " protested Bill.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Mum. Sorry Mum," they both said, chastened.

"Before they get here, we have to explain some things about Harry."

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Severus was surprised that Dumbledore had given him the responsibility of delivering Harry to the Weasleys'. Wasn't he afraid that Severus would run off with Harry and not come back this time? For Severus had to admit if even only to himself that he had thought of it more than once. He felt it in his bones that Voldemort wasn't really gone and once he returned, he would be after Harry. The boy who'd almost destroyed him.

It was becoming obvious that Harry had formed an attachment to him, Poppy called it 'sweet', but Severus thought of it as foolishness. Not that the boy was stupid, he was intelligent despite not having uttered a word since his escape from the Dursleys. The Muggles hadn't told him who he was, or even what he was. Magic was something that had never been discussed while in their dubious care.

It was decided that Harry's exposure to the Wizarding world happened gradually, which was why they were making their way to the Burrow on foot, after having travelled by train, bus and then a two mile walk from Ottery St. Catchpole bus station. The house was so remote that even buses didn't travel that far.

Harry was flagging long before they reached the house so Severus picked the boy up and cradled him against his left hip, Harry as still so thin it was like lifting a Snitch. The weight barely registered as Harry hung his arms around Severus' neck without needing to be told. Severus had already sent along a trunk filled with some clothes and toys for Harry. He'd bought them on his last trip to Hogsmeade and had to guess what size would fit him, for Harry was small for his age. The clothes were magical, so no doubt Molly could charm them to fit if needed.

Harry wriggled in his arms and Severus turned to see the Burrow looming in the distance. It was a multi-storied crooked edifice that could have come straight from the nursery rhyme. Chickens squawked and scattered as they approached the path, two pigs lounged in a mud bath and gnomes flitted in and out of various pairs of wellington boots by the front gate.

Severus set Harry down on the doorstep and just as he was about to knock on the stout wooden door, it was opened and for the first time in living memory he was wrapped in a woman's embrace.

"Severus! At last, come in, come in. Everyone's so excited to be meeting Harry." She let go of Severus and was about to transfer her motherly ministrations to Harry, who suddenly bolted to hide behind Severus' body and clung to his leg. He peeped out from behind, as if not quite sure what to make of Molly Weasley.

"Harry has difficulty accepting affection," said Severus, remembering only too well the panic attack Harry had endured when Madam Pomfrey had attempted to embrace him. He hadn't calmed down until Severus could get to the infirmary after his classes.

"But not from you?" asked Molly, smiling. "I think you've got a fan, Severus. You like Severus, don't you, Harry?"

Harry nodded, but he still not relinquish his hold on Severus' body.

"Harry, this is Mrs. Weasley. She and her family are going to be looking after you from now on," said Severus. Harry shook his head and clung to Severus' leg all the tighter.

"Mrs. Weasley sounds so formal, Severus," said Molly. "I always think of my mother-in-law when people call me that. How about Aunt Molly, Harry, would you like that?"

The boy went completely rigid and Severus could hear his breathing change, rapid and too shallow as his grip tightened.

"No, Molly, not Aunt and Uncle. The connotations..."

"Oh, Severus. I'm sorry, of course. That was tactless of me. I didn't mean to upset him. And he still hasn't spoken?"

"Not a word."

Molly stood aside and waved them into the hall. The only way Harry was going to go into the house was if Severus went too, in fact Molly seemed to be expecting it. The weight of guilt almost crushed his chest as he stepped over the threshold. This woman's brothers had been murdered by Death Eaters, by Severus' former associates and yet she was inviting him into her house as if he was a guest, a friend.

Severus had never had a friend before and he had no idea how to act around someone who seemed to genuinely like him. He was used to scorn, ridicule and name calling, but he wasn't used to acceptance. Harry took his hand and pulled him deeper into the house. He stared down at the small boy, his emerald eyes framed by his new glasses and his chest ached at how much those eyes resembled Lily's. He'd never had a friend, but he'd almost had one in Lily Evans and that was just another thing that he knew he could never forgive the Marauders for.

All too soon they were in the Weasley kitchen, where he recognised two of his own students, Bill and Charlie, but he did not know the rest of the clan as none of them were old enough for Hogwarts yet. The children all swarmed around Harry, staring at him open mouthed in surprise. They were probably all wondering how this waif had defeated Voldemort.

Introductions were made, hands were shaken, but still Harry refused to move from his comfort zone, that of clinging like a limpet to Severus' leg.

"Mum, can I show Harry our room?" asked Ron. Although both boys were of an age, Ron already towered above Harry by a few inches. "We have bunkbeds. You can have the top bunk if you want."

Molly glanced in alarm at Harry's small frame and suggested that Harry might be better off in the bottom bunk.

"Would you like to see your new bedroom, Harry?" said Molly. Harry glanced up at Severus, as if pleading for something, but what? Permission? Rescue? If only he would talk then they would know what he wanted, what he needed.

"Go on, Harry," urged Severus. "I'll be here when you get back." Harry gave his legs one last hug before holding out his hand for Ron to take and then the two of them bounded upstairs.

"He's so skinny!" said Bill.

"Like a scarecrow," added Charlie and Molly rounded on them.

"That's enough, both of you! I don't want to hear another word against that poor boy, do you hear? We already told you what Harry's been through. He needs our support. There are to be no pranks, no tricks on him, he might not understand. Harry wasn't brought up like the rest of you in a family, he needs time to adjust and if I hear that any one of you are giving him a hard time, you'll have me to answer to. Are we clear?" she glared at each of her children in turn.

"Yes, Mum," they chorused. Severus was impressed, he thought Molly would make a fine teacher and he realised that of course she was, all the Weasley children were home schooled until they went to Hogwarts.

Molly sought out her two eldest again. "Don't you have something to say to Professor Snape?"

"Sorry, Professor," they said in unison.

"For what?" Not that Severus didn't know, his hair hadn't turned green by itself. He just liked to see miscreants squirm.

"For turning your hair green."

"That was you two, was it? You know I will have to punish you. Detention and lines. See me after breakfast on Monday for the details."

"Yes, sir."

He half expected the parents to wade in with some complaint about how he was treating their little darlings unfairly, he got Howlers to that effect almost every week, but Molly just nodded as if she found the punishment both fair and adequate.

"Will you stay for dinner, Severus?" asked Molly. Severus wondered if she'd only asked to be polite and felt that he might be intruding, but faced with the warmth of the Weasleys and a cold return to Hogwarts without Harry, he was reluctant to leave the Burrow behind just yet.

"Thank you, Molly, I'd be delighted."

TBC

Chapter 4: Tears of the Sun

Part 4

The first night was the worst, Harry would not let go of Severus' leg, crying and screaming without words, as if his heart was breaking. He seemed afraid that maybe Severus was going to leave him forever and the only way Molly could actually get the boy to bed was for Severus to carry him upstairs and stay with him until he'd fallen asleep.

Harry settled down after that, but he was still very shy and in the months leading up to his sixth birthday, he still hadn't spoken. All of them had tried to get him to speak, but to no avail. Harry just couldn't seem to be able to bring himself to talk.

It wasn't until Harry's sixth birthday that he met Nana Weasley. Cynthia Weasley was among many of those pure blood families who had fallen on hard times during You-Know-Who's reign of terror and hadn't quite recovered from the shock. She still wore robes of silk and lace, even though she barely had two knuts to rub together. She didn't often visit the Burrow, in fact she hadn't even met Ron nor Ginny yet.

She still hadn't forgiven Arthur for marrying so far beneath him (in her opinion, not Arthur's, Molly knew Arthur had no doubts about his wife) and it galled her that the Burrow had been Molly's inheritance, that the Weasleys no longer had a family home to speak off. It had to be sold to pay of Cynthia's debts and she was now living in a rented cottage in Hogsmeade.

Molly tried to get along with the woman for Arthur's sake, but it was difficult when every other sentence from the woman's mouth was normally an insult. When Cynthia arrived for Harry's birthday party, she took one look at the only dark haired child in amongst all the red and sniffed, handing her valise to Arthur.

"So this is the orphan you took in, eh?" she peered over her glasses at the boy in question. "Stand up, then, let me see you."

Harry stared at her and stood up. Molly could see he was trembling. She wanted to wrap her arms around him and hug him, but she knew what sort of fuss Cynthia would make of that. "What's your name?" she demanded.

"Harry," said Molly.

"I asked him, not you," said Cynthia. "What's your name?"

"He doesn't speak," said Arthur.

"Nonsense! Of course he can speak! There's nothing wrong with you, is there? So, I ask you again, what is your name?" She kept on pestering Harry for half an hour or more until the tears were dripping down his glasses and Molly's heart lurched. "You're a bit big for the cry baby act, aren't you? Tell me your name."

"H - Harry," the boy sobbed and Molly almost fainted. Cynthia had done with her brisk manner what all their loving understanding had not. She'd gotten Harry to speak. His voice was wobbly, whether from the tears or because he hadn't spoken in so long, Molly didn't know. She could hardly wait to tell Severus, he was due any minute, he wouldn't miss Harry's birthday.

"And what age are you today, Harry?" asked Cynthia and she was smiling at Harry.

"S - six, Miss," he replied.

"You can call me Nana, Harry. Now, aren't any of you going to give your Nana a hug?"

The children looked a bit unsure at that, as well they would be, for Nana Weasley had never initiated a hug before. It wasn't long before she was clasped by all of the Weasley children, but Harry still held back. "What about you, Harry? Are you going to give your Nana a hug?"

Harry looked at the floor, then at Arthur and Molly and then he wrapped his arms around Cynthia's middle but darted away rather quickly. It was a start though, for Harry had never hugged anyone besides Severus of his own volition before.

The doorbell rang and Harry's smile could have illuminated the whole room, Harry knew who was at the door. Molly smiled at him before going to answer it. Severus stood on the porch, his arms laden down with a couple of gaily wrapped presents in silver and green. She ushered him into the kitchen, where he was almost knocked off his feet by an over enthusiastic missile commonly known as Harry Potter.

"Severus!" he squealed in delight, wrapping his arms around Severus' lower body. Severus looked at Molly and Arthur in surprise and set the presents down on the kitchen table, along with all the other gifts.

"How long?"

"Just today," said Molly.

"It's my birthday Severus and I've got a Nana and Ron and Fred and George gave me the bumps and we're going to have cake and ice cream and jelly and I get presents and we're going to play lots of games and Ron said that I have to make a wish on my birthday and I can't tell anyone what it is or it won't come true," Harry said it all in a rush with barely a breath between words, as if now that he'd discovered he could talk he wanted to get everything out in case he forgot again.

"That's wonderful, Harry," said Severus, ruffling his hair. Harry hadn't grown much in the seventh months he'd been with them, but Molly hoped a bit more time in their care with proper nutrition that he would soon become the strong child he should have been. He looked so frail in amongst her boisterous lot that she was always worrying about him.

"Right, now that everyone's here, we can start the party," said Molly. "Charlie, can you clear the presents off the table so I can set it?"

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The children fed and watered with all those delicious party goodies were now outside trying to get rid of some of that excess energy. Fred, George and Charlie were playing tag, Ron was riding on Harry's new tricycle and Harry himself was on his very first broomstick, a present from Severus. Severus was out with the children, holding on to the tail end of Harry's broom so that he couldn't hover too far off the ground.

Molly was watching from the kitchen window as she did the washing up, with Cynthia's help. As usual, Cynthia's help consisted of complaining that Molly wasn't doing it right. Molly normally used magic to clean the dishes, but not with Cynthia there. The woman had a terrible effect on her magic as well as everything else.

"I don't like him," said Cynthia as she glanced at Harry and Severus outside.

"Harry's just shy, he just needs to get used to us."

"Not Harry, he's a fine child, a credit to you and Arthur," she said, praise indeed coming from Cynthia. "No, it's Severus Snape I'm worried about. Don't you know what he is?"

"He was cleared of all charges," said Molly stiffly. She and Arthur were of the few who knew that Severus had been spying on Voldemort for the Order of the Phoenix, but Cynthia had no idea that her son and daughter-in-law were even remotely involved in that resistance so she had to bite down on the angry words she wanted to hurl at the woman.

"Oh, I'm not talking about his dubious past as a Death Eater, although that would give anyone pause. I'm very surprised that Professor Dumbledore allows a man like that to teach at a school full of impressionable children."

"What are you talking about, Cynthia?" demanded Molly.

"Don't tell me you don't know of the man's - inclinations?"

Inclinations. "You mean the fact that he's gay? Yes, Cynthia I do know and it is not anyone else's business."

"Not even when he's around children so much? You should be more careful who you allow around my grandchildren, not to mention young Harry. Haven't you seen him touching the boy?"

"How dare you accuse Severus of something so vile!" shrieked Molly, her anger causing her magic to flare and a couple of plates shattered in the sink. "Severus would never do that. Just because he likes men, men, does not mean he is a child molester."

"It's unnatural," protested Cynthia. "Wizards are dying off, soon there'll be none of us left. Tell me, what do homosexuals contribute to society? Nothing because they can't have children. I'd watch him around the children if I were you."

"Get out!" hissed Molly between clenched teeth. "Get out of my house!"

"It's Arthur's house too and my son doesn't want me to leave. I think I might have to have a word with Professor Dumbledore, air my concerns."

"Air your - God, you are a vicious, spiteful woman! That man has been through enough, you don't need to go telling tales to Dumbledore."

"I'm not doing it out of spite, I am only concerned for the children's welfare."

This from a woman who had never even seen Ginny or Ron until today.

"Do what you like," said Molly, throwing down the dishtowel in defeat. She knew the woman would.

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Severus was coerced into playing hide and seek with the Weasley children and Harry, who seemed to have come out of his shell a lot today. He wasn't looking forward to leaving but he knew he couldn't take advantage of the Weasleys' hospitality forever. It was okay to come to visit Harry on his birthday, but he couldn't keep coming, Harry would never grow if he kept clinging to Severus. The Weasleys were his family now and Severus was just going to have to let go, no matter how much of a wrench it was going to be.

Harry insisted that Severus read him and Ron a bedtime story, Severus looked at Molly who smiled and nodded her head. "Go on, Severus. He's never asked for one before. I'll just give them their bath and get them ready for bed."

Cynthia Weasley sniffed and shared a strange look with her daughter-in-law. Severus was used to it, he was used to people disliking him and Cynthia's snide remarks washed over him like a river rushing over a pebble. The trick was not to let it get to you or you'd soon find yourself in despair.

Arthur made some tea as the younger children were also sent to bed with Bill and Charlie allowed up a little bit longer as it was the summer holidays. Severus sipped his tea and it wasn't until he'd finished that Molly returned downstairs and gave him a grin. "They're all yours, Severus. The very top of the house, it's the only bedroom there."

"Thank you, Molly," said Severus as he made his way to the boys' bedroom. Both of them were sitting propped up on pillows on the bottom bunk, hair still damp from their bath. "You have to sit here," said Harry, patting the bed in the middle of the two of them. Severus smiled and settled himself against the headboard, two little imps settling themselves on either side of him as Harry handed him a small book.

The Adventures of Pip the Penguin

"You like penguins then?" he asked.

"I do," replied Harry. "They're the best."

"I like dogs," said Ron. "But I don't like spiders."

"Me neither," said Harry and Severus felt a small shudder from both boys as they curled up against his sides.

Severus opened the book and started reading all about the penguin and long before he'd finished the story, both boys were fast asleep. He closed it and set it on the bedside cabinet, before trying to move without disturbing them. As he stood up, the two boys as if sensing that he'd gone, cuddled close to one another and settled with their arms around each other, Harry's head tucked under Ron's chin. It would be a shame to disturb them, so he hoped Molly wouldn't mind if he left Ron to sleep in Harry's bunk tonight.

They were probably worn out from all the excitement of Harry's party and Severus belatedly realised that it had been the first birthday party Harry had ever had. The Weasleys would make sure it wouldn't be the last, for no matter how tight money might have been, Severus knew that the children lacked for nothing.

They were always well groomed at school and none of them looked underfed, even Harry was starting to fill out a bit more, even though his height hadn't changed much. The Weasleys were the best thing that could have happened to Harry, he knew it even though he sometimes wished that things were different. Severus kissed both boys on the forehead before he went back downstairs and landed smack in the middle of a family argument.

"Mother, Molly, please!" begged Arthur, casting worried glances in his sons' direction. "This is not the time or the place for this discussion. Think of the children!"

"It's your children I'm worried about, Arthur, letting that man into the house!" yelled Cynthia.

Molly turned and saw Severus standing by the stairs. "Severus, are they asleep?"

"Yes, I'd better get going. I wouldn't want to outstay my welcome."

"You're always welcome here, Severus," said Arthur as he walked Severus to the door. "I'm sorry about my mother, Severus."

"Arthur, please. This is not the first time someone with my preferences has been accused of this but I can assure you that I would never do that to any child."

"I know, Severus. And I meant it, you can come and visit us any time you like."

"Thank you, Arthur. That means a lot to me."

TBC

Chapter 5: Tears of the Sun

Part 5

Over the years Harry's memories of the Dursleys' abuse faded from his conscious mind, but he frequently had nightmares and would wake the whole household with his screams. He dreamt of blood and pain and death and it was only after Molly would take him in his arms and rock him that he could get back to sleep. More than once he dreamt of his parents' murders, the green light that snuffed out their lives so quickly. His mother had died to save him, he realised as he got older. Why had Voldemort tried to kill him? Sometimes he got the impression that people knew but weren't telling him.

Harry soon learned that touching from the Weasleys did not mean pain or fear for him and gradually he allowed their hugs and their soft words to soothe away the hurt Dursleys had left him with. It wasn't long before Harry started calling Arthur and Molly Mum and Dad, as they were the only parental figures he'd ever known.

As he got older, they discussed his parents more with him, as well about how Voldemort had murdered them, he learned about their life before Harry. Their friends, their days at school, photographs of them. Harry had defeated Voldemort while still only a baby. This last part Harry couldn't understand, how could he have defeated such a bad man and yet had to endure years of the Dursleys' abuse? Shouldn't he have been able to stop that if he was a wizard?

His parents had been betrayed by one of their friends, Peter Pettigrew, who was now in prison, sentenced on the testimony of another of his parents' friends, Sirius Black, who was also Harry's godfather. Harry had never met his godfather, as he lived in France and was the Transfigurations professor at Beauxbatons, but every birthday Sirius always sent him presents and a long letter. Harry wrote back, feeling very grown up that he had someone to write letters to.

Harry grew to love the Weasleys, he'd been showered with nothing but love and affection ever since he arrived, but there was one thing spoiling his idyll. Severus hardly ever came to visit any more. He only came on Harry's birthdays, he had to go a whole year without seeing him. Harry listened avidly to the elder children's tales of him at school, keen to learn everything and anything about the man who had rescued him. He didn't learn much except the fact that Severus was a very hard teacher and seemed to be unfair on any of those not in his House.

When Harry got to Hogwarts, he hoped he was placed in Slytherin, although he had not mentioned that to anyone.

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Harry woke up on his eleventh birthday with excitement coursing through his veins. Surely, surely today his Hogwarts letter had come? Ron had been so excited ever since he received his letter in March, his actually arrived a few days before his birthday, but so far no owl had arrived bearing cream parchment for Harry. All the Weasley children had been excited to go to Hogwarts, it was so grown up to be going away to school, getting your first wand, learning magic. Harry was excited too, but the main reason for his excitement was that he would get to see Severus every day.

Harry smiled to himself and hugged a pillow to his chest, imagining that it was Severus, his Patch, giving him a hug. He lay like that for a while, not really wanting to leave the comfort of his bed, knowing that no one would complain if he had a lie in, especially on his birthday. It was a world away from the Dursleys and his bright mood vanished as of it had never been, remembering what he'd endured there.

Sometimes he couldn't stop thinking about it, how awful they'd been to him. Little things could set him off, like the time they'd played a game and George had locked him in the shed. He had been hysterical, he'd cried so much he'd made himself sick and Molly had given George a good telling off before Harry was settled in bed with a hot water bottle and Molly reading to him from his penguin book. George never did it again and for weeks afterwards he was trailing after Harry and kept asking him if he was all right.

The summer holidays were the only time everyone was at the Burrow, Bill and Charlie had both left school now but there'd still be plenty of his brothers left at Hogwarts while Harry and Ron attended. Harry found it a little disconcerting when everyone was at home, the noise of so many people made him a little uncomfortable when he'd been so used to the quietness of just him, Ron and Ginny. He wondered how he was going to cope in a school filled with hundreds of people.

Harry sighed and got up, maybe the post owls had arrived by now. He had a quick wash in the bathroom (hot water!) and got dressed in the bathroom in a pair of a jeans and a t-shirt before making his way downstairs. Ron had no shyness when it came to his body and got changed in their bedroom even when Harry was there. Harry was not yet comfortable in his own skin to undress in front of anyone and it had been a long time since he needed anyone to help him bathe.

He'd actually been a bit scared of the large, claw-footed tub at first, feared he might drown in it and he laughed at himself now, at how silly he used to be. He'd come a long way from that shy boy who'd hidden behind Severus' legs. Harry wasn't so shy now, but he still liked to hug Severus and sit in his lap, but last year he'd been rebuffed when he tried to sit in the man's lap on his birthday. "But why?" Harry had asked, not understanding.

"Now that you're older, it would not be considered appropriate," Severus had replied. Harry hadn't understood, but he'd respected the man's wishes, even though it hurt.

"Have the owls arrived yet, Mum?" asked Harry as he sat down at the breakfast table.

"No, dear, not yet." Molly smiled at him and ruffled his hair. "Be patient, I'm sure they'll be here soon. Never thought I'd see the day when children were so excited to be going to school."

"It's a magic school," said Harry as if that explained everything. "What time is Severus coming?"

"Oh, Harry dear, I'm sorry. He couldn't make it today."

"He's not coming?" he would not cry, he wouldn't, despite the sudden burst of pain in his chest. Harry had been looking forward to Severus' visit all year.

"No, Professor Dumbledore needs him for something."

"Oh." Couldn't it have waited until after his birthday? Harry trailed his spoon through his cornflakes but made no move to eat any of them. His appetite had fled. He wanted to see Severus and despite his best efforts to control himself, the tears leaked from the corners of his eyes and landed with soft plops on the tablecloth.

"Oh, Harry, I know how much you wanted him to be here. He'd be here if he could," Molly said.

"He promised! He promised!" sobbed Harry, flinging his chair back and running out of the house. He needed to be alone, to cry to his heart's content at what he saw as Severus' betrayal. He promised he'd come for every birthday, he'd promised. Harry sank down by one of the apple trees and just bawled, his chest and throat aching with the effort of just letting all the pain out.

Even after he'd finished crying, Harry made no move to go back into the house. It was his birthday, the day he would get his Hogwarts letter, he should be feeling so much happier than this, but he didn't. There was something lurking in his chest, waiting for something terrible to happen and he didn't know how to get rid of the horrible feeling.

"Harry? Are you out here?" Ron called from near the house.

"Over here," said Harry, sniffling a little. He shouldn't be so miserable. After all, he knew that Severus had demands on his time, other demands than a silly cry baby. Harry took off his glasses and rubbed at his eyes, unwilling to let Ron know he'd been crying over Severus not being able to come to his birthday party.

"What's wrong, Harry?" asked Ron, sinking down on his knees in front of Harry.

"Nothing, I just needed to be on my own for a bit," said Harry, leaning his head back against the tree trunk. It felt good, solid against his back. Sometimes he felt he was walking on quicksand lately, his emotions were all over the place and Arthur had already given him the talk of what might be happening to him in the not so distant future. It seemed like changes in mood were the least of his worries, puberty sounded like hell and he'd been as red as a beetroot the whole time Arthur had been discussing things.

Talking with your foster father about your changing body and wanking techniques was something Harry hoped he'd never have to do again. Had they all been as embarrassed as him?

"Ron, er, did you get the, um, the talk?"

"From Dad? God, yes, how embarrassing was that? So - have you - you know - done it yet?"

"Done what?" They were only eleven, Ron surely couldn't think Harry had a girlfriend stashed away somewhere.

Ron made a rather graphic indication with his hand and Harry flushed. "No, why have you?" Good God, he could hardly believe he was having this conversation.

"No, I tried but it didn't do much for me."

"Maybe we need to be a bit older," said Harry.

"Yeah," said Ron, glancing up. "The owls are here."

They both ran back to the house, Harry's heart was pounding in his chest as the owls swooped in. There was his usual gift and letter from Sirius and a strange owl held out it's leg to Molly, who removed the powder blue envelope from its claw. She turned the letter over and stared quizzically at the seal on the back before handing it to Harry.

"Mum?" he queried, not liking the sudden silence in an otherwise noisy kitchen.

"Harry, dear, it's not from Hogwarts. It's from Beauxbatons."

TBC

Chapter 6: Tears of the Sun

Part 6

Fire-calls were made, discussions ensued throughout the day with Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall. It wasn't a mistake, Harry had not been offered a place at Hogwarts.

His birthday party that year was subdued. Harry felt so empty inside. No Ron. No twins. No Percy and no Severus. How was he expected to bear it? Thinking that he'd been going to Hogwarts, he'd been excited about going away to school, but now it was a sense of dread that washed over him. No one he knew would be at Beauxbatons. His godfather was there, but Harry didn't really know him, just from his letters and the Weasleys' discussions about the Marauders at school. It wasn't the same thing.

Molly and Arthur sent everyone else to bed early so that they could discuss things with Harry. The birthday spread still lay on the kitchen table, Harry wasn't the only one who hadn't much appetite that day and there were still plenty of treats left.

"Am I not good enough for Hogwarts?" asked Harry, his voice almost breaking on the words. All he could think of was that he wasn't wanted, like the Dursleys hadn't wanted him.

"Oh, Harry, it isn't that at all," said Molly, helping herself to a slice of Harry's chocolate birthday cake and cutting it up into smaller and smaller pieces until it was nothing little more than crumbs on the plate. Harry felt like that cake. Crushed into tiny pieces.

"No, you're too advanced for Hogwarts, Harry," added Arthur. "Do you remember the entrance exam you took last year?"

Harry nodded. It was the first time he and Ron had been allowed to do any practical magic and they were given school wands to see what spells they could do, if any. Then had come written papers for each subject, Molly had tutored all the children before they sat the exam and they also had to attempt to brew a potion for Severus. No one at the time had told him how well he did, but it was obvious someone had told the Weasleys.

"So I passed the exams then?"

"Yes, Harry, more than passed," said Arthur. "Your natural skills and aptitude for magic are way beyond anything that Hogwarts could teach you in first year. Beauxbatons has an accelerated program for gifted students."

"Yes," said Molly. "The students there take their OWLs at thirteen, their NEWTs at fifteen. They can leave school after their NEWTs or they can stay on to take their Masters at seventeen. Beauxbatons only take the most gifted and talented people, Harry. It's an honour to be chosen to attend."

How come it didn't feel much like an honour? It felt as though Harry was being punished, to be sent so far away where he didn't know anyone. To be sent away from Severus.

"But how did they even know what I could do?" asked Harry.

"Well, after your results, I'm sure Professor Dumbledore had a word with the headmistress, Madame Maxime and suggested you might be a suitable candidate," Molly begin nibbling on the cake crumbs.

So, it was Dumbledore's fault. Dumbledore's fault he was being sent away. Sent away from Severus. He hadn't forgotten that instead of coming to Harry's birthday party, Severus had been made to do something for Dumbledore. The man was trying to keep them apart, Harry was almost sure of it.

"It's so far away," said Harry. "I won't know anyone. I won't be with Ron." I won't be with Severus.

"I'm sure you'll make new friends in no time, Harry and Ron will always be your brother, won't he?" asked Arthur.

"I suppose."

"It's not as if you're going away forever, Harry," said Molly. "You'll be home for the summer holidays, but if you really don't want to go, maybe we can have another word with Professor Dumbledore."

"No, no, it's okay," for Harry did not want to beg that man for anything. "It was just a bit of a shock, when all this time I thought I'd be going to Hogwarts. Can - can Severus still come to visit me in the holidays if I go to Beauxbatons?"

"Of course he can, Harry!" Arthur clapped him on the back. "Why don't you read your Beauxbatons letter, see what you need to get for school and we can take you and Ron to Diagon Alley next week, how does that sound?"

"Great. Thanks, Mum, Dad."

"You're very welcome, Harry. Now go on, take your letter, you can read it in bed. I'm sure Ron's dying to know what you've decided," Molly beamed at him.

As predicted, Ron was wide awake, eager to hear all about Harry's new school. Harry removed the book, equipment list and letter from the envelope and read it to himself before reading it aloud to Ron.

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to the Advanced Student Program at Beauxbatons Academy of Magical Arts. Term begins on September 1st, the ship will depart from Dover at 10 am on September 1st from Pier 25 and a half. Please note that accompanying persons are not allowed on the ship before departure, make sure all your goodbyes have been said on the pier.

Someone from Beauxbatons will meet you at the other end and will travel with you to Beauxbatons in time for the welcome feast. Classes will start on September 2nd.

Please find enclosed your book and equipment list for this term.

We look forward to welcoming you to Beauxbatons, Mr. Potter.

Yours sincerely,

Olympe Maxime.

Headmistress, Beauxbatons Academy.

Harry read out the list to Ron

All students must adhere to the dress code at all times, including weekends and half term breaks while on school grounds.

Boys' Uniform:

Five white dress shirts with formal collars. Ruffled shirt optional.

Three cravats in royal blue

Two pairs of knee length knickerbockers in royal blue.

Two royal blue waistcoats

Two royal blue over tunics

Seven pairs of white stockings

One pair of black buckle shoes

Two royal blue robes, one long for normal classes and one shorter length duelling robe

One scarf in the Beauxbatons colours, royal blue and white striped

Two royal blue nightshirts, pyjamas are not allowed

In addition, all students require the following:

Two cauldrons, 1 silver, 1 pewter

7 glass phials, size 5

1 wand

1 set of brass scales, size 5

2 pairs of Dragonhide gloves

1 Dragonhide apron

5 blank journals

5 ruled journals

20 reams of parchment

Quills and ink to suit

Broomsticks may be brought at the students' discretion, but they are not required as the school has an ample supply.

First year students will require the following books

The Standard Book of Spells Grade Four by Miranda Goshawk

"Oh, I've got grade one of that," said Ron. Harry turned back to reading out his list.

Defensive Magical Theory by Wilbert Slinkhard

Unfogging the Future by Cassandra Vablatsky

Intermediate Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch

Intermediate Guide to Magical Draughts and Potions by Arsenic Jiggers

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander

Numerology and Grammatica

Intermediate Guide to Arithmency

Intermediate Guide to Ancient Runes

Herbs and Fungi of the British Isles & Europe

Beginners' Guide to Occlumency and Legilimency by S. Snape

"Wait, that last one? Snape? As in Severus? He wrote a book, did he?"

"It looks like it," said Harry. Maybe he wouldn't feel so alone after all if he could have one of Severus' books with him. It wasn't really the books that were worrying him, that uniform sounded a bit daft but if he went he would have to wear it. It sounded expensive and Harry knew money was a bit tight at the Weasleys, maybe they could get his books and things secondhand or something, for he felt a bit guilty about asking.

"God, Harry, you're uniform sounds a bit dodgy, are they really going to make you wear that?"

"I suppose so, but if everyone else is wearing it, it won't be so bad, will it?"

"Rather you than me. Glad I'm not going to Beauxbatons. Oh, Harry, I'm sorry."

"Forget it, Ron. Just forget it." Harry threw the letter on his bed and took his pyjamas to the bathroom to get changed for bed. One of the few times he would be allowed to wear pyjamas if he went ahead with this. He didn't know what to do for the best.

Hogwarts had Severus, but at Hogwarts Severus would be his teacher and could not be as friendly to Harry as he'd been over these past few years, it wouldn't be fair on the other students, Harry knew that. He wasn't sure he wanted to get know Severus as the stern Potions master that the other Weasleys had described. He wanted to keep him locked in his head as his rescuer, as his Patch. Harry wondered if he would be allowed to write to Severus, was it allowed for teachers to receive mail from students who were elsewhere? Sirius seemed to manage it. Harry brushed his teeth and went back to bed. He'd decided. He would got to Beauxbatons.

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Most of Harry's books, the elder Weasley boys had already, so the only one Harry needed to buy was the one Severus had written, as no one at Hogwarts had studied Occlumency or Legilimency. "What is it?" Harry had asked Bill one day.

"It's mind magic," said Bill. "Hardly anyone can do it properly. Dumbledore can and Snape of course, but it's a very difficult discipline."

"Oh." Harry had gone very quiet after that, wondering if he would be able to cope with all these subjects. He was doing more subjects than Ron and Harry worried that with him away from his family for such a long time that he would be growing apart from them.

Both Ron and Harry's new terms started on the same day. Arthur couldn't get off work and Molly couldn't be in two places at once, so it was decided that Molly ask Severus if he could accompany Harry to Dover. Harry tried not to get his hopes up, he didn't want to be disappointed again. But the truth was that he was hoping and hoping that Severus would agree to do it, or that he was allowed to by Professor Dumbledore.

When Harry went downstairs for breakfast, he saw that Severus was already seated at the table and was almost being force fed porridge by Molly. "You're far too thin, Severus. Aren't they feeding you at school?"

Severus didn't answer, he was staring at Harry, who was hovering by the door. Harry wanted to run headlong and fling himself into the man's arms, but mindful of his rejection the year before, he hung back, strange sensations whirling in his gut.

"I thought I'd get to see you in your new uniform, Harry," smirked Severus. "I hear it's quite the thing."

Harry flushed, mortified. "I hope you never get to see me in that get-up," Harry said sulkily. He was wearing jeans and a hand knitted sweater as Molly had informed him the crossing could get very cold.

"Severus was only teasing, Harry," said Molly. "You look very handsome in your new uniform."

Sometimes Harry wondered if it was Molly who needed glasses and not him.

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They took the train from London to Dover and both of them were very quiet. Severus worried he'd upset Harry more than he should have done by his remark about his uniform. He should have realised Harry was more self conscious about his clothes than most people, considering what little he'd had in the first few years of his life. It had been a struggle to convince Dumbledore to even allow this trip, but Severus had been adamant. The boy couldn't go on his own, not with all the rumours circulating lately. That Lucius Malfoy was gathering up Death Eaters again. So far Severus hadn't been contacted, but he knew it was only a matter of time.

The boy was in more danger than ever, the main reason he was being sent to Beauxbatons, although Harry didn't know it. Most Death Eaters were on British soil, most had attended Hogwarts and knew tricks to get past the wards, all the previous students did. None even knew where Beauxbatons was never mind how to get past its considerable wards.

There was also the fact that Sirius Black, Harry's godfather was there, that alone carried protection. Not as good as a blood connection, it was true, but strong enough for all that. No harm would come to Harry while he was at school or in his godfather's care. Severus snorted. It was just a pity he couldn't stand the man, but he avoided speaking of the mutt in Harry's presence, he wasn't sure he'd be able to hold his tongue.

They stood awkwardly on the pier, Harry's trunk resized now, not looking at each other and staring out to sea. A porter took Harry's luggage onto the ship, the horn sounded. It would soon be time for Harry to go.

"Harry, I - I got you a present, it's waiting for you at Beauxbatons. I hope you'll like it."

"Thank you," said Harry, looking anywhere but at him. Severus decided it was time to stop thinking about propriety, the boy was just about to go away from home for the first time in his life and he was the only one there to see him off. He strode over to the boy, knelt down and wrapped him in a hug.

Harry sobbed on his shoulder, shaking with the effort. "W - write to me," begged Harry. "Please."

"I will, Harry. I promise."

"I'll miss you," said Harry, his tears dripping down the collar of Severus' shirt.

The ship's horn sounded again. "You have to go, Harry," whispered Severus, kissing his hair.

Harry nodded, straightening up and fixing his glasses more firmly on his face.

"Promise you won't forget me?" said Harry, sounding so forlorn.

"Never, Harry. Never," said Severus as Harry made his way up the gang plank, turned and waved to him.

There was no way in the world he could forget Harry Potter.

Lily had seen to that.

TBC

Chapter 7: Tears of the Sun

Part 7

Harry closed his eyes, breathing heavily, his blood pounding in his ears at what he was about to do. He'd had quite a few dreams where he woke up sticky and trembling, but this was the first time he'd attempted to touch himself while he was awake, to get that same wonderful feeling. There were no boys in his year at Beauxbatons, so he had as much privacy as he wanted, something he would not have at the Burrow once he was home tomorrow.

He'd finished his last OWL that afternoon, Potions in fact, which in turn had reminded him of Severus and the fact that he was going to see him again soon. He hoped he'd done well on that one, he really wanted Severus to be proud of him. Harry never remembered the dreams that woke him up sticky and breathless, he just knew someone had been touching him, making him feel as if he was flying.

What did you do? Did you just start touching your cock and see what happened? He hadn't wanted to ask Ron in a letter in case his parents read it, but he wished there was someone he was friendly enough to ask at school, but there wasn't. Severus would probably be able to teach him a lot, but there was no way he was going to ask, he'd be mortified. Harry pushed down the covers and just lay on the bed, panting a little. His tummy was fluttering a little, like it had when he'd seen Severus on his birthday last year and his cock started hardening, making a tent in his nightshirt.

He made a fist with his hand and began to rub himself through the silk and surprised himself when he let out a throaty moan, sounding so much deeper than his voice had been last year. His voice had broken the middle of last term and it had been a miserable few weeks until it had settled again. Harry's legs widened almost without him being consciously aware of it and he began to rub his hand up and down his erection. He could hardly believe how good it felt, but scary too, almost as if he was going to hurtle over a cliff.

The silk on his skin felt wonderful, but how would his hand feel touching bare skin? It felt so deliciously naughty, what he was doing, but he was feeling too good to stop. He hiked his nightshirt up around his waist, surprised to feel moisture already dripping from the tip. Had he come already, then? Why was he still hard? He still felt coiled, perched on the edge of something and began to rub up and down, flesh on flesh. Soon he was arching his hips off the bed, trying to get something, something more... And suddenly it happened, his balls felt as if they were going to explode and then everything did, he was spurting over his hand and belly, his thighs quivering, his back arched like a human bridge and he thrust a fist over his mouth to stop himself from screaming out loud as he came and came.

God, he was shaking like a leaf, his hand sticky with his come, his legs feeling like rubber as he coaxed a few more drops from his cock. The room was spinning around him, but he'd never felt anything as good in his life, except maybe flying on a broom. He just lay there for a while, breathing heavily as the emission dried on his skin and started feeling a little uncomfortable. Harry smiled to himself as he cast a cleaning charm. He would have to find time to do this when he was at home, privacy or no privacy.

Beauxbatons was a thirteenth century chateau in the heart of the French countryside, even the students didn't know where it was. The only way to get to it was to be accompanied there by someone who knew where it was. Compared to Ron's descriptions of Hogwarts, Beauxbatons was very feminine, lots of lace and curlicued wrought iron in pale hues. His own bed was a white four poster with white sheer curtains and a blue quilt with the gold emblem of Beauxbatons embroidered on it, two crossed wands emitting stars.

His letters from Ron, Severus and the rest of his family were what kept him sane. Ron's letters had been more and more full of his feelings for Hermione Granger these past few months, or rather Harry read between the lines. He'd met Hermione last year and they'd both hit it off very well, even if she admitted that she was envious of him being in the Accelerated Program. Molly's letters were full of news from the rest of the family, Arthur had been passed over for promotion (again), but Percy had joined the Ministry too, Bill had just returned from another trip to Egypt, Charlie was still in Romania, the twins were getting into trouble and she hoped they'd passed their OWLs, Ginny had made Seeker on the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

Severus' letters in contrast were very formal affairs, almost as if he'd laid everything out by referring constantly to the customs set out in Wizarding Etiquette: Manners for All Occasions, a book Harry had studied in detail last year in History of Magic. Harry's letters to Severus in contrast were full of what his life was like in school, how well he was doing in Potions, he hoped Severus was proud of him and his second hand news of his family.

Harry savoured each and every letter he received, casting preserving charms on the parchment and wrapping them up with ribbons. He hid them at the bottom of his trunk, under his uniforms. Not that he really needed to hide them, no one else had ever come into his room. Everyone at Beauxbatons had their own room and it was part of their education that they keep it clean and tidy whether with spells or the Muggle method. They had an inspection by the house master every week, but no one came into his room unannounced, he'd warded the door so well. He knew this need to hide things, even though it wasn't necessary, was because of what the Dursleys had done to the things he'd liked. He could well imagine them ripping his correspondence to shreds and laughing about it.

Without close friends he had plenty of time to study and write his letters home, Severus' present in his first year had been a beautiful snowy owl called Hedwig. He worked hard in every subject, surprised to find that he could actually do the work, he'd been so worried when he first came as a shy eleven year old, but he came top of his class in most subjects, except for Occlumency. He just couldn't seem to get the hang of that and Madame Du Luc suggested he might need a tutor if he intended to continue it for NEWT level.

He'd already achieved his Animagus form, a small black kitten with a small patch of white on his forehead where his scar was and Sirius had registered him as an early birthday gift, as it cost quite a few galleons. Harry couldn't wait to see the surprise on his family's face when he transformed, he had begged Sirius not to tell them as he wanted it to be a surprise.

Harry's room was at the very top of the West turret and a couple of the older boys teased him and called him Rapunzel, especially when he started growing his hair. With no boys his own age, there were ten girls in his class, he hadn't really made any good friends and by spending lots of time with his godfather, teacher's pet was one of the less rude names they called him. He was a little terrified of the girls, they all seemed to go around together in groups, giggling madly like some many headed entity and so he kept to himself most of the time. Those people who teased him about being Rapunzel also kept asking when his prince would arrive.

Harry would just smile softly at them, refusing to answer and remembering Patch.

His prince had already come to rescue him.

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Nearly all of the Weasleys were waiting for him as he stepped off the ship, dragging his trunk with one hand and holding Hedwig's cage in the other. It was so annoying that they weren't allowed to do magic during the holidays, even if he passed his NEWTs at fifteen he wouldn't be able to do magic in public legally until he was seventeen, which if truth be known Harry thought was a daft idea.

Charlie wasn't there, he must still be in Romania, but it looked like Bill had got the day off from Gringotts and Harry saw that his eldest brother's hair was now almost as long as Harry's and he was wearing a dragon fang ear ring in one ear. Molly seemed exasperated and Harry wondered if Bill had received the same discussion on hair length as he'd had last year, but Harry liked his hair long. It was half way down his back now and he kept it tidy with a leather thong, a present from Severus two years ago. He refused to cut it and Molly soon stopped asking.

As soon as Harry was off the gang plank, Molly had him wrapped in a hug like every year he'd returned from school and her questions were the same as well. "How was school? How were the exams? Was the crossing rough? Are they feeding you enough? How's your godfather?"

But this year, one of Harry's answers was different. "Actually, he's here," said Harry, turning back to the ship where Sirius was just descending the gang plank.

"Sirius Black!" exclaimed Arthur, clasping the man's hand and giving him a hearty handshake. "It's been an age, hasn't it?"

"Hasn't it just? Almost like old times," said Sirius, giving Harry a quick glance.

"Where are you staying?" asked Molly. "You know we'd offer, Sirius but we don't really have the room, Hermione’s staying with us later in the summer and the twins' friends, Lee Jordan and Oliver Wood. We'll be packed out."

"Not to worry Molly, I'll be staying in London. You know where. Must check in with Dumbledore."

"Yes, well, better get this lot back," said Molly quickly and Harry had the impression that she was preventing Sirius from speaking further. What did Sirius need to see Dumbledore for anyway? As always when Harry heard the name mentioned, he had a strange frisson of anger. Was it about Harry? Was Sirius spying on Harry for Dumbledore? He didn't like that idea one bit, but it seemed a likely prospect and he felt a bit angry at Sirius as well.

"Taking the train back?"

"No, we've got a Portkey in five minutes," said Arthur, holding out a crumpled up newspaper. "Why don't you come along with us and have dinner first, Sirius? There's nothing too urgent, is there?"

"Harry, is that all right with you?"

"Sure, Professor," said Harry.

Sirius laughed. "You can call me Sirius when we're not in school, Harry."

"Fine, Sirius. Come to dinner." It didn't sound very enthusiastic to his own ears, but no one else seemed to notice as they all cajoled Sirius into staying. Harry was starting to wonder about the undercurrents of the adults' words. Had no one else noticed there was something going on?

What secrets were they hiding from Harry?

TBC

Chapter 8: Tears of the Sun

Part 8

Harry's scar was aching again. It has been doing that a lot these past few weeks, a couple of days ago it was bleeding too, causing Molly to worry that he'd banged his head somewhere, only he hadn't. The scar just seemed to bleed for no apparent reason.

Ron was snoring and Harry couldn't get to sleep. He was so used to the silence of his own room at school that it always took him a while to get used to sleeping in the same room as someone else, but it seemed to be taking even longer this year. His birthday was tomorrow, he'd been home for almost a month and he was still finding it difficult to get to sleep.

Oliver Wood and Lee Jordan had arrived a week previously and would stay another week after his birthday, Hermione would arrive tomorrow and stay for the rest of the summer, her parents were going to some dental conference and had asked the Weasleys if she could stay there while they attended.

Sirius had come for a visit every day since Harry had been back, but so far Severus hadn't. He would come to Harry's party though, wouldn't he? He hadn't missed one since Harry was eleven so he tried not to worry unduly, but what if Dumbledore had some errand for him like before? And what were these errands that Severus had to do for Dumbledore anyway?

Harry turned over and punched his pillow, tossing and turning in an effort to get comfortable. He wished he was able to cast a silencing charm over Ron's bunk so at least the lack of snores might help, but he couldn't. His eyes were sore, he was so tired yet unable to fall asleep. He got up and donned a robe over his nightshirt and made his way downstairs. Maybe some hot milk or something would help.

The stairs went straight down to the kitchen and when Harry was half way down them, he stopped, his heart somewhere in his throat. He wasn't the only one who was up in the middle of the night. A couple of candles were lit, illuminating the room in a soft orange glow and letting Harry see George and Oliver really well. He wished he hadn't. He shouldn't be here, he shouldn't be watching, but it was as if his feet had been hit with a permanent sticking charm and he could not move either backwards or forwards.

George and Oliver were sitting very close to each other on one of the sofas, Oliver was kissing and licking George's neck, his hand inside the trousers of George's pyjamas. George was moaning in a whispery, breathy way as Oliver continued to move his hand very rapidly over George's groin and Harry's own cock was stirring in response at the sight of the two of them together. He didn't know, didn't know boys did things like this together and felt himself flush at the knowledge that they did and could.

Suddenly George's face contorted in pleasure and he cried out, forgetting for the moment that they'd been trying to be quiet and he sagged limply against Oliver. Oliver removed his hand, it glistened wetly in the candlelight, he stared at George's face for a few moments before beginning to lick his hand. Oh, God, Harry's knees almost buckled beneath him. He realised what he was seeing, George must have come and Oliver was, Oliver was tasting it, gazing at George's face the whole time he licked and sucked his fingers.

"Oliver!" moaned George as he pounced on the other boy and mashed their lips together. Boys kissed? Like girls and boys kissed? Harry had never been kissed before but watching the two of them like that, he realised he would very much like to be kissed by someone, maybe even have a hand other than his own stroking him like Oliver had stroked George. What would it feel like if Severus touched him like that? Kissed him? Harry had to bite his lip to stop himself from crying out at the erotic sight before him and his imaginings of Severus. George's hand rubbed Oliver through his pyjamas and Harry saw Oliver widen his legs. Harry was so hard, he pressed his hand to his groin and much to his horror he made a loud squeak.

George and Oliver jumped apart from their kissing as though they'd both been given a shock. "Harry," laughed George. "Nearly gave me a heart attack, I thought you were Mum or Dad. What are you doing up anyway?"

"I - I couldn't sleep. I didn't mean to disturb you. I'll just - " Harry turned, hoping against hope that neither of them had seen how aroused he was.

"Harry," George said slowly. "Were you watching?"

Harry felt his heart sink to somewhere near the bottom of the stairs. None of his brothers had ever been angry with him before, but he knew George was entitled to be angry about this. It was wrong what he'd done, spying on them like that and he just hoped George would forgive him eventually. He turned back round, shamed, tears running down his cheeks.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to," he sobbed. "I - I was going to get milk and when I saw you, I couldn't move. It was just - it was just so beautiful. Please I didn't mean it, I didn't!" Harry fell onto his rump on the stairs and wrapped his arms around his knees, waiting for George to shout at him or hit him, he knew he deserved it. He was bad, just like the Dursleys had always said. He was a freak, watching them like that.

"Harry, come down here, please," said George, but he didn't sound angry, he sounded a little sad. Harry rubbed at his eyes before making his way downstairs. He'd accept his punishment, no matter what it was and he could hardly bear to look either of them in the eye, so he stared at the floor.

Much to his surprise, George wrapped him in a hug. "Oh, Harry, you thought I was going to hit you, didn't you?"

Harry nodded, the tears still flowing. "Harry, never, I will never hit you. None of us will, you know that, don't you?"

"Aren't you angry with me for - for watching?"

George and Oliver both laughed then. "Harry, pet, I must admit I was surprised, but I'm not angry. You're growing up and you're curious, that's all it is, isn't it? You don't fancy me or Oliver, do you?"

Harry shook his head, until tonight he'd never thought of another boy as a sexual being before. "So - so are you and Oliver like boyfriends, then?" Harry asked curiously. He'd never known boys could have boyfriends.

"I suppose we are," said Oliver. "We've been together a few months now."

"But Harry, Mum and Dad don't know yet, can you keep this to yourself? Please?"

"Oh, okay," said Harry. It wasn't his business to tell.

"So what about you, Harry? Got yourself a girlfriend or a boyfriend yet?" asked Oliver.

"Um, no."

George grinned. "Oh, I don't know, Harry's got a thing for older men, haven't you Harry?"

Harry flushed, embarrassed. Until tonight he'd never even considered Severus in any capacity other than as his rescuer and as a friend, the older boys' antics had certainly given his imagination something to think about. What would it be like to kiss Severus? To have that tall body pressed up against his?

"We're just friends," protested Harry, but his blushing face gave him away.

"Aw, Harry's got a wee crush," sighed George. "Don't worry, Harry. I won't tell."

"Who? Who is it?" asked Oliver with a smile.

George tapped the side of his nose. "Nope. Not telling. It's our secret, isn't it Harry?"

Harry smiled and nodded.

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Severus was sitting in the Weasleys' parlour, Molly and Arthur pacing the room as he revealed what had happened. Harry's birthday party was about to start at any minute, but they needed to know.

"Pettigrew's escaped from Azkaban?" asked Arthur for what must have been the hundredth time. "When? How?"

"Two days ago," replied Severus. "As for the how, no one knows. This is the first time it's happened. There are rumours that he's going to try and find the Dark Lord again. Death Eaters are hunting him, hoping to prevent that."

"Find him? What do you mean find him? He was destroyed, wasn't he? Harry destroyed him!"

"Molly, his physical form was destroyed, but his spirit, his essence, what made him Voldemort was not. He took steps to prevent it."

"Dark magic?"

"Yes, Pettigrew is hoping to find him and bring him back. Lucius Malfoy has ordered Pettigrew terminated. None of them want the Dark Lord to return. He's bound to be angry that no one searched for him before, his followers no longer follow him but Malfoy. Lucius Malfoy seeks to hold the position Voldemort once had, but he does not have Voldemort's skill or cunning in the Dark Arts. I've managed to infiltrate the Death Eaters again, it was not easy to convince them that I am on their side."

"Are you sure Malfoy trusts you?" asked Arthur worriedly.

"No, he doesn't trust anyone, but he tolerates me, which is enough. I am just so glad Harry does not attend Hogwarts, trying to pretend that I detested him was going to be difficult enough as it is. I have no doubt that if Harry had been one of my students, Malfoy would have ordered the boy brought to him."

"Why? Why would he want Harry?" asked Molly.

"That is something I would prefer not to go into, Molly. It is not considered a pleasant topic in polite company. He will be safe while he is at school and Albus and I have extended the wards around the Burrow. He is safe here for the time being, but please be alert to any strangers."

"He's always going to be in danger, isn't he?" asked Molly, her hand pressing against her heart. "That poor boy, first the Dursleys and now this. How can he cope?"

"Has he mentioned any nightmares?" asked Severus.

"No, but his scar has been hurting on and off," said Molly, Arthur nodding his agreement. "It bled the other day, didn't it, Arthur?"

"Bled? Had he banged his head or something?"

"No, Severus, it just bled on its own, Harry hadn't scratched it or anything like that, it just started bleeding."

This did not bode well, Harry's scar hurting and bleeding could only mean one thing. Voldemort was well on his way to be reborn in physical form.

"Would you like me to tell Harry?" asked Severus.

"No, Severus, it's better not to worry him," replied Molly. "Let him enjoy his holidays."

"But if he knew he had to be careful and why, wouldn't he be more likely to do it?" protested Arthur. "He's not the small child you knew, Molly. He's fourteen today and he's growing so fast. I just hope his uniform lasts him for a little while longer, those are expensive and money's always been a bit tight round here."

"I still don't want him told, Arthur. Let him have his fun for a little while longer, please."

"Money is tight? Aren't you using the money from Harry's legacy?"

"What money, Severus?" Arthur arched an eyebrow at him.

"The Potter Trust," replied Severus. "Harry is the sole heir to the Potter fortune, the money is kept in trust for him until he is seventeen, but as his guardians you are supposed to be the trustees. You were meant to be using that money for Harry's upkeep. Didn't Dumbledore let you know about this? Weren't you given the keys to his vault?"

"No, Severus," said Molly. "We knew nothing about this."

"Every month I get a statement from Gringotts," said Severus. "Lily must have arranged it. It's Harry's account, all the credits and withdrawals. If you know nothing about it, then who on earth is removing the money from Harry's vault?"

The Weasleys looked blankly at him.

None of the adults saw a small black kitten under a chair, nor did they notice when it left as silently as it had come in.

TBC

Chapter 9: Tears of the Sun

Part 9

Harry transformed back into his human form in the bathroom, the only room at the Burrow where anyone was guaranteed privacy, the words Severus had spoken ringing in his ears. Pettigrew had escaped, his parents' betrayer had escaped and was even now hell bent on finding the shreds of Voldemort's spirit to re-animate it. He couldn't stop shaking, feeling hot and cold all at once. And this Lucius Malfoy, who was he and what did he want with Harry?

It's not something that should be discussed in polite company.

Not to mention the fact that his parents had left him some money and someone was stealing it. The Weasleys had to pinch and scrape for every knut and Harry had often worried that he'd been a burden on them, even though he had been nothing but welcomed ever since he'd arrived as that shy five year old. It galled him that the Weasleys should never have been out of pocket in order to look after him, but the fact that they still took him in even without monetary reward had him feeling a sense of love and pride for them.

They took him in because they wanted to, no other reason. They wanted Harry. They wanted him when his own relatives had treated him little better than a dog.

Harry sank down on the edge of the bath and tried to pull himself together again. He couldn't stay in the bathroom all day, even though that's exactly what he felt like. How was he supposed to smile and pretend that everything was okay, when it was far from it? It was his own fault for eavesdropping, he hadn't meant to. He'd been hiding in the parlour before the adults had arrived and hadn't wanted to risk being seen when they first arrived. By the end of the conversation Harry dearly wished he'd accepted the twins' offer of a game of Quidditch in the paddock.

Maybe Molly was right and it was better not to know, but nothing could now change the fact that he did know what had happened. He would just have to be on his guard. There were plenty of photographs of Peter Pettigrew among his parents' things, from when he was still their friend. Sometimes he wanted to yell at his parents in the photos for being so stupid for trusting the man and getting themselves killed, causing him to be left with the Dursleys in the first place.

He had no idea what Lucius Malfoy looked like, wait, wasn't there a Draco Malfoy in Ron's year at school? That might be his son, it wasn't a common name after all. He would just have to be on his guard, like Arthur and Severus had said.

Harry stood up, but he felt so faint that he had to sit down again. Everything was a blur of black and white dots and he just hoped he didn't pass out right here on the bathroom floor. His stomach roiled and his breakfast decided it wanted to make a reappearance. Harry sank to his knees and retched over the bowl of the toilet. It felt as if he'd torn his throat inside out along with his stomach lining. His tummy and chest ached with the effort of his heaves and he just wanted to crawl and hide somewhere now. He leaned his head against the side of the porcelain as he debated with himself whether he was going to throw up again or not.

His body decided he was finished. Harry flushed the toilet, then rinsed his mouth out both with water and mouthwash, still feeling a little shaky. The thought of all that party food Molly would have prepared, had him on his knees again, but only sour spittle was coming up this time.

Molly knocked on the door when he'd been rinsing out his mouth for the second time.

"Harry, dear, are you all right?"

"I'm fine now, I think I ate something that didn't agree with me last night."

"Oh? Was the casserole too spicy for you, dear?"

Harry opened the door. "Maybe," Harry agreed readily, glad of some excuse that didn't involve lengthy explanations about why he was not all right.

Molly felt his forehead. "You don't have a fever. Are you sure you're all right? Do you want to cancel the party?"

"No, Mum, I'm fine now," said Harry. "I don't want to disappoint everyone."

"But, Harry, if you're ill, I'm sure they'd understand."

Harry shook his head. "I'm okay, really." He gave her a beaming smile and followed her downstairs.

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Severus looked up as he heard footsteps on the kitchen stairway, Molly was descending, closely followed by Harry. Severus had to stop himself from gasping out loud. Merlin, the boy had grown since last year. Gone were the awkward gangling limbs, instead he had now blossomed into a slim willowy creature who looked far too fey for the mortal world.

His hair was long, tied back at the nape of his neck, accentuating his cheekbones. Gone was the babyish softness of his face, now he was all planes and angles, a hint of how he'd look like an adult. Dark, almost feathery lashes fluttered over eyes the colour of no natural jewel, emerald or jade would be closest, but even they would pale in comparison to Harry's brightness. Whoever could discover a gem the exact hue of Harry's eyes would make a fortune.

There was flush on his cheeks as his eyes sought out Severus, his eyes becoming quickly downcast, but not before Severus felt his own heated cheeks in response. He used the time Harry was not looking at him to stare at the smooth planes of the boy's face, the full lips the colour of raspberries. Would they taste as sweet as they looked?

Merlin, it couldn't be happening already, could it? Harry was fourteen, he had to keep reminding himself that. No matter what Lily had done, Harry was still too young, much to young. Today he was wearing a pale green shirt, the top button undone and Severus felt his gaze drawn to the pale column of throat revealed and stared avidly as Harry's Adams' apple bobbed nervously as he swallowed. Obviously Severus wasn't the only one feeling things today.

"Hello, Severus," said Harry, sounding strangely shy today as he made his way across the room.

"Hello, Harry. Happy Birthday," Severus handed over his gift, it wasn't much, his salary didn't allow for much in the way of extravagance, but it was the thought that counted, wasn't it?

"Can I leave this one to last?" asked Harry, a little bit breathlessly. He was back to staring at Severus again and Severus felt himself drawn ever deeper into those deep, green pools.

"If you wish," replied Severus.

Harry stood up on tiptoe and whispered in his hear, "I like to save the best till last."

Severus didn't think his gift would be the best, but he was willing to indulge Harry, just this once.

His inner voice started arguing with him.

Just this once? You spoil him rotten.

So? He deserves it.

Don't you think it has something to do with Lily's spell?

Well of course it does! I'm not denying that.

And when do you think you might tell Harry about it?

Soon.

How soon? The boy needs to know, it's starting already, you know it is. Tell him today, before he finds out from someone else.

Severus was brought out of his thoughts by someone knocking on the back door. "Oh, I bet that'll be Sirius!" exclaimed Molly as she went to open it. Great just great, Sirius Black was the last person he needed to see when he needed to talk to Harry alone.

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"Happy Birthday, Harry," said Sirius as soon as he'd arrived, shoving a broom shaped parcel into Harry's hands. Harry had never outgrown the broom Severus had bought him, it was charmed to grow with the rider and he felt a little awkward that Sirius had given him the same present that Severus had all those years ago.

Harry unwrapped it after saying thanks, but it was the other boys who enthused over the gift. "Wow, Harry! A Firebolt!" aid Ron.

"Can we have a ride, later?" asked Fred. "We promise to be careful."

"That's an international standard broom, that is," said Oliver as he lovingly caressed the handle.

"You'll flatten the opposition at Quidditch on this," said Lee Jordan.

"We don't play Quidditch at Beauxbatons," said Harry.

"No," agreed Sirius. "Games take up too much time that could be spent studying."

"No Quidditch?" wailed Ron. "But Harry, you're brilliant at Quidditch! We always play during the holidays."

"Well, what Harry does during the holidays is his own business, isn't it Harry?" smiled Sirius, ruffling his hair. Harry squirmed out of the touch. International standard brooms did not come cheap and Sirius was only on a teacher's salary, where did he get the money for an item such as this? Harry felt a headache and another bout of nausea coming on. Sirius wouldn't be the one stealing from him, would he? His own godson?

"So glad his activities meet with your approval, Black," sneered Severus. Sirius turned round and paled.

"Snape! What are you doing here?"

"The same as you, I imagine. I am attending young Mr. Potter's birthday party."

"You two know each other?" asked Harry.

"We were at school together," said Sirius. "I didn't know you knew Professor Snape, Harry."

The two of them were glaring at each other and Harry had the impression if there hadn't been so many witnesses, they would have had their wands drawn and would be duelling to the death. What had happened between them at school for such antagonism now?

"Since I was five," said Harry. "He was the one who rescued me from the Dursleys'." Everyone in the room was conscious of the words not spoken. If Sirius was Harry's godfather, how come he never even made contact until Harry was living with the Weasleys?

"Right everyone, there's cake in the parlour," said Molly as she ushered everyone else out, leaving only Sirius, Severus and Harry himself.

"Rest assured, Harry, if Snape had a hand in it, there was bound to be something in it for him."

"How dare you!" yelled Harry. "You have no idea, none! Don't you dare talk to Severus like that!"

"Harry, I'm only looking out for your best interests."

"Oh, you'd really know what his best interests are, would you?" said Snape.

"Keep out of this, Snivellus! It's between me and Harry and I'll ask you to keep away from my godson in future!"

"That decision is not yours to make, Black. It's Harry's."

"No it isn't, he's a child and he will obey me!"

"I AM NOT A CHILD!" roared Harry and the two older men stared hard at him, Severus' face twitching as if he was trying not to laugh. "Sirius, you have no control over me when I am not at school and I don't take kindly to my friends being insulted."

"A friend? Him? You do know he used to be a Death Eater, don't you? A follower of the Dark Lord."

"Yes," said Harry softly. "Yes I do."

Severus stared at him and Harry knew they were definitely going to need a private conversation after this was over.

"Harry, I'm only looking out for you," protested Sirius.

Harry snorted. "Since when? Where were you when I was being abused by the Dursleys? Where were you when I had chicken pox and measles all in the same month? Where were you when I was being bullied at school?"

"You didn't tell me you were being bullied, Harry..."

"No, because you wouldn't have done anything about it in case you'd be accused of showing favouritism to me!"

"Harry, I've bought you presents every year since I heard you were living here, it can't have been easy to grow up in such a place."

"What?" screeched Harry. "Are you insulting my family now, is that it?"

"Harry the Potters were your family, not the Weasleys. You should have been living in luxury, not here, not like this." Sirius glanced around the room in distaste at the old, mismatched furniture, the worn rugs on the floor.

"I think you should leave now, Professor," said Harry coldly. "You can insult me all you like, but no one talks like that about the Weasleys, do you hear me? They may not have money, but they are richer than you could ever imagine and I will not tolerate it."

"You won't tolerate it? How come those sound like Snape's words, not yours?"

"Because he's spent more time with me than you ever have and ever will. You can take your present back, I don't want it. I don't want anything from you."

"This is your doing, isn't it Snivellus? Told him lots of tales about our school days, have you? Poisoned him against me, have you?"

"He's told me nothing," said Harry. "This is my decision, my choice."

"And you'd choose friendship with him over me, would you?"

"I would."

"I'll get you split up, I'll tell Dumbledore how close you are to him," protested Sirius but he was beginning to perspire heavily, as if he knew he was clutching at straws.

"Do you really think Dumbledore doesn't know?" said Severus, hitching up the right sleeve of his robe. "You won't be able to prevent it now, no one will."

"What? How?" Sirius and Harry both stared at the tattoo on Severus' right arm. Not the Dark Mark, this was something else.

"Lily, of course. She could see beyond the obvious."

"You're lying! It's a trick! Lily would never trust you far enough for that!"

"On the contrary, I was the only one she trusted," said Severus calmly.

TBC

Chapter 10: Tears of the Sun

Part 10

The tattoo was small, barely two inches square, but it was very detailed. A black square with a diagonal band of white going from the left corner down to the right. Above the band were two white flowers, almost shaped like stars, and another one below the broad band. It seemed a little familiar to Harry, but he couldn't place where he'd seen the design before.

"How dare you!" roared Sirius. "That's the Potter crest, what are you doing with it?"

"What? Severus? What's going on?" asked Harry, getting more and more confused by the minute. What on earth was Severus doing with the Potter family crest on his arm? Harry's family crest?

"I think we should discuss this later, Harry, in private."

"No, let's discuss it now, Snivellus," scowled Sirius. "I'd like to know."

"Stop calling him that! It's none of your business, Sirius, this is between me and Severus. It's got nothing to do with you."

"James was my best friend and I want to know what his crest is doing on your arm! You owe me an explanation, Snivellus!"

"I owe you nothing!" spat Severus.

"Stop it! Stop it, both of you!" Harry's chest was tight, it felt as though he could barely breathe. The room around him was spinning, his vision obscured by white and orange dots. Everything was tilting at a crazy angle. His magic flared, it always did when he was upset and he tried to reign it back, but it was no use. Plates and glasses shattered in the cupboards, doors flew off cabinets, chairs hurled themselves about the room as if they had been hit by a whirlwind, the table legs creaked and groaned as they splintered. It began to topple sideways, unable to bear its weight any longer.

Severus pulled Harry back, out of the way of the falling table just as the kitchen door burst open, the others had probably come to see what all the noise had been. Harry sagged limply against Severus' as his magic gradually eased off again. He felt as limp as a rag doll and he couldn't stop trembling, willing himself not to pass out. Red and gold sparks rushed sporadically round the room as Harry's magic continued to dissipate.

"What happened?" asked Molly of no one in particular.

"Harry's magic," explained Severus as he wrapped his arms tighter around Harry as though to stop him from falling.

All eyes were drawn to the mark on his bare arm. Arthur raised his eyebrows, but didn't say anything. Molly put the kitchen to rights again with a few quick household spells and turned to Harry. "Who upset you, Harry?" she asked softly.

"We were both arguing, Molly. I am sorry, it was not my intent to distress Harry, especially on his birthday."

"It was your fault," said Sirius glowering at Severus and Harry felt himself tense. He wasn't up to this. Molly turned to the assembled party guests who were gazing eagerly from Harry and the two men.

"Go on, into the parlour with you. Harry will be along in a moment."

"Aw, Mum," protested Fred.

"You heard me, out," insisted Molly, but it took a while before the kitchen was empty except for the Molly, Arthur, Sirius, Severus and Harry.

Harry swayed on his feet, the unintentional bout of magic had taken it out of him. "Harry, sit down before you fall down," said Severus, leading Harry over to one of the newly repaired chairs. He was glad when Severus didn't move away, but sat beside him and held his hand. "Molly and Arthur, perhaps I should have told you this earlier, but I think it's time I explained what's going on."

"Not with him here," said Harry. "I don't want Sirius here."

"Harry, as your godfather I have every right to - "

"No you don't. You are not my legal guardian, the Weasleys are and they are the only other people I want here at the moment."

"Harry, you don't mean that. Please, we can work things out."

"Sirius, if Harry doesn't want you to hear, I think you should leave," suggested Molly firmly. "It's Harry's decision."

"You're going to listen to a fourteen year old? Harry doesn't know what's best for him, he's too young."

Harry bristled and the air crackled with energy again but this time, Severus stroked the back of his hand and he felt his magic tingling throughout his body, but this time it was controlled. He glanced at Severus in confusion, they'd discussed this in History of Magic, how some people could connect their magic, but it was only if the people concerned were...

"We're bonded?" exclaimed Harry, his heart soaring to somewhere in the region of his throat.

"Bonded? You can't be bonded, Harry! You're only fourteen!"

"I thought I asked you to leave?" said Harry, not even turning to look at Sirius. He heard Arthur escort Sirius out and his foster parents looked as gobsmacked as he felt.

"When did this happen?" asked Molly. "Harry, why didn't you tell us?"

"Harry didn't know," said Severus. "Lily cast a bonding spell before she died. She asked me to promise to look after Harry if anything ever happened to them, but I didn't know this was what she had in mind."

"She bonded you to Harry without either of you knowing about it?" mused Arthur. "What sort of bond is it?"

"A Full Circle Bond," said Severus. "Magically, spiritually and - physically."

"What does that mean?" asked Harry.

"It means," said Molly. "That you have a husband."

"What?" squawked Harry. "We're married? But is that even allowed, two men?" Harry dimly remembered a discussion on Privet Drive when he was very small after a young male couple had moved in. Petunia and Vernon were always going on about how they didn't want those sort of people moving into the neighbourhood. Harry had been too young to understand what they meant at that time.

"Harry, dear, you're thinking like a Muggle," said Molly. "Wizarding marriages and bondings aren't like Muggle marriages. It doesn't matter what sex you or your partner is, it's how compatible you are, your magic and your souls. Severus, maybe you can explain it better than me."

"Harry, although Lily did this without telling either of us, the bonding would not have worked if we were not compatible with each other. Her spell was more of the suggestion of a bonding, if we were totally incompatible, we would just remain friends, very good friends, but nothing more. However, it turns out we are compatible and that is why the crest has appeared on my arm. When you are seventeen, you will receive the Snape crest. I did intend to tell you this, Harry, I was just waiting until you were older and could understand it."

"I'm married to you?" Harry asked quietly. "You're my husband?"

Severus nodded. Harry wasn't sure what to think. His mother had cast a spell that bound the two of them, without giving either of them a choice. It wasn't as if he hadn't perhaps thought about being in a relationship with Severus, but his imaginings had always had them wooing each other first, not stuck together because they had no choice. Was Severus only friends with him because of the spell? Did he not like Harry at all? That everything was forced because of what Lily did?

"How long have you known about this?" Harry's voice was little more than a hoarse croak.

"Since - since you were five."

"So that's why you rescued me from the Dursleys', the bond forced you to. I thought - I thought you cared about me."

He would not cry. He would not.

"Harry, you know I do," said Severus, stroking his hand. Harry removed his hand and folded his arms over his chest. He felt hollow and deflated, like a balloon losing air rapidly.

"Harry, you don't understand about the bonds," said Arthur. "Nothing can be forced with a bond like this. It's a love bond and it was designed especially for situations like this, when one party was a lot younger. It was a way for parents to ensure their children would be looked after by their husbands if something happened to them. The children usually went to stay with their future partners while they grew up and got to know each other better. If you and Harry were bonded, Severus, why weren't you allowed to look after him?"

Harry glanced back eagerly, he was meant to be living with Severus all this time? Not that he'd trade his time with the Weasleys, but he was rather curious for the reasons that he hadn't been sent to stay with Severus, if that's what was usual.

"Dumbledore thought he would be better off among a family."

"I see," said Molly. "Your loss was our gain, I wouldn't swap Harry for anything," Molly smiled at him before turning back to Severus. "Severus, Sirius does have a point you know, Harry is only fourteen. I can't condone a physical relationship between the two of you even if you are bonded."

Harry's face heated and he wished for the floor to swallow him whole.

"I assure you, Molly, things will be very slow. I have no desire to abuse Harry's trust or yours in me. Nothing until he is of age."

His parents and his husband were talking about sex. About sex with him. Right, they could stop talking about it any time now. Any time now, please. Harry clamped down on the urge that wanted to clap his hands over his ears and sing a nonsense song so he wouldn't have to hear the discussion.

"Harry, I guess you and Severus have a lot to talk about, don't you?" said Molly. "Half an hour and then you'd better join the birthday party."

Harry nodded, wondering if the mention of a time was to let them knew that they would be checked up on if they hadn't emerged by that time. He wasn't sure he even knew what to say and when his parents had left, he got up and paced the room, feeling as if the world he'd known for the past fourteen years had suddenly turned on his head. He was married. He was married to Severus.

"Do you even like me?" demanded Harry on his fifth trip around the kitchen. "Or do you just tolerate me because the bond makes you?"

"The bond doesn't work like that, Harry. It only builds on what is already there. So far, it's only our magic that is connected but gradually, if the feelings are there, we'll want to pursue a physical relationship, like any people in love."

If the feelings are there. Harry blushed, remembering his very real, very arousing feelings of last night when he'd thought of this man kissing him, touching him. Oh, yes, definitely feelings on his end, but what about Severus? Did he get hard when he thought of Harry naked? Did he even allow himself to think such things as that considering Harry's age?

Harry sank down on one of the chairs, clasping his hands in his lap, it wasn't quite an erection, but there was definitely some movement there.

"Are you unhappy about the bond, Harry?" Severus asked softly.

"I'm confused," said Harry. "Not unhappy that I'm bonded to you exactly, but that neither of us were given a choice. Aren't you angry with my mother for what she did to you? Bonded you to someone almost twenty years younger?"

"She was only doing what was best for you, I never judged her harshly for it, just as she never judged me harshly for being in Slytherin. She was the only one at Hogwarts to look beyond the badge on my chest to see me, the real me. How could I turn down a dying request, Harry? I couldn't. I accepted whatever she wanted me to do and she wanted me to be bonded to you."

"You really don't mind being bonded to me?"

"Harry, it's not a case of mind. I'm honoured that she considered me so worthy of such a gift as you."

Harry blushed even further at that. The man had a way with words that Harry envied. "Careful there, anyone might think you like me," grinned Harry.

"More than like," said Severus, then blushed himself. "Sorry, I don't think your guardians would find me discussing this with you very appropriate."

Did that mean what Harry thought it meant? "You're in love with me?"

"I'm afraid you won't get the answer to that until you are seventeen," said Severus seriously, but his eyes were twinkling.

Harry suddenly felt very hot of all a sudden and he tugged at his collar. Seventeen seemed such a long way away.

"Are hugs allowed now? Or are they still inappropriate?" asked Harry with a small smile.

"I think hugs will be fine, Harry," said Severus opening his arms.

TBC

Chapter 11: Tears of the Sun

Part 11

After Harry's party, with exhortations from both the Weasleys and Harry to come and visit again soon, Severus made his way to London and to Gringotts bank. He was determined to find out who exactly was stealing the money from Harry's account. All this time he'd been getting the statements, he'd just assumed that the Weasleys were the ones who were withdrawing the money. It wasn't an extravagant amount, but still, it was the principle of the thing. That money was Harry's and someone was taking it without his permission.

Severus headed straight for the manager's office, his shoes clicking echoingly on the tiled marble floors. The manager, like all the goblins had a pointed nose and even pointier ears and he glanced disdainfully at the human in front of him.

"Yes? New accounts need to see a cashier, can't you see I'm busy?" the goblin dipped a quill in some navy blue ink and proceeded to write out numbers in a ledger almost twice his own height.

"I'm here about the Potter Trust," said Severus. "I fear someone has been gaining access illegally."

"That's impossible!" protested the goblin. "There are charms, enchantments to prevent it."

"Can you check, see who has been withdrawing money?"

"And your authority for asking would be?" queried the goblin with a sneer that would rival one of his own.

In answer, Severus drew up his right sleeve and all of a sudden, the goblin couldn't have been more helpful. He hopped down from his stool and levitated another ledger onto his desk. "The money is held in his trust for Harry Potter until he is seventeen. Until that time only his guardian can access the money."

"The Weasleys?" asked Severus, so sure that they'd been telling the truth.

"I have no record of the Weasleys," said the goblin. "No, there is only one guardian listed here, Sirius Black, Harry Potter's godfather."

"What? No, there must be some mistake," said Severus. Black had no need of the money and surely he wouldn't steal from his own godson?

"That's what it says here," said the goblin, handing Severus the parchment. "He comes every month."

"Every month, you say? And tell me, does he stay any longer than an hour?"

"Oh, no, in and out very quickly," said the goblin. "Barely a few minutes, if that. He's due in today, if you'd like to wait for him?"

Oh, yes, Severus would like that very much indeed. It wasn't Black, but someone pretending to be him with Polyjuice, he was almost sure of it. The goblins would accept a godfather as a guardian, even though Harry was not in his care. But who on earth was it? The goblin showed Severus to the waiting area, a small alcove dotted with velvet sofas and armchairs in a rich burgundy shade. A low table held a few back issues of the Daily Prophet and The Quibbler.

Severus lifted up one of the Quibblers and began to read while he waited. It must have been an hour at least, he'd been through all the literature the table had to offer and was counting the flowers on the wallpaper when the doors finally opened to admit Black, or whoever had been imitating him.

The purple flowery robe gave it away even before the Polyjuice would wear off. No one else on the planet would wear robes in such sickening, garish colours. The facsimile of Black glanced towards Severus and paled. Severus stood up slowly and walked towards him, gripping the man's arm in a firm fist. "I think we need to talk, don't you, Headmaster?" demanded Severus as he drew Albus along the corridor into another private alcove.

He could barely believe it. Dumbledore was stealing Harry's money. What hope for the rest of them when even Dumbledore wasn't immune to temptation?

Severus didn't speak any further until the potion wore off and he was again staring at the headmaster of Hogwarts, his mentor. He felt so betrayed, feeling a stone lodge somewhere beneath his breastbone. He thought that of all people, Dumbledore could be trusted.

"Why?" asked Severus, the anguish in his voice evident.

"It was for the Order, Severus. All for a good cause, I was sure Harry would understand."

"Understand? You stole his money, his inheritance!" hissed Severus. "You should have asked him, you should have asked."

"I couldn't, Severus. Harry doesn't even know of the Order's existence, how could I ask? The Order needed the money, Severus. Who could we ask for money? You know none of us are particularly well off."

"You could have asked Black."

"His assets are in property, Severus, not coin. He's already given us one of his properties for Headquarters. So I took a little money here and there to help the fight. I'll put it back, I promise, Severus. I always meant to. Please don't tell him, Harry doesn't need to know, does he?"

"He knows someone's been taking it," said Severus. "He knows all about the Trust now."

"And how did he know that?"

"Because I told him, and the Weasleys. They should have had access to that vault for Harry's living expenses, how could you steal it and then expect them to scrimp and save for an extra child?"

"I never really thought about that," said Dumbledore sadly. "I'll put all of it back, Severus."

"All of it, before Harry's next birthday. With interest," said Severus. "Or I will tell him, Albus. I can promise you that."

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Sirius left the party not long after Severus, but he didn't take back his broom. Harry gave it to Ron, on the proviso that he was to share it with the other Weasleys. Ron put up a token refusal, but he was keen to accept the gift and soon the lot of them were playing Quidditch in the paddock, a tossed galleon decided who would be using the Firebolt during the match, it turned out to be Oliver Wood, who was looking at the broomstick as longingly as he'd looked at George the night before. Harry grinned to himself, they made a really cute couple.

Fred, Lee, Oliver, Ron and Ginny were on one team, Hermione, George, Bill, Harry and Charlie on the other. Arthur and Molly watched from the ground, but even Arthur had garnered a promise from Ron that he might have a turn on the Firebolt. Harry rode his own broom, the one that Severus had bought him all those years ago, but it had been so well looked after that it was as shiny as the Firebolt.

Thinking of Severus and brooms in the same instance was not the best idea when just about to start a Quidditch match and Harry shifted himself on his broom, willing his erection away with sheer force of will. He could hardly wait until he was in bed and could allow himself to think of Severus as much as he liked without worrying he was going to splatter his head on the grass.

Almost as though his thoughts of the man had conjured him, Harry saw the outline that he would have recognised anywhere. The tall man, billowing robe trailing behind him as he made his way towards Arthur and Molly sitting watching the match. A glint of gold zoomed by Harry's ear and he looked away from Severus and his parents deep in conversation with each other as he sped after the Snitch. He wanted the match over with so that he could see Severus before he had to leave again. What were they talking about?

It took a little longer than he expected to catch the Snitch, Fred was the Seeker for the other side and the two of them raced neck and neck, but even with Fred's longer arms, it was Harry who finally managed to catch the fluttering golden ball. He flew to the ground, dismounting almost before he reached the ground in his haste to get to see Severus. He hadn't been expecting him back so soon after the party.

"Severus!" called Harry. Severus looked up and smiled and Harry felt his heart soar to where he'd just been flying.

Dusk was beginning to fall, everyone was little more than a silhouette and Harry was reminded quite strongly of the night Severus took him away from the Dursleys.

"Harry, dear, Severus just wants a quick word with you," said Molly. "But he really has to get back soon, don't you, Severus?"

Neither Harry nor Severus could miss the warning in her tone as she and Arthur ushered the others back into the house. A few moments later, all the Burrow's lights flared to life and a golden rectangle spilled out from the kitchen window and wrapped Harry and Severus in its brightness.

"Severus? Is something wrong?" asked Harry.

"Not wrong, exactly, Harry. I discovered who was taking your money. They have promised to replace everything and have asked me not to mention any more about it. I can't tell you who it is, but in case you were wondering, it wasn't your godfather."

"Why won't you tell me who it is?"

"What would it achieve, Harry? Your money will be returned, isn't that enough?"

"I suppose so, I'm just curious as to who would have had access." Harry pushed the gravel with his foot, feeling his face heat at how near to each other they were standing. Conscious of the Burrow's many windows, Harry suggested they go for a walk in the orchard. He didn't want Severus to leave just yet.

"Harry, I'm not sure that would be wise," said Severus.

"Please," said Harry. "I just want to spend some time with you without so many bloody witnesses."

Severus chuckled. "Okay, but I can't stay long."

Why did everyone keep saying that? As if it wasn't bad enough that they'd discussed his future sex life, everyone was keen to remind him that it wouldn't be happening yet. Once they were out of sight of the house and walking along the path to the orchard, Harry tentatively reached out for Severus' hand and was elated when the man took it and squeezed. Harry thought he might faint from bliss right here.

Lanterns were dotted about some of the trees, casting fluttering shadows of leaves on the ground. Harry took Severus to his favourite spot, right beneath two pear trees, planted so close together that their leaves formed a canopy overhead. Blinking stars were visible every time the wind moved through the leaves. A fallen log had been hewn by Arthur into a small semblance of a bench and that's where Harry headed for, dragging Severus along with him.

They sat down next to each other, not speaking for a long while, just staring up at the stars. Harry realised that they were still holding hands. Harry glanced up at him and grinned.

"This is the best birthday I've ever had," he said shyly. "Knowing that I'm bonded to you." Harry stared for a long time at the man's lips, wondering what it would feel like to be kissed, but he was far too shy to even attempt it. He wanted it though, wanted it with an ache in his chest and his groin.

Severus returned the stare, his eyes gazing deep into Harry's as if he could find the mysteries of the universe in their depths. Harry was breathing harshly, his jeans uncomfortable as his cock pressed against the zip, harder than he could ever remember being. Severus traced one hand along Harry's cheek, then followed the curve of Harry's lips with his finger. The response was almost automatic, Harry opened his mouth and sucked Severus' finger, stifling a moan as his cock twitched in his trousers.

Severus face moved closer to his, Severus removed his finger and leaned that bit further forward. Harry tilted his head up and time seemed to stop for those few fractions of a second until Severus' lips finally descended upon his. Oh, God, so this was what it was like. So soft and wet, a firm press as they kissed and kissed. Severus' arms went round his back and Harry arched into the touch, feeling the urge to purr like his kitten form. Still kissing him, Severus hoisted Harry up so that he was sitting in Severus' lap, a place he'd long since given hope of being ever again.

Severus settled Harry astride his lap, his arms going once again around Harry's back, almost holding him in place.

They kissed some more, soft slow touches of lips upon lips until Molly's voice called for them in the distance.

Severus and Harry pulled apart, both breathing heavily, resting their foreheads against each other's. Harry's cock was so hard, he needed to come, he wanted to come, but he was aware of how much trust his parents had placed in him and in Severus. They couldn't do anything, not yet anyway.

Severus set Harry back on the ground and stood up. "Harry, why don't I go back and you can - um - take care of anything you might need to?" suggested Severus and Harry felt his whole body flush. He knew, Severus knew how aroused he was.

"O - okay," said Harry shakily. Severus gave him a chaste kiss on his forehead before heading back towards the house. Harry sank back down on the bench, his knees were threatening to give way beneath him. He unzipped his jeans and began stroking himself faster and faster, it didn't take long, his memories and the taste of Severus' lips still tingling on his own had him spurting over his hand almost immediately.

Feeling very daring all of a sudden, remembering George and Oliver the night before, Harry raised his fingers to his lips and tasted his seed for the first time. It was saltier than he expected, but not unpleasant and he spent a few minutes trying to get himself together again, imagining Severus bringing him off and then licking his hand, tasting Harry's essence.

It was going to be a long three years.

TBC

Chapter 12: Tears of the Sun

Part 12

The next three years passed quicker than Harry could ever have imagined, he was so busy with studying. His OWL results were good enough to take NEWTs in all ten subjects he'd done for OWLs. He got seven Outstandings and three Exceeds Expectations and the Weasleys couldn't have been more proud of him if he'd really been their son.

It was a little awkward when Fred and George got their results at the same time, despite being two years older than Harry, they'd only managed to scrape by and that was the first time they mentioned to Harry that they were quite keen to start a joke shop, and intended to get some part time jobs at Zonko's joke shop in Hogsmeade so that they could start saving. Harry was determined that as soon as he reached seventeen and had access to his vault, the first thing he would do was to give Molly and Arthur a good sum of it and the second was give Fred and George enough money to start their joke shop.

Harry's three Exceeds Expectations were in Divination, Occlumency and Transfiguration and Sirius was so disappointed that Harry hadn't done better in his subject. Harry was still so angry with Sirius over what he said about Severus that he didn't particularly care what his godfather thought at the moment. He was sorely tempted to drop the subject altogether, but his frequent letters from Severus convinced him to continue with it as he needed ten passes in ten NEWT subjects before he was allowed to take a Masters. Harry knew Sirius had been hoping that Harry would take his Masters in Transfiguration, but Harry had already decided he was going to take a Masters in both Potions and Defence.

Over the next couple of years, Harry endured his godfather's efforts to discredit and disparage Severus whenever he got the chance. Harry noted that Sirius was careful only to belittle his husband whenever no one else was around, only when he and Harry were alone, as if Sirius was aware that if anyone else heard what he was saying, they would know ho crazy he sounded.

"Has he touched you?"

"He told you to take a Potions Masters, didn't he?"

"He's been writing to you, hasn't he? Poisoned your mind against me, hasn't he?"

"He's a Death Eater. He and Lucius Malfoy were lovers, did you know that?"

The constant words didn't bother him at first, they were more like a small splinter in his skin, but the never ending tirade against Severus soon got very wearing, almost like that splinter had somehow got embedded deep inside him and was festering.

"He told you not to talk to me, didn't he? Been telling tales all about our school days? How awful we were to him?"

"He tricked Lily into performing that bonding spell, she and James hated Snape. They would never have agreed to this! To their child being molested by that pervert!" Sirius said one day shortly before Halloween of Harry's seventh year.

Harry hadn't been home for his birthday that year, the students taking their Masters had been on a retreat the whole summer, getting ready to come into their full powers when they came of age and he glared at his godfather. Their relationship would never be as close as Sirius seemed to want it, not when he couldn't even accept Severus as a person, never mind that he was bonded to Harry.

"How dare you! In case you hadn't noticed, Sirius, I turned seventeen in July, so don't you stand there and accuse my husband," Harry was careful to stress the word. Sirius winced, as if he still hadn't accepted the fact that his godson had a husband, "of molesting me! I would appreciate it if you stopped abusing his name every time you see me. I don't like feeling insulted, Sirius."

"I'm not insulting you!" he protested.

"No? Every time you belittle him, you're belittling me and my choice."

"How can you talk about choice? There was no choice involved! He tricked you into this, I'm sure of it!"

"This is getting old, Sirius and I'm sick of it. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go and pack for the Triwizard Tournament."

"You're still going then? You're going to Hogwarts? To see him?"

"I daresay I'll see him, since he is a teacher there," said Harry, walking away before he did something like hex his godfather into oblivion, as he was sorely tempted to do. His headache was back, an ache concentrated mostly on his scar, but radiating outwards so that it almost encompassed his whole head.

He was having strange nightmares too, about a strange pale faced creature with red slits for eyes and he shuddered as he made his way back to his dormitory to continue packing. In a few days he would be going to Hogwarts. He would get to see Ron and Hermione and of course, Severus.

Even Sirius couldn't put a dampener on that.

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"Goyle, how many times to I have to tell you? Tuck that shirt in," scolded Severus as the members of Slytherin House assembled themselves on the steps. The Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs were between the Slytherin and Gryffindor students, but the enmity between the two Houses was almost palpable in the chill October air. Any minute now, the delegations from Durmstrang and Beauxbatons would arrive for the start of the Triwizard Tournament and Severus' stomach could not stop fluttering madly.

He would get to see his husband for the first time in almost a year, the last time Severus had seen Harry was the past Christmas at the Burrow. They'd written letters to each other almost every week and Severus was both pleased and surprised that Harry was taking his Masters in Potions as well as Defence. Had he really had that much influence on him, even though their time together was short? He would see his husband very soon, his finally of age husband. The ruddiness of his cheeks could well have been from the cold air, at least that’s what Severus tried to tell himself and he hoped that's what others would think.

There were mumbles from the assembled students, Death Eater attacks had been becoming very frequent of late and rumours were growing that Voldemort had returned. Peter Pettigrew still hadn't been discovered, even though half the Aurors were out hunting for him. None of them had forgotten the Potters and how Pettigrew had been instrumental in their downfall.

The Order was on alert, for only last month, the Dark Mark on Severus' left forearm had reappeared. It appeared the rumours were true after all, Voldemort was returning and Severus had been charged with Harry Potter's welfare by the headmaster as part of his duties for the Order. Severus would have done it anyway, he had an inkling that Draco Malfoy would somehow end up being the Hogwarts Champion, either by cheating or by being chosen, but he wouldn't put it past Lucius Malfoy's son to somehow drag Harry before Lucius, probably in chains if he could manage it.

The Durmstrang ship arrived before the Beauxbatons carriage, the students were ushered inside by McGonagall while Karkaroff, the headmaster, shook hands with Dumbledore and Severus. When the man had gone inside, Severus wiped his hand on his robes, swallowing down his distaste. He remembered Karkaroff of old and the memories were not pleasant.

It was another unpleasant surprise when the Beauxbatons carriage door opened and down stepped Sirius Black instead of Madame Maxime. "Madam Maxime couldn't make it, Professor Black?" asked Dumbledore. Sirius was also in the Order, but so far Severus had managed to avoid seeing him at any of the meetings. He did notice however that Harry's money had been repaid and he'd asked Dumbledore how he had managed to get the money back when he had to steal it in the first place. It turned out that Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth, had given him the money and had also donated a fair sum to keep the Order going, even though he was not an active participant himself. Severus wondered why Albus had never asked his brother in the first place rather than steal it from Harry.

"I'm afraid she was taken ill at the last minute, headmaster," said Sirius with a smirk in Severus' direction. Oh, took ill indeed, with a little help form Black, Severus was almost sure. He shook hands with the other teachers and leaned close to hiss in Severus' ear. "I'm watching you, Snape. Touch him and you're dead."

Three years the man'd had to get used to Severus and Harry being bonded, but it looked like he was as likely to accept them as a couple as he was to suddenly sprout wings and fly.

"Are you really attempting to threaten me, Black? What, the murder attempt at school wasn't enough for you?"

"That was just a friendly warning, Snape," Black whispered harshly. "The next one won't be so friendly."

"Oh, look at me, I'm positively quaking in my boots," scowled Severus trying his best not to laugh. The man seemed terribly unhinged and he wondered if turning into a dog so often had addled his wits.

Professor McGonagall returned and whisked Sirius away just as the students from Beauxbatons were descending the steps. Severus' hands clenched as he watched the six females daintily hop down the last step and then it was Harry's turn; Severus knew he was the only boy in his year. Severus' heart got caught somewhere between his chest and his throat, Harry was even more handsome than he remembered.

He hadn't grown much taller, maybe an inch or so, he would never be as tall as Severus. His hair was even longer, trailing to his waist now. Harry's eyes were as bright as ever and as he scanned the assembled crowds on the steps, his smile widened when he caught sight of his foster brother among the Gryffindors. Severus was doing his best to remain calm and focused, when all he really wanted to do was to march over to those steps, scoop Harry up in his arms and carry him down to the dungeons. Where they wouldn't leave for days.

Harry had been so embarrassed at Severus going to see him in his uniform, but Severus thought it looked rather distinguished. It was almost as if Harry had stepped out of another century, with the ruffled shirt and knee length trousers. Severus had just discovered a new fetish, Harry in white stockings and buckle shoes.

But it couldn't happen, at least not in public. Not yet. Not while Malfoy was still a student at the school and reported back to his father. Severus had no illusions that he was one hundred per cent trusted by either of the Malfoys. All he could do was look out for Harry, while at the same time seeming not to.

Both the Weasley children had been told by their parents that they were not to reveal anything about Severus visiting them during holidays, Miss Granger had been told by Dumbledore. It wouldn't do for Draco to discover just how close to the Weasleys Severus was, especially not how close he was to their adopted son. Black could ruin it for everyone if he did not pull his head in.

Harry quickly glanced at Severus, then glanced away again. They both knew how important it was to keep their bonding secret, especially considering the fact of what was happening outside the world of schools and tournaments.

As the Beauxbatons and the rest of the Hogwarts students returned to the castle and the Halloween feast, Severus was pondering whether it was allowed to give the visiting students detention.

He could think of quite a few things Harry he would like Harry to do.

TBC

Chapter 13: Tears of the Sun

Part 13

Ron took Harry's arm in his and escorted him to the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall. Most of the other students had been seated already and there was a buzz of just barely heard conversation as Harry walked towards the benches.

"It's really him!"

"Harry Potter!"

"I wonder why he didn't come here before?"

"Do you think it's true? That he can't die?"

Harry tried to his best to ignore both the words and the stares as he sat down in between Ron and Hermione. Hermione made the introductions to the other seventh years sitting around the trio. Three boys, Seamus, Dean and Neville, who all gawked for a few moments at Harry's scar before hastily lowering their heads. No one at Beauxbatons had seemed that bothered by his name or his scar, but then not a lot of them had been British so maybe they hadn't known the story behind Harry's scar and his escape from Voldemort when he was a child.

The two girls, Lavender and Parvati giggled and blushed at him, before turning their attention to each other and whispering behind their hands. Hermione rolled her eyes and muttered, "Honestly! You'd think you'd never seen a boy before!"

Lavender peeped out from behind her hand and grinned shyly at Harry. "None of the boys at Hogwarts are as handsome as Harry though," she said. "That uniform is so dashing, isn't it?

Now it was Harry's turn to blush. She thought he was handsome? Him? With glasses and messy hair?

"Sorry," said Harry. "I'm spoken for." He twirled the ring on his left hand, it had been Harry's gift from Severus on his seventeenth birthday, although only he and Severus knew it. It was a ring with the Snape crest etched on the front, but was hidden by a charm. As Severus had predicted, the Snape crest appeared on Harry's arm on his birthday. The Snape crest was mostly white with small columns of a black design, that Harry could hardly make out, his tattoo was so small. Across the top there was a horizontal band of blue with three yellow portcullises.

The bond had almost completed, they both knew that to complete it they had to consummate their relationship. Sensing Severus' heated looks, Harry didn't think that was going to be a problem.

Ron arched an eyebrow at him and Harry could almost guess what he was thinking. Since when had Harry been spoken for? Harry shook his head, to warn Ron that he couldn't talk about it right now, but he guessed Ron would want some explanations later.

What was going to be a problem was actually finding some time alone with Severus without anyone being any the wiser. Not only was there his godfather to consider, but a school full of teachers and students. How was he going to visit Severus alone without anyone knowing?

"I've asked Dumbledore, Harry," said Ron. "He's moved another bed into our dormitory, so you'll be staying with us!" Ron beamed at him, so pleased that his brother finally got to go to Hogwarts with him.

"That's great Ron," said Harry, returning the smile. "Where are the others staying?"

"The Beauxbatons girls are staying with us," said Hermione, "and the Durmstrang students are being divided among the other Houses. I'm not sure about the teachers."

"Are you excited about the Tournament, Harry?" asked Seamus, but his eye was drawn to one of the Beauxbatons girls, Sophia Medicci, who was sitting a few places away from Hermione.

"Sure," said Harry. "That's Sophia, would you like me to introduce you?"

Seamus flushed. "Sure, if you don't think she'd mind?"

Introductions were made, Lavender swapped places with Sophia; she and Seamus were soon deep in conversation and laughing with each other. The noise quietened down as Dumbledore stood up and began to address the assembled crowd.

"Welcome, visitors to Hogwarts. What an exciting year this is! As most of you already know, the Triwizard Tournament will be reinstated this year after more than a century since the last one. Only students aged seventeen or over are eligible to take part," Dumbledore waved his wand at a scratched wooden chest in front of him. Emerging from the chest was a roughly hewn wooden goblet, blue flames dancing round the lip. "The Goblet of Fire will be placed in the Entrance Hall tonight. Those students wishing to compete in the Tournament, please write your name and the name of your school on a piece of parchment and drop it into the cup. Tomorrow evening, the Goblet will choose three Champions, one from each school. By entering your name in the Goblet you are agreeing to participate, there is no way of getting out of it once your name has been chosen, it is a binding magical contract. So please, only enter your name if you definitely want to take part."

Dumbledore paused for a few moments. "Now, a few words. Let's eat!" said Dumbledore and the golden plates on the tables filled with food.

"I didn't think you could prepare food with magic," Harry whispered to Ron.

"You can't, it's prepared by House Elves and then sent to us," said Ron, trying not to let Hermione hear, but it seemed Ron's girlfriend had a sixth sense when it came to House Elves. Harry had already been on the receiving end of Hermione's rants at the Burrow concerning the slavery of the House Elves.

"It's not right, is it, Harry? Those poor creatures working night and day for nothing!"

"Erm," said Harry.

"Leave Harry alone, he doesn't want to hear all that!" protested Ron.

"You do, don't you, Harry?" persisted Hermione.

"Erm," Harry said again.

There weren't House Elves at Beauxbatons, all the students took it in turns to do the cooking of meals, except for the first years. The teachers had learned their lesson the hard way; a few years before Harry started at the school, one set of first years had managed to start a fire and had burned down half the kitchens before it was under control. Luckily no one was hurt, but first years were banned from anywhere near the new improved kitchens after that.

Ron and Hermione continued arguing over him, Harry just ignored it after awhile and ate his fill of all the sweetest foods he could manage. He had a feeling he might need a lot of energy later and grinned to himself. It was a relief when the feast ended and Hermione had to head back to her own dormitory.

"This way, Harry," said Ron, helping Harry to negotiate the trick staircases. All those students wishing to enter the Tournament were adding their names to the flickering blue flames of the goblet. Harry and Ron added theirs before heading up to the dormitory.

Harry had heard all about the trick staircases and secret passages from both from Ron and the rest of the Weasleys, but actually being here and seeing it for himself was another matter. Hogwarts was a lot bigger than the Chateau Beauxbatons, with lots of secret nooks and crannies that Harry was hoping one day to explore. Fred and George had given him a special map of Hogwarts for his last birthday, knowing that he would be arriving for the Triwizard.

"Here's your bed," said Ron, pointing to the one that had Harry's trunk at the foot of it. Seamus, Dean and Neville were still in the common room, so Ron and Harry could have a bit of time alone, he guessed. There was a squishy parcel sitting on Harry's bed.

"What's that?" he asked Ron.

"I don't know, open it," insisted Ron, sitting down cross legged on his own bed, right next to Harry's.

There was a card, with writing Harry would recognise anywhere. "It's from Severus," said Harry.

"Snape, Harry. You have to call him Snape here or people will get suspicious," Ron picked at his nails. "Or greasy git, ugly bat, those will do too."

"What?" gasped Harry. "But I don't think he's ugly! Or greasy for that matter!"

"Wait until you see him in Potions," said Ron. "His hair's always greasy there. So, about this spoken for bit? Who were you talking about? I didn't even know you were going out with anyone. It must be someone from Beauxbatons, is it? The only other girls you know are Hermione and Ginny and I'm guessing it isn't either of them."

"Ew, no, Ron, Ginny's like my little sister! Who said it had to be a girl?" Harry unwrapped the parcel, a floaty silvery fabric fell through his hands.

"Oh my God! An invisibility cloak!" exclaimed Ron. "They're really rare. And expensive. Hang on, you said it wasn't a girl? But there aren't any boys in your year at Beauxbatons, so who are you going out with then?"

"I'm not going out with anyone, Ron. I'm already bonded to them." Harry thought he might have had a bit more time before he had to have this conversation with Ron.

"Who? Who is it? The only person you're even remotely close to besides us is Snape and it can't be - oh, God! It is, isn't it? You're bonded to Snape? Harry, are you mad? He must be twenty years older than you at least! How could you? My parents are going to kill you, you know that, don't you? Getting bonded without even telling them?"

"They already know," said Harry softly.

"They knew? Before me? I thought we shared everything, Harry. Obviously I'm not as important to you as I thought."

"Ron, of course you are! You were my first friend, my brother. Of course you're important to me! Please don't be like this, I thought you'd be happy for me."

"Happy? Married to that git? He hates Gryffindors Harry, he's always picking on us, giving us detention and lines for no other reason than because we exist, now you tell me, does that sound fair to you?"

"Well, no, but I've never had him as a teacher before."

"You could have done a lot better than him, Harry."

"But I love him."

"Well, it must be true what they say then, 'Love is blind'. Does anyone else know?"

"Just my godfather."

"I bet he wasn't happy," said Ron. "They really hated each other at school, did you hear what happened?"

"No, what?"

"You know that Professor Lupin is a werewolf, right?"

Harry nodded, he'd been hearing tales of the DADA professor ever since he began his teaching career at Hogwarts.

"Well, he was at school with your parents too, Lupin was best friends with your father and godfather and one day Sirius decided to play a prank on Snape by sending him to the Shrieking Shack were Lupin had gone earlier that day to transform into his werewolf form. Your father saved Snape from Lupin, but Snape never forgave Black, he was convinced that Black had really been trying to kill him."

Harry stared at Ron goggle eyed. "He tried to kill Se - Snape?"

"Snape owed your father a Life Debt. The only way for it to be balanced was if Snape had saved your parents, but he couldn't, so I'm guessing he has to save your life sometime for it to be gone."

"So is that why my mother bonded us? Because of a Life Debt? Or is that why Snape accepted the bond? Hoping to use that for the Life Debt?"

Did Severus love him at all? Or was it all just some noble endeavour on his part to repay James Potter's Life Debt?

"You were bonded to him without even a choice?" demanded Ron. "Harry, if you tell someone, surely it can be annulled if you didn't accept it."

"But I have accepted it, Ron," said Harry, rolling up his right sleeve and showing Ron the Snape crest on his arm.

"Does Snape have the Potter crest?"

Harry nodded.

"Well then, there's no doubt about it any more. The two of you really do love each other. That's the only reason the crests would appear on each of your arms."

"So are you saying you're all right with us being together, Ron?"

"I just need to get used to the idea first, it's a bit of a shock to find my brother is bonded to my worst teacher. But please, Harry, whatever the two of you do together, spare me the details!" grinned Ron and threw a pillow at him.

Harry caught it and grinned back. "Okay, it's a deal."

TBC

Chapter 14: Tears of the Sun

Part 14

Harry waited until all the other boys had fallen asleep before taking out the invisibility cloak again, he'd hidden it beneath his mattress when Ron hadn't been looking. The silky material slid through his fingers almost as if it was made from water or air rather than anything solid. He watched as his fingers disappeared and then reappeared when the cloak slid over them, the fabric tickling his skin a little.

Now with the cloak and the marauder's map from Fred and George, Harry had a way of seeing Severus without anyone else knowing. Harry tapped the map with his wands, whispering the code words the twins had given him, "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good." The map unfolded itself and soon tiny dots appeared on the parchment, most of them stationary, as their owners were quite properly tucked up in bed.

The dot labelled Severus Snape was pacing up and down a room in the dungeons. It looked like his husband wasn't in the least bit sleepy tonight either. Feeling his cock swell in anticipation, Harry got out of bed and dressed in his Beauxbatons uniform again; he still remembered Severus' flushed face when he'd finally seen Harry in it. Had his husband got a wee kink? He forwent the cravat and robe and was smiling to himself by the time he buckled his shoes and adjusted the blue ribbons holding his stockings in place at the knee.

Harry draped the cloak around his shoulder and walked on tiptoe to exit the dormitory, no point in waking the sleepers just because he was getting impatient to see Severus. If he was careful now, he could spend the night, or at least part of it with his husband.

According to the map, there was a secret passageway to the dungeons behind a bookcase in the Gryffindor common room. Harry wouldn't even need to try and sneak past the portrait who guarded the entrance. He stopped a few stairs from the bottom, glancing round at the common room from his vantage point to make sure that no one else was down there. The only sound came from the crackling fire.

Harry made his way to the bookcase marked on the map and tapped it three times with his wand. The bookcase slid aside to reveal a dark room behind it. "Lumos," whispered Harry to illuminate the room in front of him. Blue light emerged from his wand tip, sending spiders and other creatures scurrying away. Swaying cobwebs were soon the only evidence that they'd been there. The floor was thick with dust, muffling Harry's footsteps as he made his way to the oak door on the other side, opposite the bookcase entrance. He closed the bookcase behind him, the room suddenly seeming even darker without the sparse light the common room fire had afforded.

Harry pushed open the door; uneven, worn steps led downwards, to the dungeons, he assumed. He kept the lumos spell going as he descended, aware that he would have to turn it off before he opened the entrance at the bottom. On the map, two figures were wandering up and down the dungeon corridor; the Slytherin prefects, Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson. Harry would just have to be careful and make sure he wasn't caught. No one was going to stop him seeing Severus tonight.

He paused by the door at the bottom, reading the map again to ensure he would know the way to Severus' rooms. Out the door, turn left and Severus' office door was the first on the left. Harry extinguished his wand, put the map in the back pocket of his trousers and draped the cloak over him once again. Pushing the door open, he listened for the footsteps of the two prefects, they were far away at the other end of the dungeon corridor and he quickly made his way to Severus door. Which was locked, well of course it was, but he couldn't risk knocking in case the prefects heard the noise.

Harry raised his right hand and just pressed softly against the wood, much to his surprise, the door swung inward. Not wondering about his good luck, Harry quickly entered the room and closed the door behind him. Even before Harry removed the cloak, he was grabbed from behind with strong arms around his waist.

"I wondered when you'd get here," said Severus. Harry had been teetering on the brink of desire and arousal all day and the sound of his husband's wonderful voice went straight to his groin, his cock expanding fully against the front placket of his knee length trousers. Severus yanked the cloak off him and turned Harry round. "I want to see you." Severus' eyes widened, even darker now with lust as he took in the sight of Harry in his uniform. Severus' eyes roamed over Harry everywhere, right from the top of his head, down to the stockings and buckle shoes, lingering the longest on his legs and where they joined at the top of his thighs and the bulge in between.

"Merlin, Harry, how am I going to concentrate in classes with you wearing that?" gasped Severus.

"You like it then?" asked Harry, feeling strangely shy all of a sudden, even though he'd been looking forward to spending time with Severus all day.

"On you it looks exquisite," breathed Severus as he stalked towards Harry. Harry stumbled backwards until he had his back against the door. The wood rattled in its frame as Severus came closer and closer. Harry couldn't stop the moan of yearning no more than he could stop the sun from setting.

"Severus, God, Severus! I've missed you," said Harry breathlessly just as Severus leaned down and claimed Harry's lips in a deep, passionate kiss. The kiss was nowhere near gentle. They'd been apart for too long for anything resembling gentleness. They were both as vicious as each other, biting, nipping, sucking on each other's mouths as though the other were air. Harry was feeling light headed, all the blood in his body had settled between his legs and his cock was throbbing like a pulse beat in his groin. Severus stepped closer to Harry, hoisted Harry's legs around his waist and then began to thrust his groin against Harry's. Hard.

Harry had no experience other than his own hand, he and Severus had kissed, but Severus had never attempted anything more and the sensations were so much more intense than Harry was used to from his own solo explorations. It was as though there was a small electrical charge humming beneath his skin, attuned to every breath, every movement from his husband and Harry didn't want anything to end.

Harry hung his arms around Severus' neck, worried that he might fall, but Severus had him in a firm grip, Harry was sure he would have finger shaped bruises on his thighs and buttocks tomorrow. Severus set up a steady rhythm, Harry couldn't do much more than hang on and try to thrust his hips into the delicious pressure. It wasn't long before he felt the fluttering in the base of his tummy and an ache low down in his balls to warn of his approaching orgasm. Harry pulled his mouth away, gasping. "Severus! Stop, I'm gonna come! Fuck, oh fuck!" he screamed as his hips arched almost of their own accord, his ankles locking together around Severus' back as he thrust and thrust against his husband. He couldn't stop now even if he wanted to and he was coming and coming feeling pulse after pulse of his seed seep through his underwear and the velvet of his trousers.

His thighs were quivering, his whole body still feeling weak with aftershocks and Harry could hardly bear to look at his husband, unwilling to see the disappointment or God forbid, the humour in Severus' face. They hadn't even made it to the bedroom and already Harry had lost control like a bloody child!

Severus eased Harry down and tried to kiss him, Harry turned his face away and cast a cleaning charm on his clothes.

"Harry? What's wrong?" asked Severus.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to lose control like that," said Harry. "You must think I'm such a child."

"Harry, this is the first time we've done anything together besides kiss, actually I'm quite impressed you lasted as long as you did."

"Aren't you disappointed that I came so soon?"

"Why? The night is young and you're seventeen, did you think you were only going to have just one orgasm tonight, husband of mine?"

Harry's mouth dropped open. "What?"

Severus' answer was to kneel on the floor in front of Harry, gazing up at him. He trailed his hands up and down Harry's white stockings, Harry's skin tingled wherever the man touched, even through the silk of his stockings and he bit back a moan. "No, make as much noise as you want, Harry, I want to hear you. I want to hear how good I make you feel."

Severus reached the tops of the stockings and moved his fingers to the back of Harry's knees, caressing the small patches of skin and then upwards to Harry's covered buttocks. The hands moved round to the front, to Harry's renewed erection. He moaned as Severus rubbed him through the fabric, he didn't know he'd be able to get hard again so quickly. His knees were threatening to give way and he grabbed hold of Severus' shoulders for support.

Severus began to undo the two buttons on the front panel of Harry's trousers. Harry was trembling with need and want and perhaps just a little bit of fear. Would Severus think he was ugly there? Too small? Not good enough? Living with the Weasleys, who were all much taller than Harry, he had constantly worried that he might not measure up in that department.

Severus pulled down the flap, then reached inside the slit in Harry's boxers and tugged his cock out. He didn't seem to find it wanting, as he bestowed kisses along the length, which had Harry twitching against the man's mouth and had precome dripping from the end of his shaft. "Severus! That feels so good," groaned Harry.

"I know something even better," Severus smirked up at him before kissing backwards until the reached the head of Harry's cock and then he took almost half of Harry's cock in his mouth. Harry wailed, feeling his knees give way almost immediately. "Severus!" he screamed as Severus continued to suck and lick on Harry's cock as though it was a delicious lollipop.

"Let me, let me, you too," panted Harry, trying to gently tug Severus' head away. He wanted to make Severus feel as good as he'd made Harry feel. Severus released him with a small pop and Harry tried not to whine in disappointment at the loss of all that lovely, wet suction. He'd never imagined anything would feel that fantastic.

"Harry?" queried Severus. "What do you want to do?"

Harry knelt down on the floor next to his husband.

"I want - I want to make you come," he said softly. "Can I?" Harry waved at Severus' trousers. Severus nodded and Harry wasted no time in unzipping his husband's black trousers and fondling his cock for the first time. He was indeed bigger than Harry, both in length and girth, what Harry hadn't reckoned on was how exciting it made him feel to be doing this to someone else. The only person he'd ever touched was himself, he hoped he was doing it all right, from the small gasps and thrusts of Severus' hips, he guessed he was.

"Does my uniform excite you, Severus?" Harry whispered close to the man's ear as his hand continued its ministrations on Severus' cock.

"Yes!" a strangled gasp.

"Does it make you feel so naughty? Me, in my school uniform?"

"Yes, God, yes," moaned Snape. "Those stockings, those shoes, the trousers, you're just begging to be despoiled in that outfit."

"You want that, do you, Severus? To despoil me? To claim me? Mark me as yours?"

"Harry! Yes! Yes! Yes!" Severus screamed and arched his hips into Harry's hand, bathing his skin in drops of pearl. Harry kissed the man as he came down from his orgasm, feeling ecstatic. He had made someone else come. He had made his husband come. When they'd finished kissing, Severus cast a silent spell that had them both naked in moments, well almost naked. He'd left Harry's shoes and stockings on. Harry smiled, Severus really did have a thing for those shoes and stockings didn't he?

"I think we'd be more comfortable in the bedroom, wouldn't we?" asked Severus with a cheeky grin.

"Lead the way," said Harry, waving his hand about.

"Oh, I can do better than that," said Severus as he helped Harry stand, then he scooped him up and carried him into the bedroom.

TBC

Chapter 15: Tears of the Sun

Part 15

Harry's weight felt so perfect in his arms as Severus carried him over to the bed and set him down on top of the covers. Severus could hardly believe that it was really happening, that for the first time he had Harry, his husband, right where he wanted him. In his bed, naked and aroused. Harry blinked up at him, his eyes magnified by his glasses, and swallowed nervously.

"S - Severus?" he asked tentatively and Severus realised he was probably staring at Harry like some predator before he swooped in to devour his prey. He felt like devouring Harry, all of him, from his fingers to his toes. Severus didn't speak, he bent down and unbuckled each of Harry's shoes in turn, before his hands were back caressing Harry's stocking clad feet. The boy moaned and his eyes rolled back in his head. Harry's hips were pumping the air, his prick twitching from amidst its nest of dark curls.

"Do you like that?" Severus asked in a throaty voice.

"Yes!" moaned Harry, his hands fisting the bedclothes on either side of his body. Severus thought he'd teased him enough; he lay down on top of Harry and proceeded to kiss his husband senseless. Harry was thrusting up against him and that pressure as well as the thought of what they might soon be doing had Severus' own cock quicken again.

He trailed a hand across Harry's collarbone, dipping down to tease each nipple in turn, swallowing Harry's moans as he did so. His hands moved further still, down his sides, caressing lightly before one hand found it's way between Harry's thighs, fondling Harry's balls as he arched up against him with a jolt. A bit further and Severus eased his right hand underneath them, toying with the secret place between Harry's legs.

Harry tensed and pulled away from their kiss, an incredulous look on his face. "Severus? What are you doing?" he asked, still a little breathless from their kissing.

Severus stared down at his husband, feeling a little uneasy. Surely Harry knew? Someone was bound to have told him, weren't they? But Harry was looking up at him with such surprise on his face, such an innocent look on him.

Severus rolled off Harry and lay down on his side, facing Harry. Harry turned over and did the same. Severus couldn't stop touching him, running his hands over Harry's sides, his chest. "Harry, you do know what men can do together, don't you?" he asked hopefully.

"Of course!" Harry chuckled. "Kissing and touching and what you did, you know, with your mouth." Harry blushed such a delightful shade of pink that Severus was seriously reconsidering his choice of colouring in the dungeon decor. "And - and rubbing against each other."

Severus groaned, but not in desire. He knew Harry was a virgin, they'd been bonded since he was a child and the bond would allow no other intimacies to take place, but he at least thought that Harry would know the theory, even if he couldn't put it into practice. Somehow Severus hadn't imagined that tonight he would be giving his husband a sexual education lesson rather than actually engaging in any.

"You do know about the birds and the bees?"

"Yes, I've known that for ages, but neither of us are a girl," protested Harry.

So he told Harry, who listened eagerly and blushed in turn. There was silence from both of them when Severus had finished. Harry just stared at him. "Is that really true, Severus? Or you just teasing me?" demanded Harry.

"It's true, Harry," sighed Severus.

"But - but wouldn't it hurt?" Harry asked worriedly. "Having something in there?"

"It does hurt a bit, especially the first time, but with the proper lubricant and preparation, pain should be minimal."

In the flickering candle light, Severus saw Harry's eyes were a little tearful. He scooted over and wrapped Harry in his arms. "I'm sorry, Severus. I don't think I'm ready for that."

"Sssh, Harry, it's all right. We don't have to do anything you don't want. Kissing and touching is fine for now, isn't it?"

Harry nodded against Severus' shoulder and Severus stroked his back, trying to soothe him. His intention hadn't been to panic his husband. Was there more to his panic than worry over something new?

"Harry," Severus began carefully. "The Dursleys, did they ever touch you? Molest you?"

"No! Of course not, they hated me. It was just the beatings and no food."

As if that wasn't bad enough.

"Now, I hear from your parents that you've become an Animagus? What's your form?"

"You'll laugh," said Harry, gazing up at him, dry eyed for the moment.

"Tell me, please. I promise I won't laugh."

"Okay. It's a kitten. A fluffy black kitten," said Harry.

The corners of Severus' mouth quirked but he managed to control his mirth. This was just too adorable for words.

"Can I see it?"

"You want to?" asked Harry.

Severus nodded and Harry slid out of the bed; Severus' arms felt awfully empty once he'd gone. Harry said the incantation and a few seconds later a very fluffy black kitten with bright green eyes was gazing up at Snape with a beseeching expression and let out a plaintive miaow. Severus bent down and lifted the kitten onto the bed and settled it on his lap, petting it and being delighted at Harry's small purrs. "You like that, don't you?" said Severus tickling behind Harry's ears. Harry reached up and began to lick Severus' nose. Severus laughed. "Time you changed back, I think."

Harry hopped off Severus and turned back into himself. "Severus - can I - can I stay with you tonight? If I go back early enough, no one will know." Harry sounded so unsure. Did he really think that Severus would turn him out?

Severus opened his arms. "Of course you can, Harry. Come and see me whenever you can. I missed talking with you on your birthday this year."

"I missed you too," said Harry as he snuggled up against Severus' side once more, resting his head on Severus' shoulder. Harry toyed with the sparse hair on Severus' chest. "Do you think I'll get a lot of body hair?"

"How long since you've had hair on your groin and underarms?"

"A few years now," said Harry.

"Then you probably won't get a lot of body hair. Some people are just naturally smoother than others."

"I like yours," said Harry. "It feels so soft." Harry kissed Severus' chest, his eyelids drooping. "So, do you have an Animagus form?"

"I do, but I have never told anyone what it is and I'm not about to start now."

"Oh, go on," pleaded Harry. "I told you mine. I won't laugh, I promise."

Sighing deeply. "Very well, if you must. It's not a very useful form, at least not unless you're near water or snow. I'm - I'm a penguin."

Harry went completely still, almost as if he'd stopped breathing. He wasn't laughing. In fact, he looked more shocked than anything else. "Harry? Are you all right?"

"You - you're a penguin?" Harry beamed at him and hugged Severus even tighter. "I knew it! I knew it!" exclaimed Harry. "Patch did save me after all!"

And Severus heard all about Harry's toy penguin and how he thought Severus had been the penguin brought to life to save him. Harry was sobbing by the end of the tale, his memories of the Dursleys still affecting him even when they were hundreds of miles away and couldn’t harm him here.

Severus might have to do something about that.

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The next day, Harry managed to sneak back to the dormitory without anyone knowing he was gone. He'd spent the night wrapped up in Severus' arms and there was nowhere on earth he'd rather be. It probably was best not to risk seeing Severus every night, but Harry wanted to, despite the risks.

He spent the day attending classes with the Gryffindors, but as he'd already passed his NEWTs, he was allowed to study his own notes in preparation for his Masters in June. Once a week, his tutor from Beauxbatons would visit and check on his progress. He would have to ask Severus for permission to use his lab for the practical aspects of Potions. There was only so far theory could take you in Potions.

Sophia and Seamus seemed to be getting on very well, they sat together during classes, at lunch and at dinner that evening when everyone was curious to see who would be the Champions. The chest had been brought into the Hall again and instead of blue flames this time, the goblet was emitting gold sparks. Once dinner had finished Dumbledore stood up and called the room to order.

"In just a few moments, the three Triwizard Champions will be revealed," said Dumbledore as he watched the gold sparks suddenly splutter to a halt and then a piece of parchment whizzed into his hand. "The Champion for Hogwarts will be Draco Malfoy," the headmaster said, glancing over at the boy in question. The Slytherin table erupted into whoops and cheers. Harry looked over too and felt his scar burning as their eyes met. Draco smirked at Harry before turning away and accepting the congratulations of his Housemates.

"A Slytherin Champion!" wailed Ron. "That isn't fair! Can't they have one from each House?"

"Don't be silly, Ron, you know the rules," said Hermione. "There are only one from each school."

The goblet spat out another piece of parchment. "The Champion for Durmstrang will be Anton Dholov." Dumbledore nodded towards Karkaroff, the Durmstrang headmaster, who patted his winning student on the back amid a round of polite applause.

Dumbledore caught the third piece of parchment; Harry, Ron and Hermione sat up straighter in their seats as they waited for the identity of the final Champion to be revealed. "The Champion for Beauxbatons will be Sophia Medicci," said Dumbledore.

"Sorry, Harry," said Ron and Harry bristled. Ron didn't sound sorry in the least, almost as if he was glad Harry had failed to become one of the Champions. He was disappointed, of course he was, but he congratulated Sophia anyway, who was being hugged ecstatically by Seamus.

"Thank you, everyone, now if the Champions could just follow Professor Snape into the next room - " Dumbledore's words were cut off mid-flow as the goblet began to emit sparks again and this time a fourth parchment flew into his hands. The crowds gasped as one.

Dumbledore stared at the name on the parchment, then showed it round the teachers' table where everyone from Professor Sprout to the Minister of Magic himself had a look at it. The Minister nodded, Dumbledore cleared his throat. "It seems there has been a bit of a mix-up and the goblet has given us a fourth Champion. Harry Potter, will you join the others please?"

TBC

Chapter 16: Tears of the Sun

Part 16

Harry was so sure he had misheard. Had Dumbledore really said he was one of the Champions? That couldn't have happened, he must have been imagining it. Hermione's urgent whisper in his ear was no phantom though, "Harry, they're waiting for you!"

Harry stood up, the lack of cheers a sharp counterpoint to the welcome the other champions had received. A buzz of hurried conversation followed him as he made his way to the small door by the side of the teachers' table. Once in the room, Dumbledore followed Harry in and shut the door with a snap.

"He cheated!" protested Malfoy almost before the headmaster turned round. "What's the matter, Potter? Not infamous enough already that you had to cheat to get into the Tournament?"

"That is enough, Mr. Malfoy!" Severus glared at his student, but had ignored Harry completely. It hurt, Harry hadn't realised how much it would hurt for Severus to ignore him like this when they weren't alone.

As well as the four Champions, the room also held Sirius, Professor Dumbledore, the Minister for Magic and Percy Weasley, the Minister's new assistant. Severus and Sirius were pointedly ignoring each other as well.

"Potter can't compete," said Severus coolly, still not looking at Harry.

"No wait just a minute, Snape!" snarled Sirius. "Harry's name came out of that goblet fair and square! You all saw it!"

"Quite right, Black," said Fudge. "The Champions have been chosen. Harry's name did come out of the goblet and according to the rules, he has to compete. None of the Champions have a choice now that their names have been called."

"Or what?" asked Severus. Harry wished he would at least look at him, give some indication of what was going through his mind. Was he afraid that his emotions would show on his face and somehow give them away? Harry tried to make his own face as blank as possible.

"Or their life is forfeit," sighed Dumbledore. "You know how archaic some of these magical contracts are."

"Minister," began Karkaroff tugging on his goatee beard. "Surely you will not allow this travesty to go ahead? Two Champions from one school? It's preposterous! I insist the names are drawn again until every school has two Champions."

"I'm sorry, Igor," said Dumbledore. "That isn't possible, the goblet has gone out and won't re-ignite until the start of the next Tournament."

"Very convenient!" muttered Karkaroff. "Rest assured Minister, that this is the last time Durmstrang will open the hand of friendship to foreign wizards ever again! Anton, come along, we are not staying here a moment longer."

"Karkaroff, your student still has to compete. Binding magical contract," said Fudge, looking rather uncomfortable. Karkaroff glared at the whole room in general, saving a particularly vicious glower for Harry's direction. Pain shot so suddenly through Harry's scar that he almost stumbled. "Harry? Are you all right?" asked Sirius, gripping Harry's elbow.

"I'm fine," Harry yanked his arm away, feeling a hollow ache in his chest that it wasn't the touch he wanted. He tried his best to ignore the throbbing of his head as Fudge began telling them about the first task.

"My assistant, Weasley, will shortly be giving each of you an envelope. Inside will be your clue for the first task. They are magically sealed until the thirteenth of November and you will have a week to figure out the clue which will let you know what your task is. If you have not figured it out, someone will tell you so that you can in fact do the task, but you will lose points. Weasley, please give the Champions their envelopes."

Percy rummaged through the brown leather satchel slung over his shoulder. "But Minister, we only have three - oh, there are four," he said and handed the envelopes to each Champion in turn, giving Harry his last. Percy's smile as he gave Harry his clue reminded Harry that someone was going to have to tell Molly that he was now one of the Champions.

"Now, a small reminder of the rules," said Snape and finally, finally, he looked at Harry, in fact he was gazing from one Champion to the other. "No person is allowed to help you, but you may use Hogwarts extensive library to help you solve the clues. Each of you will be given a pass to the Restricted Section, but you may not give this pass to anyone else. If it is discovered that you have in fact betrayed the trust shown in you, your privileges will be revoked and you will have to figure out the rest of the clues on your own. Marks will be given out of two hundred for each task. The judges will be Professor Dumbledore, Professor Karkaroff, Professor Black and the Minister of Magic."

"You can't have him judging!" said Malfoy with a glare at Sirius. "He's Harry Potter's godfather, it's a conflict of interest."

Harry wondered how on earth Draco Malfoy knew that.

"Ah," said Fudge. "Quite right, young Mr. Malfoy. Black can you step aside? We have to be fair to the others."

"If you insist," said Sirius graciously.

"Dumbledore, can one of your teachers do it? What about you, Snape?"

"Again, one of my House is a Champion, Minister. Someone more impartial, I reckon. Professor Flitwick?"

"Yes, yes, write that down, Weasley," said Fudge. "I think that's everything for now, we must be off, good evening everyone," said Fudge as he waited for Percy to throw some Floo powder on the fire. A few moments later both of them had disappeared in a burst of emerald flame.

Karkaroff pressed his hand down on his student's shoulder and steered him out of the room without a goodbye for anyone. Sophia hovered close to Harry, she seemed to be finding both Severus and Sirius rather intimidating.

"I may go now, yes? Professor Black?"

"Yes, of course, Sophia. Congratulations," said Sirius nodding to her.

Snape led Malfoy out and it wasn't long before Dumbledore left Harry and Sirius alone together.

"Did you cheat?" asked Sirius gravely, as he rubbed his hand together in front of the fire, his back to Harry.

"How could you even ask me that?" Harry folded his arms across his chest.

"Snape didn't put you up to it, did he?" Sirius asked, turning back round.

"Of course not! Why would he even do that?"

"To ensure you were chosen of course. These tasks are dangerous, Harry, make no mistake about that. Maybe someone is hoping you'll fall afoul of one of them. Very easy to pass a murder off as an accident if you die during one of the tasks."

Harry laughed. "Oh, so you think Severus is going to murder me now?"

"Once a Death Eater, always a Death Eater. I smell Snape's hand in this."

"Sirius, you're being ridiculous! We're bonded, the bond wouldn't allow him to harm me."

"Has it been consummated yet?" demanded Sirius, a manic gleam in his eye as he pulled Harry's arms apart and yanked up Harry's right sleeve.

"That's none of your business!" snapped Harry, tugging his arm away.

"While I am looking out for your welfare it is." Sirius stared at the Snape crest on Harry's arm. "The crest hasn't changed yet. Until it does, the bond is incomplete and he can harm you as much as he likes."

"Well, then, we'll just have to complete it soon, won't we?" said Harry. The slap was so unexpected that Harry staggered backwards a few steps, holding his jaw and glowering at his godfather. "You hit me!"

"I'll do it again if you ever talk about that pervert mauling you!"

"How dare you!" screamed Harry. "He's my husband, he isn't a pervert!"

"No? It's usual for a grown man to be with a seventeen year old?"

"I'm of age, I'm an adult and it has nothing to do with you!"

"You don't belong with him!" shrieked Sirius stalking towards Harry. Harry tried to move, get out of the man's way, but Sirius was more agile than he looked and he soon had Harry pinned against the wall. Sirius thrust one of his legs between Harry's and pressed his face close to Harry's. Harry turned his head so that the kiss landed on his cheek instead of his lips.

"You belong with me!" hissed Sirius as he yanked Harry's head towards his and forcibly kissed him.

Harry squirmed to try and dislodge him, he managed to free his mouth at least. "Get off me!" screamed Harry as he pummelled Sirius with his fists. "Get your fucking hands off me!"

"What's the matter, Harry? This is what you wanted, isn't it? An older man? You'll be much better off with me than with him. At least I'm not trying to murder you."

"No, you're trying to rape me!"

"Oh, no, dear, Harry. You'll be on your knees begging me. I'm not a rapist."

"The let me go!" Harry said, struggling to get free. This could not be happening to him. Not Sirius, not his own godfather.

"Go where? Off running to him in James' invisibility cloak? Oh, yes, Harry, I know where you were last night. I can't risk that bond being completed, so I'm afraid I have to do this whether you want it or not."

Sirius stood back and got ready to raise his wand, probably to cast a binding spell, but Harry was much quicker. He was upon Sirius before the man even knew what hit him and had kneed him in the groin. Sirius fell to the floor, his hands clutching his crotch and screaming while Harry cast a binding spell on his would be rapist. It helped having brothers.

"What the fuck did you do that for?" screeched Sirius. "What's the matter with you?"

"What's the matter with me? You're the one who tried to rape me!"

"Harry? What are you talking about?" Sirius couldn't move, but he did look rather surprised. "I would never rape you! You're my student! My godson!"

"Funny, that didn't seem to bother you a few minutes ago when you had me pinned against the wall!"

"Harry, I swear to you, I have no idea what you're talking about! Please, release the binding spell."

"No! Do you think I'm stupid? I'm getting Professor Dumbledore, you can plead and deny it all you want. I know what you did."

As Harry threw the Floo powder onto the fire, he noticed his hands were trembling. His legs wanted to give way beneath him, but he would not give Sirius the satisfaction of seeing how much his actions had affected him

As Harry firecalled the headmaster, he wondered who would take their revenge on Sirius first; Severus or Molly.

TBC

Chapter 17: Tears of the Sun

Part 17

"Albus, I swear to you, I didn't do it!" protested Sirius, still lying prone and bound on the floor. "Harry must be confused! Nothing happened!"

The headmaster didn't waste time arguing with him, he firecalled Madam Pomfrey, the school matron and Severus, instructing him to bring a bottle of Veritaserum. When the Matron emerged from the fireplace, she took one look and Harry and led him over to an armchair. "Sit down, dear, before you fall down," she urged him. A few moments later, Severus stepped out of the fireplace, glanced at Sirius bound on the floor and his eyes widened when he saw Harry being tended to my the matron.

"What did you do to him?" demanded Severus of Sirius.

"I didn't do anything," said Sirius for what must have been the hundredth time.

"These injuries aren't the boy's imagination!" barked Madam Pomfrey as she turned Harry's head this way and that. His jaw ached where Sirius had gripped it. She scanned Harry with her wand. "And they have your magical signature, Mr. Black! You did this to him!"

"No," whispered Sirius. "That's impossible! I would never do anything to hurt Harry, never!"

"Harry, dear, what happened?" the medi-witch asked him gently. Harry glanced over her shoulder at the three wizards in the room. He couldn't say anything in front of Severus, his husband would probably kill Sirius and ask questions later.

"I - I can't," said Harry, twisting his hands. "Not with everyone listening," he whispered. Madam Pomfrey nodded and casting a silencing bubble around the two of them.

"Now, Harry, can you tell me what happened, what he did to you?" she patted his knees and waited patiently for him to answer her.

Harry wrapped his arms around himself, he was shaking and felt really cold, despite sitting beside the fire. "He - he pushed me against the wall and - and kissed me. I didn't want him to, I tried to get away. He was - he was going to rape me if I hadn't stopped him."

"Here you are," said Madam Pomfrey, taking a vial out of her apron pocket. "It's just a calming draught, you'll feel better in a few moments, Harry. I think you're suffering a little bit of shock and no wonder! Do you want me to arrange a counselling session for you?"

"No, I'm all right, thank you," said Harry. "He didn't do anything, I stopped him."

"Harry, he may not have raped you, but he still assaulted you. It might help for you to talk over things with someone."

"I'll be okay," he said as Madam Pomfrey released them for their silencing bubble. Sirius and Severus were arguing, why didn't that surprise him? Harry just wished it would all stop.

"I won't take any Potions from you! You're trying to poison me!" screamed Sirius. "Albus don't let him kill me! This is some Death Eater plot!" The cords on Sirius neck were extended fully as he fought against Harry's bonding spell. Frustrated tears leaked from his eyes but Harry didn't have it in him to feel sorry for his godfather, not after what he'd done. Why had he done it? He'd never done anything like that before. There was no warning, no strange looks from his godfather over the years that he might one day try something like this. Harry didn't understand it.

"Out of the way, out of the way," instructed Madam Pomfrey as she pushed Severus aside. She bent down to examine Sirius, casting plenty of scanning spells that Harry knew very little about. A couple of times she said, "Hmm," and, "That explains it," before casting another spell. The room was covered in a blue glow by the time the matron had finished.

"Headmaster, Severus. Sirius is in fact telling the truth, he has no memory of the incident, but it does not mean that it did not take place. Harry isn't lying, as his injuries and the magical signature prove. Sirius, when was the last time you had a health check-up?"

"I don't know, a few years ago, why?"

"Headmaster, can you escort Sirius to the infirmary? I will be with him in a moment, but I need to talk to Harry first."

Dumbledore nodded and released Harry's binding spell. Sirius tried to talk to Harry on his way out, but Harry turned his head away and could not look at him. Once they'd left, Madam Pomfrey glared at Severus. "I need to talk to him alone, Severus."

Severus glanced quickly at Harry and the concern in the man's eyes had Harry knowing that he would be visiting the dungeons tonight, no matter what the risks. He couldn't be alone tonight, he just couldn't.

"Harry, dear, has Sirius given any other indications of strange behaviour recently? Paranoia? Incidents of violence?"

Paranoia? "He thought Se - Professor Snape made the goblet choose me, that's he's going to kill me during the Tournament. Madam Pomfrey, if I tell you something, do you promise not to tell anyone else? No one else can know."

"Of course, Harry. Nothing you tell me in confidence will be repeated outside these rooms."

"Well - my parents bonded me to Professor Snape."

"You're bonded? To Severus? My, that is a surprise Mr. Potter, but rest assured your secret is safe with me."

"Yes, well when Sirius found out he didn't take it very well. He kept calling Severus all these awful things, he just wouldn't see reason. I thought - I thought he might be going a little crazy to be honest," admitted Harry.

"You are correct after a fashion, Harry. Sirius has indeed been showing symptoms of psychosis from what you describe, the paranoia, the assault on you, his rants about Severus, but there is a reason for it. Harry, your godfather has a brain tumour and it is affecting how he reacts to things around him. It's affecting both his memory and his behaviour. He really did have no memory of assaulting you. To him, in his mind, it is as if it never happened."

"But it did," Harry said hoarsely choking back tears. "He did do that to me - he held me down..." but Harry couldn't continue, he sank to his knees, clutching his stomach as the meagre dinner he'd consumed threatened to come back up. Madam Pomfrey stood over him, rubbing his back until the nausea abated a little.

"Did you take the calming draught, Harry?"

"Oh, I forgot," said Harry, twirling the vial in his fingers.

"Take a sip for me now, dear," she told him. Harry obeyed, feeling a little better almost at once. "Your husband knows his stuff, doesn't she?" she smiled at him as she helped him to stand.

"A - a brain tumour? He's dying?"

"I'm hoping it can be treated, but he'll have to be transferred to St. Mungo's. The Healers are very well qualified, Harry. You shouldn't worry, you'll have your godfather back to normal in no time."

Harry was a little concerned about the nurse's words. He wasn't entirely sure that he'd ever met the normal version of his godfather, what if that persona was so much worse?

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Severus paced his rooms, much like he'd done the night before, but tonight he wasn't in a state of heady anticipation while waiting for his husband to arrive. He knew what had happened, what had almost happened. Despite Poppy's silencing charm, he knew every word Harry had said, Severus had learned during the course of his spying to read lips. It wasn't always possible to hear what people said, but he needed to know what was spoken even if the quarry were trying their best not to be overheard.

What was Black doing in the infirmary? Did Poppy hope somehow to save him from Severus' wrath? No one did that to Harry and got away with it, he didn't care who they were. There was a creak as the door to his chambers opened and he felt an invisible breath in the room.

Harry's head popped from thin air as he began to remove the cloak. He wasn't looking at Severus, as though afraid Severus was going to be angry with him. Oh, Severus was angry all right, but the anger was directed at the person who so deserved it, Black.

"Severus, I'm so sorry," said Harry as the final folds of the cloak were removed and Harry discarded it over a chair.

Severus opened his arms and wrapped Harry in them. "Ssh, Harry, it's all right."

"No it isn't," said Harry. "Severus - I - I have something to tell you and you're not going to like it."

"Harry, I already know what he tried to do to you," said Severus. "You don't need to tell me, unless you want to talk about it?" Severus stroked Harry's back, relieved that Harry seemed to have no problem with being comforted by a touch.

"Madam Pomfrey said it was a brain tumour, that's why he's been acting so weird around me and you."

"That does not excuse what he did," said Severus fiercely.

"No, it doesn't. I was so scared, Severus, I couldn't reach my wand and I was so afraid that it was going to happen to me. He said it would prevent us from completing the bond," mumbled Harry, his voice muffled by his face being pressed against Severus' chest. A few moments later, Harry gazed up at him and stood up on tip toes, his breath ghosting across Severus' face. "Make me forget, Severus, please," he begged, offering his mouth up to be kissed. Severus was not entirely sure that was the best thing in the circumstances.

"Harry, you're upset. A good night sleep is what you need."

"I need you, Severus. I want you," said Harry. "Please, touch me, make me forget about him." Harry moved closer to him and Severus could feel Harry's erection digging into his leg. He cupped Harry's face in his hands, caressing his cheeks. "Are you sure about this, Harry?"

"I'm sure, Severus, please."

Severus dipped his head, pressing his lips firmly against Harry's. He tasted toothpaste and mouthwash, rather stronger than it had been the night before as if Harry'd been cleaning and cleaning his teeth, trying to get the taste of that other kiss out of his mouth. Severus' heart constricted painfully at the thought of what Harry had endured and he was determined that no one would hurt his Harry ever again.

Harry moaned when Severus trailed his tongue along Harry's lips, lightly teasing him. Harry's arms wrapped themselves around Severus' waist, Harry was too short to reach his neck while they were standing. Harry was writhing and jerking in his arms and Severus knew that part of it was probably from adrenaline. He leant down, still kissing Harry, scooped him up in his arms and carried him to bed.

Nothing tonight would take place while up against a wall, not when Harry still had the memory of being pinned there by his godfather. Severus undressed himself first, letting Harry calm a little, before he knelt astride him on the bed and began to unbutton Harry's pyjamas. Harry hadn't worn his uniform tonight and Severus thought he understood the reasoning behind that. Harry wanted tonight to be about love, not sex or lust.

"Harry, what do you want to do?" asked Severus, he was guessing Harry was nowhere near ready for intercourse tonight, given his shocked surprise last night and his near rape today. He pressed tiny butterfly kisses to Harry's chest every time he undid a button. Harry moaned and gasped below him, his cock already tenting his pyjamas. There was a small damp patch at the tip; Severus leaned over and kissed it, loving Harry's hiss of pleasure when he did so.

"Anything, anything, oh please!" wailed Harry as he fisted his hands in the bedclothes. His eyes were shut, his whole face scrunched up, but whether from pleasure or pain, it wasn't entirely obvious. Severus leaned over and gave Harry a soft kiss on the mouth while he tugged Harry's pyjamas down. He kissed his way down Harry's smooth chest, tweaking the nipples with his fingers until they were standing up in pink points.

When he reached Harry's twitching cock, Severus glanced up at Harry from beneath lowered lashes, trying his best to ignore his own arousal at Harry displayed so wantonly before him. Knees bent, chest heaving, small mewls and sighs. "I love you, Harry," he whispered before bending down to take Harry's firm length in his mouth. Severus sucked and licked, loving the feel of tasting Harry.

"I love you too, Severus," Harry said.

He lay down between Harry's legs, so that he could rub against the bed while he sucked Harry off, for his own cock was aching with want as well. It was an awkward angle for his neck, but the sounds Harry were making were worth it. Each groan went straight to his groin, Severus sucked Harry and thrust himself down on the mattress as he waited and waited for Harry to come in his mouth. "Ahh! Severus! Severussss!" screamed Harry as he reached his peak and Severus' mouth was flooded with his husband's sweet seed, each drop swallowed like nectar.

Even before Harry had finished spurting, Severus' own crisis was upon him and he groaned around Harry's cock as his ejaculate pulsed on the mattress beneath him. After he'd licked Harry clean, the cock in his mouth began to soften, but Severus suckled on it a little longer, unwilling to let his captive go quite yet. He didn't do it too much, knowing that it would probably be a bit sensitive after such a strong orgasm.

Releasing Harry's cock with a soft pop, Severus scooted up the bed so that he could like down next to Harry. He stroked along Harry's chest, down his sides. Harry moved closer for a kiss, Severus backed off, it was the first time he'd brought Harry off like that, the first time he'd swallowed his come. "Don't you want me to brush my teeth first?" asked Severus.

"Why? It's not like I've never tasted myself before," said Harry, leaning down and kissing him languidly. Severus' prick almost shot to attention at that little tidbit of information. Harry had tasted himself? Just the thought of it, imagining Harry masturbating to orgasm and then tasting his own emission had Severus groaning into their kiss, but he knew it would be a while before he would actually quicken again.

"Thank you, Severus," said Harry after they'd come up for air. Severus could kiss Harry all night, it was a pity humans needed to breathe. "Can - can I stay here tonight?"

"Harry, there's no need to sound so unsure. You are always welcome in my rooms, they are our rooms now. Didn't you notice the wards let you in? You have my crest on your arm, Harry. These rooms will always be open to you. But you do need to get some sleep."

Harry yawned, covering his mouth with his hand and mumbling an apology before scooting over and snuggling against Severus' shoulder again, small puffs of breath tickling his skin.

It was a sensation he was determined to get used to.

TBC

Chapter 18: Tears of the Sun

Part 18

"Harry! Wake up!" Ron called from one of the other beds. Harry groaned and buried his head underneath a pillow. "It's the thirteenth! Time to open your clue!"

"What?" Harry asked, his voice muffled by the pillow. He still wasn't quite awake. He'd only been back in the dormitory for an hour or so, having spent most of the night with Severus. Ron sounded more excited about the clue than Harry felt. He just needed some more sleep. Ron had other ideas, he yanked down Harry's bedclothes and removed the pillow from Harry's head. "Come on, Harry, we're all on tenterhooks here," said Ron.

Harry glanced around the dormitory and saw the other seventh year Gryffindors were eagerly awaiting what his clue was going to be. Even the girls were here! Feeling very vulnerable dressed in just his pyjamas while everyone else was already dressed, Harry pulled the covers back up over himself before reaching for his glasses and lifting the envelope from his bedside cabinet.

There was complete silence as they waited for him to open the missive. Harry slid his thumb underneath the wax seal and slipped the parchment out. He read it silently for a few moments. "It's a riddle," he said. "When we figure out what it means, we know what we have to do for the First Task."

Come and visit us in our lair,

But how can you find us if we aren't there?

Girls may approach,

But boys beware.

Your task is this,

it must be done.

Find the one of one

Harry read it to himself a few times before he read it out loud to the others. He'd figured out it was a unicorn, but the one of one, what did that mean? Had he to find a particular unicorn? The one of one what? How would he know which was the right one? Add to the fact that most of the Champions were boys, how on earth were they going to get near a unicorn without being gored to death on its horn? Unicorns avoided humans wherever possible, Harry could hardly blame them. They'd almost become extinct by being hunted for their horns over the years.

A few of the others were muttering the rhyme to themselves, Hermione wasn't. Harry guessed she'd realised what the clue meant as well, but since no one could help him, she never bothered explaining it to him. The others dispersed to head down for breakfast, leaving only Ron and Hermione now.

"Do you know what it is, Harry?" asked Hermione.

"Yes, it's a unicorn. But I haven't figured out the one of one yet."

"I'm sure you will, though," said Hermione. "Maybe the library's got something on it?"

"Yeah, maybe I'll go there later. I'm - I'm going to see Sirius today."

"Oh, Harry, how is he?" asked Hermione.

It had barely been two weeks, but the Healers at St. Mungo's were no nearer to curing Sirius. Harry was feeling very confused. He was feeling awful that his godfather was so ill, yet he was also still upset at what Sirius had done to him. It was the first time he'd be visiting Sirius in the hospital and he was feeling a little nervous.

It was Saturday today, a Hogsmeade weekend and Severus had promised that he would accompany Harry to the hospital, for he had told Harry in no uncertain terms that he was not leaving Harry alone with the man, brain tumour or not. Harry had been so pleased that Severus had worried so much about him that he'd been in tears for most of the night, hence him feeling so tired this morning.

"Not too good," Harry admitted. He hadn't told anyone else what Sirius had done, wasn't sure how they'd react.

"Harry, if you want, we can come with you," said Hermione. "We can go to Hogsmeade some other time, can't we, Ron?" she nudged her boyfriend in the ribs.

"Er," said Harry, glancing desperately at Ron. Ron knew about him being bonded to Snape, but Hermione didn't.

Ron cottoned on quickly. "No, I'm sure Harry wants to be on his own for this first visit, don't you, Harry? We'll maybe go next time, okay?"

Harry nodded and soon the two of them had left him alone. He took a quick shower and got dressed before heading down to the dungeons, he wasn't hungry and avoided breakfast in the Great Hall altogether. Ever since his name had come out of the goblet, a lot of the other students had been making their displeasure known at what they saw as Harry's cheating.

He hadn't cheated, Harry had no idea how he came to be picked as a fourth Champion, but his explanations seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. He had already suffered from people spiking his food with potions to induce symptoms that mimicked food poisoning; someone had jinxed his broom so that it almost bucked him off; there were notices up all over the school reading Potter Sucks, Hogwarts Hates a Cheater and other, ruder versions of the same. Harry just wasn't in the mood to face the Great Hall.

Severus was already dressed and waiting for him when Harry entered Severus' private chambers. "Harry, are you sure you want to do this?" asked Severus as he held up a jar of Floo Powder. They would Floo to the Leaky Cauldron and make their way on foot to St. Mungo's from there. "You don't have to visit him if you don't want to. It's not as if he doesn't have any visitors. Lupin's been going every day and the Order members pop in and see him too."

"I'm not sure," agreed Harry. "But - but I feel like I have to see him. I'm sorry, I'm not making much sense."

"Okay, but if at any time you want to go, we can go, all right?"

Harry nodded and took his place beside Severus to get ready to Floo. The Leaky Cauldron was fairly empty of patrons that early in the morning, something Harry was grateful for. He didn't fancy half of wizarding London wondering what he was doing with Snape. Severus gave the landlord a quick greeting, before ushering Harry towards the door which led to the Muggle street outside.

Muggles shoppers thronged the streets, laden down with boxes and packages, none of them seeming to notice that Harry and Severus had just emerged from a doorway that they couldn't see. It was the first time Harry really noticed the differences between Muggles and Wizards. Harry could feel his own magical power, thrumming beneath the surface of his skin and he could feel the lack from the others around them. Although both human, it was almost as if they were two very different species.

Severus halted before an old fashioned department store, faded signs posted on the windows indicated that they were closed for refurbishment. It seemed as though they'd been closed for refurbishment for a few decades at least. There was a lone mannequin in one of the windows, wearing an ugly lime green dress and false eyelashes. Severus stood close to the window and Harry was almost sure he saw the model wink at them.

"Severus Snape and Harry Potter, here to visit Sirius Black," said Severus. The model blinked again and beckoned the two of them forward with a pale, plastic hand, chipped red nail polish flecking off even as they watched. Severus took hold of Harry's hand and then they were walking through the window. Harry closed his eyes, gearing himself up for the impact against the glass, but there wasn't one. The glass had turned fluid, flowing like water, but dry.

They had arrived straight in the reception area of the hospital, Severus seemed to know his way about, so Harry was quite happy to follow his lead. They asked at the welcomewitch's desk which ward Sirius was in and they were directed to the fourth floor, Spell Damage.

Spell Damage? He and Severus exchanged looks as they made their way to the lift and ascended to the fourth floor. A long corridor stretched ahead of them, closed doors on either side with small glass windows set at eye level. A desk was sitting at the far end, opposite the lift. A witch was sitting there and thumbing rapidly through an issue of Witch Weekly. She glanced up from her magazine as she heard their footsteps.

"Yes? May I help you?"

"Good morning," said Snape formally. "We're here to see Sirius Black."

"Are you relatives?"

"He's my godfather," said Harry.

"Oh, I'm sorry, dear. It won't be possible to visit him today, he's just been sedated. Getting a bit violent with the Magical Reversal Squad, not to mention the Healers and the Obliviators. Very tough spells that were cast on him."

"Spells?" queried Snape. "We were under the impression that he was suffering from a brain tumour."

"Well, that's what the Healers thought at first as well, very easy to confuse the two. The curses affected the same part of the brain, but it wasn't a tumour, it was a spell wall. It had been deliberately put in place so that it was thought to be a brain tumour. They were hoping no one would notice it was in fact a spell wall."

"Who?" demanded Snape.

"Well, whoever cast the spells of course," said the witch, sounding almost as exasperated as Snape when he was trying to teach a particularly obtuse student. "Whoever it was didn't want the spell being discovered, that's for sure. I think they don't know how thorough St. Mungo's Healers can be."

"Was it Imperius?" asked Snape.

"Among others. He's been hit with Crucio quite a few times in the past and he's had so many memory charms placed on him that his mind is like Swiss Cheese. Someone went to a lot of trouble to try and hide these spells. He doesn't know or remember who cast the spells, they're going to try and work on him some more to get back to the original memory, but it'll be tough. There are so many layers to go back through, false memories on top of false memories. It's very unusual these days, we don't often get people with Imperius damage nowadays. This is the first case in about twenty years."

The witch rambled on some more, but Harry's brain had tuned her out. Imperius. Someone was controlling his godfather. Had that same someone made Sirius try and rape him? Harry remembered Sirius mentioning something about the bond between him and Severus had to be stopped from completion, but who else knew about the bond? As far as Harry was aware, the only people who knew were Sirius himself, Molly, Arthur, Ron and he and Severus themselves and Harry couldn't imagine any of them using an Unforgivable curse.

"Don't look so worried, dear," said the witch to Harry. "At least he's not dying now. The Healers will have him fixed up in no time."

"Harry? Are you all right?" asked Severus, glancing down at Harry's hand. Harry looked and saw that his hands were pressed so hard on the desk that his skin was stretched tight across his knuckles; they looked like they might burst forth from his skin at any moment.

"Yeah, I think so," he said. "Can we go?" There was no point in hanging around if they couldn't actually see Sirius today. Sedated because he was violent. Was that the curse controlling him or was Sirius normally violent? How long had Sirius been under the curse? Had Harry ever met his real godfather?

"Of course," replied Severus, taking hold of Harry's arm and leading him back to the lift. Harry was working on autopilot. He was hardly aware of anything, just putting one foot in front of the other. He didn't remember getting into the lift or out of it again. All he saw behind his eyelids was that day when Sirius had attacked him, like his own private horror movie.

Harry held onto Severus' hand as they stepped out of the fluid glass onto the street again. His mind was still on other things as he stepped out and suddenly something huge and solid blocked his path. Harry fell backwards landing on his arse on the busy pavement. Shoppers swerved to avoid the lump he'd become. Severus bent down to help him up and then Harry heard the voice. That voice.

"Stupid fucking brat! Watch where you're going you bloody freak!"

Harry's world dimmed and greyed as he tried to get air into his suddenly straining lungs. It was almost as if the past twelve years with the Weasleys had never been. He was a small boy stuck in his cupboard in the dark and his uncle was angry with him again for some imagined misdemeanour. Harry risked a glance up and wished he hadn't.

The face of Vernon Dursley scowled down at him, his jowls quivering with rage. Vernon raised his hand, shrieking, "Bloody kids! No manners! Apologise, boy! It'd be the belt for you if it was up to me!"

Harry trembled on the pavement, feeling five years old again and in for a hiding.

"Unfortunately for you, Dursley, it isn't," Severus said softly, too softly, as he withdrew his wand.

TBC

Chapter 19: Tears of the Sun

Part 19

Vernon Dursley turned the colour of porridge as soon as he saw the wand, his eyes flickering with a combination of both fear and outrage. "You!" he squawked at Severus. "You're one of those fucking freaks! I'll scream, I swear I will!"

"Go ahead, Dursley. Do you really think I would allow anyone to hear you?"

Vernon glanced around him in alarm. The shoppers were still there, but none of them seemed to notice the three men in their midst. It was as if a small bubble encased the three of them, the crowds just swerved past them, not seeing. "You did something! Some sick spell!"

"Of course. We wouldn't want any witnesses, would we?" asked Snape, giving his wand a little twirl. Vernon stared at the wood as though it was a snake getting ready to strike him.

"W- witnesses?" Vernon gasped and visibly quailed. Oh, how Severus was enjoying the man's discomfort. He deserved it and more for what he'd done to Harry. Even now, Harry was still affected by nightmares of what those people had done to him, this man more than most. Harry himself was still lying on the ground, his eyes blank.

"To what I'm going to do to you," said Severus as he cast a simple spell from his wand, it was used to entertain children, gold sparks flew like fireworks from the tip and Vernon recoiled as though hell hounds were after him.

"Let me out! Let me out!" Vernon shrieked as he tried to escape from the disillusionment bubble, but he could not escape. He sank to his knees, snot and tears running down his face as he realised there was no escape.

"You didn't let Harry out, did you? Not even when he was screaming himself hoarse!" spat Severus. "Did you really think you'd get away with it?" hissed Severus, leaning down and thrusting his wand under Vernon's neck. "I know curses that would have you writhing in agony for eternity. You will pay for what you did to Harry Potter."

"Potter! Potter?" spluttered Vernon. "We didn't do anything to him! He ran away!"

"And you think that excuses your crimes, Dursley? I know what you did. The bruises, the broken bones, the beatings, the starvation, the throttling that almost killed him. Did you think no one would know? No one would find out?" Severus could hardly contain the rage that was coursing through his body. This man had beaten and abused a child, a child who was now Severus' husband.

"He deserved it!" Vernon yelled, his fear forgotten for the moment. "He was wilful, disobedient!"

"Fractum," Snape intoned and aimed his wand at the man's wrist. He enjoyed the sound of the man's bones breaking much more than he enjoyed his screams. "Painful, isn't it? Shall it be the skull or the collarbone next? Or maybe the legs? I could make you sit here in agony for days, just like you did to Harry. You never took him to a doctor when you broke his bones, did you?"

Vernon just screamed all the louder, but Severus didn't think the man had suffered quite enough. He cast the spell again and again, breaking both the man's legs, his arms, his ribs, but nothing he could do could ever quite repay him for the pain and humiliation Harry had suffered at his family's hands. "Cruc-" Harry's hand on his wand stopped him. "Harry?"

"No, please," Harry begged. "Don't hurt him anymore."

"Harry, you know what this man did to you. How can you just let him go without being punished?"

"Please, I can't bear it," Harry thrust his hands over his ears to shut out the man's screams. "I feel it, Severus. I feel the pain you're giving him! Stop it! Please stop!"

Severus looked at Harry in alarm, his scar was a vivid red today, standing out against the paleness of Harry's face. Harry could feel the man's pain?

Severus cast a few healing charms in Vernon's direction, but it was a while before the man stopped screaming, not quite realising his torture had stopped yet. Harry slumped against Severus and would have fallen to the floor again if Severus had not reacted so quickly and held him up.

"Harry? Why were you feeling his pain? You know I never meant to hurt you."

"But you did," said Harry. "I think it's the bond. I - I always felt it whenever you hurt someone. When - when you were with them, when you had to go on raids."

"What? Everything I did, you felt it? Felt the pain of it?" As if Severus didn't feel guilty enough about the tortures he'd participated in, the price to keep his cover. Now he discovered that he'd been inflicting pain on his bonded mate as well.

Vernon was whimpering now, on his knees, his hands resting flat on the pavement in front of him. He didn't seem to be aware of anything going on around him. Severus was torn in two, he wanted to hurt the man, badly, but he couldn't. Not without inflicting that same pain on Harry.

Harry seemed to know what he was thinking. "Strip him," said Harry.

"What?"

"The Dursleys set great store by appearances," said Harry. "Strip him and leave him here naked for someone to find. They'll never live it down with the neighbours. He doesn't have to be hurt in order to suffer."

"Sometimes you have quite a Slytherin streak, Harry," said Severus grinning. Severus cast a spell divesting Vernon Dursley of his attire, the man didn't seem to know it had happened, he was still on his hands and knees whimpering.

Harry stalked towards his uncle, glared at the man's naked back before spitting on him. Vernon didn't even flinch.

"You're pathetic!" yelled Harry, before turning away and grasping Severus' hand. Neither of them looked back as they made their way to the Leaky Cauldron.

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"Harry? Are you all right? You've been in there ages," said Ron from outside the stall door. Harry doubled over and threw up again. His mouth tasted foul and his stomach was cramping terribly. Someone had spiked his food or his drink at dinner again and he'd spent the last half hour with his head over the bowl. His eyes felt as if someone was jabbing metal spikes into his eyes, he could barely move without his head spinning.

"No, Ron, I think you'd better fetch Madam Pomfrey." Harry's robes were soaked with sweat, there was a strange metallic taste in his mouth and he just wanted it to stop now, please. "Hurry, Ron, hurry!" he cried out as another vicious cramp shot through his stomach and he leaned over the toilet bowl but there was nothing left to come up. He'd never felt this bad before. Was it the after affects of Severus' spells on Vernon earlier that day?

Harry didn't know how long waited before he heard three sets of footsteps come hurrying across the bathroom tiles. "Alohamora!" said Madam Pomfrey, Harry had forgotten he'd locked the door. Madam Pomfrey rushed in, "Severus! My bag, quickly now!" she said.

The sounds were getting fainter and fainter as Harry slowly lost consciousness.

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He was dreaming again, dreaming of that pale creature with slitted red eyes. The creature licked its lips, the tongue was forked, reminding Harry of a serpent, but the creature stood upright, with arms and legs, humanoid, if not exactly human. "We will meet again soon, Harry Potter," a voice said, as cold and dark as a grave. Harry saw where he was then. A mist shrouded graveyard. The mist cleared and he saw it there, a recently dug pit of earth and beside it a roughly hewn grey tombstone with his name etched on it.

"NOO!!!!" Harry shrieked and woke himself up, breathing heavily, sweat sticking to his pyjamas. He didn't recognise the room he was in, it wasn't the dormitory or Severus' bedroom and he had to swallow down a few seconds of panic before Madam Pomfrey came rushing over to him. He was in the infirmary, he'd been ill, he'd sent Ron to fetch her, but he didn't remember being brought here.

"Harry, dear, you're awake. About time too."

Harry was in a room of his own, not in the main ward, but this one too had high stained glass windows and the same medicinal smell that permeated everything in the infirmary. "Drink this," said Madam Pomfrey, handing him a steaming vial of blue liquid. "I don't want you eating anything else from the Great Hall, Harry, until we find out who did this."

"It was just a prank," said Harry as he obediently swallowed the liquid. It was best to just obey the medi-witch without arguing about it, life was much easier that way. "Some people don't think I should have been chosen as the Champion. They've done it before."

"Harry, that was no prank! I've had Charlie and Bill Weasley, not to mention the twins through here, I know a prank when I see it. You almost died last night! Someone is trying to poison you."

"No, it was just a joke, really," said Harry. "It's just a potion to mimic food poisoning or something."

"Harry, dear, it isn't a potion or a prank. Someone has been deliberately adding arsenic to your food or drink. And not small doses either, someone is trying to kill you, there's no question about it."

Harry gaped at the matron. He thought it had been a joke, just one of those pranks like the Potter Sucks signs. Never for a moment had he thought that someone was deliberately trying to poison him. Why did his life have to be so bloody complicated? His head was throbbing and his eyes stung, he blinked rapidly, not wanting the woman to see him cry.

"You need to take the antidote for a few more days, Harry, so I'd recommend a stay in the infirmary for that time. I've placed you in a private room so that Severus may visit you without the whole school knowing. Your friends would like to see you before class, can I send them in?"

"Yes, thank you. For everything," said Harry.

"It's my job dear," she smiled at him and patted the bedclothes near his knee. A few moments after she'd left, Ron and Hermione came in looking rather pale faced and worried.

"Harry! You're okay!" squealed Hermione and bent down to give Harry a very firm hug.

"Thanks to Ron," said Harry. "If he hadn't fetched Madam Pomfrey when he did..."

"Don't say it, Harry. Don't," pleaded Ron. "God, you looked awful last night, Harry. You were almost blue for fuck's sake! Don't ever scare me like that again, okay?"

"I'll try not to," said Harry.

"What was it, Harry? Something you ate didn't agree with you?" asked Hermione, her brain working overtime as she tried to process Harry's symptoms.

"You could say that, someone's been spiking my food or drink. I thought it was a prank, but Madam Pomfrey seems to think it was a deliberate ploy to try and poison me. Arsenic."

"Arsenic?" exclaimed Hermione. "But where on earth would someone get arsenic in the first place? It's used in a few potions, but only a small amount. It would need a lot to poison someone and if you overdosed you die really quickly! Oh, Harry, thank God you're all right!" she hugged him again.

"It's because Madam Pomfrey got to me in time I suppose."

"The Potions store room," said Hermione.

"What?" asked Harry and Ron together.

"The Potions store room, not the student one, Professor Snape's store room, I bet he has arsenic and things in there. Oh, Harry, you don't think it could be him, do you?"

Harry and Ron both burst out laughing at that. "No, Hermione," said Harry. "You'd better sit down for this, Hermione. I have something to tell you."

A/N: Fractum = to break into pieces, to destroy

TBC

Chapter 20: Tears of the Sun

part 20

Harry spent the rest of the week until the first task in the hospital wing, being dosed with coloured potions by Madam Pomfrey and as he wasn't allowed out to get to the library to research the first task, it was allowed that the library could come to him. Ron, Hermione and Severus brought him armfuls of books on unicorns every time they visited and Harry spent most of the time he wasn't bent over the toilet being sick, reading them all.

The antidote potions were making him throw up, but Madam Pomfrey seemed to think that was a good thing. "It'll help you expel the poison that much quicker," she said every time Harry mentioned it. The books were fascinating, he'd never actually seen a unicorn except in pictures, there weren't any near Beauxbatons, but from the books he discovered there was a herd in the Forbidden Forest right next to Hogwarts. It would be interesting to see them up close.

The books told him everything he needed to know about unicorns, most of it he'd studied already in his previous Magical Creatures classes, so nothing new there. How they were gold when they were young, turning silver at around two and only turning white when they were fully grown around seven. Unicorn blood was used a lot in dark arts, the books never mentioned for what dark arts, just that it was forbidden to slay a unicorn. It was a protected species.

But the one of one, Harry still couldn't figure that bit out, nor how he was going to get close enough to a unicorn to find out. He closed the last book with a sigh, it was getting dark and he knew it must be nearing dinner time. Ron and Hermione usually visited him after dinner, Severus a little later.

Hermione had taken the news that he and Severus were bonded very well, much better than Ron had taken it at first, although she did seem a bit shocked that he was bonded to one of the teachers. It was different for Harry though, he'd known Severus for a long time and until this year, never as his teacher. Would he have felt the same about him if Severus had been his teacher? What about the bond? Would that still have wanted them to be together even if he had been? For Harry could not imagine his life without being bonded to Severus, teacher or no.

A few minutes after he'd put his books away, Madam Pomfrey entered laden with a dinner tray for him. She'd been cooking all Harry's meals herself, not trusting anyone else and so to please her, Harry tried to eat everything she plied him with, even though his appetite lately had been non-existent. Tonight at least it was light, chicken salad with chocolate pudding for dessert. Harry smiled up at her. "You were the first person to ever give me chocolate," he reminded her.

"I remember," she smiled in return. "Eat up then, you'll need your strength for tomorrow, won't you?"

"Tomorrow?" Harry stopped his fork as it was half way to his lips.

"Yes, the first task. You'll be out of here after breakfast."

"Already?" the time had gone quicker than he'd expected being stuck in the infirmary.

"Have you figured out your clue yet?" Madam Pomfrey asked as she fussed about the room, straightening chairs and pictures, casting a preserving charm on the flowers Hermione had brought him yesterday.

"Not all of it," admitted Harry. "None of the books seem to help."

"Have you tried any Muggle books, dear?"

"No, does the library have any? I could go and check the library tonight," Harry got one foot on the floor before Madam Pomfrey had him climbing back into bed again with one of her patented stares, guaranteed to have any patient obeying without question. "Or I could ask someone to check for me."

"That's more like it," said Madam Pomfrey. "You're not leaving this infirmary until tomorrow, Harry and even then I'm still not sure you'll be back to a hundred per cent."

"I feel fine," protested Harry with a pout and folded his arms over his chest, the dinner still uneaten between them.

"You can stop that right now, young man, you may be able to twist your husband round your little finger, but that lost puppy face won't work on me. Now eat," the matron's tone left no room for argument, so Harry began the slow task of finishing his meal. He could barely taste the food, but she had an explanation for that as well, the poison and the antidote were affecting his sense of smell and taste.

It was a relief when he had finally finished the food and she left him alone for a while before Ron and Hermione knocked on his door. Hermione promised to go and look out any Muggle books on unicorns in the library, leaving Harry and Ron to talk.

"Nervous about tomorrow, Harry?" asked Ron as he brought his chair closer to the bed. "I wonder how boys are going to get near a unicorn? They never let us near them in Care of Magical creatures."

"You've seen one?" asked Harry, awed.

"Yeah, just the once though. The girls were allowed to touch it, it was a baby one but Hagrid wouldn't let the boys anywhere near, too afraid we might get gored I think."

"Is that really true, do you think? That they attack boys?"

"Well, it's in all the books, isn't it?"

It was, but was everything written in a book completely true? Hermione came back and deposited a small pile of books onto Harry's lap. "They only had four, maybe you'll be able to find something in here?"

"Maybe," agreed Harry, opening the first book and beginning to read, forgetting for a few moments that he had visitors. "Sorry," Harry said with a wry grin. "But if I have to figure this out by morning."

"That's okay, Harry," said Ron. "You just reminded me of Hermione. She's always got her head stuck in a book."

"Ronald Weasley! I do not always have my head stuck in a book! I do other things too!"

"Yeah, like knitting," giggled Ron. Hermione flushed and turned away from him.

"If you think I'm still going to Hogsmeade with you after a crack like that, you've got another thing coming, Ron Weasley!"

"Aw, come on, Hermione, it was only a joke."

"Slavery is no joke!" snapped Hermione, standing up and bestowing a small peck on Harry's cheek. "See you tomorrow, Harry," she said before flouncing out of the room without another word to Ron.

"What was that all about?"

"What else?" sighed Ron. "House elves. She's been knitting clothes for them, trying to get them freed. The clothes have disappeared, but there's been no mention of any elves suddenly announcing their freedom. The food in the Great Hall is just as good as usual."

"Unless your name is Harry Potter."

"You're taking this all very well, Harry. Aren't you worried that they might try to do you in again?"

"They probably will, but I just can't go through life wondering if every second is going to be my last. I just have to be careful."

There was a knock on the door and Severus peeked his head round the jamb. "I can call back later."

"No, no, come in, Professor," said Ron. "I was just going."

Severus came in as Ron left, the two of them nodded to each other but otherwise didn't offer a greeting. "How are you feeling?" Severus asked as he bent down, kissing Harry softly.

"Fine, I feel fine but Madam Pomfrey still wants to keep me here tonight."

"She's only looking out for you."

"I know, and it was really nice of her to cook for me. She didn't have to that."

"No, she didn't, but I think she has a bit of a soft spot for you. It really upset her, what had happened to you at the Dursleys'. I don't think she'd ever come across such a terrible case before."

Harry was quiet, glancing down at his unicorn book, but he wasn't reading it. The words blurred on the page as he tried not to remember what he had endured.

"I thought you might like to see this," said Severus, handing Harry a folded up newspaper. The first thing he noticed was that the pictures weren't moving. It was a Muggle newspaper and there, scowling from the front page, held between two policemen was Vernon Dursley. Completely starkers but for a band of black ink across his genitals.

Surrey Man Arrested for Indecent Exposure in London

Harry hoped every neighbour in Privet Drive had seen it, every customer at Petunia's hairdresser, every school friend of Dudley's. He wanted them all to see the man's humiliation.

"Is he in jail?" asked Harry.

"No, a psychiatric hospital. The arresting officers thought he seemed a bit out of it. Probably my spells. Harry, why didn't you tell me you were feeling pain when I was casting spells?" Severus sat down on the chair Ron had so recently vacated. He lifted Harry's hand and kissed it.

"It's not all spells, it's only spells that you use to hurt people. I don't why it's doing it. I know that - that sometimes you have to do those things." Harry looked down at their joined hands. Severus' hands were so much larger than this, paler too, with slender, elegant fingers. "I'll just have to bear it."

"You shouldn't have to bear it," said Snape forcefully. "I've never heard of this affect of a bond before, I'll have to do some research on it."

"Severus, do you mind if I read some more? I really want to try and figure out this clue for tomorrow."

"No, of course not, Harry. I brought along some marking, that is if you don't mind the company?"

"I'd love it," grinned Harry. He conjured a desk for his husband, who sat down and removed rolls of parchment from his pockets.. Harry turned his attention back to his books, trying to figure out the whole of the clue. Okay, it was pretty obvious that they were meant to find a unicorn, but what were they meant to do with it once they did?

Harry read a page and then re-read it? Was that true? Virgins could approach unicorns? Well, he was certainly that, although he'd come close to losing it when Sirius had attacked him. Was that why he had attacked him? Whoever was controlling him, didn't want Harry to be a virgin, so that he wouldn't be able to approach the unicorn? Or hoping that the unicorn would gore him to death because he wasn't a virgin?

Harry had been in the hospital wing for the past week, so Severus had only kissed him anyway, but if he hadn't been, if they'd been alone in Severus' room, would they have wanted to try intercourse? Or did Severus know that about the unicorns?

"It says here unicorns can be approached by virgins," said Harry, testing the waters.

"That's true," agreed Severus as he bent down to his essays once again.

"Is that considered help?" queried Harry, quirking his lips.

"No, it wasn't in the form of a question. I was just agreeing to what you said."

"I still haven't figured out the one of one yet," said Harry, feeling rather frustrated.

"Would a kiss help?" Severus glanced up, his eyes dancing.

"Yeah, " Harry grinned. "I think it might." He set the book aside, marking his pace with one of his get well cards and lay back against the pillows, licking his lips. He loved seeing this side of Severus, the hungry lover, the intense look on his face whenever he gazed at Harry like that. Heat flared low in Harry's belly and he squirmed under the scrutiny.

Severus strode over to Harry's bed, before leaning forward and pressing his lips firmly against Harry's. Harry moaned and wrapped his arms around Severus' neck as the kiss deepened, their mouths opening as they breathed each other in. Severus thrust his tongue in Harry's mouth, Harry tangled his fingers in Severus' hair as they just kissed and kissed. Severus trailed a hand along Harry's neck and collar bone, dipping beneath the shoulder of his pyjama top, the soft touch to his skin had Harry achingly hard in moments, trapped beneath the blankets. He tried to arch his hips, but the weight of the covers prevented it.

They'd done nothing this week except for a few brief kisses and Harry didn't want this kiss to end so soon, this was feeling too good to stop. Severus tweaked a nipple and Harry cried out in surprised pleasure, pulling away from their kiss to gasp his husband's name. "Severus."

Severus looked deep into Harry's eyes, before sliding his hand downwards and cupping Harry through the bedclothes.

Harry felt as if he'd been set on fire. "Please, please," he begged, pressing Severus' hand down harder. He needed this, God how he needed. "Don't stop. Please don't stop." Harry closed his eyes as he felt the pleasure wash over him. Severus' hands, Severus' hands on him. Severus lifted his hand, Harry wailed in protest but the sound died on his lips when he realised that Severus was only pulling down both the bedclothes and Harry's pyjama trousers.

With Severus' hand on his naked cock and the intense gaze he was giving Harry, there was no way he was going to last long. Harry gripped the sheets and thrust into his husband's hands, feeling exhilarated, panting as if he'd just finished a marathon. "Severus! Oh fuck! Severus!" Harry screamed as the first tingles of his orgasm began in his sac and the base of his prick. As soon as he'd started coming, Severus bent his head and drank his seed down and Harry felt himself floating away as he relished the sensation of that wonderful, wet heat around his cock.

"I think my bones have melted," smiled a sated Harry. Severus stood up, then bent down again to kiss Harry. This time there was no reticence from either of them as Harry enjoyed tasting himself from Severus' mouth. Harry could feel Severus' erection against his arm, he reached out with his other hand and squeezed, enjoying his husband's squawk of surprise as he did so. Severus pulled away and kissed his forehead before moving away.

Puzzled, Harry asked. "Severus? What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong, Harry. But it's getting late and I think you could do with some sleep."

"But I didn't... you didn't -" Harry waved his hand in the direction of his husband's groin.

"I'll be fine, Harry. I can take care of it later."

Harry felt his face heat. "You - you do that?" He thought only teenage boys did that.

"Whenever I feel the need, yes."

Oh. Oh. Oh, dear. He now had a lovely mental picture of his husband spread out on his large four poster bed, legs wide, knees bent as he stroked and stroked that magnificent cock, body covered in a fine sheen of sweat, back arched as he humped his hand. Harry's cock twitched, but didn't rise, he guessed the strong orgasm he'd just had was to blame for that. Severus pressed a soft kiss on his forehead. "Goodnight, Harry. See you tomorrow."

Harry stared at the door for a few minutes after he'd left. What an image Severus had left him with before he was going to sleep.

Harry had a strong premonition he would wake up with sticky pyjamas in the morning.

TBC

Chapter 21: Tears of the Sun

Part 21

Severus stood alongside the other teachers and the judges by Hagrid's hut, a mere stone's throw from the Forbidden Forest. The Champions stood in a line, their backs to the trees, wrapped up in cloaks and scarves against the damp November chill. It was drizzling slightly, making everything shimmer wetly. Severus couldn't see much of Harry's uniform, except for brief flashes of those stockings whenever the wind whipped cloaks out of the way. The sight had him reminiscing of the night before and how tempted he'd been to stay and do a lot more than kiss and touch his husband.

Whenever I feel the need. Oh, yes, Severus had indeed felt the need last night and had hurried back to his chambers where he stroked himself to not one, but three rather strong orgasms with his own hand and even after that, he woke up to a damp nightshirt and thighs. He hadn't felt this out of control since he was a teenager and he knew it was because the bond was getting stronger now that Harry was of age and it needed to be consummated. He wouldn't push Harry into anything he wasn't ready for, but there was no denying the desire to take Harry, to claim him fully and it was getting stronger by the day.

He quelled his thoughts and looked over at the Champions, none of them had figured out the one of one part so they were all starting with a negative score of minus ten points. At least they were all starting from the same point. Draco Malfoy smirked at his fellow Champions and the assembled crowds, as if he had a secret that he didn't want to share.

Severus had wondered if Draco had anything to do with Harry's poisoning, the boy certainly seem to hate Harry enough to do something like that, but Severus hadn't seen Draco anywhere near the Gryffindor table at any time. Ever since Harry had arrived at Hogwarts, Severus' eyes were more often to be seen glancing at the Gryffindor table rather than that of his own House. He hadn't seen anything unusual from Draco, nor did he remember anything unusual at the Gryffindor table at all, but maybe he'd just missed it. It wouldn't take long for someone to slip poison into an unattended cup or plate. He sighed, they were still no nearer in discovering the culprit and Severus worried for Harry's safety even more now than he had done since he was a frightened child.

Sophia Medicci, the other Beauxbatons student looked rather pale, although her face was set in a determined grimace, he dark hair whipping about her face with the wind. Anton Dholov, Karkaroff's student seemed quietly confident, although Severus thought he saw the boy's body tremble, but whether with nerves or cold he couldn't say. Harry was standing calmly, his gaze drawn to Severus' and away almost as quickly. Severus was nervous and worried for him, but he was also rather proud that Harry had been selected as one of the Champions, no matter how that came about.

Stands had been magically erected so the spectators would have somewhere to sit while they waited for the Champions to complete the first task, even though they wouldn't actually be able to see anything of the task itself. The ancient woodland had resisted all attempts to place a See-All spell upon it.

Fudge waved his wand to conjure a table and a set of chairs for the judges and Percy Weasley. The man never seemed to go anywhere without Percy these days and Severus often wondered what other duties the Minister might have the Weasley boy performing for him. Was he a bodyguard as well as an assistant?

Another wave of his wand, Fudge had conjured a megaphone and cast Sonorous on his throat. "Welcome, welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to this, the First Task in the Triwizard Tournament. The Champions task will be for those who are pure of heart, thought and deed. They must get close enough to a unicorn which will have four blue ribbons tied to its mane and return one of these ribbons to the judges. The unicorn with the ribbons, is the one of one, which no Champion had quite figured out yet." There was a mumble from Malfoy, but Severus couldn't quite hear what it was.

"The Champions may do all that they can in order to tame the unicorn, they may use spells, but they may not harm the creature in any way. If they do, points will be deducted. If you get into difficulty, raise sparks from your wand and you will be rescued by our officials," Fudge indicated a group of burly men who looked more like boulders that had sprung to life than anything that had started off as human.

"Champions, are you ready?" asked Fudge, after he'd conjured a starting pistol. All four of them nodded, even though Sophia Medicci had turned a rather alarming shade of green. Fudge raised the starting pistol and at the bang, the four of them turned as one and fled into the Forest. Soon they were all swallowed by the darkness of the trees.

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Harry ran for about half an hour before his lungs gave out and he just couldn't continue. Madam Pomfrey warned him this might happen, his physical fitness was nowhere near back to normal after the poison and the antidotes he'd been taking for the past week. He stopped in the middle of a path, resting his hands on his thighs as he tried to get his breath back. There was no way he was going to fall at the first hurdle just because he wasn't quite back to his full physical strength yet.

Malfoy and Dholov sprinted past him without a backward glance, Sophia was the only one who stopped to check if he was all right. Harry nodded and waved her on, leaving him alone and gasping again. When he'd calmed down a little, he looked around him. The path led deeper into the trees, but veered off in different directions a few yards ahead. He had no idea which route to take, or even how one went about looking for a unicorn in this Forest.

The Forbidden Forest covered a large expanse, hundreds of miles and completely unplottable, so even though Harry had the Marauder's Map with him, he didn't think it would be much help. Harry removed it from his pocket just in case, but it was as he had expected. A congregation of dots right by the edge of the Forest where the spectators were, but the map was completely blank where the Forest was supposed to be. No mention of any of the Champions or any animal that dwelled there.

Harry heard a scream somewhere deep in the heart of the woods and his head jerked towards the sound. Was it human or the cry of some strange creature in here? Did unicorns have a particular call? He didn't remember reading about that in any of his books. Deciding he might be best just to stick to the path that continued straight ahead, Harry took out his wand and cast lumos to illuminate the path in front of him a bit more.

He didn't know how long he trod the path before he emerged into a clearing, with a pool at the far end. By the edge of the pool, sipping from the water, stood the most beautiful creature Harry had ever seen or imagined. He'd read that unicorns were white, but the word could not convey the brightness of the creature before him. Its coat dazzled his eyes and Harry had no more need of the lumos spell, it was as if light was coming from the creature itself. Even the most virgin snow would seem dirty and grey in comparison.

The creature lifted its head, golden horn sparkling from an unseen light source as it turned to stare at Harry. He couldn't move, almost as if he'd been hit with a binding spell, but Harry knew it was because of the awe he was feeling in the creature's presence.

He'd never seen anything so pure, so unsullied, so innocent in all his life. He had no wish to harm such a magnificent creature, but he knew there were those who would. The unicorn had been hunted to near extinction for its horn, Harry had used powdered unicorn horn in his Potions classes, but those were from unicorns who had died naturally. As they were very long lived, it was a very rare and expensive ingredient and had lots of restrictions on its use. It was also believed that bowls and cups made from unicorn horns could protect those who ate from it from any poison.

In the end, it hadn't mattered that Harry seemed rooted to the spot, the unicorn cantered slowly towards him, as if afraid of frightening Harry. He didn't feel frightened, despite the dire warnings from his books and the rather graphic accompanying illustrations. The unicorn stopped a few paces in front of Harry, lowering its head, the horn almost touching the ground.

Harry saw the four blue ribbons threaded through its mane. Had he been the first Champion to find the unicorn, despite his slow start? The unicorn pawed the ground, lifted its head again and gave Harry what he thought was a rather exasperated stare before lowering its head again.

Harry patted the unicorn's neck, the coat was so soft. "Okay, okay, I know I'm supposed to take one of these ribbons. I just don't want to hurt you, okay?" Harry gently untangled on of the blue ribbons and tied it round his wrist for safe keeping. As he was tying it, his hand brushed against something solid in his cloak pocket. Hermione had given him an apple earlier that morning when Harry couldn't face breakfast. Harry removed it and held out the treat for the unicorn.

The unicorn pressed its nose to Harry's hand and sniffed the fruit. "Do you like apples?" asked Harry, his only reply was for the creature to start nibbling on the apple, tickling Harry's hand in the process. Harry could hardly believe his good fortune. He'd seen a unicorn, not only seen one, but it was eating out of his hand as if they were life long friends.

The apple now munched down to the core, the unicorn began nosing in Harry's other pockets as though hoping for more treats. "Sorry, that's all I have. I have to get back now." Harry patted the creature again and turned back to the path he'd come from, or at least he hoped it was the same one, it was difficult to tell. The trees were so dense that the Forest seemed to be in a sort of permanent twilight, no matter what time of day it was.

Eventually, Harry emerged form the Forbidden Forest and straight into lights so harsh he had to close his eyes. Floodlights had been lit in his absence and the night was fully dark. How long had he been in there? He didn't even feel hungry and he'd missed both lunch and breakfast now.

There were screams and squeals from the crowd, as though in relief.

"He's here!"

"He's all right!"

"He hasn't been gored!"

"Panic over everyone, settle down, settle down," said Fudge. Harry then noticed the other Champions standing by the judges' table. Disappointment settled like a lead weight in his stomach. He hadn't been the first back with his ribbon after all. The other three looked rather dishevelled, with dirty faces and scratched hands.

Harry risked a glance in Severus' direction, trying not to be too obvious about it. The man was paler than Harry had ever seen him, he could almost feel the man's worry.

"Harry, what's that on your wrist?" asked Percy drawing all eyes to it.

"Oh, it's my ribbon," said Harry.

"Ribbon? Ribbon?" spluttered Fudge. "You actually got near enough to the unicorn to get one of the ribbons?"

"Yes, wasn't that what we were meant to do?"

"Indeed, indeed," said Fudge. "But you were the only one to succeed at the Task, Potter."

Harry stared round at the other Champions. "Why didn't you get the ribbons?" It had been easy, almost too easy for Harry to do it, the unicorn had come to him after all.

"The beast would not let us approach," said Dholov gravely. "Ran away from all of us and when we tried to find it again we could not, we emerged out of the Forest and were told we were not allowed back in again."

Malfoy looked livid. "Unlike you, Potter, some of as actually have a love life. Poor ickle Harry's got nobody to love him, nobody to fuck him."

"That's enough out of you, Mr. Malfoy!" said Flitwick.

Malfoy sneered at the diminutive wizard but didn't say a word, as if he didn't think the wizard was worth wasting his breath on.

"Champions, please stand over there while we discuss your scoring," said Fudge, heading back to his seat and conferring with the other judges while the Champions stood a little to the side. About fifteen minutes later they seemed to have come to a decision. Dholov's score was first. Twenty from Professor Flitwick, thirty from Dumbledore, forty from Karkaroff and twenty from Fudge. Along with his minus ten, he had scored one hundred points.

Malfoy was next, he scored ninety and he scowled at Dholov, as though wishing he'd scored more than him. Sophia did even worse, only managing to scrape sixty points. At Last Harry's own score was called out, he got full marks from Dumbledore, Flitwick and Fudge, but he only got ten points from Karkaroff, earning the judge lots of jeers from the assembled spectators, but it still gave Harry a respectable one hundred and fifty points and an early lead.

"Champions, you will find your next clue in your trunks at midnight tonight. You may open it as soon as you receive it if you wish and you will have until February twentieth to work out your next task. Now, everyone is hungry for Hogwarts wonderful Feast I'm sure. The First Task is now over."

The spectators descended from the stands and began making their way back towards the castle, but Ron and Hermione fought the tide of the crowd in order to hug Harry and congratulate him. Severus hovered close by, Harry could sense him but he couldn't see him, the man blended in so well with shadows.

"You two go on ahead, I'll be up in a minute," Harry waved them away.

A few moments later, Severus stepped into the light. "Congratulations, Harry." His voice almost broke on the words.

Aware that there were still a few stragglers, Harry couldn't do what he wanted to, which was to fling himself in Severus' arms, kiss the man breathless and let him feel Harry's heartbeat so that he would know that Harry was all right. That he was still alive. The need that washed over Harry in that instant had him almost doubling over, he was hard even before Severus had touched him, had kissed him.

"Severus," he whispered breathlessly. "Can we miss the Feast?"

"I'd love to, Harry, but it would be a bit obvious if we were both absent."

"Oh," Harry tried not to sound so disappointed.

"However, I would not be averse to a visit from you later tonight."

"I want to Severus. I want that very much. Severus - I - I don't need to be a virgin anymore, unless we have more unicorns to face, do I?"

Severus shook his head. "Then - then I want us to complete the bond. I want everything you can give me, Severus."

"Harry please do not joke about this."

"It's not a joke," Harry protested. "I would never tease you about that, Severus. I want this, I want all of it."

"You do understand, Harry, that once we take that final step there is no going back? If we wait, you can have the bonding annulled if you wish. Once the bond is complete, neither of us has that option."

"I know, Severus. I want to be with you forever, I don't want this to end."

Severus nodded. "Then I shall endeavour to grant you what it is in my power to give."

Harry didn't doubt that for a second.

TBC

Chapter 22: Tears of the Sun

Part 22

The Gryffindor common room had something of a party atmosphere going later that night, somehow, someone had managed to smuggle in some butterbeers. The Gryffindors seemed to have adopted Harry as one of their own, now that he was actually winning. When only Ron, Hermione and Ginny seemed to want anything to do with him before, he now found himself the unwilling recipient of hearty handshakes and backslaps from almost everyone else.

He felt a little bad for Sophia, she was curled up on Seamus' lap, crying her eyes out as the boy did his best to comfort her. Harry debated whether or not he should say something to her. He knew how disappointed he would be if he'd come last in the first task and he made his way over their chair.

"Hi, Sophia," Harry ventured. "Er, I'm sorry about your score. Better luck next time, eh?"

Sophia's head whirled round from where it had been hidden on Seamus' shoulder. "Sorry?" she wailed. "You just have to rub it in, don't you? How better you are than everyone else!" Sophia jumped down from Seamus' lap and flounced upstairs to the girls' dormitory, still sobbing. Harry gaped after her. He was only trying to be friendly.

Seamus tried to go after her, but he'd forgotten about the charm to keep boys out, the stairway turned into a slide and he fell back down, to the tune of raucous laughter from everyone else except Harry and Seamus. The noise must have been getting a bit much, for Professor McGonagall marched in, dressed in a tartan dressing gown and a hair net.

"Quiet!" she boomed. "That is it! I don't care if it is a Saturday, you are all to get to bed, now! It sounds like there's a herd of Hippogriffs in here and some of us are trying to sleep!"

"Sorry, ma'am," a few people muttered, lowering their heads as Dean and Neville tried to toe the butterbeer bottles out of sight. Either McGonagall didn't see them or she was too tired to start giving out detentions this late in the evening, for they weren't mentioned.

They all began to ascend the stairs to their respective dormitories, Harry glanced at the alarm clock by his bed, it was after eleven. Was it too late to visit Severus now? He still wanted to, but he knew the man got up early and had a ton of work to do. It was around midnight before the others had settled down to sleep, soft breaths and snores alerting him. At twelve precisely, a cream envelope bearing the Triwizard crest, three crowns with two stars above each crown, popped out of nowhere onto Harry's bed. He stared at it for a moment and then tucked it into his pyjama pocket.

Harry had already put on his pyjamas, knowing it would look suspicious if he was still wearing his clothes while everyone else got ready for bed. He'd left his stockings on though, knowing how much Severus liked them. Harry liked wearing them for Severus too. At school, they'd just been part of his uniform, but the way Severus looked at him in them, made him feel desired, wanted. His tummy was fluttering, full of butterflies and he had to take a few deep breaths to calm himself down.

It wasn't as if they hadn't done anything before, but this final step seemed so much more than making love. Harry knew it was, it was the final consummation of their bond and he had no idea what that meant, what would happen once they crossed that threshold. He was excited and aroused, as the tent in his pyjama trousers testified, but he was nervous too. Severus was so much more experienced than him, what if Harry made a mess of the whole thing?

It was almost half past twelve before Harry finally managed to put on his invisibility cloak and make his way down to the dungeons. There were no prefects patrolling tonight and he made it to Severus' rooms without incident. He still called them Severus' rooms even though Severus insisted they were Harry's too. Maybe if their bonding wasn't so secret he would feel more that they belonged to him as well as Severus.

Ron and Hermione had been going out for a while now, everyone knew and no one batted an eyelid if they held hands or kissed in public. Even George and Oliver were due to be bonded over the Christmas holidays and their betrothal announcement had been in the Daily Prophet. Sometimes Harry felt a strange sensation in his chest when he thought of all those couples who didn't need to hide. It was too dangerous with Severus still spying on the Death Eaters, Harry knew they couldn't come clean yet, but he couldn't deny that sometimes it hurt to keep his love for Severus such a secret.

As Harry raised his arm to the door, it swung open, but not by magic this time. Severus was standing on the other side, dressed in a plain white robe, his hair wet and curling round his shoulders from a recent bath or shower. Harry could smell no soap or shampoo on the man. Harry had never seen him dressed in all white before and on Severus it wasn't a good look, he was too pale already and the white robe just made him seem ill.

"We both have to be purified for the ritual, Harry," said Severus as he waved Harry into the living room.

"Ritual?" asked Harry.

"Yes, the bedding ceremony normally takes place shortly after the couple have been bonded, but since you were a child when Lily cast the spell, the ritual can only take place now."

"W - what do I have to do?" Harry asked worriedly. The butterflies had fled from his tummy and left rampaging elephants in their stead. Severus went to one of the shelves and returned with a pale blue potion.

"Drink this. It will - clear out your system." Severus was careful not to touch any part of Harry as he gave him the bottle. Harry guessed it was because he hadn't been purified yet.

"Clear out my - oh!" Harry blushed almost as red as the Weasley hair he was sure when he realised what Severus meant. Of course, if they were going to do that, the potion could only help. He drank the potion and a really weird sensation shot through his whole body, as if he was suddenly lighter.

"Then you must take a shower, only with water, no soap or shampoo, no perfumes of any sort. I've left your robe in the bathroom. Put that on and you'll have to be barefoot just this once, pretty though those stockings are. No spells for washing or drying, Harry, not tonight. No glasses either, not until after the ritual."

Harry nodded, to show that he understood.

Severus grinned at him and Harry couldn't help smiling back, despite how nervous he felt. He hadn't known tonight was going to be a ritual, but he should have realised. Taking someone's virginity was not something taken lightly in the wizarding world, unless you were a Death Eater and used rape as one of your weapons of terror.

Harry went to the bathroom, divested himself of his pyjamas and stockings, he hadn't bothered with shoes tonight, and set the clue for the next task on top of his folded pyjamas. He removed the leather thong tying his hair back, placed his glasses on top of his clothes, turned on the shower and stepped in.

The water was tepid, so of necessity it was a rather brief shower. There was a white sponge sitting on the edge of the tub, which Harry used to wash himself with the water as thoroughly as possible. His hair felt heavy once he'd doused it with water and the urge to cast a warming and drying spell on himself like he usually did was almost as strong as the urge to be with Severus.

He turned off the shower head by hand, got out and dried himself with the white fluffy towels Severus had set out for him. It didn't take as long as he thought to get dry, although his long hair still felt rather damp. He didn't tie it back, noting that Severus had been wearing nothing but the white robe either.

Harry's own robe was hanging on a hook by the door. The material was a little coarse, some sort of natural fibre, he guessed, and it had a row of pearl buttons reaching just past his waist. Washed and girded, he wandered out of the bathroom and smiled up at his husband, whose eyes had just lit up at Harry's approach.

Severus kissed Harry softly on the forehead, before taking his hand and leading him to the bedroom. The bedroom had changed since the last time Harry had been in it. Instead of the dark furniture with green and silver bed curtains, nearly everything in the room was white. White dresser, white flagstones on the floor, sheer white curtains around the four poster, the posts themselves white today. The only hint of colour was a scattering of red rose petals on the white sheets of the bed.

"It's symbolic," said Severus when he saw Harry looking at the rose petals. "Purity and blood, shedding the blood of your virginity tonight."

Harry's eyes widened in a touch of fear. He wouldn't bleed, would he?

"What do I have to do, Severus?"

"Just lie down on the bed, Harry. I will speak some words over you, don't speak unless I ask you a question and I need your reply. Okay?"

"Okay," said Harry, swallowing nervously as he climbed onto the bed and lay down on top of the rose petals. As soon as Harry was settled, Severus straddled Harry's waist and lifted up two rose petals.

"With my ears, I hear you," said Severus, placing the petals on each of Harry's ears in turn, before kissing Harry's skin through them. Harry bit back a moan, unsure if that would be considered speaking.

"With my eyes, I see you," Severus placed two more petals on Harry's closed eyelids, kissing them again and Harry was sure the man would be able to feel his arousal, considering how close he was sitting to it.

"With my heart, I love you," said Severus, unbuttoning Harry's robe until his chest was bare, placing another rose petal just over Harry's heart before bending down and kissing him through the velvet of the flower.

"With my soul, I share you," said Severus, placing a rose petal right in the middle of Harry's forehead and giving him another kiss. The desire was washing through Harry like a runaway Hogwarts Express and his breathing was little more than a panting rasp. His prick was aching, tenting his robe and he was desperate for any sort of touch by now.

Severus popped the other buttons of Harry's robe open, until Harry's cock was freed, standing up almost vertically from his body. Harry could feel himself leaking already.

"With my body, I worship you," said Severus, placing a rose petal right on the tip of Harry's cock. His hips bucked, but couldn't go much further with Severus sitting on them. Severus bent down and bestowed a soft kiss on the head of Harry's cock, through the rose petal. Far too brief a touch in Harry's opinion. He bit right through his lip to stop himself from crying out in frustration.

"Do you, Harry Potter, accept all of me? My magic, my body, my soul?"

"I do," said Harry, feeling it strange to talk now when he'd been so quiet before.

"Is this gift given willingly?"

"It is."

Severus bent down and kissed Harry firmly on the lips, whispering against Harry's mouth. "It's okay, Harry, you can relax now. The ritual part is over," before pressing his lips to Harry's once more. Harry made a long, drawn out moan, now that he could. He could feel Severus' erection pressing against his hip, his hand twined beneath their bodies as Harry grabbed hold of it and stroked it slowly, loving the noises Severus made when he did.

Severus broke the kiss, but only long enough to cast the spell that had them both naked in moments. God, it was almost too much for him, this slow slide of skin against and skin and Harry whimpered into Severus' mouth. He felt so out of control tonight.

Severus' hands wandered down his sides, caressing each in turn, before sliding down to his cock and giving Harry a few sharp strokes. Harry came so suddenly that he was seeing stars and looked up at Severus in surprise. His knees felt like jelly, had Severus made him come deliberately?

"It'll be easier the more relaxed you are," said Severus as he sat up and reached for a jar of oil sitting on the bedside cabinet. As Severus unscrewed the lid, the scent of lavender and camomile wafted out. Severus slid down the bed, but not before kissing Harry long and deeply again.

This time, when Harry felt a slender oil coated finger playing with his entrance, he widened his legs rather than tried to bolt in surprise. He expected it to hurt, it did a little, but Severus was gentle, stretching him slowly with one finger before he even tried for two. Harry's thighs and abdomen were sticky with come and the scent was making him excited all over again. Severus smiled down at him, his face was just a blur to Harry without his glasses but he could just about make out expressions.

A second finger was added and the slow stretching began again. It wasn't until the third that he cried out as the pain almost became unbearable. He couldn't do this, there was now way a cock was going to fit, Harry was too small, he'd be split in half.

"Relax, Harry," urged Severus. "Bear down around my fingers, that's it, that's it." Severus bent down and kissed him again, his mouth teasing Harry, distracting him from what was going on down below. Harry kissed back like a man drowning, clinging desperately to Severus' neck.

He tensed the second Severus withdrew his fingers, he knew what was coming next and Harry wasn't at all sure he was ready for it. Harry blurrily saw Severus coating his own cock with liberal amounts of the oil, before Severus stroked Harry back to full hardness. Severus placed a pillow under Harry's hips, pushed Harry's legs apart and circled his fingers around Harry's perineum, teasing him for a few moments so that Harry was surprised to feel himself, aching, twitching down there, as if he wanted to be filled with something. He cried out. "Please, Severus! Please!"

Severus pressed forward, for a few seconds it felt as if Harry was going to reject the invader, but a few more soft thrusts and suddenly Severus was there, where no one had ever been before. Severus was inside him. Inside him. It hurt, it hurt more than Harry had expected it to, not just where they were joined, but an ache in his lower back and tummy as well. Spots were dancing on the edge of his vision.

"Breathe, Harry," panted Severus. "Or you'll pass out."

Harry hadn't realised he'd stopped breathing as Severus had entered him and he sucked in a gasp of air as Severus started to move, thrusting inside him. Severus face was heated with passion, gone was the normal sallow skin, his mouth was open, his eyes shut.

Harry wrapped his arms around Severus' waist and tugged the man forwards, so that Severus was lying on top of him. He liked the weight of his husband on top of him. It took a while for Harry's cock to become even remotely interested in the proceedings again, the pain of when Severus first entered him diminished his arousal, but it wasn't long before Severus changed his angle slightly and that had Harry crying out in surprised pleasure and seeing stars again.

"Oh! Do that again," he begged. That felt wonderful, whatever it was.

"Anything for you, Harry," his husband smiled down at him and thrust against that spot again and again. Soon it wasn't long before Harry was meeting Severus thrust for thrust, the initial pain long forgotten. Severus was grimacing, tugging Harry's legs up around his waist as he began to thrust harder and harder. Harry copied him, stroke for stroke. Severus groaned, the sound going straight to Harry's cock and he could feel the build up of his orgasm approaching, faster and faster.

Then Severus found that spot, where shoulder met neck and bit down, hard. Harry was lost.

His balls drew up, his cock pulsed between their bodies as Harry came, spurt after spurt. "Severus!!!! Severus!!!" he wailed as the tremors rocked his whole body. Severus thrust even harder, once, twice more, shuddering as his own climax overtook him and Harry felt himself filled with his husband's warm seed. He could hear Severus' panting close to his ear as the two of them just lay there for a while, not speaking.

"Harry? Are you all right? Did I hurt you?" Severus kissed Harry's neck.

"I'm okay, Severus. It - it hurt a little at first."

"Sorry, it does tend to the first time, even if you are carefully prepared."

"I love you," Severus," said Harry, appalled to discover that his voice was hoarse with unshed tears. He turned away from Severus, blinking them away, but Severus knew or saw and kissed them gently away.

"Ssh, Harry, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you." Harry stroked Harry's hair, trying to soothe him.

"No, no, it isn't that," said Harry, trying his best to explain what he was feeling. "It was just so - so intense. I've never felt like that before. I felt - I felt so connected to you."

"And now we both are, Harry," said Severus, drawing Harry's gaze to the crest tattoos on their right arms. Instead of the Snape crest on Harry's and the Potter crest on Severus' arms, the crests had somehow merged. It was a black background from the Potter crest, but instead of the little white flowers of the Potter crest, both of them now had the little portcullises of the Snape crest.

"They've changed," Harry mused.

"Yes, Harry. We're fully bonded now. No one can take that away from us."

TBC

Chapter 23: Tears of the Sun

Part 23

Harry yawned as Severus cast a cleaning charm over both of them and Severus grinned at him. "Did I wear you out?"

Harry blushed and Severus thought it was adorable that Harry could still blush like a virgin, despite what they'd just been doing to relieve him of it. Nothing seemed to diminish Harry's innocence, no matter what abuse he'd suffered at the Dursleys' hands or no matter what terrible visions haunted his dreams. They didn't often talk of Harry's nightmares, but once he had told Severus that he saw visions of the things the Death Eaters did, some of them from raids that Severus hadn't even taken part in, so it could not be anything to do with their bond.

Harry sat up and propped his head on his elbow, using his other hand to trail his fingers through the hair on Severus' chest. Harry seemed fascinated with Severus' body hair, probably because he didn't have much of his own. Severus reached up and stroked Harry's smooth chin. "Do you even shave yet?" The thought discomfited him, Severus had never been attracted to children, but even Harry at fourteen had Severus wondering what it would be like to do more than just kiss him.

Harry shook his head. "That bothers you, doesn't it? I'm not a child, Severus, no matter how short I am. I'm of age, you did nothing wrong." Harry leant down and kissed him, letting the kiss linger for a few moments. "Oh, I almost forgot," said Harry breathlessly once they'd pulled apart again. "I got my next clue, do you want to read it with me?"

"If you'd like," agreed Severus and was rewarded with another kiss, slower this time, but with still as much passion in it as if they hadn't already made love tonight. Harry pulled away, his face glowing and hopped down from the bed. Severus saw him wince.

"Do you need a healing charm, Harry?" and there it was, that beautiful blush again.

"No, thanks. It's just a twinge," replied Harry as he scurried off, red-faced to the bathroom. Severus was disappointed to see that Harry had dressed in his pyjamas while he was gone, clutching the envelope clue in one hand and his glasses in the other. Harry placed his spectacles on his face before settling down cross legged in the middle of the bed, opposite Severus. Severus pulled a sheet up to his waist, feeling a little wary about lying there completely naked while Harry was wearing pyjamas, maybe one day Harry would feel comfortable enough to lounge about naked too even if they weren't having sex.

"Ready?" said Harry as he slit the envelope open with his thumb. Severus nodded and Harry read out the clue.

"Hogwarts School with Founders four,

A castle ancient, with secrets galore.

One of our member, whom serpents adored

Left with a puzzle none could solve.

A secret chamber, in this school of old.

Clues were many, but the trail went cold.

Many have tried, one has died,

None have succeeded in the task at hand.

Can you discover where the secret chambers stand?"

"The Chamber of Secrets," Severus muttered to himself, but Harry was reading again.

"Under no circumstances are students to enter the Chamber of Secrets, if its location is indeed discovered. It is said to be the home of a monster."

"Well, it must be real, mustn't it?" asked Harry. "They're hardly going to give us a task we can't do."

"The already did," said Severus. "No one expected anyone to get the unicorn's ribbons, didn't think any seventeen year olds would still be virgins."

"It could still be real though, this Chamber. Do you know anything about it? Or would that be considered helping me?"

"I'm not allowed to help you complete the task, that is work out where the Chamber is. But I can tell you about the legend, most people already know it anyway, especially if they attend Hogwarts."

Severus told Harry all he knew about his House founder and what little he did of the Chamber itself.

"If there is a monster," mused Harry. "It might be some sort of serpent, since Slytherin was a Parselmouth. Much easier to control a monster that way, I think."

"Maybe," agreed Severus. Harry pulled his hair back and tied it at the nape of his neck with the leather thong Severus had given him. Severus had hardly ever seen Harry without it since he'd given him the gift. Harry scooted up the bed, scurried under the covers and rested his head on Severus' chest, just below his chin.

"Can you wake me early, Severus? The others will probably want to know about the clue, they did last time."

"How early? Six?" queried Severus, getting his wand out and ready to cast an alarm spell.

"Better make it five, just in case," advised Harry.

"Okay," said Severus, casting the spell. "Goodnight, Harry," he said as he pressed a kiss to the top of Harry's head. His only reply was a soft snore, his young husband had fallen asleep already.

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Severus endured a rather unique form of torture over the weeks leading up the Christmas holidays. Classes. Classes with Harry in them. Classes with Harry in them wearing his uniform. Those shoes. Those stockings. Severus was just relived that teaching robes were very generous and hid a multitude of sins.

Potions for the advanced seventh years was the last class of the day and that day was also the day before Christmas Eve, the day before the school holidays. Severus knew he was not going to be able to concentrate on brewing any sort of potion with them today, so he set them an essay to be completed by the time the bell rang.

Harry didn't need to do the essay, he just attended the classes with the Gryffindors, but he didn't take them. It was as if Harry could read his mind and knew exactly what to do to drive his husband to distraction. Trailing a quill over his smooth cheeks, across his mouth, scratching the hollow of his throat with it. The throat Severus had tasted just that morning.

Merlin, he was getting hard just watching that quill, wanting it to be his tongue following that pathway across Harry's skin. Harry glanced up and gave Severus a small smirk, he knew, the brat bloody knew how much he was affecting Severus, but still with that air of innocence about him. Harry shifted and then one elegant leg stretched out from under the table, encased in black buckle shoes and those white stockings that had Severus coughing, trying to disguise a gasp. Harry knew how much those stockings affected him, he bloody well knew.

Severus heart was beating a rapid tattoo against his ribcage as he waited impatiently for the bell to go. It seemed he waited hours before it finally rung out. "Everyone, place your essays on my desk and get out!" he barked. Nothing mattered at the moment except for getting his husband alone, he didn't even give them homework. They all hurried out after handing in their essays, scared he might change his mind about the homework, no doubt.

Harry stayed behind, as he normally did when they had Potions last thing. The whole school knew that Harry was taking his Masters in Potions and sometimes Professor Snape (shock, horror), let Harry do experiments in the classroom when they weren't there. That was normally the case, but not tonight. Tonight something was stirring all right, but it wasn't a potion.

As soon as the last student left, Severus cast the strongest silencing and locking charms on the door, adding an imperturbable charm for good measure. No one would be able to get within three feet of the door. If anyone asked, he would just say that he and Harry had been brewing a dangerous Potion.

The siren still sat calmly at his stool, but his face was flushed and his eyes were a darker shade, a combination of love and lust shining from them as Severus stalked towards him. He bent down and crushed Harry's mouth with his own, gripping his face in a firm hand. Severus kicked the desk out of the way before falling to his knees in front of Harry, wanting to worship at that which he'd been dreaming of all lesson.

Harry gasped in surprise, as if he hadn't been expecting that at all. He probably hadn't, they had never done much more in the classroom than share some very heated kisses before now, but that was about to change. Severus had undone Harry's trousers in no time and grasped Harry's cock in his fist, stroking a few times before lowering his head and tasting that which he couldn't get enough of. Harry.

"Severus! Oh God, Severus!" yelled Harry as he felt the first flick of Severus' tongue against the tip. Harry tangled his fingers in Severus' hair, almost as if he was afraid Severus would stop what he was doing. He needn't have worried, Severus had no intention of going anywhere. Not when he had Harry's delicious cock in his mouth, much better than a lemon drop any day. A couple of times his stomach and balls jolted, almost as if he might come just from this, just from sucking Harry, but he staved off his own orgasm in favour of bringing Harry to his.

Severus licked and sucked for all he was worth. Then he hummed. Harry's increasing frequency of moans as well as the cock in his mouth stiffening even further let him know when that was going to be. Harry's hands were so tight in his hair now, Severus was sure Harry was going to pull it out by the roots. "I love you! Ahhh! AHHH! SEVERUS! Oh God! Severus!!!!" Harry screamed, his hips driving him into Severus' mouth as Severus felt the sweet drops of Harry's sweet seed flood his mouth. He swallowed and sucked, swallowed and sucked some more until Harry was so dazed he almost slid form the stool.

Severus lapped at Harry's cock with his tongue as it softened, but he continued his attentions until it hardened again and Harry was a babbling, incoherent mess. Wonderful. Severus reluctantly removed Harry's cock from his mouth and kissed him in desperation. "On my desk. Now," he commanded, his own cock like a boulder of need between his legs.

Harry's eyes widened. "Here? Now? God, Severus," he moaned.

"Yes, here," said Severus kissing him again and pulling Harry up into a standing position, leading them both towards the desk. He could feel Harry trembling against him, but whether it was from little aftershocks or renewed excitement, he wasn't sure. There was nothing unsure about the renewed erection against his hip though.

"I can't wait, Harry. I want to be in you now. I need to be in you now."

"God, yes," moaned Harry as he disentangled himself from Severus' embrace, but only so that he could remove his trousers and underwear. Severus was pleased to note the shoes and stockings stayed on.

"Lean over the desk, face down," instructed Severus and Harry did as he was bid. Harry widened his legs to a more comfortable stance and Severus was greeted with the view of the most delectable arse he had ever seen. He was tempted to fall to his knees again and worship at the temple revealed to him, but his cock was getting rather insistent and insisted that it wait until another time.

Severus summoned the lubricant and prepared both of them as quickly as either of them could stand it but hopefully would be enough to not hurt either of them. Severus moaned as he slid inside Harry, he could never get enough of this, of being so connected to him like this. Sometimes he still couldn't believe how could it felt to be encased in that tight heat, like being gripped by a silk gloved hand, which knew all the places to touch him for most effect.

"Severus! Move!" pleaded Harry as he wriggled his arse backwards, trying to impale Severus deeper inside him. Severus was happy to oblige. He knew his orgasm wouldn't be long in coming, not when he'd been teased for the past hour or so by the young man beneath him. It was helped along by Harry's wordless squeals as he came, his buttocks clenching down on Severus' prick as Harry spurted over the desk below him. Severus thrust once, twice more and gripped Harry's hips hard, pounding ruthlessly into him as his own climax had him spurting deep inside his husband. "Harry! Oh, fuck! Harry!" he screamed as he came, feeling faint by the end of it.

Severus kissed Harry's neck, his shoulder, his back as his own legs started to feel like water. Harry shifted and looked round at him. "Um, Severus?" Harry sounded a bit worried.

"Yes?" Severus asked languidly, really he just wanted to slide to the floor in a puddle of goo at the moment, he hoped it wasn't anything too serious. He moved, easing out of Harry slowly, careful not to hurt, so that they could both stand up.

"Um, I sort of came over someone's essay."

Severus glanced down at the stained parchment. They hadn't even bothered to move the essays off the desk.

"Whose?"

Harry lifted the topmost paper and read out the name in the top left hand corner. "Draco Malfoy's."

If it hadn't been for the silencing charm, Severus' laugh could probably have been heard all the way to Hogsmeade.

TBC

Chapter 24: Tears of the Sun

Part 24

"Harry!" squealed Fred as soon as Harry levitated his trunk through the doorway at the Burrow. Ron was still outside saying goodbye to Hermione before she took the Knightbus to the wizarding inn in the village, as the Burrow was filled to the rafters with the Wood and Weasley families while awaiting George and Oliver's nuptials, so Hermione had to stay elsewhere. Ron's offer of sharing a room with her didn't go down too well with Molly, even though Harry guessed she probably knew that Ron and Hermione had gone way beyond the stage of kissing and holding hands.

"Where is everyone?" asked Harry, for at the moment Fred seemed to be the only occupant. Ginny had dashed into the house and then as quickly dashed out again, taking another Portkey out.

"George and Oliver have gone for a walk in the orchard," Fred didn't seem to notice Harry's blush as he remembered walks there with Severus and the night when he'd seen George and Oliver on the sofa. "Dad has gone to try and persuade Nana Weasley to come to the bonding ceremony, Mum is in the village making sure all the suppliers are ready with the flowers, cake and everything, no idea where Ginny is, she came in and went out straight away again. Percy's doing something with Fudge, again, Bill and Charlie aren't arriving until later and Oliver's family are at the jewellers and the robemakers, making sure everything fits for tonight."

Harry set his trunk down beside Ginny's near the door and the two of them glanced out the window at Ron, still engrossed in his "goodbye" to Hermione. "Do they do that all the time?" queried Fred.

"Most of it," agreed Harry as he tore his eyes away from their snogging. He enjoyed kissing Severus, enjoyed plenty more besides, but he couldn't help but wonder even if their relationship was out in the open, if he could still enjoy it in places where they knew someone might see them.

"Mind you, those two haven't got a thing on George and Oliver," confided Fred with a wink. "The times I walked in on them..." he trailed off and stared at Harry. "Sorry, Harry, I keep thinking of you as this titchy five year old. You've grown a lot, haven't you?"

"Not that much," smiled Harry, who was dwarfed by all the Weasleys, although none of them could match Snape for height. "Won't George and Oliver be cold?" The snow wasn't heavy yet, just a light dusting that made the path and the house looked dusted with sugar, but it wasn't exactly warm weather.

"Heating charms," said Fred. "Mind you, I think young love has them not noticing the cold." Fred walked over to the fireplace and rubbed his hands together to warm them, even though it was Harry who had just come in from the cold. He turned round and grinned impishly at Harry. "Who would have thought it, Harry? Our own little virgin? The only one able to complete the first task."

Harry flushed to the roots of his hair, remembering lying face down on Severus' desk the evening before, by now he was far from a virgin. Fred noticed the blush. "Oho, I take it you wouldn't be able to do the task now? So who did the deed, Harry? Or is that a secret?" He winked at Harry. "I'm good at keeping secrets."

Harry shook his head. “I’d rather not say, but Fred, can I ask you something?"

"Sure, Harry. What is it?"

"Why isn't Nana coming to the bonding ceremony?"

"Oh? You mean you haven't been treated to one of her anti-gay rants?" said Fred with venom. "She knew about George of course, but was rather disappointed that I am also of that persuasion."

"You are?" gasped Harry. He'd had no idea.

"Some Muggles think it's genetic, Harry and we are twins. Don't tell me you thought that Lee and I were just friends all those summers he visited?"

"Actually, I did," said Harry. "I knew about George and Oliver though."

Fred laughed. "Yes, they told me about you catching them that night."

"They told you?" Harry was sure he must have been the colour of a tomato by now. He wasn't proud of what he'd done, spying on them like that, but it was even more unsettling to hear that someone else knew of it.

"Harry, George tells me most things and sometimes he doesn't even have to tell me. I can figure some things out by myself. The way you feel about a certain Potions master of our acquaintance for, example."

"You knew? How? When?" Harry sank down on the sofa, feeling his legs turn to jelly. So much for keeping it secret if his emotions were written on his face for everyone to see.

"It was him, wasn't it?" Fred asked softly, sitting down beside Harry on the sofa. "The reason you're no longer a virgin?"

"Are you angry with me?" asked Harry, feeling tears prick at the corners of his eyes.

"Harry, no! Of course not. I'm not so sure about him. Harry - did - did he hurt you, force you to do things?"

"What? No, it wasn't like that! I love him, Fred, he loves me." Why on earth did people keep thinking that Severus would hurt him?

"Good, then there's nothing for me to worry about if I leave you two alone is there?"

"What?" Harry had the impression they were carrying on two quite different conversations.

"He's at the door, Harry," smiled Fred as he went to answer it. Severus entered the room, closely followed by Ron who had managed to drag himself away from Hermione. Fred tugged Ron upstairs leaving the two of them alone in the middle of the Weasley kitchen. A place where they'd never actually been alone before. It felt very odd and Harry kept expecting someone to burst in at any minute in order to make sure they weren't doing anything. Not that they were doing anything. Yet.

They hadn't even spoken a greeting, all Harry was aware of was Severus' hungry gaze as he took in Harry's appearance from top to toe. Harry still hadn't changed out of his uniform since the Portkey had dropped them all off at the Burrow.

"Don't I get a kiss?" queried Severus, arching an eyebrow. Harry was conscious of Fred and Ron in the house, but they both knew about he and Severus now and from Fred taking Ron upstairs, Harry guessed he was giving the two of them some privacy.

"Yes," said Harry moving towards his husband, wondering when his voice had gone so dry. Severus leaned his head down, Harry stood on tiptoes and arched his neck up. The kiss was soft, tender, at first, a brush of lips briefly against the other's, but it grew more heated the longer their lips stayed joined. Severus' cupped Harry's face, trailing his fingers down his cheek, along his jawline and across his neck. Harry could feel his toes curling and he moaned deep into his husband's throat, wrapping his arms tight against Severus' waist.

"What the fuck are you doing with my little brother?!!!" came a voice from somewhere and suddenly Severus' weight was no longer against Harry, his husband was flung backwards and landed hard on the tiled kitchen floor, Charlie's wand aimed at the man's chest.

Harry ran to put himself between his foster brother's wand and Severus. "Charlie, no! It's all right!"

"All right? Harry, he was mauling you! Harry's only seventeen for fuck's sake!" snarled Charlie and made no effort to remove his wand from its aim on Severus' chest.

"I am well aware of his age," said Severus.

"He's your student!"

"Technically, Harry has never been my student, nor is he now."

"Technically? Oh, that'll hold up well in court, wouldn't it? They'll throw the book at you for this! Wait until Mum and Dad found out, you'll not live to see prison, Snape!"

"Charlie, stop it! Put your wand away, they already know. Mum and Dad know."

"What? They know? And approve?" he sneered down at Severus as if he couldn't quite believe that his parents were crazy enough to approve of this man having a relationship with Harry.

"Yes, Charlie."

"Harry, you're not thinking straight. He's Confounded you or something. You can't honestly tell me that you love him?"

"But I do, Charlie," said Harry.

"Is this why you rescued him?" demanded Charlie. "So that he'd be grateful and you'd have a ready made pet? Is that what he is to you? Just some fucktoy?"

Harry lifted up his shirt sleeve to show Charlie the combined crest on his arm. Charlie stared at it.

"No, Charlie, We're bonded. This is for real."

"Both of you are fucking crazy! You're old enough to be his father!" Charlie roared at Snape. "I don't care if you are bonded. It's wrong, it's sick." Charlie did however lower his wand.

"I thought you'd be happy for me, for us," said Harry in a small voice.

"Happy? Happy that you threw your life away on someone who isn't good enough to tie your shoelaces? No, Harry, I'm sorry, I cannot be happy for that."

"Don't talk about him like that!" said Harry, almost in tears.

"Harry, it's all right. I've been called worse, believe me."

"It isn't all right, it isn't. People shouldn't talk to you like that. Charlie should apologise to you."

Charlie turned round and stalked off upstairs, leaving Harry to stare at the space where he'd been. He helped Severus up from the floor and allowed himself the comfort of being hugged. The tears fell before he was even aware of them. Charlie had been so angry. It was the first time it hit home that even if their relationship could be out in the open, that not everyone was going to accept them. Those few people who did were probably in the minority, Harry realised.

For if Charlie Weasley, open minded dragon tracker and purveyor of piggy back rides when Harry was younger, didn't approve, then what hope for the rest of the wizarding world?

TBC

Chapter 25: Tears of the Sun

Part 25

Late on Christmas Eve, George Weasley and Oliver Wood were joined in the first wizarding ceremony Harry had ever been to. Things were a little tense before the ceremony actually started, Charlie was pointedly ignoring Harry and Severus, and George was a little upset that Arthur had failed to convince Nana Weasley to turn up.

The bonding ceremony itself took place in a marquee on the lawn in front of the house. It was magically heated inside, ribbons floated down from the ceiling and each guest was encouraged to take one, they would use them to tie the grooms' hands together when it came to that part of the ceremony. Harry was soon to learn that in a traditional wizarding bonding, the wedding guests took part in the ceremony as much as the grooms or brides to be did.

It made his throat ache a little when he saw how pleased everyone was at George and Oliver's would-be joining, even Charlie was joining in with the risqué jokes about the wedding night, when he could barely look at he or Severus.

George and Oliver were both dressed in wizarding robes of palest blue, with three pearl buttons a the top. They both looked radiant and Harry was happy for them, his own worries of how people would react to he and Severus forgotten for the moment.

Professor Dumbledore performed the ceremony itself, he was dressed in a silver and gold striped robe, his white hair tied back with a blue ribbon the same shade as George and Oliver's wedding robes.

"Who gives these two to be joined?" asked Dumbledore. Arthur and Anthony Wood, Oliver's father stepped up to their respective sons. Arthur took George's hand, Anthony took Oliver's and then the two fathers pushed their sons' hands together.

"We do," Arthur and Anthony said in unison.

"If there is anyone here present who has objections to his match, let them speak now or nevermore," said Dumbledore.

There were few mumblings from the crowd, but no one objected. Dumbledore raised his hands for silence and continued with the ceremony.

"George and Oliver have written their own vows, George you may start," he said with a nod.

"I, George Weasley do this day take you Oliver, as my fully bonded husband. I give you my heart for I know you will look after it, I give you my soul for it belongs to no other, I give you my magic because it was always yours, I give you my body because it yearns for your touch and that of no other. I will never betray you, I will never hurt you. I will honour you and cherish you as my companion in this life and all others."

Harry could see both George and Oliver were glassy eyed as George finished saying his vows. Oliver's voice was hoarse as he started saying his own. "I, O - Oliver Wood do this day take you, George as my fully bonded husband. I want to dance with you in the rain. I want to kiss all your worries away. I cannot give you my heart, for it is already in your tender care. You stole my soul and my magic long ago with your soft smiles and your kisses, but I have never objected to the theft. They are yours forever. I promise no other will come between us, I will always be faithful to you. You will always be loved."

Harry was blinking rapidly, trying to hide his own tears, even as most of the women were sobbing into their handkerchiefs as the vows were finished. Dumbledore removed the ribbon from his hair and bound George and Oliver's right hands together with it. "Family, guests, please add your ribbons to the bonded couple to wish them long life and happiness."

The parents of the grooms went first, wrapping the ribbons loosely around. Then it was the immediate family's turn, and Harry was ushered up there with Fred, even though he wasn't a blood relative and tried to protest. "Harry, family isn't just blood," insisted Fred and forcibly dragged Harry with him. Harry wrapped his own ribbon around the grooms' wrists, then stood back to watch as every guest placed their ribbon round the newlyweds' wrists.

After every ribbon had been placed, both George and Oliver's wrists looked as if they'd been wrapped in thick bandages, Dumbledore pointed his wand at their covered arms.

"This bonding has been witnessed and approved by all here present. Congratulations," Dumbledore waved his wand intoning a spell Harry couldn't make out and the ribbons disappeared. "You are now a fully bonded couple. No one can take that away from you."

The words were reminiscent of what Severus had spoken to Harry on the night he took his virginity and Harry felt a pang beneath his breastbone that their bonding had to be so secret. Guests were congratulating the happy couple and making jokes about the bedding ceremony that night. Charlie's angry words were swirling round his brain and every time Harry tried to talk to Charlie, to perhaps try and explain, Charlie snubbed him and ignored Harry completely, which did not go unnoticed by the other guests.

Severus was up congratulating the happy couple now, but even if he'd been beside Harry, Harry couldn't do what he wanted, which was to curl up in his husband's arms and bawl his eyes out. He felt really wrung out and a party was not where he wanted to spend the rest of the evening, no matter how much he loved his brother.

"It was beautiful," sighed Ginny, coming up to him and handing Harry a plate of canapés. "You haven't eaten anything."

"I'm not hungry," said Harry, but he took the plate from her anyway. If had a plate of food already, at least he would be guaranteed that no one else would try to feed him.

"What sort of bonding would you like, Harry?" asked Ginny. "This is the full traditional one, of course. But there are others, spells and such, without the ceremony. I think I'd like one like this, Mum and Dad would probably want that for me anyway, me being the only girl."

The question was redundant, for Harry was already bonded. He thought he was answering her about Molly and Arthur wanting the full works for their only daughter.

"I suppose so, yes," said Harry distractedly. He never noticed Ginny's radiant smile as she walked away to converse with Hermione and Luna.

"Good," said Severus, arriving by Harry's side. "You're eating something."

Harry didn't bother pointing out that he hadn't actually been eating anything from the plate holding little mouthfuls of food. He was sure he would choke if he even attempted it. It was unfair to George and Oliver, he knew it, but Harry couldn't help feeling utterly miserable the moment. He rubbed the back of his right hand over his scar as though attempting to iron it out. The pain wasn't strong, but it was a niggling insistent annoyance and he really wanted to go and lie down somewhere, preferably with Severus.

Harry noticed Severus' eyes widen and then he had gripped his left arm. No. No. No. It couldn't be happening now. Severus couldn't have been called tonight.

"Harry, I've got to go. I've been Called."

"No! Don't go!" pleaded Harry in a harsh whisper. "Please, I have a bad feeling about this. Please don't go."

"I have no choice, Harry, I must. You know I must."

"But it's their wedding!" protested Harry. "You can't just leave!"

"I am sorry, Harry. Please give your family my apologies. Most of them are in the Order, they will know why I have to leave."

With that, Severus nodded to the headmaster, who followed him out and then Severus was gone and Harry was left to break the news of his hurried departure.

They hadn't even said goodbye.

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The guests had finally left sometime around one a.m. It was Christmas morning now, but none of the Weasleys seemed keen to get to bed. The presents had been brought out from underneath the tree and the floor was awash with discarded ribbons and wrapping paper. George and Oliver were already in Italy, having Apparated there for their honeymoon.

Harry was normally excited about Christmas, but this year he was too worried about what Severus was doing or was being made to do. His scar was a throbbing mass of pain and he really just wanted to go to bed but felt that it would be too rude to just say so when everyone else was so excited about opening their presents and discussing the wedding.

"There's one more for you, Harry," said Ginny with a small smile and handed Harry a tiny square box.

Charlie had handed over Harry's present without a word, a dragon tooth handled dagger but from the expression on Charlie’s' face, Harry had the impression that Charlie would have been quite willing to use the dagger on Severus if it had been within reach earlier. Harry had no idea what he was going to use a dagger for, but he thanked Charlie anyway before opening the rest of his presents.

As Harry unwrapped the small box form Ginny, she knelt down by his feet. "Harry Potter, will you do me the honour of becoming my bonded?"

Crash! Charlie had just smashed the glass of wine he was holding against the fireplace and Harry thought he might faint as he stared at the bonding ring inside the box. He had no idea, none.

"No, Ginny dear, Harry can't," said Molly, helping Ginny to her feet.

"Of course he can, we're not related," said Ginny.

"That isn't the reason," said Arthur, casting worried glances in Harry's direction.

"Go on then, tell her, Harry. Tell her the reason why you can't be bonded with her, with anyone else."

"Charlie, you have no idea what you're talking about," said Fred.

"I know, all right? I fucking know that he's bonded to Snape!"

Ginny paled and stared at Harry. "That's not true, is it, Harry?" she asked quietly.

"I'm sorry, Ginny, it is."

"Snape?" said Bill and Percy together, sounding as though they were on Charlie's side of not approving.

"But you can't be bonded already, Harry! You promised me! You promised me," sobbed Ginny.

"What? When?" Harry had made no promises to Ginny as far as he was aware.

"When we were talking about bonding ceremonies, you said we could have the full traditional ceremony!"

"I thought we were talking hypothetically," said Harry, feeling as if he'd just landed in a dragon's nest and was trying to steal its eggs.

"What about all the times you said you loved me?" demanded Ginny, hands on her hips.

"I do love you, Ginny, but as a sister," Harry said softly.

"You're not my brother!" snapped Ginny, tears falling unchecked down her cheeks. "I hate you! I hate you!" she shrieked before stomping upstairs. Bill, Charlie and Percy went after her, Molly dithered for a few moments before she too went after her sobbing daughter.

"Merlin Harry, I had no idea Ginny felt like that about you," said Ron. Fred hugged him and stroked his hair.

"It'll be all right, Harry. Ginny's just a bit shocked at the moment, she'll come round."

"I'm sorry," Harry said, glancing over at Arthur. "I didn't know."

"None of us did, Harry. We just thought Ginny was accepting you as a brother, we had no idea her feelings lay in another direction entirely."

Harry felt awful. It was his fault there had been this rift in the Weasley family and the weight of the guilt was crushing his chest and making it difficult to breathe. He wrenched himself away from Fred's arms and ran for the back door. He had to run. He just had to get away.

With cries of, "Harry!" and "Where's he going?" ringing in his ears, Harry ran as fast as his feet could carry him

He'd forgotten about the snow and he was so upset that his magic was too erratic and he couldn't even cast a simple warming charm.

The pain in his scar was getting worse, Harry scrubbed at his forehead as if by doing that he could make the pain stop, but nothing could stop it.

Harry didn't know how long he walked or where to, before he sank down and lay shivering on top of the snow, unable to keep going through the pain.

"Severus!" he screamed to the night. "Severus!"

But no one was there to hear.

TBC

Chapter 26: Tears of the Sun

Part 26

Fred, Ron and Arthur rushed outside to find Harry. It didn't take long, Harry's screams loud enough to lead them right to him. Fred's heart was beating a mile a minute in his chest. Harry had looked so upset when he'd run off, he hoped Harry hadn't been tempted to do anything ... foolish.

Harry was lying on small patch of snow near to the entrance to the orchard. Ron and his father cast Lumos as Fred bent down to check that Harry was all right. He wasn't. The snow by his head was stained crimson, as was his face, blood pouring over him from his lightning bolt scar. Harry was screaming incoherently but Fred thought he could make out one word. Patch.. Patch? It didn't make much sense. Fred placed his hand on Harry's forehead, his little brother was shivering but his skin felt hot to the touch. Harry clawed at Fred's hand, trying to get it away from his scar.

Fred stood up and exchanged worried glances with his father. He and George had been inducted into the Order shortly after their eighteenth birthday. Fred and his father had their suspicions about what it meant that Harry's scar was hurting and bleeding like this.

"Ron, run back to the house and fire-call Madam Pomfrey immediately," instructed Arthur as he bent down to lift Harry up. Ron stared at his father for a few moments, then dashed back to the Burrow.

"He's back? Isn't he?" Fred asked nervously, jogging alongside his father as they hurried to get Harry back into the house and into the warm.

"I'm afraid so," said Arthur gravely.

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Someone was calling him back from the darkness, the emptiness but he didn't want to leave. There was a reason he wanted to stay in the dark where he was free from thinking, from knowing. The voices were insistent and wouldn't leave him in peace. Hot liquids were forced down his throat, choking him, but he didn't care. Maybe it would be better if he choked and he wouldn't have to face being alone.

The voices came and went, but never the voice he wanted, the voice he needed.

"Severus!" he groaned and his eyes opened without his will.

"Severus isn't back yet, Harry dear," said the brisk no nonsense voice of the Hogwarts matron. Harry squinted up at her. He was lying on his bed at the Weasleys', not the Hogwarts infirmary at all.

"How long? How long have I been out?" asked Harry, his hand going automatically to his scar. It was angry and raised, but it no longer throbbed painfully. He felt woozy and closed his eyes against the dizziness.

"Three days."

Three days? And Severus still wasn't back?

"Something's happened to him," said Harry, struggling to sit up.

"I'm sure he's fine, Harry," said Madam Pomfrey. "He's sometimes away longer than this on business for the Order."

"It wasn't business for the Order," replied Harry. "He was Called. After the wedding. The Death Eaters have succeeded. Voldemort is back."

"Harry dear, you're distraught. It was probably just a nightmare you were having."

"It wasn't a nightmare!" insisted Harry. "They are going to do something to Severus, I know it. My scar was hurting, that's how I know he's back."

"But hasn't your scar been hurting before, dear?"

"Yes, but not as much as this. Before, that was Voldemort getting stronger. It was never as bad as this before."

There was a knock on Harry's bedroom door and Molly peeked her head on. "Harry, Professor Dumbledore is here to see you, he says it's urgent."

"Molly, Harry isn't well enough to have vis-"

"I'll see him," Harry cut her off and a few moments later, he was left alone with Dumbledore. The man looked even older and paler than Harry had remembered. His long white hair was loose, hanging in matted strands round his face, as if he hadn't been near a brush or comb for days.

"Harry."

"Professor."

"Harry, I'm afraid I have some very bad news. I know how close you've become to the Professor over the years since your rescue. Professor Snape went to a meeting of Death Eaters a few days ago, as you know. Harry, the Professor never returned from that meeting and - and late last night, Professor McGonagall was out for a walk and she - she discovered Professor Snape's body in the grounds. I'm sorry, Harry, I'm so very sorry."

Harry gaped at him. This could not be happening. This could not be true.

"You're lying," said Harry. "He isn't dead. He isn't." He would know it. He would feel it.

"I know it must be such a shock for you, dear boy, but I assure you it is true. Professor Snape is dead."

"How did he die?" demanded Harry.

"I hardly think you need to know the details of that, Harry."

Harry cast a wandless and silent Legilimency spell on the headmaster, the old man wasn't even aware of the intrusion, his memories were wide open for Harry to explore. He found the one where a sobbing McGonagall rushed to the headmaster's office to tell him that Severus was dead, that his body was outside lying on the lawns.

Dumbledore followed her out and the headmaster then carried Severus to the infirmary, Poppy wasn't there, she'd already been to the Burrow to tend an unconscious Harry. "I'll see to the preparations, headmaster," said McGonagall as she began to strip Severus of his blood and mud splattered robes. And then Harry knew the headmaster had definitely been lying to him. The body on that bed was not Severus Snape, no matter how much he may have looked like him. The Dark Mark blazed darkly against his left arm but the right arm was as pristine as newly fallen snow. No bonding tattoo.

And then another memory, someone in a Death Eater robe and mask casting Imperius on the headmaster.

Harry eased himself out of the man's mind.

"Petrificus Totalus!" roared Harry without his wand, Dumbledore fell backwards and landed immobile on the floor.

Molly and Arthur rushed into the room to see what the commotion was. "I think the headmaster is under Imperius," said Harry, pointing to the stunned man on the floor. "He told me Severus was dead, but it's a lie."

"Dead?" gasped Molly, her hands over her mouth.

"No, he's not dead," said Harry. "But something has happened to him. We need to find out what."

"I'll get Kingsley Shacklebolt," said Arthur as he descended the stairs. Molly came further into the room, avoiding the lump the headmaster made on the floor and wrapped Harry in a hug.

"Harry dear, are you sure about this? You can't just go around petrifying people for no reason."

"I'm sure," said Harry. "I saw the curse being cast in his mind."

Molly stared at the headmaster. "How long has he been under the curse?"

"I don't know," said Harry. The two of them remained silent until they heard footsteps on the stairs and then Arthur entered accompanied by Kingsley Shacklebolt, member of the Order of the Phoenix and an Auror. In his hand he held a bottle of Veritaserum. Kingsley did a complicated wave of his wand and said a few strange incantations, for none of the Unforgivables could end just by a simple Finite Incantatem.

Dumbledore's eyes lost their glazed look, now they looked rather panicked. "Can you release your binding spell, please Harry?" asked Kingsley. Harry nodded and waved his hands so the spell lifted. The four others in the room looked at him in awe.

"You can do wandless magic?" asked Kingsley as he helped Dumbledore to a chair. Dumbledore was looking round the room in some confusion.

"Kingsley? What's going on? Molly, Arthur, what am I doing here?"

"Professor, you've been under the Imperius curse," said Molly. Arthur and Kingsley nodded their heads.

"I have some Veriteraserum here, Professor. May I?" Kingsley hefted the vial in his hand.

"By all means," said Dumbledore as he opened his mouth and held out his tongue. Kinsley dripped three drops on the man's tongue and looked to the others for the questions, for Kingsley didn't actually know what Dumbledore had done.

"Who cast Imperius on you?" asked Harry.

"I don't know. They wore a hood and a mask."

"Do you know who was trying to poison me?"

"No."

"Why did you tell me Professor Snape was dead?" asked Harry.

"That's how they wanted it."

"Who?"

"The Death Eaters. They wanted me to tell everyone he was dead so that no one would come looking for him."

"So he is still alive?"

"As far as I know, yes."

Harry paced the length of his bedroom, it didn't take long as it was such a small room and this was the most crowded it had ever been.

"Why don't they want people to look for him?"

"They need him."

"For what?"

"I don't know," said Dumbledore staring straight at Harry. "But they need to keep him for a while."

Harry's blood felt like ice in his veins. They knew. They knew about the bonding and now Severus was going to suffer for it.

"Where is he? What have they done with him?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know much, do you?" spat Harry. His questions were getting them nowhere and the longer they delayed, the worse it was going to be for Severus.

"Who was the dead body in the infirmary?"

"Walden McNair. A Death Eater who displeased his Master. They cast a glamour over him to make him look like Severus so that no one would go looking for him. Their plan would be easier to carry out the longer they have Severus."

"What is their plan?"

"I don't know."

They were going round in circles.

"And you have no idea where they might be holding Severus?"

"None."

"How did they give you your instructions? Did you go to Death Eater meetings? Do you know where they were held?"

"My instructions came by owl. I never went to any meetings. I don't know where they were held."

Harry swayed on his feet, Molly's arms were around his shoulders as she tried to lead him back to bed.

"No!" he wrenched himself out of her grasp. "NO! I have to look for Severus! I have to find Severus!"

"Harry, you're not well," insisted Molly as she all but propelled him into the bed again. Harry went quietly for now.

Kingsley Shacklebolt gave Dumbledore the antidote to the Veriteraserum as Molly did her best to soothe Harry. No one could soothe this ache in his chest, in his heart. No one but Severus.

"Harry, I'm so sorry," said Dumbledore as he made his way over to the bed. Harry turned his face to the wall.

"Get out. Get out," he whispered hoarsely. He didn't want to talk to the headmaster when it was his fault that Severus was captured, had been put in danger in the first place.

"Harry, the Order will start looking for Severus straight away," Kingsley Shacklebolt assured him as he squeezed Harry's shoulder firmly. "We'll find him, don't worry."

Don't worry? That was easy for them to say. They weren't the ones who were going to have front row seats of Severus' torture as soon as he closed his eyes.

Molly kissed him on the forehead, then Arthur wrapped him in a hug before they all finally left him alone. Even Madam Pomfrey hadn't returned to dose him with potions.

Harry turned this way and that, trying to get settled on his pillow, when he felt something rustle underneath it. Harry's hand reached beneath his pillow and brought out a parchment, words written in what he suspected was blood.

His skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever.

Severus had been taken to the Chamber of Secrets.

TBC

Chapter 27: Tears of the Sun

Part 27

Harry went back to school with Ron, Ginny and Hermione, but he went to no classes after the Christmas holidays. Madam Pomfrey took over Severus' classes, but Harry didn't feel like going to the dungeons when Severus wasn't in them

Ginny still wasn't speaking to him, but he didn't really care by this stage. Only one thing was important to him now. Finding the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets and rescuing Severus.

While everyone else was in class, he spent every moment in the library, he would have stayed there every night too if Madam Pince hadn't chased him out of it. He hardly ate, he hardly slept, it was as though there was a timer counting down the time until the second task and Harry knew he needed to find out before that.

Sometimes Malfoy would pass him in the corridors and yell at him. "Still haven't found it yet, Potter? Where's that brain of yours?"

Harry's own work for his Masters fell by the wayside and when Madam Du Luc, his Beauxbatons tutor came for her weekly progress report after the Christmas holidays, she wasn't pleased.

"But 'Arry, you 'ave worked so hard on your projects, no? You cannot mean to give up completely?"

"It's not important anymore," sighed Harry. And it wasn't. Nothing mattered except figuring out this stupid clue and finding the Chamber of Secrets. Severus was there, Harry knew he was, but he didn't know how to get to him. It was so frustrating, knowing Severus was somewhere in the castle but somewhere where he couldn't be found.

No one complained about him missing classes with the Gryffindors, but Sophia kept giving him filthy looks whenever she caught sight of Harry and Seamus soon wasn't speaking to him either. Harry couldn't have cared less.

"Harry, please, you should eat something," said Hermione one day as she pushed a plate of scrambled eggs towards him as he sat with the Gryffindors at breakfast. Harry hated eggs, he wasn't feeling hungry, he couldn't actually remember the last time he had felt anything remotely resembling hunger. His fuel was fear and adrenaline these days, not food. He just couldn't face it.

"No, thanks, Hermione," replied Harry as he turned to the latest book he was researching, Hogwarts, A History. Unfortunately the only thing mentioned in it about the Chamber was the fact that it was considered a legend. Harry closed the book with a thud just as the morning post owls swooped into the Great Hall.

Hermes, the Weasley owl went straight to Harry's place and held out his leg. Harry untied the scroll and gasped in surprise. "It's from Charlie," he informed Ron and Hermione, Ginny glared at him from further down the table before standing up and waltzing out as though Charlie writing to Harry was an affront to her.

Harry read the letter, his heart hammering against his ribs, afraid of what Charlie might say to him, but at least it wasn't a Howler.

Dear Harry,

This letter is long overdue and so are my apologies for what I said to you and Severus over Christmas. I meant to talk to you before you went back to school, but Madam Pomfrey insisted that she wasn't allowing anyone in to upset you and wouldn't let me anywhere near your room, nor did Mum for that matter.

She wasn't too pleased with me when I told her about the argument we had and said I needed to grow up. She's right, of course. When you told me you were bonded to Snape, it just didn't make sense to me. I've known him mostly as my teacher, a teacher I really hated to tell you the truth and I just couldn't imagine you being in love with him. But you'd never had him as a teacher, and you've known him since you were five years old, so perhaps you know him better than anyone else.

I was also a little freaked out about the age difference, Harry and I couldn't help but wonder if he'd tried to seduce students at school before, I was worried that he only wanted you because you were young, that he liked young boys, but I realise it's not that at all. He loves you, it's got nothing to do with what age you are. I didn't want to see it, I wanted him to be the villain, maybe to make up for all those detentions I got from him at school.

I am so sorry, Harry that I said all those things to both of you and I feel even worse now knowing that he's missing.

I can only imagine how hard it must be for you. Mum and Dad said you thought he might be in the Chamber of Secrets. Me and Bill only heard rumours while we were at school, but the rumour went that around fifty years ago, the Chamber was opened and a girl got killed, supposedly by the monster. I don't know who she was or anything like that, sorry I couldn't be much more help.

Sorry again, Harry and I will apologise to Severus in person when he returns.

Love,

Charlie

Harry's hands were trembling by the time he'd finished reading the letter. He gave it to Ron and Hermione to read. Harry wasn't sure what to think, wondered briefly why Charlie hadn't tried harder to apologise to him in person, despite Madam Pomfrey's and Molly's guardianship of his room at the Burrow.

"Merlin, he's changed his tune," said Ron, handing the letter back to Harry. The rest of the Hall had emptied after breakfast, they were the only three left but as it was Saturday, none of them had to rush off to class, although Harry had plans to haunt the library later.

"But Ginny hasn't," said Harry sadly.

"Don't worry, she'll come round, Harry. It was just a bit of a shock finding out like that."

"If you two have quite finished discussing that debacle," said Hermione. "Aren't you interested in the part where he mentions the Chamber of Secrets?"

"He wasn't at school fifty years ago," said Harry. "He doesn't know."

"No, but one of the ghost might, most of them have been here for hundreds of years. Sir Nicholas," called Hermione to the slivery figure floating aimlessly past them.

"Yes, Miss Granger?" queried the ghost of Sir Nicholas de Mimsy Porpington, doffing his hat, but thankfully this time his partially severed head remained not quite firmly attached to his neck.

"We wondered if you knew anything about a student who'd been killed at Hogwarts, around fifty years ago?"

Sir Nicholas pressed a transparent hand to his chin. "Oh, yes, I remember that. Terrible commotion it was, the Grey Lady came screaming out of the bathroom shouting 'Murder, Murder!' She was most upset. Bad with her nerves you know, despite being dead. Really, I'm surprised she hasn't told you all this herself, she's quite keen to share her untimely demise with anyone who'd listen, but alas she doesn't get much company. Keeps to herself most of the time."

"The Grey Lady?" asked Ron.

"No, no, dear boy, the student who was killed. She's a ghost at Hogwarts now, you know."

"Moaning Myrtle," said Hermione. "Do you mean Moaning Myrtle?"

"I'm not sure she'd be so fond of that appellation, Miss Granger, but if you are talking about Miss Myrtle Johnson, then yes, that is she."

"Thank you, Sir Nicholas," said Hermione as he drifted off once more.

"Who's Moaning Myrtle?" asked Ron, Harry's own thoughts exactly.

"She haunts one of the girls' bathrooms on the second floor," said Hermione. "Hardly anyone goes in there, she always howling and bawling. Can you imagine trying to pee with all that racket going on?"

Harry and Ron both blushed. "Er, too much information, Hermione," said Harry. "So, do you think she'd talk to us?"

"We can try," said Hermione.

The three of them made their way to the second floor bathroom, much wailing and sobbing could be heard before they even entered the room. "What if someone catches us in the girls' bathroom?" asked Ron, his hand on the door handle.

"I told you, hardly anyone goes in there, don't be silly Ron," said Hermione as she took hold of Ron's hand and pushed the door open herself. The two boys followed her in. Hovering by one of the windows was the ghost of a girl around sixteen or so, with round glasses and her hair in pigtails. She looked over at them and Harry saw some silvery tears fall down her translucent face.

"What do you lot want?" asked Myrtle.

Ron and Hermione looked at Harry. He coughed.

"Er, we don't want to offend you or anything," said Harry.

"That makes a change," sniffed Myrtle. "People are always trying to offend me."

"Well, um, er, we were wondering if we could ask you how you died?"

Immediately the ghost's face brightened and Harry had the impression if she hadn't been more than wispy silver vapour, she would be flushing with delight. "Oh! Oh, no one's ever asked me that before! It was awful, really terrible," said Myrtle with relish. "I was crying because Olive Hornby was teasing me about my glasses and I was hiding in this cubicle," Myrtle floated to the one she mentioned. "Then I heard a boy speaking, I don't know what he said, it was strange, like hissing. I opened the door to shout at him and then and then - I died."

"Just like that?" said Ron and was nudged in the ribs by Hermione.

"Oh, I'm sorry my death was so disappointing for you!" sobbed Myrtle and swooped up into one of the taps, by the sink opposite the cubicle she'd died in. Harry wandered over to the sink, but there was no further sign of Myrtle. He turned on the tap to splash his face, he was feeling rather wrung out again, rapidly losing hope that he would ever find the Chamber, would ever find Severus, but the tap didn't work.

"Fuck!" said Harry, hitting his fists in the sink.

"Harry, what did you say?" asked Hermione. Harry turned to his two friends.

"Sorry, Hermione, I know you don't like swearing."

"You were swearing?"

"You both heard me, didn't you?" For Harry's voice had certainly been loud enough.

"You were talking funny, like hissing," said Ron.

"Hissing?" said Hermione "Like Myrtle heard? Harry, do you see a snake anywhere on that sink?"

Harry glanced down and saw that both taps had engravings of serpents on them.

"You're a Parselmouth, Harry," exclaimed Hermione. "You can speak to snakes."

"Like Voldemort can?"

The two of them nodded at him.

"Harry, do you know what this means? You've found it, I think you found the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets!"

TBC

Chapter 28: Tears of the Sun

Part 28

"Why would the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets be in a bathroom?" asked Ron.

"For precisely that reason," said Hermione. "Because no one would ever think of it. I mean, who on earth would have thought that Salazar Slytherin would house the entrance in a girls' bathroom?"

"But was this bathroom even here in Slytherin's time, Hermione?"

"Probably not this one, Harry, but there was some sort of bathing room here, the original plans are in Hogwarts, a History. Slytherin probably thought this would be a good way to hide the entrance."

"Okay, so we're agreed than that the entrance is somewhere in this bathroom, the question is where?"

Ron and Hermione looked blankly at Harry, they didn't know either. A few moments more staring at each other and then they got to work searching every nook and cranny in the bathroom. Every cubicle, every sink, every shower, the floor, the walls, the ceiling, the windows, but apart from the engraving on one set of taps, everything seemed perfectly normal.

Hermione tried casting Alohamora at various intervals, as if she hoped the entrance would be surprised into revealing itself or that a trapdoor or secret panel would slide open. Harry glanced at the Marauder's Map, but as expected, there was no mention of a secret chamber anywhere in the castle.

"Myrtle said she heard hissing," said Harry, wiping drops of sweat from his brow. "You don't think there's a password in Parseltongue or something?"

"Maybe," agreed Hermione. "But it could be anything, how are we going to guess it?"

"It's worth a try though, isn't it?" insisted Harry.

"Okay, Harry, you go over to that sink and say something in Parseltongue."

"How, Ron?" asked Harry, hands on his hips. "I don't know how I know to speak Parseltongue."

"Just go over to that sink, the one with the snakes on and look at them, like you did before."

"I thought I was speaking English then," said Harry but he did as Hermione bid him and stared at the snakes. He began speaking a list of words, trying to guess a password, but he was having no luck with any of them. Harry glared hard at the sink as though his will could make it do something. The Chamber had been opened over fifty years ago, but not by Salazar Slytherin. A boy called Tom Riddle had attended Hogwarts around fifty years ago, but he'd carved a new name for himself since then.

How would a student have opened the Chamber when Slytherin's passwords, if any, would probably have died with him? Harry wondered if it could really be that easy. "Alohamora!" he hissed in Parseltongue. At first he thought it had failed, but suddenly there was a great wrenching, scraping noise. The sink was moving, pulling away from the wall and sinking into the floor. It moved aside and a small grid slid away from the wall, revealing a small pipe, visible only as a dark tunnel leading downwards.

"We need to get the Order," said Ron. Dumbledore was still in St. Mungo's recovering from his stint with the Imperius curse and Professor McGonagall had taken over as the acting Head for the moment.

"Harry, no! You mustn't!" exclaimed Hermione as Harry edged closer to the pipe. He was slight enough to fit down there, he was almost sure of it.

"Hermione, I'm not just going to stand here while Severus is in danger! You and Ron can go and fetch help, I'm going after him. Ron, Dad'll know how to contact the rest of the Order, won't he? And bring Madam Pomfrey as well."

Ron nodded and took Hermione's hand, who was still trying to make Harry see reason. "Ron, you can't mean to let him go down there on his own? What about the monster? You can't let him do it!"

"Sorry, Hermione. Harry needs to do this," said Ron as he tugged hard on Hermione's hand and ushered her out.

Harry watched them leave before he jumped leg first into the pipe.

He hurtled to the bottom and landed with a crunch. Lighting his wand with Lumos, he discovered his fall had been broken by the skeletons of rats and other small animals. He grimaced, but forged on, he hadn't time to get upset about the dead when he had someone alive to save.

Not quite a hundred yards from the edge of the tunnel he'd come down, he discovered the reason for all those animal bones. A shedded snake skin around sixty feet long. He recognised it at once, a Basilisk. No wonder Myrtle had little memory of how she died, she'd probably opened the door and been killed instantly as soon as she'd seen it, for a Basilisk's gaze was fatal.

Harry untied his hair and Transfigured his leather thong into a mirror, so he would have some hope of avoiding the creature altogether. Was Severus even still alive? He refused to consider any other possibility for long. It was a rescue mission, not a pilgrimage for a dead husband. He couldn't go on if he thought that.

The tunnel opened out and ahead of him was a heavy metal door, green with algae. Three metal snakes carved on the sides guarded it. Harry tried the Alohamora spell in Parseltongue again and the snakes slid aside, opening locks as the went. The door swung open and Harry wasted no time in going in.

He found himself in a cavernous room, lit by an eerie green glow. Pillars entwined with carved serpents held up what little of the roof he could make out in the gloom. It was so difficult to see anything else, Harry kept his wand lit as he ventured further into the room. It was around half an hour later when he saw the figure shackled to the wall.

"Severus!" Harry screamed and ran, his feet flying over the stones, splashing in shallow puddles of water. The edge of his robes were getting soaked, but he was barely aware of it.

The figure was indeed Severus. He was naked from the waist up, his chest was marred by a myriad of scars, blood still trickling from some of them. His head was hanging down loosely on his neck, hair hiding his face, his arms stretched taut over his head. "Severus!" Harry screamed again, but there was no answer from his husband

Harry cast every spell he could think of on the manacles, but they wouldn't open no matter what he tried. Severus was unconscious and Harry couldn't get him down. He edged closer to him, stopping when his foot came into contact with something on the ground. Harry glanced down and saw a small black book.

He lifted it up and stared at it. It was blank inside, but on the back cover were golden initials. T.M.R.

Harry remembered every conversation he'd ever had with Severus or the Weasleys about Lord Voldemort. His original name was Tom Marvolo Riddle. In his hands he held a book belonging to Tom Riddle. But what was it doing by Severus' feet?

"Mr. Potter," came a voice from the gloom. "I wondered when you'd be joining us."

Harry knew that voice, he'd heard it often enough in his dreams and nightmares.

"Expelliarmus!" screamed Tom Riddle as he came into view, the image of his sixteen year old self, not the red eyed creature Harry had been expecting. Harry's wand flew out of his hand and into onto the floor. Tom wasn't physically formed yet, Harry could see the outline of the Chamber behind him, but yet he wasn't as translucent as the ghosts. It seemed he could cast spells, but couldn't touch anything.

"Not to worry, Harry. You won't be needing it. A wand is no defence against a Basilisk and my pet has been very hungry these long years."

"How?" asked Harry. "I destroyed you!"

"Tut, tut, young Harry, haven't you guessed yet? You destroyed my physical form, but you never destroyed my sprit, my essence. It was in the diary you are so lovingly holding in your hands, dear boy."

Harry threw the diary from him as if it had burned him. "A diary that Severus brought to school. It was a gift from his friend, Lucius Malfoy. Severus is a copious journal writer, did you know? For seven years he poured his heart and soul into that diary, very lucky for me."

"You're draining his soul?" queried Harry.

"The diary is. As soon as he breathes his last, I will be fully formed and Lord Voldemort will return. Of course, as you are both bonded, I'll be draining yours too. As soon as he dies, you die and I will be even stronger than before. The power of the great Harry Potter will be mine."

"I don't think so," said Harry, feeling Charlie's dragon tooth dagger against his thigh.

"No? There's nothing you can do. Alone, wandless, what hope do you have against me? Against the greatest wizard of the ages?"

"I don't need a wand," said Harry, diving for the book and yanking the dagger out almost in the same instant.

"NOOOO!!!" screamed Riddle as soon as Harry plunged the dagger into the heart of the book. He knew the book had to be destroyed. Harry plunged the dagger through the pages again and again, hearing Riddle's screeches in his head. A light as bright as dawn erupted in the Chamber and suddenly the phantom or whatever it was of Tom Riddle exploded in a shower of red sparks

Harry's arm ached where he'd been holding the dagger. It fell from his suddenly nerveless fingers, clattering to the floor as Harry slumped to the ground.

TBC

Chapter 29: Tears of the Sun

Part 29

Severus regained consciousness just in time to see his husband fall to the ground, something clattering from his fingers, but Severus couldn't see it on the gloom. "Harry," he whispered urgently, but his throat was sore and dry from disuse. How long had he been held here? All Severus could remember was attending the meeting Lucius had Called him to, a stunning spell cast by a cadre of Death Eaters and then nothing until he'd woken up shackled to a pillar and Tom Riddle had appeared to him. He'd threatened Severus with a Basilisk, but Severus had yet to see the creature and wasn't so sure he wanted to see it now.

For if Riddle was really gone and going by the mangled state of that diary, Severus guessed he was, then there would be no one to control the serpent if it came hunting. "Harry," he tried again willing his voice to work. Every muscle in his upper body was in agony as he tried to move, tried to get himself free. Then he heard it, a slithering of scales against stone, a hissing as the Basilisk scented prey.

"HARRY!" he'd managed to find his voice at last and he watched as his husband was roused from his faint and began hissing in return. Severus couldn't see the giant serpent, but that was probably a good thing. Harry was a Parselmouth? For there was no doubt in Severus' mind, despite not being able to understand a word, that Harry and the serpent were having a conversation.

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"You speak my tongue, little one?"

"Yes, please don't hurt him. He is my - he is my mate."

"Your mate? I had a mate once. The other, he killed her."

"The other?"

"The other serpent-speaker, the one who stole your mate. You have avenged my mate's death by destroying him. I will harm none who are a friend to you. Both of you may go, but do not look upon me for I cannot control the magic of my kind."

"What if other people come down here, will you hurt them?"

"This has been my home for many years, I will defend it from invaders. I do not seek out prey, but if they come to me, I will kill them. It is in my nature. I do not apologise for it. Both of you should go, I sense others approaching and I do not wish them here."

It must have been members if the Order, Harry realised. He wanted nothing better than to get them both out of the Chamber, but how? No spells worked on the manacles encircling his husband's wrists and Harry wasn't strong enough physically to damage them in any way.

"Instruct your mate to close his eyes," said the Basilisk.

"Severus, close your eyes," said Harry. "And don't panic, the Basilisk is going to try and get you down."

Harry thought he saw his husband give him one of his patented glares before his dark eyes disappeared from view as he scrunched up his whole face. Harry was aware of a giant shadow as it reared up in front of Severus. For one horrible moment, Harry thought he'd ensured his husband’s doom, but a few moments later, Severus fell to the ground, manacles in pieces courtesy of the Basilisk’s fangs. "Thank you," said Harry as he ran to get Severus up. "What can I do to repay you?" The Basilisk was silent for some time and Harry wondered if he'd offended it and that even now they were about to become a snake snack.

"Seal the Chamber and do not speak of me. Let me remain a secret for my last days, I have very little time remaining to me now. Soon I will join my mate."

"You're dying? I'm sorry," said Harry. "But I'll do as you ask."

"Thank you, little serpent-speaker."

"My name is Harry, Harry Potter."

"Your name will be honoured among my kind, Harry Potter. For you broke the spell the other cast upon me, to never find rest, to always be there for him. I can die now and know that our snakelings will be safe." And then Harry heard the noise of what he imagined to be hundreds of snakes slithering along the ground. He hoisted Severus up and tried to support him, but Severus was too heavy.

Harry cast a levitation spell on him in the end and they made their way out of the Chamber of Secrets and into the tunnel. Harry closed and sealed the door, casting a spell on it that no one but him could break. No one would be able to find the Basilisk accidentally and become a snack.

When they returned to the base of the pipe he'd slid down, the time seemed a lifetime ago, it seemed as if half the Order were there. He saw Arthur and the twins, before the world turned white once more.

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Harry's eyes felt as if they'd been glued shut, he struggled to open them as he heard voices raised nearby.

"Minister, I can't believe you are even considering such an action! To punish Harry Potter after what he's done is nothing short of criminal!"

"Minerva my, dear, it is because of what he has done that he must be punished. None of the Champions were supposed to enter the Chamber. It was all there in the rules."

"If he hadn't done it, Severus would be dead and we'd all be suffering another reign of terror from Lord Voldemort!"

"Now, Minerva, we only have Snape's word on that that he was being held by You-Know-Who. A lot of fuss about nothing if you ask me. I'm sorry, my ruling still stands. You can tell Mr. Potter when he wakes up that he has been disqualified from the Triwizard Tournament."

Both sets of footsteps wandered away and Harry's eyes managed to open this time. He was in the main ward of Hogwarts infirmary. It was dark outside, moonlight casting shadows on the stone floor. Torches were flickering on the walls and Harry struggled to sit up. Where was Severus? Harry saw his husband in the bed next to his left side. He was fast asleep, or unconscious, Harry wasn't sure which.

Harry hopped down from his own bed and made his way over to Severus'. His legs felt very wobbly as the adrenaline wore off but he was determined to make it. He wasn't going to go another night without Severus in his arms. Harry made it to the bed and climbed up. He curled up behind Severus' back, wrapped his arms around him and kissed his hair softly. "I'm never letting you go," Harry whispered, trying not to wake him. "You're stuck with me." Harry yawned and felt his eyelids drooping.

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When Severus woke, his head felt as if he'd gone ten rounds with a mountain troll and fifty of his friends. The first thing he noticed was that he was not alone in the small infirmary bed, Harry's weight was familiar on his back. The second thing he noticed was that they had an audience.

Minerva McGonagall was staring down at him over the rim of her glasses, her mouth pursed in a thin line of disapproval.

"Would you care to explain to me what a student is doing in your bed, Severus?" she demanded.

Severus turned and looked at his sleeping husband. Harry's scar was gone, nothing remained of it except for a paler patch of skin where he'd been. His own arm was free of the Dark Mark. It wasn't faded, it was completely gone. Voldemort was gone, they had no need to hide anymore. Voldemort couldn't use him to get to Harry, not anymore.

"He's my husband," said Severus, shifting so that he could show Minerva the combined crest on his right arm. "I daresay that after me being missing all this time, Harry wanted to make sure I wasn't going anywhere."

"Husband?" Minerva looked as if she'd never heard the word before in her life, or understood its meaning. "What do you mean he's your husband?"

"We're bonded, Minerva, we have been for some time." Movement behind him alerted Severs to the fact that Harry was waking and was soon about to face the wrath of his adopted House Mistress.

"Bugger," whispered Harry, but Minerva heard him.

"Bugger indeed, Mr. Potter. Please remove yourself from Professor Snape's bed at once, I need to talk to you."

Harry's warmth left him as he jumped down from the bed and despite Minerva's anger and presence, Harry pressed a soft kiss to Severus' cheek.

"Are you going to give me detention?" queried Harry, although he didn't seem all that bothered about it.

"I can hardly give you detention for spending the night with your husband, Mr. Potter, but I do need to talk to you about the Tournament. Minister Fudge has decided you should be disqualified for entering the Chamber."

"Okay," Harry shrugged.

"No it isn't okay," protested Severus. "Harry shouldn't be punished just because he saved my life and saved us all from the Dark Lord. He's really gone this time, Minerva."

"I know, Severus, but the Minister's decision is final."

"So it'll just be the other three competing?" asked Harry.

"I'm afraid not, Harry. Sophia Medicci has been disqualified also, she was caught trying to break into Severus' office, looking for arsenic. It was her who had been trying to poison you. Mr. Malfoy has also been disqualified, when you destroyed Lord Voldemort, quite a few of the Slytherin seventh years were in pain from Dark Marks, they'd been Death Eaters and were biding their time to destroy you, Mr. Potter. They are awaiting trial in Azkaban with their parents. There will be no more tasks, the Triwizard Cup will got to Mr. Dholov by forfeit. The Durmstrang students are quite distraught, Professor Karkaroff has fled, but the Aurors will catch him soon enough I imagine."

"Sophia was trying to poison me?" Harry sank down on the edge of Severus' bed. "I knew she was upset that I was chosen as one of the Champions, but I didn't think she'd stoop to that."

"It constantly amazes me what lengths people will go to ensure glory and adulation," said Minerva. "And then there are others who are quite happy to save the world and not have people know about it." She smiled at both of them. "We all owe you both our lives."

"I didn't do much," said Severus. "It was all Harry, I was unconscious."

"You're bonded to Harry, Severus. He could only destroy the Dark Lord because of that. One wizard alone could never have done it, but two joined in love and in magic, that's why he's gone. He has power the Dark Lord knows not.. It was your power, your love that helped, Severus. Both of you destroyed him."

Harry's had reached out and twined with his, squeezing as though he wanted to make sure that Severus was really there. Severus understood that need and he squeezed back just as firmly.

"Well, I'll leave you two to get some rest," said Minerva as she pressed Harry's shoulder and gave Severus' knee a pat through the blankets. As soon as she'd left, Harry climbed onto Severus' bed and curled up on his chest like his kitten Animagus form.

"Harry, Voldemort's gone," said Severus, stroking his back.

"I know, Severus, I know."

"We don't have to hide our relationship anymore."

"We don't?" Harry's head jerked up and he gazed into Severus' eyes.

"So I was wondering if you would like to have an official bonding ceremony, let the whole world know."

"No," replied Harry, kissing him softly. "It was enough that you offered."

TBC

Chapter 30: Tears of the Sun

Part 30

Three days later, Severus was released from the hospital wing, but Madam Pomfrey wanted to keep Harry in for a little bit longer. His destruction of Tom Riddle's diary and of Voldemort himself had Harry's magic fluctuating madly, almost as it had been when he'd been going through puberty and Harry knew he was a danger to the other students if he couldn't control it properly. Even a simple Lumos spell had him setting fire to his bed, deftly put out by Madam Pomfrey.

Harry wasn't ill, but anyone visiting the hospital wing was warded against any accidental magic, so Harry could do no harm to anyone while he was there. Madam Pomfrey didn't confine him to bed, Harry had been transferred to the private room again and Madam Pomfrey had furnished it with a desk and chair as well as a sofa, so that it was almost like his own bedsitting room rather than a hospital ward. Harry wondered if this room would be his life from now on, for even just that morning a stray bout of magic had shattered all the room's windows and Madam Pomfrey had to replace them, for Harry's spells were liable to do even more damage if he'd tried it himself.

The nights were the worst, Harry missed sleeping beside Severus. After all those weeks with him missing, Harry had been looking forward to curling up beside his husband, not to mention other things that could happen in a bed, but there was fat chance of that while he was stuck in the infirmary and Severus was in his rooms.

"Harry, dear, Ginny is here to see you," said Madam Pomfrey as she knocked on Harry's door. "Do you want to see her?"

He supposed he ought to. Ginny hadn't been to see him since Severus had been found, almost two weeks ago now. In fact, she was the only person in the whole school who hadn't come to see him. Harry felt like an exhibition at some strange zoo when even the first years had been trying to sneak a peek at him.

"Send her in," said Harry, putting down his quill and closing the lid on his ink bottle. One good thing about being on his own was that he was going through his coursework for his Masters quicker than he'd ever had thought possible. He would certainly be ready to take it in a few months along with the other Beauxbatons students.

Ginny entered the room, twisting her hands nervously. Her hair was in a long braid hanging over her left shoulder, it glinted gold from the sunlight streaming through the windows. Ginny was pretty, there was no denying that, but Harry had never, nor would he ever feel anything for her other than brotherly affection.

Harry waved Ginny to the sofa, she sat down perched on the edge as if she was about to take flight at any moment.

"Hello, Harry," she began at last.

"Hello, Ginny."

The two of them stared at other places in the room for a few minutes before Harry could bear the strained silence no longer. "Did you want something, Ginny?"

"To see how you were. And - and to apologise to you, for my behaviour."

Harry had the impression that Molly's hand was behind this apology, but at least Ginny hadn't refused to make it.

"Ginny, I don't know what I ever did to give you the impression that there was more between us, but you should know that even if I wasn't bonded to Severus, I wouldn't be interested in girls, any girls. I'm gay, the bond only worked like a marriage bond because we were both gay and attracted to each other. I never meant to hurt you, I do love you Ginny, but not in that way."

"I know that now, Harry. I think I got a bit carried away, George and Oliver's bonding ceremony was so romantic and I was afraid that I would never have someone to love me like that. I wanted it to be you, Harry, you've always been so nice to me."

"Like a brother," Harry reminded her firmly.

"No, the others are always teasing me because I'm the only girl, you never did. You were my first friend, Harry and I'll never forget it."

Harry didn't know what to say to that.

"Can - can we still be friends, Harry?"

"As long as you know that's all it is, Ginny. There's only one man for me."

"I know, Harry and I'm sorry I was being such a pain about it. I'd better go, I've got Transfiguration after lunch. See you," Ginny bent down and gave him a very chaste peck on the cheek before hurrying out. Harry's hand went to his face, it felt warm where she'd kissed him, but Harry felt none of the desire or the longing he felt whenever Severus touched him, no matter how innocent the touches were intended to be.

He groaned and willed his erection away, he was hard these days at the mere thought of his husband, and tried to get back to work. Time got away from him, as soon as it was dusk, the torches flared to life automatically and Harry glanced up in surprise, seeing darkness outside. His neck ached where he'd been hunched over the desk so long, he stretched, yawning, his t-shirt riding up his stomach.

"Now there's a wonderful sight," said Severus. Harry almost toppled from his chair, he turned, but couldn't see his husband anywhere. Severus' head popped into view as he removed Harry's invisibility cloak and grinned down at him. "All that pale skin just begging to be licked, to be touched," sighed Severus as he sank to his knees and kissed the firm planes of Harry's revealed abdomen.

"What are you doing here?" gasped Harry, Severus' soft kisses enflaming him at once.

"Would you rather I go?" Severus looked up, his eyes two deep pools of jet that Harry wanted to drown in.

"No, but won't we get in trouble?"

"Why do you think I wore your cloak? Anyway, I'm here on Poppy's orders."

"Madam Pomfrey told you to see me? Why?"

"Three exploded cauldrons in one class, not to mention the destruction of a sixty year old bottle of firewhiskey."

"What? You mean you caused the cauldrons to explode?"

"Poppy thinks we need to be united in congress to stabilise our magic."

"Uh, what?" asked Harry, Severus should know his brain turned to mush as soon as Severus started touching him.

"Really, Harry, we will have to work on your vocabulary. She means sex."

"Madam Pomfrey is ordering us to have sex?" Harry grinned down at his husband.

"She is, but I would have been here tonight anyway," said Severus, his eyes darkening with desire. "I can't keep away from you any longer, Harry. It's been too long." Severus knelt up and claimed Harry's mouth in a long, lingering kiss. Severus' mouth was hard and unrelenting against his, biting him, claiming him. Harry wrapped his arms around Severus' neck and held on for the ride. His cock was so hard, pressing uncomfortably against the zip of his jeans and he shifted in the chair, trying to widen his legs to ease the pressure somewhat.

Maybe Severus sensed his discomfort, or maybe he just couldn't wait to touch Harry any longer, for in the next moment Harry felt the top button being popped out of its hole and then the scrape of his zip as Severus pulled it down. He moaned in relief as the pressure on his cock was removed. Severus was still kissing him, his hands wandering underneath Harry's t-shirt skating along his side, up his chest to toy with his nipples. Harry's body arched into the touch and he was panting into Severus' mouth as the sensations overwhelmed him.

Severus' mouth left his, he stared at Harry before lowering his gaze to glance at Harry's cock, throbbing and dripping with need already. Harry whimpered as Severus licked his lips.

"Severus, can I - can I taste you too?" Harry had never done it before, but he wanted to do it. He felt an almost overwhelming need to do it, wanted to feel that firm cock in his mouth, wanted his mouth flooded with his husband's come. He almost swooned from the chair at the thought of it.

"How about we taste each other?" said Severus with a wicked grin. Harry flushed with desire and nodded his head, as Severus scooped him out of the chair and carried him over to the bed. Severus crushed his mouth against Harry's, his weight a wonderful pressure on top of him and Harry couldn't help groaning. His movements were restricted by the jeans around his ankles, but Severus soon had them naked with a few spells, neither of them had the patience tonight for slow explorations, it had been too bloody long. Severus moved off him and Harry turned on his side.

His heart was hammering against his ribs and sweat was trickling down his back as he swallowed nervously, it was all well and good wanting to do it, but actually trying to do it was another matter. What if he was hopeless at it? For Severus was an expert, or so it seemed to Harry.

Severus lay down opposite him, shifting on the bed so that his head was level with Harry's groin and he tucked his legs up so that Harry's face was level with his. Harry couldn't remember being as hard as this ever before and he almost yelped when Severus licked his cock and began to suck.

Harry was barely able to remember his own name as Severus began to suck him in earnest, but realised that he was supposed to be giving Severus pleasure too.. Tentatively, he poked his tongue out and licked the tip of Severus' cock, relishing the taste of his husband's precome. It was slightly stronger than his own flavour, but he liked it even better.

He opened his mouth and sucked the head of Severus' cock in his mouth, using his hands nearer the base, he wasn't even going to try and attempt deep throating, he never thought he'd be able to do it without gagging or maybe accidentally biting down on his husband's cock if his own arousal got the better of him.

He soon got into a rhythm, it was so good, being sucked and sucking at the same time, although Harry wasn't sure how good his technique was considering what Severus was making his cock feel. His movements were erratic and frantic, thrusting into Severus' mouth as Severus thrust into his. Harry moaned around the cock in his mouth, loving the weighty feel of it and he felt it harden even further. Suddenly the lovely wet pressure on his own cock was removed as Severus panted harshly.

"Fuck! Harry fuck!" he screamed as he thrust even deeper into Harry's mouth, squeezing Harry's cock in the throes of his orgasm. Harry was gifted with a gush of sticky seed in his mouth and the taste, the feeling of it filling him along with Severus' hand on his cock, had him coming and coming over his husband's hands as he drifted to somewhere on the ceiling, moaning around the softening cock in his mouth.

Harry continued to suckle on it, but gently, knowing how sensitive he himself was after an orgasm. Severus gently tugged on his hair and Harry let Severus go with a small pop and grinned over at his husband.

"You can scrape me off the ceiling now, Severus," he chuckled.

Severus turned and scooted up the bed so that he could wrap Harry in his arms. "I'm never spending another night apart from you," Severus said firmly.

"So, do you think it worked?" asked Harry, he was lying with his head on Severus' shoulder, his arm thrown across Severus' chest. It was on of his favourite positions.

"What?"

"Our magic, do you think it's balanced again?"

Severus grinned at him. "Hmm, I'm not sure, I think we'll have to have a bit more sex to make sure."

"You're just after my body," laughed Harry.

"Of course," agreed Severus, kissing his forehead. "What a wonderful body it is to wake up to. Missed you."

"Missed you too," mumbled Harry as his eyes drifted closed.

TBC

Chapter 31: Tears of the Sun

Part 31

The Ministry auditorium had never been this full at any time Severus could remember. Harry had passed both his Masters with honours, the youngest wizard ever to do so in the last hundred years and Fudge had suddenly done an about face and was keen to have Harry accept his certificates in full view of the entire wizarding world, as if it had anything to do with Fudge how intelligent Harry was. No mention was made of Fudge disqualifying Harry from the Triwizard Tournament.

Molly had been so excited about Harry passing his exams and earning the right to be called Master, she'd gone to Scrivenshafts to get personalised stationery done up for the two of them. Master Harry Potter Snape and Master Severus Potter Snape blinked up at them in gold ink.

Harry hadn't wanted the publicity, but Fudge was insistent and refused to hand over Harry's Masters certificates unless he attended this very public ceremony. Glancing at the assembled crowds, there were so many people that some didn't even have chairs, but were standing up along the walls and in the aisles between the chairs, Severus wondered which of these people had been sending the Howlers.

Severus had half been expecting them, he knew quite a few people would disapprove of the age gap between them, but Harry had been shocked and upset. Many a night, Severus had to hold Harry through the tears as things got too much for him. The Daily Prophet had a new article every week about some witch or other who claimed that she'd had Harry's love child or two, when anyone who knew Harry knew that he'd never even been out with a girl, never mind anything else.

Most of them were addressed to Severus, but a few came to Harry as well, ranting about how disgusting it was that he was gay.

"Why do they do it, Severus?" Harry would ask and Severus had no acceptable answer. "Why can't they just leave us alone?"

Severus would stroke him and rock him until Harry fell into an exhausted sleep.

Sirius was sitting a few places down from Molly Weasley, he gave Severus a nod of acknowledgment, which Severus returned, although he still felt a little wary of the Animagus. It had all come out at the trial, both Dumbledore and Sirius had been Imperiused by Draco Malfoy, on his father's orders, but Sirius attempting to rape Harry, that had been done on Draco's own initiative. Draco had seen the bonding mark on Harry in the showers one day, he'd recognised the Snape crest and he also knew that the bonding wasn't complete until the marks changed. Draco had wanted Severus for himself and had pushed Sirius into trying to rape Harry before the bond was consummated, hoping that would void it.

Draco should have paid more attention to bonding spells in History of Magic, the only people who could have voided the bond were either Harry or Severus, but not after it was consummated. No one could separate them now.

Dumbledore was still in St. Mungo's, the Imperius curse had been removed by the healers, but his mind was slipping both due to his age and how long he'd been under the curse. Severus wondered if Hogwarts would ever be the same again.

Hermione Granger was sitting beside Ron and Severus knew it probably wouldn't be long before those two announced their engagement.

Fudge stood up on the raised dais at the front of the room and called for order. Severus noted Percy was nowhere near Fudge today, he was sitting between Bill and Charlie and looked as pale as parchment. A few moments later, two scarlet robed Aurors strode up to Fudge and had bound his hands behind his back.

"Cornelius Fudge you are under arrest for sexual harassment and assault."

Fudge spluttered and protested but his words were hard to hear due to the rapid conversations of the crowds.

As the ex-Minister was dragged away, Severus was the only one who saw Harry cast a silent, wandless spell in his direction. Fudge screamed in agony and dropped to the floor, curling his knees up against his chest. The Aurors had little sympathy for him, they just cast a binding spell on him and levitated him out, probably to the holding cells.

Harry stared at Severus, almost daring him to disapprove of Harry's actions. "No one hurts my family," hissed Harry to Severus just before he made his way over to where Percy was sitting, pale and shaking as his family swarmed around him.

"Percy, why didn't you tell us before?" asked Molly. "What that man was doing to you?"

"He threatened to have Dad sacked if I didn't agree," said Percy. "I couldn't do that. I don't know who told the Aurors."

Glancing at Harry's angry visage, Severus had a good guess who did. Harry wouldn't let any harm come to his family, not if he could help it.

Madam Bones, the head of the Magical Law Enforcement office walked onto the dais and the crowds chattering died away as they waited to see what she was going to say.

"Well, due to the Mr. Fudge's actions, he has been stripped of all titles and in the interim, the Wizengamot has appointed Arthur Weasley as the new Minister of Magic. I give you Arthur Weasley."

Arthur stared around the room, as though expecting another Arthur Weasley to pop out from somewhere, but Bill and Charlie pushed their father towards the stage, grinning madly at him.

"Well, I don't know quite what to say, Madam Bones, thank you for this honour. I will do my best in my new position. And now the reason we are actually all here today, to issue Harry Potter Snape with his Masters certificates. Harry, come up here," said Arthur with a grin, wandering to the table where two beribboned scrolls waited.

Harry squeezed Severus' hands before going up. Severus had never been so proud of someone, Harry had worked hard, those certificates were well earned and he couldn't help the fond smile as he watched his husband cross the dais to the table beside Arthur. "Congratulations," said Arthur, first shaking Harry's hand and then wrapping him in an enormous hug. Severus could see tears glinting beneath Harry's glasses and felt his heart lurch.

Harry had been through so much in his life and Severus was determined that his husband would never be sad again.

Harry and Arthur hopped down from the dais and made their way back to the rest of the Weasleys. A party was being held at the Burrow, but only for those closest to them. The rest of the crowd would have to make their own entertainment. A bright flash dazzled Severus, Harry stumbled and then glared at the photographer.

"No photographs," said Harry. He cast a spell on the camera so that the film inside burned.

"Hey! You can't just do that!" protested the photographer, a wizened man who looked more like a monkey than anything else.

"It was not my idea to make this event public," snarled Harry, "and I only agreed because photographs were banned. Now be lucky I didn't destroy your fucking camera!"

The assembled crowd gasped at hearing such language from the hero of the wizarding world, but Severus knew Harry's patience was wearing thin. He hated all the publicity, the boy wonder stuff the Daily Prophet printed without his consent. Harry never gave interviews, so the papers just made it up.

"Come on, Harry, let's get back," said Severus, taking Harry's arm and Apparating them both back to the Burrow.

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Harry was still seething when they'd finished Apparating, his hands tightened on the scrolls. A few moments later, the rest of the Weasley clan popped into the kitchen, Ginny being assisted by Charlie. Fudge got off lightly in his opinion, but at least he wouldn't be able to keep hurting Percy.

Harry had never been as close to Percy as some of the others, but he just couldn't stand by and let Percy continue to be hurt. He'd no idea when he'd sent an anonymous tip off to the MLE that Percy was not the only person Fudge had been abusing in this way, using his position to threaten them or their families. Along with Percy's testimony and that of the others, Fudge would be sent away for a very long time.

Molly bustled about the kitchen, getting the party food ready. The doorbell rang, Ron went to answer it and returned with Anton Dholov in tow. Anton glanced nervously round at the assembled guests and coughed as his eyes fell on Harry. "Your sister, she is inviting me," he said by way of explanation and in the next instant Ginny was by Anton's side and kissing him rather passionately for a public display.

"Ginny!" scolded Molly, her face almost as red as her hair.

"Sorry, Mum. Anton, this is my mum. Anton's my boyfriend," grinned Ginny. Harry didn't know whether to burst out laughing. Ginny had certainly got over him now.

Severus slid close to Harry to whisper in Harry's ear. "I've got a present for you."

Harry looked round and felt his heart hammer his ribs when he saw his husband's sparkling eyes.

"It's in the orchard," said Severus as he surreptitiously licked the shell of Harry's ear.

"Mum, we're going for a walk," said Harry, thankful that he'd worn robes today and his erection wasn't so visible.

Once they were outside, Severus grabbed his hand and tugged Harry along a very familiar path, to the clearing where they had their first kiss. Sitting on the carved tree trunk was a parcel wrapped in blue paper. Harry grinned up at Severus. "You didn't have to get me something, it's not my birthday."

"But it is a celebration," said Severus.

"I thought the shop was my present?" asked Harry, for just last week they had bought a run down shop in Diagon Alley, a few doors down from Fred and George's joke shop. They were going to open a Potions shop, Slug and Jiggers wouldn't be happy at the competition, especially from a shop with two Potions Masters.

"The shop is for both of us, this is just for you," said Severus, lifting the parcel and proffering it to Harry.

Harry ripped the paper, excited to see what was inside. The tears started even before he'd finished unwrapping the present. "Oh, God! Severus! Thank you! Thank you!" Harry hugged Severus and just let the tears fall. It was Patch, the penguin Harry had so loved as a child. Patch repaired and made whole again. Once he'd calmed down and wasn't at risk of drowning his husband, Harry stood on tip toes and kissed Severus with all the love, all the passion he could muster.

Severus pulled away from his kisses much too soon. "Shouldn't we get back to the party?" asked Severus.

Harry pulled out of Severus' embrace and grinned wickedly. "Really, Severus? You want to go back?" Harry waved his hand and transfigured his robes into his Beauxbatons uniform, watching Severus' eyes widen. Severus yanked Harry towards him and crushed their bodies together.

"Sod the party!" said Severus just before his mouth came down hard on Harry's.

THE END