

## Sev's Gang

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# Sev's Gang

by [RueRambunctious](#)

## Summary

Ever wondered how an unpopular half blood became close enough to Lucius Malfoy to become Draco's godfather?

A story in which Lucius is entitled, predatory and vaguely charismatic. Severus is stubborn, but vulnerable, and slowly begins to see something he likes in Lucius.

Although he's not certain that he ever wants to become the blond's mistress.

## Notes

I started this when still at school, when far worse underage antics were going on around me. However, for the sake of squick, I'm going to imagine these characters are now older than they are canonically, or else I'll never finish this thing.

# Chapter 1

“You are going to pay for that, Half-Blood!”

A cold, clear, precise voice broke through the imminent fight in the Slytherin common room. “Desist,” said the highly respected, blonde sixth year.

“I was just going to teach him his place-” began the antagonist in what he considered to be a reasonable and persuasive tone –a reasonable motive too, actually.

“His *\*place\**, Macnair,” Lucius Malfoy said icily, “is currently above your own. Snape is *\*mine\**.”

The previously silent Snape opened his mouth angrily. “I am no one’s, Malfoy!”

Lucius’ smile spread with no warmth behind it. “Perhaps I should remind you, Half-Blood, that *\*everyone\** in the vicinity is my *\*bitch\** and they are privileged to be such. It is much worse, I expect, to be on the outside of my concern.”

Severus Snape’s lips pressed tightly together on the word ‘bitch’.

“Put your wand away,” Lucius said, before Severus had even fully pulled it out. “Macnair,” the blonde said, “go find someone constructive to terrorise. Preferably a loser in a red and gold scarf.”

Macnair’s frustrated face lightened and he left cheerfully enough to obey.

“Where are Avery and Wilkes, even the Lestranges?” Lucius demanded frostily. “No need to ask where Rosier is...”

“I don’t know,” Severus answered churlishly.

A prudent-to-heed warning flashed minutely across Lucius Malfoy’s silver-blue eyes. “You are only to be in public with a companion,” the sixth year growled to Severus alone.

“I have no need of a minder!” the young boy exclaimed angrily.

“Evidently you do!” Lucius retorted frostily.

“I am none of your concern!” Severus hissed.

Lucius took an intimidating step forwards. “You know that you are: for all the superficial, official and personal reasons. You will desist placing yourself in danger or you will find yourself hurt.”

“By yourself, Malfoy?” Severus retorted.

“I shall have no need to!” Lucius hissed back. “Your wand is quicker than most; but your wretched mouth is also.”

Severus clenched his fists and pushed one up to tightly pinch the bridge of his nose.

“Please just do as I ask, Severus,” Lucius said.

A dark expression crossed the youth’s face but he grunted in acknowledgement. At that moment the younger Lestrange boy appeared in the common room entrance. “Snape, you git!” Rabastian called. “Avery and Wilkes have had my brother and I searching everywhere for you!”

Severus snapped back a retort but paled marginally as he felt Lucius’ angry eyes on him. Instead of giving him an immediate tongue-lashing, Lucius turned to Rabastian and chided, “Decorum in the common room please. Use your indoor voice.”

“Oh... Sorry Malfoy,” Rabastian answered.

“You can tell the others that Severus is with me,” Lucius told Rabastian. “I’m going to have a talk with him.”

Rabastian’s annoyed look swiftly faded into a mix of regret and sympathy for the doubtlessly unfortunate Snape. Lestrange threw the boy a wide-eyed look that said, ‘I’m sorry for getting you into trouble with \*him\*!’ and darted away to relay Malfoy’s message.

Severus frowned down at his shoes.

“It seems you have had the boys searching the entire castle for you,” Lucius said coolly.

Severus’ head darted up. “Rabastian didn’t say that!” he protested.

Lucius’ stare silenced him. “You are aware that it is true.”

Severus closed his mouth before scowling and fiddling with his wand.

“You know better,” Lucius stated in a faux light voice.

Severus stopped fidgeting and looked up in reluctant obedience; he kept his hand on his wand but did not draw it. Lucius observed this but made no comment.

“To your dorm now please,” Lucius said.

Severus glanced at his wand then nodded stiffly. Lucius turned his back and began to walk towards the dormitories. Severus made no mention at this act of trust but loosened his grip on his wand.

Lucius let himself unreservedly into Severus’ dormitory and closed and warded the entrance behind the boy.

“Please sit,” Lucius said.

Severus glanced uncomfortably at his bed and perched himself on the trunk at its foot. Lucius took a pillow from the bed and transfigured it into a chair.

“You need to stop this,” Lucius said without preamble.

Severus gazed at the ceiling for a moment before flicking his eyes to Lucius. Gazing out from beneath lank hair he said, “Bite me.”

In a moment Lucius had crossed the short distance between them and despite Severus’ instantaneous snatch for his wand, Lucius had a grip on his wand hand and opposite shoulder and had pinned him against the footboard of the bed.

“Now don’t be troublesome Severus,” Lucius scolded. “We know you are highly talented in a number of nasty ways but I have the most experience and that currently still trumps you. If you continue to be such a pest I shall be forced to punish your misbehaviour.”

Severus flushed then, and not simply from anger.

Lucius observed it but simply continued, “You need to learn to control your impulses and stop trying to hex or hinder those who are attempting to help you.”

“I don’t need your help,” Severus growled. His entire body was stiff with anger under Lucius’ own.

“No of course you don’t,” Lucius retorted shortly. He arched one perfect brow at the frustrated youth. “Which of us was it that had four Gryffindors set about him only a few days ago –and who very nearly found himself in the hospital wing because the injuries he was given were almost beyond my ability to heal?”

Severus narrowed his eyes and irritably admitted, “I did!”

“So tell me, Severus, which of my friends is *\*extremely\** lucky for not being hexed into next week for the stunt he pulled today?”

“Me,” Severus growled.

“Very true,” Lucius snapped back. “And tell me Sev, what do you think would have happened if I had not defused a fight between yourself and Walden Macnair? I’ll tell you: instead of my holding you down scolding you, I would currently be healing up some especially nasty, exceptionally painful wounds that Macnair would have put on you. And, if he managed to get a lucky curse in, you might even be in the hospital wing.”

“I am an excellent duellist,” Severus retorted.

“Excellent enough to take on four Gryffindors but not excellent enough to avoid all injury. Macnair fights dirty and he is far more creative and sick-minded than those idiot lions.”

“I fight dirty too, in case you haven’t noticed,” Severus retorted in disgust, “and I should be insulted for you not to find me creative.”

Lucius pulled back and stepped away from the younger boy. "Oh you're certainly dirty and creative."

Severus rubbed his wrist and the shoulderblade that had been thrust against his footboard. Shifting quietly on his worn, wooden trunk, he sighed and stared at his feet. Lucius watched him for a moment and sat down on his transfigured chair.

"Wilkes and Avery and Rosier and the Lestranges; they're your friends," Lucius said, "not just your babysitters."

Severus reluctantly looked up at Lucius. "I know..." he said softly.

Lucius met his eyes frankly. "You just do not wish to rely on anyone; \*I\* know," he said.

Severus let out a huff of air and stretched out his feet. He stared at them for a moment.

"What?" Lucius prompted.

"It's only three. Three Gryffs that I duel against, I mean. Lupin never raises his wand to me."

"Dare I ask why?" Lucius smirked softly. At Severus' glower and eye-roll, Lucius' expression became sincerer. "You're still one of the best duellists in the school, and the absolute best in the mid- and lower years."

Severus nodded. He mildly said, "I know."

"Just take care of yourself a bit more, would you?" Lucius said. "At least stop taking stupid risks like today."

"I'll try," Severus said.

"You had certainly better," Lucius grumbled. Severus laughed and Lucius smiled. He got up and returned his chair to its original form, with which he lightly smacked the dark-haired boy.

Severus deftly managed to slither away from the hand that instantly went for his wand and he pointed it at Lucius swiftly. One incantation that Lucius could not quite decipher later and the pureblood's hair was a calamitous mix of gold and flaming red.

Feeling the tingle of magic along his scalp, Lucius reached up to touch his hair and baulked when its length fell over his shoulders in two awful colours.

"You horrible child!" Lucius cried in appalled astonishment.

Severus let out a rare laugh that was clumsy and childish in nature, but entirely natural. Lucius felt his horror dissipating to a mild, simmering, annoyance and gave the brat a scowl that did not quite keep down the corners of his mouth.

"Change me back right now," Lucius warned.

Severus grinned impishly but wisely cancelled the incantation.

“Dinner is soon,” Lucius grumbled. “Go tidy yourself up before I decide to confine you to your dorm for the rest of the night for your reprehensible antics.”

Severus twitched his eyebrows and grinned but obediently got up to go brush his hair and attempt to straighten his clothes. Lucius turned to cancel the charms on the door and shortly afterwards Evan Rosier burst into the room complaining about not being able to get into his dorm.

“Why are you even bothered Evan?” Severus asked. “You could always have gone to someone else’s.”

“I still haven’t worked out how to get into the girls’ dorms,” Rosier admitted mournfully. “What were you pair even doing in here?” he complained. “Actually, don’t tell me if it’s something I don’t want to know.”

“Remove your mind from the gutter Rosier. I was giving your friend a dressing down for disappearing off without \*yourself\*, Avery or Wilkes and antagonising Macnair.”

Looking guilty for chasing girls when he should have been keeping an eye on his bad-tempered friend, Evan turned on Severus. “Well that was a \*stupid\* thing to do! Macnair is dangerous and you know it.”

Severus narrowed his eyes and turned his back to smooth his barely wrinkled bedsheets.

“I hope you gave him hell,” Evan muttered to Lucius.

“Thanks, Rosier!” Severus snapped.

“Don’t you Rosier me, Severus Snape! Macnair could put you in the hospital wing.”

“At least I’m not lifting the skirt of his girlfriend,” Severus retorted.

“Being beautiful is the burden I have to bear,” Evan sniffed. He turned to Lucius. “Hey Malfoy, have you considered the benefits of giving our Half-Blood a whooping?”

Severus turned scarlet and opened his mouth furiously to reply.

“You hold your tongue Severus,” Lucius warned sternly. The boy closed his mouth reluctantly. “I cannot admit to entertaining the notion much,” Lucius said to Evan.

“I think it would do him the world of good,” Evan said. With a smirk at an appalled Severus, he continued to the blonde, “You know you have the authority to cane Slytherin’s miscreants, Lucius; I would have considered such \*stupid\* behaviour to put Severus high on that list. It’s not exactly behaviour befitting of our house, is it?”

“Some friend you are!” Severus snapped.

“I’m not the one stupid enough to pick a fight with Macnair without any backup!” Evan retorted. “I think Malfoy’s been lenient in just taking you up here to bawl you out: if I was in

his place I'd have made sure you were in tears by the time I was done with you to make sure you *\*never\** did something so stupid again. Fighting with Macnair of all people!"

"I wasn't fighting with him!" Severus shouted.

"Indoor voice Severus," Lucius chided. "Rosier may even have a point."

"He's suggesting you-"

"Turning you over his knee for a sound spanking would be equally advisable," Evan added.

"How is that reasonable?" Severus cried.

"Put it this way, if I'd picked a fight by myself with Macnair *\*I'd\** be crying by now, because that boy is seriously cruel," Evan said. "I think you're getting off light with less than a slap on the wrist."

Severus gritted his teeth.

"Boys, enough," Lucius said. "It is surely time for dinner."

"Sorry Malfoy," Evan murmured obediently, getting off his bed and making his way to the door.

Lucius sidled up to Severus and whispered in his ear. "Rosier has a point: you shouldn't be getting away with less than a slap on the wrist."

Before Severus could even formulate a reply he found himself giving a short, surprised yelp as he felt Lucius crack his hand lightly off Severus' rump.

"*\*Luciussss!*" Severus protested in embarrassment.

"Do not pull that tone with me, Severus Snape," Lucius murmured sharply in his ear. "If you *\*ever\** do anything as stupid as today ever again I might just give Rosier's suggestion a try. Oh, and just to make doubly sure you behave in a suitable manner: if you do *\*not\** I'll be sure to *\*spank\** your bottom *\*bared\**."

"You wouldn't dare!" protested a horrified Severus.

"You better not find out," Lucius retorted. "Come *\*on\** dinner will be cold if you don't move yourself."

"Ever heard of a heating charm?" Severus retorted, following Lucius to the common room.

"You do *\*not\** want to provoke me right now," Lucius growled at the other boy.

"But-" Severus considered and quickly closed his mouth. They were in a public place and the last thing he wanted was to antagonise Lucius into fulfilling his crazy promise.



Lucius led Severus up to the Great Hall and smirked at the shade of colour Severus' cheeks appeared when he patted the boy's bottom in front of the house table. He had no intention of honouring his promise but it was highly entertaining to watch Severus scowl through the whole meal whilst still keeping a meek mouth.

Lucius should have threatened to spank Severus' milky little behind \*months\* ago. The whelp clearly didn't realise he had little intention of following through.

Thoroughly enjoying himself, Lucius whispered to Severus during dinner, "I might even avenge my hair; can you just imagine the shade of Gryffie red I can paint your derriere Sev? I'll bet you'll never see a ruby so red in your life."

"Whatever are you pair talking about?" Bellatrix Black asked.

Lucius smirked at Severus but decided the youth had been tortured enough for the evening. "Nothing of importance, Bella. How have you spent your evening?"

Severus relaxed slightly as Bellatrix smirked and launched into a witty tirade. Lucius patted his arm mildly whilst continuing to converse with Bella and what eventually became the majority of the Slytherin table.

Severus heard a commotion and glanced across to the Gryffindor table.

Lucius noticed and after glancing at the tumult between a boy and a girl leaned close to Severus to whisper, "I do hope your attention is on that Blood Traitor and not that Mudblood chit Severus."

Severus barely nodded.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Just to be clear, by my maths no one born before '52 or after '68 could possibly have went to school with Snape and that includes both the Lestrage boys (born in the early 70s) and Bellatrix Black ('51). However, since the Lestrages are supposed to be part of Snape's gang I've just aged the boys up to roughly Snape's age ('59 and '60) and placed Bella in the year above Lucius (seventh, so Andromeda will be in sixth year with Malfoy and Narcissa is in the year below). Alrighty?

"I don't understand how you do it you know," Lily said as she swiftly diced a number of ingredients. She cleaned her knife and reached for a temperamental root. "No, that's not true: I see that. But I don't know why."

Severus took the first group of ingredients and began adding them to the concoction that was the spoils of a previous hour's toils.

Lily continued, "No. I know why you do it as well." She pressed the knife handle to her chin for a moment and gifted Severus with a wide-eyed, thoughtful look. "But I still don't understand!"

Severus said nothing. Lily was particularly beautiful to watch when she was engaged thus, but if she took his glancing at her as a desire for eye contact then he was screwed. Lily was one of the few people who could read his face and he would prefer to avoid that right now.

"Severus!" a frustrated Lily growled.

Severus lifted his eyes reluctantly.

The redhead merely huffed affectionately at him and passed him the root she had carefully segmented. She had more tact than to ask if he was trying to prove himself or was just used to debasing himself. She felt it was clear from the blunt way she spoke with him that she was all the replacement family he needed. It wouldn't kill him to make friends with a Ravenclaw though.... although if he continued acting the way he was recently it probably would get him killed to try and speak to a rival house member.

Lily's thoughts were interrupted as Severus lurched forwards, almost dropping the last of the potent root into the cauldron from a height that would splash them both with boiling toxins. It wasn't for several moments that she realised Potter had jostled her partner and was now holding the root pieces out of Severus' reach saying, "Whoops Snively, wouldn't want to screw up your potion by dropping this in now would I?"

Lily snatched back the ingredient furiously and carefully adjusted the heat beneath the cauldron before the brainless prick got them all hospitalised.

“Go to hell, Potter!” she snapped.

“But Evans!” he protested, “I just saved your potion from clumsy Snivellus here!”

“Potter, I might be too interested in my life than to whip out my wand whilst brewing a potion, but trust me, the moment we are finished for today I will hex you into the hospital wing.”

“Such harsh words Evans!” Potter protested.

Severus knocked the glasses right off the arrogant twat’s face. “Clumsy me,” Sev said.

Lily couldn’t help but crush them under her heel. “\*Clumsy\* you Severus,” she agreed.

Potter looked appalled, knowing he couldn’t clear up or repair the mess until after every potion had been stoppered and everything had been cleaned up.

Lily and Severus exchanged a glance, and their palms slapped softly off each other under their desk.

They worked in companionable silence for some time until the end of the class drew near. “Do you want to go down to the lake until next period?” Lily asked. She efficiently stoppered their potion and looked up at Severus with her striking eyes.

Severus opened his mouth momentarily then withdrew to the other side of the desk. He shook his head.

Lily gave him a frank look and glanced at his various house members at workstations behind them. “You’re not going to give in to what they think, are you?”

Severus pressed his lips together wordlessly, which provoked Lily to stab him in the chest with one finger. “We are best friends, Severus Snape!”

“Of course you are Lily! My best friend,” Severus said quickly.

“Then you are spending your free time with me,” Lily said stoutly.

Severus took the potion out of Lily’s hand and carried it to their professor’s desk. “Lily I can’t.”

Lily crossed her arms, that spark reaching her eyes. “You \*can\*.”

Severus reached for his satchel and began gathering his things. “It’s a lot easier if we don’t, okay?”

Lily cleared the workstation swiftly. “No it is-”

“Not just easier for me Lily,” Severus said quietly. “They don’t like us being together and it’s only a matter of time before they do something about it.”

“Then I will hex them into next week Severus. What are you so afraid of? That big blonde bully in sixth year? I’ll-”

“Just drop it, okay,” Severus demanded, swooping out of the classroom quickly.

“Severus! Sev you \*snake\*! Severus...” Lily huffed in annoyance and reached for her own bag. Rodolphus Lestange jostled her roughly as she made to rush after Severus, and Lily’s hip ground into the corner of a workstation painfully. “That was deliberate!” she growled at the conceited git as she pulled out her wand.

Rodolphus sneered and nodded. “And it was a great sacrifice on my part, let me assure you. I’m now going to have to head straight to the showers to scrub the \*mudblood\* off of me.”

Lily’s eyes narrowed.

\*

“Rodolphus told me that you were talking to that mudblood today.”

Severus managed a sneer. “I’m surprised he managed the motor function considering how hard she hexed him.”

Lucius’ eyes flashed warningly and Severus quickly added, “I had to speak with her; she’s my lab partner.”

“We do not \*talk\* to the filth, Severus,” Lucius stated. “And wipe that look off of your face before I do it for you.”

Severus curled his lips in derision but his expression quickly turned black when Malfoy grabbed him by the tie. Taking the narrow end, Lucius stated coolly, “I might be provoked into adjusting this by about six inches if you fail to rectify your behaviour.” Before Severus could even react a smile had worked its way across Malfoy’s cold features. “Unless I chose to follow Rosier’s advice.”

Severus flinched and Lucius let go of the boy’s tie carefully. Taking advantage of his height, Lucius leant imposingly over Severus and whispered, “You’ve such a pretty arse.”

Lucius darted away elegantly and glided towards the door. “Stay away from that mudblood Severus.”

Severus sat down quickly on his trunk and took a deep breath.

Rosier bustled into the dormitory and regarded Severus condescendingly. “That’s the second time in two days that Malfoy’s taken you up here for a talking to.” He turned his back and started rifling through his dresser.

“So?” Severus murmured.

Evan gave him a glare, "Watch yourself." Retrieving the item he desired from his dresser, he pocketed it and concedingly stated, "Although I'll admit between us two that she's a pretty mudblood. And passionate."

Severus growled and Evan shrugged. "Fine, I'll leave you in peace. Need to give this to a pretty girl anyway."

Severus curled his lips. "Have you even learnt her name?"

Evan rolled his eyes. "I haven't decided who I'm trying my luck with yet. Don't worry though, it won't be Evans."

## Chapter 3

Unusually, Evan was sitting on his bed with a purposeful expression when Severus returned from showering. That he was in his own dorm at all at this hour of the morning without a female companion was most unlike him; it was even more unlike Evan to bestow such an expression on Severus. Severus gave him a suspicious look and turned his pale back to dress. Evan waited until Severus was putting on his tie to say, "Are you alright?"

Severus turned and gave Evan a shrewd expression. "What do you mean? Why are you even here Evan?"

Evan kept a peaceful expression. "You were really pale when I came in last night. And quiet."

Severus sneered. "Which time? And you spend so much time in other people's bedrooms you seem to have forgotten I am naturally quiet."

Evan made a face, used to the acerbic half-blood's poor people skills. "When I came to get a stupid token to give to ...Amanda I think. One of those stupid Hufflepuff girls with a rich family and a nice face. Malfoy had just left and you were far more subdued than usual."

Severus rolled his eyes with an expression of distaste. "What's your point Rosier?"

"I'm trying to find out if you're okay!" Evan snapped. Alright, so he was used to the half-blood's scathing way of speaking, but he was not immune to it.

"You don't need to be worried about me," Severus drawled with a dark and somewhat closed expression on his face.

"Well I am worried," Evan said, fighting down his irritation to do so. The wretched little half-blood had looked shaken last night and that was a hard thing to achieve. When combined with the knowledge of Malfoy's reputed (and occasionally witnessed) cruelty, Evan was concerned for the dark-haired boy. "I know Malfoy's not a nice guy but I thought he was fond of you... He didn't do anything... unpleasant, did he?"

Severus made a bitter noise of derision. "When is he ever pleasant?"

It took Evan a great deal of his Slytherin will to succeed in continuing any conversation with Severus that the boy would rather not have. However, there was a note in Severus' voice there that had set Evan's nerves on edge. "What did he do Ha... Severus?"

Severus clenched his fists and scowled slightly, but his lips were not twisted into the shape that customarily indicated a warning not to continue the conversation. "He didn't... do anything."

Evan's Slytherin mind sparked and prompted his mouth to form words before the sentence had quite settle in his brain. "Did he threaten something?"

Severus undid the clumsy knot in his tie and re-tied it. “Nothing he doesn’t usually,” he replied in a low voice.

Evan contemplated the boy before him. “You’re a virgin, aren’t you?”

Severus looked up, his dark eyes flashing. Angrily he retorted, “What does that have to do with anything?!”

Evan shrugged and kept his facial expression placating. “We all know what he wants from you,” Evan said gently.

“I don’t know why,” Severus retorted, “My blood’s dirty. And I’m not pretty. I’m not even... I’m not attractive.”

“I suppose he likes the power he has over your position,” Evan said. “And he seems to admire your magical power.”

Severus scowled, but he looked rather sick. He mumbled, “So tell me, what is the Slytherin thing to do?”

“Unite yourself with the strongest power or whatever brings you the most gain,” Evan answered without thinking. After a moment he said, “I think Malfoy’s safest as your friend, but it depends how afraid you are of what he wants from you.”

“And I have to consider the possibility that if I don’t give him what he desires that he will take it by force,” Severus continued.

“There’s that to consider too, yes,” Evan said. Gently, he asked, “Did Malfoy indicate when he wants you?”

Severus shook his head. “No, this is the first time he openly expressed what... I expected he might desire. I was... am... just...”

“Nervous about what it implied,” Evan supplied.

“Yes,” Severus admitted shortly.

Evan sighed. “If you decide to reluctantly side with Malfoy you should probably consider whether he wants your virginity or just your body and your mind and your power. Depending on what you could gain for giving him your virginity, you might be comforted in giving it to someone who isn’t coercing it from you. ...If Malfoy was cruel to you it could be magnified by the pain of what you’d given him.”

Severus gave Evan a wary look, but the boy’s eyes were free of leering insinuation. Severus chuckled darkly at the ‘if’ Malfoy was cruel and nodded at the overall statement that Evan had made. Severus swallowed. “I don’t know how long I have, and I don’t know how to go about losing my virginity,” he said meekly.

Evan nodded understandingly. “Don’t underestimate your ability to stall; I know you’re a good Slytherin. Equally, don’t underestimate Malfoy. But if you’re fixed on losing your

virginity to someone else, it's... important that you consider gender."

"Gender?" Severus repeated, with a little of his usual sharpness creeping into his tone.

"Well if you wanted Evans to be your first she would still be the first girl you penetrated after Malfoy," Evan said somewhat flippantly.

Severus flushed and scowled but could not help but concede the point.

Evan continued, "If you looked at it from a purely emotional view, you might want Evans to be your first simply to know that you had been with her and hadn't given something special to Malfoy. With that you'd also have to consider how you'd then deal with how she'd take you sleeping with Malfoy. However, you should also consider that you'd be losing your anal virginity to Malfoy and we don't know how gentle he would be with you. If you had experience you might be able to make his enthusiasm easier on yourself."

"That's a good point," Severus said weakly.

"I'm not saying to forget Evans though," Evan said. "Malfoy could spring something twisted on you involving the Black girls or anything, and you don't want to lose it like that. Although," Evan dared to inject a little humour, "I'm sure there are plenty of guys who would love for their first time to be with any combination of the beautiful Black sisters."

"Lily's kind though," Severus said. "And you never know, it might put Malfoy off touching me."

"At best," Evan agreed. He didn't need to vocalise the possibility that Malfoy would find it a punishable offence.

Severus pressed his lips together and regarded Evan with a look more close to helpless than Evan had ever seen on the half-blood's face before. "How am I going to find a guy to have sex with me before Malfoy does?"

"It will be difficult to get anyone from Slytherin simply because everyone's afraid of Malfoy, but there's still three entire houses to choose from. Or I'll help, if you never let Malfoy know that I did."

Severus stared wide eyed at the handsome boy for a moment but Evan quickly continued talking.

"There's also the option of boys outside of school during Hogsmeade weekends but I'd probably rule that out unless you had someone already in mind. You could try to find a guy in Ravenclaw that you have common interests with or who just has a large curiosity for sex; you could find a Hufflepuff boy who isn't influenced by the Slytherin ideals; or you could liaison with a Gryffindor who is attracted by the opportunity to take something from Malfoy."

"A Gryffindor? Are you crazy? He'd probably hurt me worse than Malfoy!" Severus exclaimed.

"Lupin wouldn't," Evan said.



“What?” Severus said.

“I partner him in potions class,” Evan said. “He seems... like a possibility.”

Severus swallowed. “I need to think about everything.”

“I suppose all else that’s left to decide is what you want to barter from Malfoy for what he wants,” Evan said softly.

Severus nodded again solemnly. He asked, “Why are you even trying to look after me like this when it was Malfoy who first told you to look after me?”

Evan considered the question seriously. “Because you’re not too bad a sort; and because it would only have taken a fluke of fate for me to be in the perilous position of being Malfoy’s favourite and I’d appreciate not been abandoned to that fate; and because you’re not entirely helpless and it might be intelligent to help someone with as much future potential as you when you are currently vulnerable.”

Severus nodded and crossed the room towards the door. They were already significantly late for breakfast. “Thank you for this Evan.”

Evan grinned. “You can help me with my potions homework sometime. I’d ask Lupin to explain what we do but Potter and Black make my life hell if I do.”

“Not to mention Malfoy if he found out,” Severus added drollly.

“Hey Severus?” Evan said, “When I told Malfoy he should hit you, I was just... angry... worried... because it was McNair, you know? I’m sorry if...”

Severus shrugged. “Don’t worry about it. Malfoy was going to happen either way.”

“I’m sorry anyway,” Evan said.

Severus nodded and led the way down to breakfast before it ended.

\*

Later that night Severus considered his decision further. Malfoy was handsome, powerful, popular and rich. Would it really be so terrible to be taken to his bed?

## Chapter 4

Severus had been doing an impressive job of avoiding Lucius for the next day and a half by foregoing the great hall in favour of sneaking into the kitchens, and loitering in various lonely portions of the castle where Lucius was not likely to patrol.

Unfortunately Lucius chose not to honour his prefect duties and arrived in the common room just as the dark-haired boy was intending to sneak into his first-year dormitory. Malfoy's voice seemed to fill the entire quarters. "Severus, a word in my room if you please." The sixth year turned his back and strode towards his bedroom, stating, "That was not a request."

Severus felt the pit of his stomach fall out as he turned away from the direction his own dormitory in favour of Lucius Malfoy's. Evan sent Severus a sympathetic look from over by the fireside where he was being coddled by some fourth years for his good looks, but that was of little consolation to Severus.

The boy followed Lucius into the sixth year's bedroom and looked at the floor as the blonde swung the door shut heavily with magic.

Lucius sat down on his bed collectedly and placed his hands loosely atop of each other on his lap. He indicated for Severus to seat himself on the bed opposite.

Severus fought what could have been a rising blush or cold sweat –he was unsure which as he was unusually befuddled- and reluctantly obeyed.

Lucius watched Severus' face calmly. "Is there something you should confess to me Severus?"

Severus felt a little sick and pressed his lips together. His heart rate was rising steadily and he willed it to quieten down.

"Severus," Lucius prompted.

"No, Malfoy," Severus answered quickly.

Lucius affected a sigh. "You may call me Lucius when we are alone Severus; you know this."

Severus squirmed. He did know this, but he preferred to do so when it would manipulate Lucius' mood or when he simply forgot to do otherwise –like when Lucius slapped his rump the other day. Severus nodded, which appeased Lucius only slightly.

"Are you going to admit the truth now Severus?" Lucius asked in a marginally bored-sounding voice. "You have failed to be present in the great hall for a number of meals and I did not see you even once yesterday. Are you being bullied?"

Malfoy was concerned he was being bullied? Severus did not know whether to be grateful for this or not. Deciding not to drag out the unpleasantness, Severus replied, "It's not that exactly."

I..."

Severus did not like admitting weakness, even to manipulate others.

"Come, Severus, what is the matter?" Lucius questioned.

"I was nervous," Severus admitted curtly. "Of being around you."

Lucius laughed lightly for a moment, his expression a mixture of surprise and amusement.

"Dear Severus, you silly thing. What naughtiness have you been upto now?"

Severus glowered just a little. "I haven't."

"Then whatever are you worried about, silly? You need not worry; I am not inclined to spank you unprovoked if that is what you are worried about," Lucius said with an indulgent smile. Bless the little brat, he was genuinely scared of having his cute little bottom smacked.

"It's not that! Not exactly," Severus replied with difficulty.

"What then? Do you \*want\* me to turn you over my knee?"

"No!" Severus cried. "It's just that... you said... about my, you know... And I know that you... You know..."

"We are going to have to work on your eloquence I see," Lucius stated. A memory lit his face. "Ah, I see. It was the 'pretty arse' comment that has you acting like a little blushing virgin, is it?"

"I am a virgin!" Severus shouted back, and then paused, nervously. Should he have admitted that?

"As I would expect," Lucius retorted, giving Severus the feeling that there would have been trouble if he had been otherwise.

Lucius' face softened and he regarded Severus sympathetically. "What do you believe are my plans for you, little one?"

Severus fidgeted uncomfortably. "Everyone knows that you... Like me."

"Severus, of course I like you. I never let anyone harass you about your blood status, do I?"

"Not that kind of like!" Severus protested, certain Lucius was toying with him. "I'm your favourite, amn't I?"

"For now," Lucius said with a mild tone of warning. It was not done to admit something that was not advantageous, to one's inferior.

Severus looked at his feet. "You know what I am trying to say," he protested mildly.

"I can surmise," Lucius replied. He set his face and regarded Severus. "Let us be clear: you are my property Severus."

Severus flinched but nodded tightly.

Lucius reached over and caught hold of Severus' jaw; he lifted it up to force the boy to look at him. "I do have carnal intentions towards you but they will not be realised for a considerable amount of time. You are much too young at the moment for me to wish to do anything more than tease you, understood?"

Severus would rather not have made a reply but as his chin was being held firmly he reluctantly voiced an affirmative.

Lucius did not let him go. Perhaps the half-blood was ignorant of the pure ways? Surely he understood that alliances were often formed in youth that would later be strengthened with physical intimacy in later years. "Every pureblood in this house is aware that I intend to take you as my consort when you are older."

Severus flushed in embarrassment at that although he already knew that was true: everyone knew he was Malfoy's 'favourite' and that there was a particular *manner* to the way in which Malfoy looked at him. Weakly Severus said, "But what about your family's alliance with the Black family?"

"I am expected to wed one of the daughters," Lucius said calmly, sitting back again on his bed, "but I am by no means prohibited by that to take you as a lover when I feel comfortable doing so."

"What about when *I* feel comfortable?" Severus protested.

"I will keep in contact with you when I leave Hogwarts next year Severus. You will grow quite accustomed to me and when you grow curious for a physical relationship it will be natural for you to learn from me."

"What if I don't *want* to learn from you? What if I choose to learn from someone else instead?"

Lucius sneered lightly. "Then perhaps you *will* have to worry about being pulled over my lap for a sound enough spanking to make you a very sorry little boy."

Severus looked so uncomfortable that Lucius could not help but feel sorry for the boy. "Are you worried about being heterosexual? I assure you that you will find the benefits of the arrangement will be more than satisfactory in compensating for any preference you may have for the opposite gender. Besides, my future wife is likely to be curious about you, my other bed-warmer. I dare say you won't complain about being examined by any of the Black girls."

Severus felt so overwhelmed that he could only mutter, "Where I come from not many people worry about *being* heterosexual."

Lucius looked surprised. "You didn't think you would be staying in whatever muggle hovel you do now once you are my consort, did you? You will live somewhere of my choosing; I have no desire to visit you in whatever hole your mother married herself into living in. You will live somewhere properly befitting a Prince."

Severus was torn between observing the backhanded but true insult to his mother, or that Lucius intended to keep him as his kept mistress. Neither were comforting considerations. He found himself growling, "The muggle is beneath my mother."

Lucius widened his eyes ever so slightly again. Perhaps he was surprised at Severus' lack of loyalty towards his father. "I am glad you agree."

Severus was quiet and considered the conversation. It had been surprisingly easy to breach the question of Malfoy's intentions and it was comforting to know Lucius intended to give him some time. Lucius had also stated there would be considerable benefits for being his consort (whilst choosing otherwise seemed to indicate a spanking and continued interest. There would probably be further punishments that Lucius had not mentioned).

"You need some further persuasion," Lucius stated. He stood and that prompted a wary Severus to stand also. Lucius began to open the front of his robes. Severus took a few steps backwards and Lucius went on to unbutton his shirt.

"What are you *\*doing\** Malfoy?" Severus saw Lucius finish unbuttoning his shirt and pull it out from the waistband of his trousers, and then the dark-haired boy darted towards the bedroom door.

Lucius gave a put upon sigh and charmed the door closed with a spell only he could remove. Keeping a firm hold of his wand, he strode over to Severus and pulled the boy's wand from him before dragging him back to where they had each stood moments before.

"Behave yourself," Lucius said coldly. He charmed the wands well out of Severus' reach but not his own, and not close enough to any furniture that Severus could reach either with a jump. "Stay still and pay attention to me," Lucius told the preteen boy.

"You *\*said\** you weren't going to do anything yet!" Severus said.

"And I'm *\*not\** going to molest you now either, you stupid child," Lucius snapped. He whipped off his shirt and tie before tossing them lightly onto the bed, where the shirt folded itself.

Lucius held out his arms from his body and met Severus' eyes. "Now look at me."

"Look at what?" Severus snapped back.

"*\*Me\**. My body," Lucius answered, circling confidently to allow the boy to do so.

Despite himself, Severus could not help but do so. Everyone knew that Lucius' body was magnificent, and the toned blonde looked so different from the boys that Severus showered with.

"This," Lucius said, "is the product of good breeding and care." He let Severus stare at him for a moment longer. "This," Lucius indicated Severus' nose, touching it softly, "is a product of *\*your\** breeding and *\*this\**," he combed Severus' greasy hair away from the boy's eyes, "is testament to the amount of care taken of *\*your\** body."

Severus shivered as a feeling of vast inferiority and longing settled over him and reignited the ache inside him.

Lucius reached for his shirt and dressed again. "My belongings and my associates reflect on me. When you are my lover I will ensure that you are well-toned and pleasingly presented. I will make the most of you, and that will not just apply to your physical attributes."

Severus swallowed. If he was Lucius' he would look something like that? The prospect of a muscular, attractive body, beautiful hair and flawless skin made Severus feel warm inside. Lucius was offering him the ability to feel less inadequate. Severus knew he was being manipulated, but what was offered was so inviting. "Do you give me your word?"

"Do you give me yours?" Lucius countered. He snorted at the look on Severus' face and said, "I give you my word that I will do the best I can to improve my consort."

Severus made another face and asked suspiciously, "Why me?"

Lucius straightened his tie and plucked both their wands from the air. "Your character impresses me." He handed Severus his wand loosely. "You may go."

Severus took his wand back slowly and left through the door that Lucius opened gallantly for him. Evan was waiting for him with a butterbeer when he entered their dorm.

"I thought you'd want this. Are you alright?" Evan asked.

Severus regarded the butterbeer. "Where did you get that?"

"Off of one of the olders girls by asking nicely," Evan replied with a sparkle in his eye.

Severus accepted it, but muttered, "This better not be contaminated with a stupid love potion."

"It isn't; I checked," Evan said.

"Arrogant git," Severus muttered.

Evan laughed. "Hey, I'm not as bad as I seem. Just because I'm popular with the ladies doesn't mean my virginity's that much more tarnished than your shiny new one, alright?"

Severus snorted and Evan gave him a mildly annoyed look. "I'm serious. I am \*twelve\*, just because all the older girls like to use me as a talking teddy bear doesn't mean I'm ...enjoying myself with them all. I don't have the stamina, or the confidence yet."

Severus snorted again, but took a little comfort in Evan's effort to reassure him. Evan was several months older and normally had a habit of making Severus feeling inadequate and underdeveloped without even trying.

"So what happened? Are you alright?" Evan pressed.

"Fine. I have time," Severus said. "At least a year, unless he changes his mind."

“Good. I think Lupin’s a virgin too and it’s going to take months if you want to use him. At least.”

“I notice you didn’t point that out the other night,” Severus grumbled.

“I didn’t want to panic you,” Evan said. “Don’t worry, if you desperately want de-cherried by a bloke this year I’ll do it. You, even.”

“Don’t worry about the candy and hearts then,” Severus muttered.

“Oh, I can’t damage my reputation,” Evan teased. “I’ll be sure to send you a card and flowers.”

Severus glowered but felt significantly less panicked than he had in days. His future looked less bleak today and his virginity was intact for the time being.

## Chapter 5

Severus woke slowly and lay in bed for precious minutes relishing the knowledge that he was between crisp, fresh sheets in his bed at school, far away from his father, or the noticeable effect his father had on Severus' mother. Yes, he was at school, and if he did not get out of bed soon he was going to have to shower at the same time as his dorm mates.

Severus withheld a sigh and pulled back the curtains around his bed. Good: all the curtains around the other beds were still closed. Severus got up and quickly padded softly to the showers.

Severus smiled as the hot water hit his body and drank in the sensation for just a moment before he began to wash. He held his head under the spray of water and considered what Malfoy had said earlier. Severus eyed the shampoo for a long minute before turning away from it in disgust. He had no desire to look like Malfoy's kept pet. Maybe if he kept his hair greasy Malfoy would change his mind.

"Good morning," Evan called cheerfully, entering the room and choosing a stall as close to Severus as social protocol allowed.

Severus bit back a curse and sighed, considering quickly ending his shower. "What are you doing up at this hour?" he grumbled.

"Don't mind me if you were enjoying the privacy," Evan said with a cheeky smile. "I don't mind at all. We all do it."

Severus growled. "I was not partaking in *that* activity and I would not care to indulge in it in your company."

"Pity," Evan said with a wink, and turned his attention to showering and singing some popular song that Severus found irksome.

Severus sighed and began to speed up his ablutions. He watched the water run down Evan's chest and shoulders until he remembered himself and quickly cooled the spray of water before switching it off and quickly wrapping himself in a wonderfully plush towel.

"Don't suppose you could help me wash my back?" Evan asked cheerfully.

Severus swore at him and stalked through to the dormitory to dress.

Wretched Evan.

Severus dried quickly and spared his body a glower. Wretched Evan. Severus dressed quickly.

"Severus? Why are you always up so early, you git?" Wilkes pulled back his bed-curtains and gave Severus one of those vacantly cross faces that only recently wakened teenage boys



make.

“Go back to sleep, Wilkes,” Severus replied. “There’s more than an hour before breakfast even starts.”

Wilkes threw back his sheets and stood up. “No point: I’m awake now,” he replied. He glanced at Rosier’s unoccupied bed. “He isn’t back yet then?”

“He’s in the shower,” Severus answered.

“Has he been in long?” Wilkes asked.

Severus made a face.

“I’ll wait until he’s finished then,” Wilkes decided. “Say, how did things go with Malfoy? He whip you?”

Severus’ eyes widened. “No!”

“Ouch, he ...you know’d you then?”

Severus coloured. “He didn’t do anything!”

Wilkes made the sort of face that tempted Severus to hex him. “If that’s what you say. It’s only a matter of time though.”

“That is a matter of opinion,” Severus retorted sulkily.

Wilkes shrugged. “In that case it’ll be alright for you to play cards with some thirds years and us tonight then, won’t it? If Malfoy isn’t going to come looking for you and break up the party.”

Severus’ lip curled. “I have nothing to gamble against any of you purebloods.”

Wilkes grinned in a way that was not quite innocent enough to be mischievously. “Who needs money when you’ve got the body that Malfoy wants to warm his bed? I bet there’s plenty of older guys stupid enough to want what Malfoy does.”

“You think so?” Severus said.

Wilkes shrugged. “You know enough hexes to take care of yourself, don’t you? Play a little.”

Evan emerged from the shower room and Wilkes got up to get ready for breakfast. “Get up, Avery, you lazy sod,” he called cheerfully into the bed next to him.

## Chapter 6

Wilkes' suggestion had not been as undesirable to Severus as perhaps it ought to have been. As a rule Severus tended to detest people and as such avoided them as much as possible. This impacted poorly on his social skills and meant he was often not included in things that his other year mates were; which in turn left him vulnerable to their derision. This did not upset Severus overly but he knew that participating in the third years' gambling nights would credit his currently low reputation. Providing money was not an overlarge issue the event could even be fun, and Severus felt a very small grain of excitement make itself known within him. And besides, Severus was gifted in any number of card games: he played them repeatedly during the summer with Lily and occasionally his mother.

Later that day Wilkes and Avery met Severus with characteristic boyish boisterousness and babbled on excitedly over Severus' decision to join them. Evan seemed surprised to find Severus amongst them despite sitting between Wilkes and Avery during breakfast as they crowed as discreetly as they could to various others that Severus would be included in their number that night. It appeared Evan had been making eyes at some girl across the table from them the entire time and had not taken in a single sentence the boys had grammatically slaughtered between them.

"It figures," Wilkes said. "The only thing cooler than Snape joining us would be you thinking about something other than adding to your collection of groupies for once."

Evan rolled his eyes and scoffed. "Whatever Wilkes. You'll have nothing to say when your entire allowance is in my pocket tonight."

"That's unlikely," Wilkes laughed.

Avery slung his arm around Severus' shoulders. "How about we pool our resources tonight and make them our bitches?"

"Um..." Severus said.

Whatever reply Severus' brain was formulating became redundant as a door opened before them and an older Slytherin beckoned them inside quickly.

"Glad you could join us!" cried a fourth year boy from amongst the others already there; he was jointly responsible for the event. "Who's here now? Rosier, Avery, Wilkes, the little half-blood... Snape, is it?"

"That's right!" Wilkes replied cheerfully, dropping down beside his older relative. "Thanks for the invite."

The fourth year laughed. "You're easy money."

Wilkes took the cards his cousin was dealing and smirked as he dealt them himself. "That's my line, I think you will find."

The fourth year's friends laughed and drinks were put in the first years' hands. "Enjoy yourself."

"Thank you."

One of the Mulciber girls approached the four first years and smiled. "Hi Evan. Who's your friend?"

Evan's face became charming. "This is Severus," he told the pretty second year. "He's half Prince, and has a skill with the cards."

The girl widened her welcoming smile in Severus' direction and took his arm. "You can help me then. I'm hopeless at cards."

Severus gave Rosier a suspicious look but Evan's face seemed genuinely innocent. 'Go,' Evan mouthed.

"How did that happen?" Wilkes pouted, aghast, as Mulciber led Severus to sit with a number of attractive second and third year girls. Wilkes' cousin laughed. "Mulciber likes them pliable," was all he said.

"I didn't expect him to get picked up by a \*girl\*," Wilkes muttered to Avery.

"Well at least you know you won't be responsible for someone receiving a physical deformity when Malfoy finds out," Avery replied.

Wilkes rolled his eyes as the girls around Severus giggled. They continued to coddle him as they played, and cheered girlishly when any of them won. At least Snape wasn't having a problem with money.

"Don't worry about it," Wilkes' cousin murmured to him. "They think the half-blood's like a puppy: just a novelty to play with."

"Batters the ego, though," Wilkes said.

"Not really. They respect you as an equal," his cousin said. "Damn, these cards are awful."

Evan had found himself on the outskirts of the group of girls and was quickly being absorbed into it. Severus flashed him a grin. "This... is really fun," he said.

Evan grinned back. "I'm glad."

Mulciber's older sister flopped down beside them. "I'm out of this round," she grumbled cheerfully. "Hello, you're the Rosier boy and the Prince half-blood, aren't you?"

"That's us," Evan replied. "Never mind, you can cheer us on. It's very heartening to be encouraged by such a lovely-looking, well-blooded girl."

Severus swallowed. He wasn't used to speaking to girls as mature and respectable as the elder Mulciber sister. He glanced at the steadily increasing mound of galleons before him.

Did they help?

The older Mulciber patted Severus' arm and bent her head to speak to him quietly, "You look nervous. I hope it isn't the company or the stakes?"

"Um," Severus pressed his lips together as he tried to think of a reply.

Mulciber turned away. "Nott! The Prince boy needs a refill!"

Severus blinked in surprise as another older girl from the other side of the room called, "Sure!" and quickly brought him a drink. The girl who was seated beside her a moment before lost the game and joined them.

"You're playing so well," she commented as the game progressed.

Severus ducked his head and thanked her awkwardly from behind his curtain of greasy hair.

"Do you think we could team up for the next game? I might not lose so badly then," Nott's friend continued.

Bellatrix Black had been watching them for some time from where she was seated drinking with the older students, but she got up from her arrogant sprawl and marched towards the greasy, little half-blood. "Andromeda! Remember your breeding."

"I... He's a Prince, Bella," Andromeda replied awkwardly.

"He is a half-blood and you are a full-blooded Black," Bellatrix retorted.

The other girls cringed away from Severus at Bellatrix's clear disapproval. "He plays well, sister. It is only a card game with our House mates, not a sordid tête-à-tête," Andromeda replied.

Bellatrix gave a clear look of displeasure and tossed her hair. "I want no place in somewhere that permits this mockery of class structure." She left and it caused a visible feeling of unease in the room.

The fourth years shrugged and the older years left. "Play on!" Wilkes' cousin said, and the first years found their drinks refilled.

It was clear that Bellatrix had made her displeasure further known as later that night the Prefect Lucius appeared in the room with an almost-angry look on his face. "This is not conduct befitting our House," he said frostily. A parchment appeared in the air beside him and filled with red names of people who were in the room, and dark yellow names of people who had left. "I will not be taking points but you will all be disciplined for this," he said. His eyes fell on Severus, who had stuffed his winnings in his pockets and was staring back at Lucius with a worried and perhaps even guilty expression.

"You. Dormitory, now. The rest of you, get to your dormitories this instant and do not dare let another House or Professor see you out after curfew."

Severus bolted to his dormitory whilst the other around him swiftly cleared up and obeyed Malfoy's instructions. Lucius followed the first year and barred the boy's entry to the room whilst the other boys slunk in.

"This is unacceptable," Lucius hissed when the heavy door clicked closed behind the other boys.

Although he did not want to, Severus shrank back at the steely look in Malfoy's eyes.

"Explain yourself," Lucius ordered crisply.

"I... I was just trying to fit in," Severus snapped.

Provoked by Severus' tone, Lucius took hold of the boy's jaw sharply. "Give me lip like that again tonight and I will remove it," the sixth year promised darkly.

Severus felt a cold feeling slide from his chest to his stomach. He did not doubt Malfoy would cut off his lower lip if angered enough. "S...sorry."

Lucius held the black look he was giving the first year and Severus' irritation grew. What right did Malfoy think he had to threaten Severus like that and scare him? Severus wrenched his wand from his robes and blurted a curse, but Lucius grabbed his thin arm and yanked it out of harm's way, to allow the angry sparks that Severus' wand emitted to bounce off of the stone wall instead. Lucius tore the wand from Severus.

"That was an astonishingly idiotic thing to do," Malfoy growled.

Severus swallowed. The grip Malfoy had on him was burning his skin and it hurt; he was worried the bones in his arm would not withstand the grip.

"Little boys who cannot be trusted to behave in an acceptable manner need to be supervised," Lucius said coldly. "You've earned yourself the task of warming my bed. Chores are good for an undisciplined brat's character."

"What?" Severus gasped.

"You *will* learn to behave tolerably, Severus Snape," Lucius replied, "and you will suffer until you do."

"Malfoy, I-" Severus began.

"Hush," Lucius said firmly. "Come along." He flaunted Severus' wand in encouragement.

Severus stood his ground, feeling sick. "No, Malfoy, I-"

"Have no say in the matter," Lucius finished. "Now march yourself into my bedroom, or I will drag you."

"No," Severus protested. He considered calling to his dorm mates, but they could never be expected to stand up to Malfoy.

Lucius gave him a frank look. "Do you want to annoy me further?"

Severus closed his eyes. What should he do?

"Severus."

The dark-haired boy opened his eyes at a softening in Malfoy's coldly furious voice. "I am not going to rape you tonight, however much it might teach you your rightful place. I shall never rape you, I hope."

"That's truly reassuring," Severus retorted, but felt slightly less panicked.

Lucius leant forwards and whispered, "I am only not punishing you for that because we are alone."

Severus regarded the older boy warily.

"Move yourself," Lucius demanded. "We have not got all night."

Malfoy had both of their wands and Severus was no physical match for the blonde. He obeyed with a glower on his face, and tried to skirt out of Malfoy's grasp.

Lucius closed his bedroom door behind them and ensured Severus would not be able to open it. He summoned a night-shirt, shrunk it, and sent Severus' outer clothes to a chair.

Severus cried out in alarm. Lucius tossed him the night-shirt. "Put that on or you will get cold."

"What the hell, Malfoy?" Severus spat.

"If you want to continue using that tone I can fetch my cane," Lucius replied. He sent the wands to wait out of Severus' reach.

Severus glared but covered himself with Lucius' shrunken night-shirt.

"Finally, some obedience," Lucius sighed. He crossed the room towards Severus, sniffing slightly.

"What now, you pervert?" Severus snarled.

Lucius glared back and pulled back his bedcovers; he pushed Severus towards the bed and watched the boy whiten. "Cleaning charms only do so much," Lucius drawled. "Exactly what were you doing tonight?"

"Exactly what you saw!" Severus retorted. "I drank a little and played cards!"

"For what stakes?" Lucius demanded.

"Money!"

"You are poor!" Lucius barked.

“But I play well!” Severus snapped back.

“Keep out of trouble,” Lucius growled. The younger boy did not smell of sex. “Now go to bed; it is late.”

“As if I’m going to sleep!” Severus retorted.

“You will do as you like,” Lucius drawled. “I’m going to sleep. Get into the bed.”

“I won’t sleep with you!”

“Then you will lie awake beside me all night,” Lucius said. “You are going to bed so that I know where you are, since I cannot trust you to be safely in your bed during curfew.”

Severus crossed his arms in the expensive night-shirt, feeling ridiculous in it. His bare legs somehow made him feel more vulnerable as well as cold.

“Get into bed now Severus, unless you would prefer to have me tuck you in?”

Severus took two nervous steps backwards and hit his legs off of the bed.

“Good boy,” Lucius drawled in a much-suffering voice. He began to strip, much to Severus’ alarm.

“No, Lucius-”

“Enough, Severus,” Lucius said with a smirk. “You would not be in this situation if it were not for your own misdeeds.”

Severus looked truly sick and Lucius took pity on the boy. “Relax, half-blood, I will keep my underwear on tonight, I promise you.”

Severus watched wide-eyed as the beautiful blonde boy strode towards him and the bed, wearing only the aforementioned underwear.

“Get in and go to sleep,” Lucius said. He did look tired.

Severus swallowed as Lucius nudged him onto the bed and slapped his calves. The dark-haired boy lifted his legs onto the bed and Lucius Malfoy tucked him in!

“I told you I was not intending to rape you,” Lucius said drolly, and moved around to the other side of the bed. Severus could not rip his gaze away from Lucius as the sixth year climbed into bed with him.

Lucius grinned at the attention. “Count yourself lucky, virgin. I prefer to sleep in the nude.”

Severus swallowed.

“Lie down,” Lucius told him, “and go to sleep.”

Severus did not move as he considered the order. He squeaked as Lucius pushed down on his chest and lay down beside Severus with a heavy arm over him.

“What-?” Severus yelped.

“I want to know where you are,” Lucius growled. “Now... go... to... sleep.”



## Chapter 7

Severus was warm. He was too warm and there was something heavy on top of him. It took him a moment to identify that something as another body, and a moment more to decide that although he had only ever fell asleep against his mother before, this was not her: this body was harder –more muscular; it did not smell like her; and there was something unfeminine pressing into the flesh protecting Severus' kidney.

Severus tensed upon identifying the stiflingly warm body upon him to be male, and paid more attention to its smell. It was definitely familiar.

Severus decided to open his eyes and instantly regretted it; Malfoy, sodding Lucius Malfoy in a pair of closefitting underpants was lying atop of him. The night before came back to him in hazy detail, but unfortunately so did the realisation that he felt like hell: his head hurt and \*oh\* his stomach!

He had to get up. He was going to puke. Where was the toilet? Could he stand? Malfoy was still pinning him to the bed. How was Severus going to move the colossal heap? Severus attempted to ease himself out from the grip but only managed to produce a noise of protest from the sleeping Malfoy and the muscular arms tightening further around Severus to draw him closer.

Severus attempting to push the older boy away. "Malfoy \*please\*. I think I need to be sick."

Lucius made another incoherent noise somewhere between a protest and a question.

Severus reluctantly nudged Malfoy's face with his free hand. "Please Lucius!"

"Hmm?"

Severus nudged the blonde firmly, prompting Malfoy to languidly open his eyes in question.

"Please Lucius," Severus whimpered. "I need to use the bathroom!"

Lucius stared at the youth for a moment as his wits arranged themselves. "You're chalky," he noted. Lucius registered with a start Severus' last sentence and sat up quickly. "You're ill."

Severus was looking worse by the minute. "I need to find the toilet Lucius!"

"Of course. This way..." Lucius leapt up only to observe Severus whimpered pitifully at attempting to move.

"Feel sick," Severus whispered. "Don't like it!"

"What did you drink last night?" Lucius muttered as he quickly moved to take hold of Severus ("Feel sick, really sick!" the boy reiterated) and helped move him slowly, pausing every time Severus whimpered in alarm.

Finally entering the bathroom prompted Severus to lunge for the toilet –screwing his face up in distress at the motion- and after a moment of panicked breathing he threw up violently. At length. And despite himself, young Severus started to snivel.

Lucius combed the boy's dirty hair back from his face with adult fingers and soothingly rubbed Severus' back. Severus' stomach settled slowly and between bouts of vomiting the boy wept into the kneeling Lucius' shoulder whilst gripping his skin desperately, and drowsing fitfully.

“Sh, shh,” Lucius murmured, stroking the back of the sobbing boy's head. “It will be alright. The sick feeling will go away and then I can give you some cool water and a hangover potion, yes?”

Severus cried some more. “Please.”

Lucius continued to hold the boy, rocking him as the shakes shook the slight frame, and slowly Severus regained some colour.

“Can you let me up to get you your potion? I cannot summon it without my wand.”

“Don't be long,” Severus said, nodding stiffly.

“It is only above the sink,” Lucius replied, fetching the potion and a crystal tumbler of water swiftly.

“Heavy,” Severus mumbled, attempting to snatch the glass. “Cold.”

“I can help,” Lucius replied, holding the glass to Severus' mouth to allow the boy to sip.

Swallowing both the potion and the water exerted enough energy that Severus slumped heavily back against Lucius but the potion's effects quickly produced Severus' recuperation.

“Oh, I'm so sorry,” Severus muttered in humiliation.

“Don't worry about it,” Lucius replied. “Take it easy,” he cautioned as he lifted Severus in his arms and took him out of the bathroom to deposit him back onto the bed.

“I'm fine now,” Severus protested.

“Don't argue,” Lucius declared calmly. Severus sat back against the headboard and regarded Lucius thoughtfully.

“Thank you,” he said reluctantly.

“Your first hangover?” Lucius asked. Severus nodded. “I had not realised you had drank so much last night.”

“I wasn't really counting,” Severus said.

Lucius smirked just a little. “You will now.”

“Mm,” Severus agreed. “That was \*horrible\*.”

“Little boys should not drink so much alcohol,” Lucius said.

“I’m not...” Severus did not bother to finish his sentence. Lucius had undressed him and tucked him into bed the night before and had since helped him to the bathroom and cradled him as he sobbed.

“I am appalled that the fourth years allowed you so much to drink,” Lucius said.

“I could have said no,” Severus said.

“You didn’t know better... You knew that you ought not to, but not the physical consequences,” Lucius replied. “Motions will already be in place to discipline the older years for allowing the first years strong alcohol.”

“I didn’t mean to get anyone into trouble,” Severus said.

“No one can blame you, they were in the wrong,” Lucius answered.

“Black wouldn’t have told you if it wasn’t for me though,” Severus said.

“Bella? If you were someone else you would likely be punished by your peers because they cannot punish her, but you are under my protection. Besides, everyone will also expect you to have received severe punishment at my hand.”

Severus shrunk into himself, biting his lip ever so slightly. “What are you going to do?”

“To punish you? I ought to have let you suffer your hangover and beaten you soundly when you had sobered,” Lucius replied casually. He sighed at the look on Snape’s face. “Clearly I have abstained. You have not even been draped over my lap for that spanking Rosier so wisely advised.”

Severus gave Lucius a wary look. “Then what..? Am I going to have to... bl... um... fellate..?”

“No sexual favours now,” Lucius said. “If you’re a good boy I will not expect you to fellate me this year, or next.”

“After?” Severus asked bravely.

“Perhaps,” Lucius said. “However, the matter at hand is the prospect of your current punishment.”

Severus swallowed.

Lucius continued, “I am certain bathing you would suitably dampen your disobedient streak, but I am inclined to be lenient on you this one time. You are just a boy and all boys are naughty at times. Although you need not think for a moment that if I find you drinking more than two large firewhiskies again before you are older that I will refrain from whipping your skinny buttocks.”

“Understood, Malfoy,” Severus mumbled.

“Now, as for your punishment, I believe it would be beneficial for you to spend more time at my side to prevent yourself from suffering bad influences.”

“You wanted Avery to keep an eye on me!” Severus protested.

“And he will be a sorry boy when I have dealt with him,” Lucius replied. “I would not tell him that you have not been thrashed for last night’s antics if you do not wish him to be resentful.”

“It’s not his fault, you can’t-”

“Everyone present last night will be punished, Severus. The younger girls will get a thorough scolding and a few taps, the younger boys and the elder girls will receive a spanking and the older boys will be receiving a caning.”

“What about me?”

Lucius sighed. “You aren’t getting formally punished because it will be assumed that I made you an extremely sorry little boy and they’ll feel sorry for you. You would only receive an official spanking if I requested it. Now, if you have no more questions I intend to shower.”

Severus realised that Lucius was still only wearing those obscenely, attractively tight underpants. The young man’s body was both lithe and muscular and every hard part of him (his cheek- and jawbone for instance, because that was where Severus was attempting to hold his gaze: away from Lucius’ eyes and away from the impressive abdominal muscles that only persuaded the gaze lower) was perfectly chiselled. Lucius could read Severus’ current thoughts and smiled as the boy hid his face behind his lank hair.

“You will wash that rat’s nest once I have showered,” Lucius declared. “Unless of course,” he said over his shoulder as Severus glowered, “you are attempting to persuade me to bring you into the shower with me and wash your hair myself.”

“No!” Severus cried.

“Good. You’ll be an obedient boy then,” Lucius said as he disappeared into the shower. Severus sat back and wondered exactly how he found himself in such messes, and where the hell was his wand? He got up and began searching.

Lucius could hear Severus moving around. “If you want to join me so badly you can come wash my back,” he called jovially.

Severus stuttered a negative which made Lucius smile to himself as he rubbed a luxuriantly lathering product over his exquisite body. The water rushed over him, eager to please him with its temperature and delighted to explore every piece of him.

Lucius left the shower and tucked a towel loosely around his lower ribs as he bent over the sink to brush his teeth. He spat and adjusted the towel comfortably around his waist.

Severus made no flinch as Lucius appeared; instead he gazed at the blonde with surprise and interest.

“You are lucky,” Lucius replied to the look.

Severus flushed. “I-”

“You should enjoy the sight,” Lucius said casually as he retrieved an outfit from his large wardrobe. “It is good for you, and perfectly understandable.”

Severus sighed. “Can I get my wand back?”

“You won’t need it in the shower,” Lucius replied, and casually removed his towel to dry himself. Severus quickly locked himself into the shower room.

Lucius had taken care of him when he was wretchedly hungover, and had not used it to his advantage or to torment. Why?

Severus took off Lucius’ nightshirt, peering suspiciously at the locked door, and gingerly stepped into the shower. A spray of warm water met him and he ducked his head under it gratefully. This morning had been an experience. He had never drank so much before, but had not considered himself to be drunk enough to be so ill. Perhaps the amount of alcohol he had consumed had not had enough time to make itself known before Lucius had put him to bed.

Lucius had looked after him. Severus had felt truly hellish and Lucius had attended diligently to him.

Was Lucius fucking with his mind? Usually Severus could tell when someone was trying to do that.

At that moment Lucius was smiling amusedly to himself about the locked door. He finished drying and stepped into his underwear.

Severus quickly washed his hair.

Lucius put on his trousers and reached for his shirt.

Severus stepped out of the shower and dried. He had no clean clothes. Ought he put the nightshirt back on? He picked it off of the floor and unlocked the door. Lucius gave him a glance and then scowled and gave him a longer look.

Severus took a step back. “What?” he snapped.

“You still have shampoo bubbles in your hair. Do you not know how to wash it at all?” Lucius said. “Get back in the shower and I will show you.”

“I’ll do it myself!”

“You clearly are incapable,” Lucius retorted coolly. “Now you can follow my instructions or I can decide to check you adequately washed the rest of yourself.”

“I hate you,” Severus stated as he turned back to the shower and reluctantly dropped his towel.

Lucius picked it up and put it on a rail. “You can hate me all you want; you need only obey me,” he said. “Now into the shower with you.”

Severus nervously obeyed and stood awkwardly as he attempted to shield both his genitals and his bottom from Lucius’ gaze.

“Relax,” Lucius said. “Kneel down away from me and place your hands over your lap.”

Severus obeyed and Lucius produced a shield over Severus’ eyes, nose and mouth before rinsing the boy’s hair properly. He took hold of random segments of hair and rubbed them between his fingers. “This is not clean,” he said. “It would squeak when I did this if it was.” He reached for the shampoo and lathered Severus’ hair appropriately.

The boy’s shoulders were so tense. Lucius paused before rinsing Severus’ hair and put a hand lightly on his bony shoulder. “Really, \*relax\*,” Lucius said. “You can take me at my word when I have told you I do not intend to molest you unless you need reminded who the master of your body is.”

Severus hardly felt comforted.

Lucius sighed and gave the shoulder a gentle squeeze before beginning to rinse the shampoo from Severus’ hair. “Fits of temper are unseemly,” Lucius said quietly. “I am not going to suddenly turn on you. I am honest about my intentions towards you and my behaviour towards you this morning is hardly cruel. I have little need for broken... I find broken toys reflect poorly on a person. I wish to hurt you as little as possible.”

“I don’t want to sleep with you,” Severus said softly.

“Your feelings are likely to change as you mature,” Lucius said.

“Why me?” Severus asked.

Lucius had rinsed Severus’ scalp thoroughly but continued to do so as Severus did not seem to detest the contact. “You are rare. There are few Slytherin half-bloods and even fewer with a Prince bloodline. You are powerful and you regularly scrap outnumbered, but survive. You’re intelligent and talented. You are an asset, objectively speaking.”

“That doesn’t mean I’ll make a good mistress,” Severus said.

“You can learn,” Lucius said. “And I did not begin to list your less objective attractive qualities.”

“I’m young and virginal?” Severus suggested dryly.

“Your eyes, for one,” Lucius said. “Your \*witty\* humour for another.” He got up, cancelled the shield, and reached for two towels. He dropped the largest over Severus’ shoulders and the boy swiftly wrapped it around himself. Lucius dropped the hand towel on Severus’ wet scalp and left the room. “I will find you something to wear.”

Severus quietly began to dry his hair. Lucius appeared with an outfit and left again. Severus dressed and hung up the damp towels before joining the much older boy.

“I suggest that you stay here for a while before you return to your dorms,” Lucius said. “Your dorm mates likely will not desire an audience when they return from their disciplining.”

“You aren’t..?”

“No,” Lucius said. “The head boy and girl.”

Severus glanced at Lucius in surprise. “You’re letting me go back to my dorm?”

“There only. Unless you would rather accompany me to a meeting with Bellatrix later.”

“No,” Severus said. He watched Lucius style his hair. “What do you see in her?”

“Asides from the obvious, that she is the eldest Black daughter, beautiful, passionate and a proper pureblood?”

“Yeah, that,” Severus muttered.

Lucius smiled wryly. “Not a great deal. She and I are as bad as each other. Narcissa has a more pleasant influence on my nature, but she is the youngest. Andromeda... she seems so distant. I would dislike a dreamer for a wife. Bellatrix and Narcissa are intelligent and would make better matches.”

“I think Narcissa would tolerate me more,” Severus said.

“Perhaps,” Lucius said. “Bellatrix might enjoy the freedom my having another lover would offer her.”

“The last thing I’d like is to do Bellatrix any favours,” Severus muttered.

Lucius laughed and reached for a shirt.

## Chapter 8

“Evan was worried about you.”

Severus glanced at Wilkes and curled his lip as he slunk into his dormitory. “Then you weren’t, I presume?”

Wilkes shrugged. “There’s little point worrying about the inevitable.” He paused. “I imagine spending the night was little fun... If you want we can go looking for lions to torment.”

Severus smiled just a little but shook his head. “I’m grounded,” he drawled. It was unusual when Wilkes took much notice of Severus, but not unheard of. Severus was unsure if it felt nice to be sympathised with, or worrisome.

“Me as well,” Wilkes smirked. Of course he would find being grounded amusing; he thought everything was funny. “So I am glad I’m not going to get myself into trouble by running off somewhere. How about we hone our duelling skills for a bit? You can imagine I’m \*him\* if it makes you feel better.”

Severus snorted. “You’re not much competition and I doubt you could be mistaken for a Malfoy.” He was surprised that Wilkes was really trying. What was he after? Or did he really feel bad for what he thought Severus had experienced?

Wilkes rolled his eyes. “You undervalue me,” he smirked. His engaging sneer ebbed and a more serious expression sat on his face. “If Evan was still here he would ask if you want to talk.”

Severus quickly schooled his expression to nonchalance but examined Wilkes’ face from under the cover of his unusually clean curtain of hair. Wilkes seemed strained yet genuine, but looked relieved when Severus said, “I don’t.”

“Good,” Wilkes said. His lips pursed ever so slightly in a thoughtful way.

“Why are you comparing yourself to Evan?” Severus asked.

Wilkes shrugged. “He’s more competent than I am with people and I don’t want you to resent me for involving you in last night.”

“You think you can make up for what happened last night with Malfoy?” Severus asked.

Wilkes paled and Severus held back the smirk. It cost nothing to ensure Wilkes cut him some slack in the future.

“My cousin taught me a cushioning charm,” Wilkes said. “For the ...hiding. We can’t use it at meals because Malfoy might notice, but it will make classes easier.”

Despite himself, Severus had to make an effort to staunch the rush of blood intent on colouring his face. He succeeded of course. Severus had no need of the cushioning charm



because he alone had not been officially disciplined. He had no other reason to need to cushioning charm this morning either, despite what Wilkes might assume. It was embarrassing to have anyone picture that scene. Still, the charm could be useful in the future. Severus quickly picked up the lesson.

“Of course you would learn so quickly,” Wilkes commented, not entirely unkindly. “It took me more than twenty minutes to get that right.”

Severus shrugged. There was not really anything to say. And it was a more tolerable silence than the one that had followed Wilkes’ insinuation that Malfoy had raped Severus earlier.

Especially since Malfoy had proved not to be a monster last night.

Wilkes moved away and headed for the door. “We should go down to breakfast.” A slightly awkward shadow touched his eyes and the corners of his mouth. “I think you overdid it with that glamour you know. You don’t normally look so groomed.”

“I’m not wearing a glamour,” Severus said, touching his hair unconsciously. “Malfoy made me shower before I left.”

Wilkes read things into that which embarrassed Severus further. “No luck Snape,” Wilkes said sympathetically.

Severus shrugged. He did not want to discuss this. “Let’s just go down to breakfast.”

\*

Breakfast was not the most comfortable affair that Severus had ever endured, but mealtimes had never been particularly comfortable anyway. Wilkes was less harsh in making Severus the butt of jokes to Avery and Severus was not sure how to feel about that. Evan was not at the table, but that was not unusual.

Avery said Rosier was having some pretty Ravenclaw kiss the fresh welts on his buttocks better. Severus did not want to know any further details.

Malfoy had taken his seat beside Severus and Bellatrix was on the blonde’s arm, laughing prettily at appropriate moments in the table’s conversation and shooting Severus haughty looks. Severus stared at his bony wrists and the sleeves they sprouted from. He was trying hard to avoid making his jaw visibly tense or his brow visibly furrowed as Bellatrix made a point of emphasising how influential she was in the present company.

Severus blinked in surprise as Malfoy’s large, warm hand settled over the top of his own. Severus inhaled shakily as the hand showed no sign of moving. Somehow this seemed worse than if the hand had rested on Severus’ shoulder or even his thigh: it was a mixture of public and intimate that made Severus uncomfortable.

It was nice though: the warmth of Lucius’ hand. Severus did not experience an excess of casual touching.

Severus fought the heat threatening to creep up his face as he saw other Slytherins notice Malfoy's hand on his. Was it worth trying to move it?  
Severus sensed rather than heard Bellatrix's laughter falter for a note when she noticed the hand covering Snape's.

Lucius stared straight ahead as he squeezed Severus' hand.

Bellatrix looked irritated for a nanosecond before pouting mildly huffily and rolling her eyes at the silly antics of a young man suited to her bloodline.

Lucius turned to her and smiled courteously.

"Must you do that at the table?" Bellatrix asked through curved lips that Severus knew were not smiling.

Lucius lifted his hand and rested it on the side of Severus' head for a moment, toying with wisps of clean, dark hair. He brushed his thumb over Severus' cheekbone before smiling widely at Bellatrix and moving his hand to his goblet.

"I am certain you need not be jealous of my bitch, Bella," Lucius said lightly as he raised his drink to his mouth.

Bellatrix seemed inwardly offended, but it only lasted an instant as she caught the flinch of the half-blood.

"I'm not used to eating so near anyone's \*bitch\*," Bellatrix replied, "forgive me."

Lucius tilted the goblet at his lips and drank for a moment. "I have high standards. My \*bitch\* is worthier than most to sit at my side."

Bellatrix laughed off the warning but the conversation shifted away from Severus.

Severus felt his pulse racing and willed his hands not to shake. Being insulted thus made him feel as though he was burning and he wanted little more than to hex Black off of the face of the planet.

But he couldn't do that.

It would be nice to hex Lucius too, whilst he was at it. Speaking about him like that! Severus bit his lip to prevent his breathing quickening.

Lucius turned to him. "Are you not going to be late for class, Severus?"

Severus barely shot Lucius a glance and swung himself off of the bench. "Sure," he grunted.

Malfoy snatched his wrist. "I'll see you afterwards."

Severus had a double period in a classroom close to Malfoy's second class. The boy sighed and nodded. He just wanted to leave. He turned to do so and felt his yearmates get up to form an escort around him.

He said nothing about it and kept walking.

The other boys filed into the classroom and filled the desks in a ring around the seat beside Wilkes. Severus was expected to sit there.

He straightened out of his slouch as he saw red hair enter the room. Lily saw him standing there and smiled.

Severus shifted his satchel on his shoulder and crossed over to her. "Hi."

Lily smirked. "Did you remember your house are jerks?"

"How could I forget?" Severus replied.

"Good," Lily said. "Pull up a chair beside me."

Severus did and pulled his supplies from his bag in time with Lily. He could smell her hair as she rustled around for a quill.

"I've missed you," Lily said, finally emerging triumphantly from her bag.

Severus huffed out an almost-laugh from between his lips. It felt good to be missed by Lily.

Lily turned to him with an unthreatening scowl. "You missed me too, right?" she demanded.

Severus gave another weak snicker. "Perhaps."

"You did too, Severus Snape!" Lily snapped playfully.

Severus almost grinned but schooled his expression into a much cooler demeanour. "Did I?"

Lily ranted something in reply, but Severus was distracted by the clump of dried ink dropping onto his desk. Wilkes had thrown it; Severus did not need to see the pureblood do it.

Severus held back a sigh, because Lily would hear it, and felt a little less sick about the prospect of Slytherin retribution when Evan wandered into the classroom and deposited himself in the seat beside Wilkes.

Severus pushed the dry ink around his desk as Lily nattered on affectionately. Perhaps he could make some excuse about not desiring to be sitting in prime view of everyone after his punishment?

But Lucius hadn't actually punished him. And he was going to be displeased in two hours time when he heard that Severus had dared snub the Slytherins in favour of a muggleborn.

Severus threw his head back and swallowed a moan.

He felt a finger prod him. "What is up with you?" Lily asked with wide, innocently concerned eyes.

## Chapter 9

Severus was a sorry little boy after Malfoy promised to show his displeasure on Severus' 'poor behaviour' in potions class. Luckily, Malfoy had not punished the first year yet. Unluckily, Severus was left in no doubt that he *\*would\** be punished, and was so distressed by the threat that he had decided to skip class.

It was only history of magic anyway, but Severus hoped he would not get caught. The class was so mind-numbing that if he merged with the rest of his housemates as they were leaving the class they would probably assume he had been there the entire time.

So Severus was wandering lonely corridors, attempting to stay out of sight and also keep his stomach from twisting into an even more uncomfortable knot of foreboding.

Meeting Remus Lupin was not what Severus had anticipated in his immediate future, but the quiet boy was suddenly blinking at him with odd amber eyes. Severus swiftly clenched his wand.

"We're both supposed to be in class," Lupin said.

"Astute observation," Severus snapped. "What are you doing here and where are your pack? Are you following me?"

Lupin blinked again slowly. "I wanted some peace," he answered calmly. "They're in class. No: I'm coming from the opposite direction, aren't I?"

Gay, gay, gay. Severus remembered what Evan had said about Lupin. Severus blushed and tried not to look at the Gryffindor. And tried to stay alert in case Lupin hexed him. And tried not to look gay. And wondered if it was worth sleeping with a Gryff to piss off Malfoy.

How dangerous was it to be near Lupin? Would Potter, Black and Petty take umbrage?

"Snape?" Lupin murmured.

"What?" Severus snapped, still staring at the boy suspiciously.

"Conversations are not typically one-sided," Lupin said.

What? Oh. Severus realised he had not replied to Lupin's explanation. So Severus answered with a sneer: "Don't *\*you and your ilk\** usually monologue?"

"I don't," Lupin said coolly.

It occurred to Severus that being hostile to Lupin was possibly not his cleverest move. "I have little experience in conversing with you," Severus admitted as diplomatically as he could bear (resisting speaking through gritted teeth only marginally).

Lupin inclined his head. "Do you have something more pressing to do?" he asked softly.

The answer that Evan would have given was 'no' so that was the reply Severus pushed from between his lips. Was Lupin looking at his lips?

Lupin smiled mildly. "What were you intending to do?"

"What business is it of yours?" Severus snarled.

Lupin retreated ever so slightly. "I was hoping we could perhaps do it together."

Dunderhead! Severus cursed himself internally. "Oh," he said, hoping that would be enough of an apology. It wasn't. "My apologies," Severus muttered, and Lupin's face opened back up.

"Perhaps a walk?" Lupin suggested in a murmur.

Severus stifled an ambush accusation and nodded tersely.

"Or we could stay here and make an attempt at conversation?" Lupin suggested.

Was Severus so easy to read? He nodded stiffly but then wondered what he was supposed to say. What would Evan say in this situation?

Severus tried. He really did.

Lupin was trying too.

Unfortunately Severus was not practiced enough at making small talk with Marauders, even when the Marauder could prove useful and seemed interested in conversing, for whatever suspicious reason. If the snapping was not enough to make Lupin uncomfortable, Severus twitching his wand ill-naturedly certainly was.

"I'll take no more of your time," Lupin murmured, softly moving away.

Severus watched him go. He knew he should apologise and go after Lupin –the boy did not seem offended to the point that he would rebuke that, which was something at least- but Severus knew he was a dismal failure in his effort to befriend Lupin and did not wish to bring about more of the same awkwardness.

"That was pathetic."

Severus did not bother to turn around. Any Slytherin could recognise the voice of the Bloody Baron. "No need to reiterate the obvious," the boy replied.

"You could learn much from the current Malfoy progeny," said the Bloody Baron, "about how to interact with people. It would suit you to be less cruel however, you do not have the standing to be as impudent."

Severus quirked an eyebrow lazily at the words of the ghost behind him. "You think he's cruel?"

"Perhaps not to you," the Bloody Baron said, "but he could be. It is the way they are bred."

“Noted,” Severus drawled. “Why are you telling me this?”

“We don’t get many impurities in the House,” the ghost said, “I am not inclined to see you shame us, or perish. Learn how to play the game.”

“I was sorted,” Severus said.

“That means that you are capable, not that you are currently \*at\* the standard.”

“I am smarter than many of my housemates, and quicker with my wand,” Severus said.

“They have breeding that compensates for their softness. You cannot afford not to hone every weapon in your meagre arsenal.”

“Noted,” Severus said. He began to walk away, and when he looked around the corridor was empty. He cast a casual tempus that persuaded him to head back to the classroom. He had a foul day ahead of him.

At least Lupin had not had the same idea to join their leaving classmates.

## Chapter 10

The way Severus rubbed the skin under his eyes was an indication of his surprise at the lack of dark rings there, and although it did not show he was relieved that the whites of his eyes had not reddened.

He did not desire conversation and kept well away from his jocular dorm mates, knocking Avery away with a bony shoulder when he dared to clap a hand on Severus' shoulder.

Severus wanted nothing more to do with any of them. He showered quickly and pulled on shabby clothing.

His dorm mates wisely refrained from suggesting that his attire could provoke a certain awful blonde further.

Severus made his way out of the dungeons as quickly as possible and headed in the opposite direction.

"Severus?"

The malevolent threats in Severus' eyes receded slightly. "Lily," he mumbled.

The pretty redhead stared at her friend. Severus seems both physically tired and world-weary to an extent she rarely saw at school. "Severus what happened?"

Severus shrugged beneath the layers he wore to detract from his thinness. "Let's not discuss it," he said.

"Oh Severus," Lily said softly, stepping forwards to take her friend's bony hand and squeezing it.

"Can we go somewhere?" Severus muttered.

"Of course, the last thing you need right now is a fight with your house mates or mine," Lily murmured, referring to both her blood status and to the antagonistic nature of certain Marauders.

Severus made a mild growling noise in agreement and followed Lily.

When they were somewhere suitable Lily guided Severus to sit and stared at him in concern.

"Stop worrying," Severus murmured.

"If I stop worrying I'll start plotting," Lily replied, coaxing a small smirk from the Slytherin.

Severus gazed at his beautiful friend. Her normally correct posture was discarded in favour of hunching towards him and the amount of caring in her eyes almost made him uncomfortable.

“Oh Severus,” Lily whispered, the concern in her voice doubling, “you’re hurt.”

“It’s nothing,” the boy replied. Reluctantly, he tolerated Lily’s scrutiny of the injuries he had apathetically examined in the shower. Lily plucked at his clothing to further see the bruising that disappeared under it.

Severus squirmed. “Don’t Lily.” Her hands felt warm on his skin; they even felt warm through his clothing. She was touching him; looking at him. He tried to pull away.

“We need to know you’re alright,” Lily replied.

Severus shook his head and drew his legs to his body: a barrier between it and Lily. Her gaze fell to his now exposed ankles.

Severus sighed and attempted to cover them, without exposing his wrists.

“You look stiff,” Lily said.

Severus let his hair fall over his face. He was stiff, but he was mostly trying to not show any more marks of shame.

“Want me to massage your legs?” Lily offered.

Severus made a face.

“They feel tight and sore don’t they?” Lily said. “They look it. Let me help.”

Severus gave a faint shrug of agreement that his legs hurt and Lily decided to take that as permission to place her hands on him.

Severus flinched but for a moment he watched Lily runs her hands up his taut, skinny legs and massage away the ache there. “Lily...” he complained.

“What? I’m not hurting anything am I? Are you hurt here too?” Lily asked.

“No,” Severus lied softly.

“Then let me try to help,” Lily said. “Relax you.”

Severus sighed. “Lils, don’t. I’m sore all over.”

Lily’s hands stilled but stayed on Severus, causing a warmth there that contrasted with the cold feeling in his chest and thawing the edges ever so slightly.

“I worry about you being amongst those monsters,” Lily said softly. “Please let me make you better somehow.”

“I don’t know how,” Severus said.

“Can I touch your chest?” Lily asked.



Severus looked at her and frowned a little. “No.”

“Are you hurt?”

“No,” Severus said.

Lily seemed to take that as permission and pushed up his oversized shirt.

“Lily,” Severus protested gruffly.

Lily placed her hand flat over his flesh. “I can feel your heartbeat,” she said.

“What are you doing?” Severus asked, with an alternating stare at her face and at the hand on his bare chest.

“Do you feel me?” Lily asked, her eyes wide as she stared into Severus’ face.

Severus’ gaze flickered and he scowled. “Of course I can feel you. You haven’t paralysed me.”

Lily cast her eyes down Severus’ torso and felt grateful that his housemates had not paralysed him either. “I’m here,” she said. “Here in your heart. I’ll always be here no matter what they do, okay?”

Something like relief shaped Severus’ face. The mood had changed and he felt safer now. She must have seen he was uncomfortable, or perhaps –definitely- he had imagined the purpose in her eyes.

Lily gave him a smile. “Friends forever.”

Severus looked at her and managed one back that was almost sweet.

He pushed his shirt down, but let Lily’s fingers remain resting on his poor excuse for a pectoral muscle. Lily might own his heart, yet perhaps Malfoy would carve a signature into Severus’ slim white thigh.

Or perhaps the injuries Malfoy had encouraged MacNair to inflict were enough of a brand of ownership.

Lily rested her head gently on Severus’ shoulder and curled her free arm around him. Severus smelt of nothing but soap and shampoo and the unusual blandness unsettled her although she was unsure why. She moved her face closer to Severus’ clothes and there was a faint scent of musk and potions. That was her Severus. Not the new, clean, restricted Slytherin he was being forcibly moulded into.

## Chapter 11

“You are not still sulking, are you?” Lucius’ appearance was not a welcome one and Severus stifled a sigh as the blonde approached.

“What could I have to sulk about?” Severus replied dryly wondering if he would be allowed to walk away.

Lucius’ lips curled into a patronising smile and Severus hated how delectable they look. “Oh Severus,” Lucius smirked, “are you trying to pretend I did not punish you?”

“You did not punish me,” Severus replied. “You had MacNair do it, remember?”

Lucius’ eyes glittered and alarm flashed across Severus’ face. Lucius smiled again, having made his point that Severus should be fearful of him, and was. “Now do not be petulant Severus,” Lucius scolded. “You do not want me to have to give you a time-out, do you?”

Severus snorted derisively and did not bother to hide his sneer. “What do you want Malfoy?”

Lucius gave him a cold look. “I suggest you attempt that question again in another tone.”

Severus bit his lip. Lucius was right: Severus could do without being punished for a resistant attitude whilst he was still sporting brilliant bruises from MacNair. “What is it you want, Malfoy?” Severus repeated in a more subdued tone.

“Good boy,” Lucius praised tauntingly, and flashed another smile. “What I desire, Severus, is to see how my favourite boy is recuperating.”

“Who?” Severus retorted in evident disbelief.

“Now Severus, do consider your tone,” Lucius warned calmly. “Of course you are still my favourite despite your being naughty recently. I am not going to discard you for errant behaviour before you are even properly educated.”

“What?” Severus sighed.

“Severus really,” Lucius scolded, “your tone and posture are appalling today. Rectify it and once and maintain it properly.”

Severus frowned and pressed his lips together. “To what purpose?” he growled.

“You *will* desist using a disrespectful tone of voice Severus if you desire to avoid receiving a sore face,” Lucius warned.

“It’s already sore, like the rest of me,” Severus replied, but muted some of the venom in his voice.

“You *are* impossible,” Lucius stated, giving a dry smile that Severus did not understand.

“What are you talking about?” Severus asked.

“You, Severus,” Lucius replied. “I am fond of your spirit, despite its culmination in less desirable behaviours such as those you have been exhibiting just presently.”

Severus curled his lip slightly but was silent.

“What are you thinking?” Lucius asked.

Severus glanced at the older boy in surprise. Slytherins rarely asked that question of each other. “What good is my spirit to you if you have definite ideas about what you want from me?”

“I will marry a girl who compliments me in every way,” Lucius answered, “I want a lover who is challenging, surprising and unsycophantic.”

Severus spread out his arms. “I am not built to be a challenge.”

Lucius stepped forwards and reached out his hand –slowly enough for Severus to understand the move was unthreatening. Lucius tapped Severus’ forehead lightly. “You are built for it in here.”

Severus gazed at Lucius suspiciously. The younger boy was unused to touch or encouragement.

“Don’t get your hopes up,” Severus said. “Can I go now?”

“Whilst you can,” Lucius agreed with a cool purr.

“More threats?” Severus drawled softly as he stepped away.

Lucius exhibited a feral smile that sat perfectly at home on his face. “I have no need to threaten you, Severus. Life will show you that your existence will be difficult without the privileges I can bestow on you.”

“I am well-versed in ‘difficult’,” Severus replied.

“You will tire of it,” Lucius said. “Why should you struggle when I can transform your existence?”

“I won’t tire today,” Severus said, “and I won’t tire tomorrow. Not when you are my alternative.”

“The tomorrow I have told you of will come,” Lucius said.

Severus left. He was intent on finding himself as much enjoyment as he could before that time came, if ever. He wanted Lily.

In the following weeks Lucius seemed content for the most part to give Severus some space. Severus spent as much time with Lily as he could, despite the clear disapproval of his

housemates. When Lily was busy Severus studied or allowed Avery to coax him into socialising with the other Slytherins.

The other Slytherins were suspicious of Severus at first and Severus knew it. His low blood and poor choice in company did him no favours. However, the more Severus' dorm mates encouraged his presence in the common room, the more he relaxed there and showed himself to be witty and skilled. Lucius simply watched as Severus integrated into his house. It was still clear that Severus' blood was tainted. The boy would never truly rise in the ranks without Lucius' help.

## Chapter 12

Severus struggled to get excited over much; but he could certainly say that Honeydukes was a novelty. Lily was vocal about her own enrapture with the place. Every so often the phrase tumbled from her lips: “Severus, look!”

Severus did, following quietly behind her with only a shine in his eyes and the occasional twitching of his lips to announce his own interest. Lily spun around in delight as she regarded the magic treats all around her. The light bounced off her hair and the flicker of red and gold danced before Severus’ eyes as Lily twirled and danced and darted around.

“I’ve no idea what I want,” she confided in him breathlessly, her eyes gleaming with excitement and desire. “Isn’t it all magical?”

“Magical,” Severus agreed quietly, a little gruffly, and found that though the bewitched sweets drew his attention, his gaze continued to steal back to Lily. The girl took no notice of the awkwardness in his voice: she presumed Severus was having difficulty keeping nonchalant amidst the overwhelming treasure trove they had discovered together.

“What do you want to try first?” Lily asked.

“I don’t know,” Severus said. He stared helplessly at the noise and colour crowding around him and scowled coolly at it.

Lily wandered the shop thoughtfully and eventually chose two different packets of sweets. “One for now and one for later,” she said to Severus with a conspiring smile. “What do you want?”

Severus glanced around and swallowed. He had never had so much choice. A flash of copper and gold foil caught his gaze. They reflected back the exact colours of Lily’s hair. Severus wandered forwards and picked up a packet carefully.

Lily trotted up and gazed at his choice. “Mmm, they look good. What do they do?”

“I don’t know,” Severus answered honestly and turned the packet over in his hands to check. Lily read over his shoulder and smiled.

“Nice choice,” she said.

Severus gazed at the packet for a moment then back at Lily. “Let’s go pay,” he said.

Lily nodded and smiled. She shifted her sweets to cradle them with one arm and took Severus’ hand as she skipped over to the counter’s queue. Standing amongst the other schoolchildren that until then Severus had managed to ignore, he glanced down at their clasped hands uncomfortably. Lily hummed to herself happily.

The queue moved forwards and Lily moved to the counter. She let go of Severus' hand to count out her money and once she had been served waited at Severus' side. Severus paid and followed Lily out of the shop. She linked arms with him cheerfully and opened her bag. "Which do you want to try first?" she asked.

Severus speculated at the two packets. "That," he said.

Lily smiled. "Slytherin green?"

"No," Severus said, "The green like your eyes."

Lily grinned and opened the packet, holding it out towards Severus. He took one and waited until Lily had chosen her's. They unwrapped them in sync and met each other's eyes as they cautiously tasted the treats.

"Mmm," Severus said. "They taste like that apple cake your mum makes."

Lily nodded and smiled, leaning into him as they walked along the street. Severus allowed himself to enjoy the contact.

That was when Lucius turned around a nearby corner with Bellatrix Black upon his arm. He noticed Severus and Lily immediately and narrowed his eyes momentarily.

Feeling unfriendly eyes on him, Severus stumbled and gazed in Lucius' direction.

Lucius gave him a cool glance then turned Bellatrix away. Bellatrix tossed her head and shot a further glare in Severus' direction before placing her hand more possessively on Lucius' arm. Lucius led her into an expensive shop.

"Severus?" Lily murmured. "Are you in trouble?"

"Don't worry about it," Severus said with a dark expression. "Come on, we might as well make the most of today if I'm going to be punished for it."

Lily followed, squeezing his arm tightly.

\* \* \*

When they returned to school, Severus and Lily slipped into their empty Potions classroom. They were unlikely to be disturbed there.

"Shall we try my sweets?" Severus suggested, hoping to lighten the mood.

Lily smiled and agreed. Severus quickly poured the sweets onto a desk and they shared them out cheerfully.

It was not long before Lily began to laugh. "The gold ones make you feel happy but the red ones actually make you unable to stop smiling!"

“It just said ‘feel good’ on the packet,” Severus sniffed, covering his hand with his face. “I’m never eating these in public!”

Lily pulled his hand away, her smile equally as artificially large. “Stop that, I like your smile.”

“I like yours too,” Severus grumbled as he obeyed. “Here, you have all the red ones,” he said.

Lily laughed and shook her head, but took a small handful. “No, I want to see you eat them more often,” she said.

Severus stuck out his tongue.

Lily unwrapped another. “Oh look, it has a little heart on it. I didn’t notice before.”

“Tacky,” Severus said.

“That you let me eat your hearts?” Lily teased.

Severus glowered at her. She laughed fondly and offered him one of the gold sweets.

Severus took it and gave it a glance before he placed it in his mouth.

“This has a star,” he said.

Lily opened another. “Mines too. These are nice.” She regarded Severus comfortably. “How do you feel?”

“Comfortable,” Severus said.

“Same,” Lily said.

They sat together for some time, occasionally conversing or making jokes, and at other points enjoying the companionable lull in speech. They had plenty of sweets still spread before them. Severus slipped some of the gold stars into his pocket as he got up to leave. They had left a warm feeling in his chest and made him disinterested in Lucius’ displeasure. Severus would send some on to her mother.

Lily picked up a red sweet and pushed it into Severus’ hand. “Eat it tomorrow,” she said. “I want to see that smile again.”

Severus curled his lips but took the sweet. Both their fake smiles had finally faded to something almost normal.

“It’s getting near curfew,” Severus said.

“Will you be okay?” Lily asked.

“I’ll be fine,” Severus said, hoping his statement was truthful.

“I’ll hex them into the hospital wing if they hurt you again,” Lily growled.

Severus' lips twitched. "Come on, I'll walk you to the tower."

Lily swept the remaining sweets into Severus' pocket. "Thanks."

\* \* \*

Afterwards Severus slunk carefully into the Slytherin common room. Luckily, Lucius and Bellatrix were elsewhere and Severus made it to his dorm room unscathed.

Avery glanced up but greeted him in a tone that invited little conversation. Severus tossed a sweet onto Avery's bed, careful to avoid spilling Avery's ink, then let Avery attempt his homework in peace.

Severus popped a gold sweet into his mouth and took off his outdoor clothing. Letting the sweet burst open in his mouth, Severus flopped onto his bed and kicked his curtains partway closed.

He had enjoyed going to Honeydukes with Lily. It had been exciting, but it also reminded him of buying cheap sweets from the ice cream van together and sharing them in the park. However, instead of Lily's sulky sister Petunia the atmosphere had been dampened by Malfoy.

Severus knew he was in trouble. He closed his eyes.

Some time later Avery finished his homework and came to sit on Severus' bed. "Thanks for the sweet," he said. "Are you okay?"

"For now it's debatable," Severus muttered.

\* \* \*

He left the dungeons early the following morning to avoid Lucius and Bellatrix. Severus wandered with little purpose other than avoiding anyone who was displeased with him.

It appeared Remus Lupin had felt equally unsociable that morning.

"No entourage this morning, Lupin?" Severus asked.

The boy regarded Severus with unreadable gold eyes. "They're asleep."

"Shouldn't you be making the most of the rare quiet to study?" Severus said.

Ignoring the insult, Remus shrugged. "Probably," he said.

Severus gave the boy a suspicious look then, but said nothing.

"Why are you up so early?" Remus asked.

"Avoiding the pleasantries of my housemates," Severus drawled.

"Oh yes," Remus said. His face said that he understood that.



Severus stared at the other boy. Lupin bore the scrutiny with tolerance before turning his mild, gold eyes on Severus questioningly.

“Would you like a sweet?” Severus found himself muttering.

\* \* \*

Severus did not see Lily until much later in the day.

“How are you?” she asked.

“Breathing,” Severus muttered back.

Lily gave him a worried look but smiled anyway. “I’ve got something to cheer you up,” she said brightly.

“Oh?” Severus replied.

Lily held out the packet of sweets she had bought but had not opened yesterday.

Severus’ lips twitched. “Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans,” he read. “You first,” he said gallantly.

Lily gave him a dry look but opened the bag and tried one gamely.

“Watermelon,” she said cheerfully.

Lily offered him the bag challengingly and Severus took one at random, pushing it bravely between his lips. He almost spat it out in shock.

“Are you alright?” Lily asked.

Severus nodded but declined any more sweets. The Every Flavour Bean had tasted like the lipgloss Lily had worn the one summer day they had played Truth Or Dare with the neighbourhood children.

## Chapter 13

Severus had deliberately not sent any of the grinning sweets to his mother lest they antagonise his father. Come the Christmas break, Severus wondered why he'd bothered, because the strain between his parents was worse than he ever remembered it to be.

Without Severus around to be harmed by Tobias, Eileen had been speaking her mind more than she had in years. It had not served her well, but she had lost faith in her husband a long time ago.

She reined in her argumentativeness when her only child returned for the holidays, but he could taste the tension in the air. He did not know what had caused it, but it worried him.

Eileen and Severus did their best to keep out of Tobias' way, and for a little while that worked.

Severus almost jumped out of his skin when an enormous owl appeared before his mother on Christmas day.

She looked utterly stunned, and for a moment did not react at all to Tobias' furious exclamations. Eventually she blinked and reached out to take the message from the bird, stroking it absently.

“If your ruddy parents think that just because we've let the kid go to that bloody school that they can-”

Eileen gave a small frown and nodded a little in her husband's direction, as though she were listening and agreeing peacefully. She took a piece of food from the table and handed it to the owl, making a gentle shooing motion with her frail hands.

The imperious messenger gave her a cool look and perched pointedly on the crooked coat stand.

“Get that bloody owl-”

“He's waiting for a reply,” Eileen explained.

“Your father?” Tobias sneered.

“No, the owl,” Eileen replied. “The owl... is a boy. He's been trained to wait for a reply. I don't think the owl is my father's... He never favoured this kind. He preferred fast owls over strong.”

Severus watched the scene play out before him with horrified fascination. He had no memory of his grandparents, who had disowned their daughter for her relationship with the muggle Tobias, and he had very few memories of his mother acting familiar with the wizarding world. She had been in a very odd mood for days after sneaking Severus into Diagon Alley

for his school supplies. More urgently, Tobias was liable to blow up at any moment over the invasion of wizardry within his muggle house.

“The quicker I reply the quicker we can have the owl out of the house,” Eileen stated, brushing her fingers along the seal of the parchment.

“Burn the thing and I'll get a broom for the owl,” Tobias suggested.

“They might send another,” Eileen pointed out.

Tobias huffed, but motioned to his wife to follow her own suggestion. He was sated enough with food for the time being that he was not as quick as usual to jump into a raving temper.

Eileen opened the letter warily, doing her best to school any hope entirely from her sunken features. She blinked quickly, looking pale as she read and reread the text.

“What is it?” Tobias asked impatiently.

Eileen swallowed and stared at her son with a heavy expression he could not interpret. “It's... an offer of intent. From... a House of High Standing.”

Severus' eyes widen and he felt heat creep up his neck. It went unnoticed due to the feeble glow of the nearby Christmas lights.

“A what now?” Tobias snapped.

“Someone has made an offer for our son's future,” Eileen explained.

“Like an apprenticeship?” Tobias asked.

Eileen made a breathy noise. “In a... loose sense of the word, I suppose, yes.”

“So he needn't go back to that blasted school?” Tobias questioned. Severus felt sick at the thought.

“Well no, he'd be expected to complete his schooling first,” Eileen said carefully, “the offer would come into place when he reached his majority at seventeen.”

“Eighteen, you mean,” corrected Tobias.

“Seventeen for wizards,” Eileen said softly. To circumvent a snarl from her husband she added, “Which would be one less year of putting food in his belly.”

Severus watched the exchange quietly. He knew his mother wanted him around, but what would happen to her if he had to leave?

Tobias made considering noises. “But this would be working for a wizarding family, you say?”

“A very... traditional, and rich family,” Eileen admitted, watching her husband scowl, “but they would... be paying us, for the privilege of having our son in their service.”

“Paying us, not him?” Tobias queried.

“Well, I would expect him to receive some sort of allowance,” Eileen conceded, “but as his parents we would receive a... considerable payment.”

“Sounds like a dowry,” Tobias sneered.

Eileen whitened. “Something like selling a boy to a chimney sweep, I imagine,” she said carefully.

“How much are they offering?” Tobias asked.

“Negotiations would typically begin when the child turns sixteen,” Eileen said. “If we agreed to this offer.”

“Why ask us now?” Tobias asked.

“Possibly to give the family time to put enough money together, or to have time to survey the suitability of the arrangement,” Eileen commented. “Mostly it's traditional... but we aren't ...of a traditional wizarding background, so it makes no difference to us.”

“Why would they want our boy anyway?” Tobias asked.

Eileen stares at the message, wondering what to say. “The family's heir is in Severus' school house, in a senior year. He's vouched that our boy seems hardworking, intelligent, and respectable.”

Tobias snorts. “Doesn't sound like our little nancy to me.”

Eileen schools her face. “Does it matter if it secures a job for our boy's future, and means we have money coming in when he goes?”

“Write them back then,” Tobias orders. “I want rid of that damn owl.”

Eileen nods, and looks around for something suitable to write on and with, as surely the Malfoys will not be impressed by muggle writing supplies. Though their avoidance is likely to provoke Tobias.

“I'll go find something to write with,” Eileen murmured, giving Severus a strange look as she left the room.

The letter had referred to her by her title as a Prince heiress, despite her well-documented denouncement. Should she respond with the Prince seal? She still had a small ring that could do the job, one she couldn't bear to pawn because she wanted to give Severus a piece of his heritage come his seventeenth.

Eileen wrote the letter, sealed it, and gave it to the sulking owl.

When Tobias had finally drunk himself into a stupor, Eileen took her son aside. "You can break this arrangement at any time if that's what you want," she told him, "just don't tell your father."

"What about when he finds out what... what Malfoy intends for me?" Severus asks.

"Let's hope it never comes to that," Eileen says soberly. She puts her hands on the boy's thin shoulders. "The... arrangement... is not what I would have hoped for you, but it will get you out of here. You'll never have to worry about food, or money..."

"What if I'm terrified of him?" Severus asked.

"I'm terrified of your father, but I don't have a mansion to hide from him in," Eileen said tartly. She gave him a soft look. "But the choice is entirely yours."

## Chapter 14

The thought of returning to school, and the blonde who would await there, filled Severus' stomach with knots for days and days. Sometimes Severus worried he would vomit, and other times he found himself running to the tiny bathroom and locking the door because the thoughts about Lucius make Severus quite lose his mind and do unspeakable, depraved things that left him covered in a cold sweat and feeling dirty despite the shower.

Lucius' expression seemed more mysterious than usual when Severus finally did see him, but one smirk is all it takes for the pit of Severus' stomach to drop in the certainty that Lucius knows of Severus' depravity.

“Come along,” Lucius intones briskly, swiftly placing a locomotor charm on Severus' shabby case. Severus presses his eyes closed tightly and listens to the much taller boy stride ahead amidst the commotion of the station platform. Clenching his sweating palms, Severus heaves a sigh, opens his eyes and reluctantly trots after the Malfoy heir.

Would it have been too much to ask to have had the train journey to prepare for seeing Lucius again?

Lucius sends a scolding remark about dawdling over his shoulder and holds open the door to an empty carriage. Severus catches up as Lucius transfers all of their luggage inside and feels vulnerable as Lucius fixes his cool gaze upon him. Sliding past Lucius through the doorway and feeling contained within the compartment does nothing to soothe Severus' nerves.

He sits himself at Lucius' indication and watches grimly as Lucius firmly closes the door.

Lucius seats himself elegantly. Fixing his gaze upon Severus once more, he sighs and pinches his nose as though mortally offended.

“Stand,” Lucius orders.

Severus almost jumps, and inwardly curses his nervousness. He fidgets uncomfortably as Lucius' gaze circles his appearance with surgical precision.

Lucius pulls out his wand casually and points it at Severus.

Severus recoils, but the older teen merely has his attention focused on Severus' now too-short robes, adjusting them carefully. “You're not a dancer; your ankles should remain covered,” Lucius explains shortly.

“I got taller,” Severus snapped. “I can't help it.”

Lucius raises one blonde eyebrow. “Yet no wiser, evidently. You had best rectify that tone of yours with me right now, little boy.”

Severus swallowed, and would rather have not, but his sense of self preservation kicked in. "Apologies, Malfoy," Severus grit out.

Lucius gave a long-suffering, regal sigh. "I should be knighted for such suffering as desiring you," he announced. "Sit down."

Severus narrowed his eyes but obeyed, conscious of having more fabric covering his legs, and refusing to feel grateful for it.

"If your family are so poor as to be unable to provide for your necessities we can come to some arrangement," Lucius declared, looking an ounce less harsh than usual.

"I didn't tell my mother I'd outgrown my robes because she has enough to worry about, and fancy school robes that I'm just going to outgrow again are far from a necessity," Severus muttered.

"I'll get you some," Lucius declared shortly.

Severus stood. "I don't need your charity. I'm not your pet!"

"Tone, Severus," Lucius sighed. "And it may have escaped your notice, but your mother signed a formal arrangement with the Prince seal over the holidays. You're more than my pet; you're my legally binding intended consort. I'll be damned before I let anyone see you walking around like a stray."

Severus swallowed, feeling almost dizzy at the mention of 'formal arrangement' and 'legally binding'. He'd forgotten the enormity of it all amongst the surreality and embarrassment. Having his mother know an older, far richer boy had intentions of formally folding him like a pretzel had rather blindsided Severus.

Lucius was standing before Severus, touching his forehead and neck. "Are you alright?" the senior boy asked.

Severus shrugged off the contact. "I'm fine," he muttered.

"I dread to think the amount of canes I'm going to work through over our lifetime from your lies alone," Lucius sighed, appearing put-upon as he looked over Severus with concern.

Severus batted him away. "You are not going to be wearing out canes on me in our future," he retorted. "I'll be hiding out in some property somewhere, whilst you shout yourself hoarse and then bore yourself into returning to your wife."

Lucius stifled a laugh, and for a moment his face was unguarded enough that Severus saw something he couldn't fully understand. The blonde seemed wry, and flirty, and sad all at once.

Lucius took a deep breath, and tugged Severus' tie lightly. "Trust me," Lucius said dryly, "if I visit you to bend you over a desk I shall not be returning to my wife bored."

Severus grimaced in embarrassment and squirmed as far away as his tie permitted.

“Stop posturing,” Lucius drawled, dropping the tie and sitting back down, “we both know your mother wouldn't have signed so quickly if you didn't want what I've offered you.”

Severus sneered. “You don't think my parents just wanted your money?”

Lucius eyes him intelligently. “You're the sole Prince heir, like as not,” he stated. “Your Grandmama is not having any more children, so everything she and her husband have is coming to your mother or you one of these days. Most likely you, to save face after the rift. If your mother wants money she's likely to get a whole lot more than what my parents are offering once her own are dead.”

Severus is embarrassed by the naked surprise which shows itself on his face before he can contain it.

Lucius examines it with curiosity. “Exactly how little do you know about your birthright?” he asks.

“I rather thought my mother being disowned meant I didn't have much 'right',” Severus mutters.

Lucius looks around as some Slytherins attempt to enter the compartment. The blonde shoos them away effectively.

“Come back later, if you must,” he snaps at a lingering Avery.

Severus watches the others leave and pulls his robes tighter around himself, feeling cold.

Lucius closes the door and rests his elbows on his strong thighs as he sits. It's an unusually human position for him, and it manages to settle some of Severus' whirling thoughts.

Lucius taps his own fingers on his jaws as he thinks. After a pause, he queries, “Would your answer have been different if you had known that you will one day be an illegitimate lord?”

Severus is quiet. He had expected to live in poverty forever, and although he is skeptical of a change in such fortune, there is a tiny, shameful little part of him that likes being owned by Lucius.

Lucius seems to read his mind. “I can give you time,” he suggests. “Say a year, to think it over, and annul if it's not what you want?”

“Don't I have until I reach majority to break the arrangement?” Severus asked.

“Yes, but I expect a year gives you less chance to become irreparably attached,” Lucius states. He sits back and rests his arms on the back of the seat. “You are aware that you could break the arrangement at any point in our lives if I broke any of the significant rules?”

Severus' blank expression is telling. “Like what?”

“Were I to beat you to unlawful standards, or,” Lucius smirks, “failed to provide for our children, were you a witch.”



Severus chokes.

“Is this all a bit much for you?” Lucius teases. “Do you need a kiss for the shock?”

“Shut up, Malfoy,” Severus moans, mildly annoyed by the other boy's amusement.

“It's far from my fault you've been living in a bubble,” Lucius states. “Most of your yearmates have been getting coached by now on the courtship of the partners they've been promised to since birth.”

“Forgive me for being an oblivious bastard,” Severus grumbles.

“I will ensure you make it up to me,” Lucius teases.

He is no more or less exasperating for the rest of the school year, but Severus' stomach dips unexpectedly at the certainty he will see Lucius less after the senior boy's graduation.

The summer holidays are strange, and seem to pass in a blur of trying to keep owls from Tobias' notice.

The chatter of Wilkes, Avery, Rosier and the Lestranges on the train to school for their second year does not make up for the strangeness of a lack of Lucius Malfoy.

Whilst it remains an unspoken rule that no Slytherin marks out Severus for any violent or amorous attention, the protection is markedly different without Lucius' vast and threatening presence. People now dare to make comments a little more openly. There is more nudging on the stairs.

Because of this, Severus is strangely relieved when he is summoned by Lucius for company during the first Hogsmeade weekend of Severus' second year at Hogwarts.

Lucius seems pleased to see Severus, and Severus is embarrassed, because they have exchanged so many owls over the summer that Lucius surely knows that Severus has not entirely dreaded this eventuality.

Lucius always appeared grown up, but he seems even more so out of his school uniform. It makes Severus feel like a stupid child, but the way Lucius puts a possessive arm around his shoulder and steers him around makes Severus feel anything but a child. Lucius smells masculine, groomed and expensive.

The blonde scrutinises Severus as they perambulate around the shop fronts. “Why do you appear so dishevelled?” he questions.

Severus adjusts his robes to his some of the bruising. “I made a new friend. The Gryffindors don't like it,” admits softly.

Lucius stops walking. “Another Gryffindor?” he queries.

“No, a Slytherin,” Severus explains quickly. “Regulus Black. He's a first year who's-”

“The younger brother of Sirius Black,” Lucius surmises. “I see. Not like you to make new friends?”

“He hates his brother and so do I,” Severus says grimly. Lucius smirks indulgently. Severus does not mention his strange on-off acquaintance/relationship with Remus.

“How's your relationship with Regie's cousins?” Severus asks politely.

Lucius laughs. “Look at you, trying to make small talk. What taught you that?”

Severus snorts, trying to hide his embarrassment. “I don't know,” he admits. “Avery or Rosier I suppose.”

“Good to see they're trying to shape you,” Lucius commended. “Avery is a proper pureblood. Is Rosier beginning to calm down?”

“A bit,” Severus conceded. “But his energy has to go somewhere, so he's been trying to school me. Avery goes more gently.”

“A firm hand won't do you any harm,” Lucius scoffs. “You have a lot to learn.”

He leads Severus into Fortescue's and orders for them both. Severus feels a bit emasculated again, but as he eats he catches Lucius looking at him, and it's an odd sort of look. It is almost an acknowledgement that Lucius thinks Severus is starting to grow up, and that is not the level of respect Severus is used to from Lucius.

It causes a strange, warm feeling in his chest. Severus has to look down to hide his blush behind his curtain of lank hair.

“Still not a fan of personal grooming, I see,” Lucius comments.

“And that's rather personal,” Severus retorts, feeling rather brave and mature because of the earlier look.

Lucius glides close and whispers, “You're mine; I get to be personal.”

Severus recoils, startled, and almost gets ice cream everywhere.

Lucius laughs fondly. Severus closes his eyes and does not bother to his his flush.

Lucius puts his arm around him sympathetically. “My apologies; let us talk of something a bit less intimidating for you,” he says gently.

Severus stares at his melting ice cream.

“Bella and I are getting along as well as we ever do. That man I wrote you about? He's an acquaintance of Bella's as well and it's almost getting... competitive.

“Andy is as odd as ever and you would not believe the rumours Bella has been spreading about her, but I won't lower myself to spread such dirt.

“Narcissa is... I like Narcissa,” Lucius says simply.

“Why aren't you betrothed to a specific sister?” Severus asks.

“I think my father values choice, ironically,” Lucius replies a little absently.

“But you'll probably marry Bellatrix, as she's the oldest?” Severus asks. The thought makes him feel funny inside. He does not like it.

“Perhaps,” answers Lucius. He looks at Severus, and keeps quiet on how increasingly irked he is by Bella's continued baiting of him over Severus. “It depends how much energy she invests in playing the Lestranger brothers off against each other.”

Severus feels comforted and is unsure why. “Your ice cream's melting,” he says for something to say.

“As is yours,” Lucius comments, lifting Severus' hand and feigning licking up a drip. His tongue brushes Severus' hand deliberately and the boy would likely have dropped the ice cream if not for Lucius' hold.

“Isn't that improper conduct for heirs?” Severus asks breathily.

“Scandalous,” Lucius agrees. “My father would be livid if he found out.”

Severus glances around the busy street but no one appears to have noticed the indiscreet gesture. “Then why did you do it?” he asks.

Lucius grins wickedly. “Because I wanted to,” he says winningly, then finally pays attention to his liquid ice cream.

“I'd like to see your dad cane you,” Severus snorts, before his mind catches up with his tongue.

Lucius looks down at him oddly, then does that sultry thing where he licks his lips and arches a brow. “If he does I'll send you a vial of my tears,” Lucius promises. “You can pretend I'm romantic.”

“I can't imagine anyone caning you,” Severus says thoughtfully. “Or you crying.”

“It hasn't been a rare event,” Lucius admits wryly.

“But you're a man now, right?” Severus presses. “Your father wouldn't beat you for... you know, if anyone saw.”

Lucius stares for a moment at Severus, then bats his lids as the corners of his lips quirk. “I think I might get it twice as hard for being a 'man',” Lucius comments. “Let's just hope he doesn't find out.”

Severus watches Lucius finish the last of the ice cream and dispose of the packaging neatly. It almost seems like there is a pinker tinge to Lucius' cheeks, and his knuckles are whiter.

It is utterly strange for Severus to consider that for all Lucius' refined maturity, he is still also a boy afraid of his father.

Severus wonders whether at Lucius' age he will be brave enough to perform such a dangerous, intimate misdeed in such a public place, knowing how Tobias would explode. Although at least Lucius' father does not seem to care about Lucius' leanings, provided the blonde keep them above board.

Severus is left feeling bewildered when Lucius leaves him fondly at the school gates. He has no idea how to feel, and the emotions swirling around within him are not ones he is certain he ought welcome.

He already misses Lucius.

The one good thing about Lucius' absence at Hogwarts, beyond those obvious ones about not having to worry about encountering Lucius at any moment of the day and feel threatened... or excited... by the associated humiliating tirades, is being able to spend time with Lily without Severus having to constantly look over his shoulder. The reports surely still go to Lucius, but the resulting punishments are often more vague and superfluous. And Macnair likes to hurt Severus anyway, so it can be hard to tell what is a punishment and what is simply poor luck.

Any time with Lily is cherished, because she is exasperated by the growing friendship Severus has developed with Avery, Wilkes and Rosier. The increased fighting with the Marauders is also putting strain on the interhouse friendship. Severus has zero idea how to react when Lily gives him an appalled and very knowing look during class on Monday.

“Did you kiss him?” she whispers urgently.

Severus' jaw falls open and he feels blood rush past his ears. “Of course not!” he hisses back, horrified anyone might overhear.

“Would you like it if he kissed you?” Lily asks shrewdly.

“Shut up,” Severus responds. How stupid could she be?

## Chapter 15

Severus is startled to see Lucius on the platform at the start of his third year.

Lucius notices him immediately as though he has some vile, obscure hex tracking Severus' every move. Which Severus wouldn't believe Lucius to quite be above, in all honesty. The smile on Lucius' face is strangely proud and possessive and makes Severus shiver.

Lucius' face falls open in shock once he has a clear view of Severus' own. Before Severus can quite commit the expression to memory Lucius manages to school his smooth features into something more restrained.

“What,” Lucius begins carefully, “happened to your face?”

Severus scoffs, holding a hand up to cover himself despite the sneer in his voice. “Are you saying you don't own me now?”

Lucius' eyes flash warningly. “What happened to your face, Severus?” he repeats coldly.

Severus rolls his shoulders as though he does not quite feel confident enough to shrug dismissively at the older boy. “You shouldn't have sent the new robes to my house,” he says quietly.

Lucius steps closer with an expression that is both warning and surprisingly aghast. “Are you saying this was my fault?” Lucius demands.

Severus splutters into a snigger and struggles to stifle the offending sound. “Is this the first time the great Lucius Malfoy has been guilty of a social faux pas?”

The grim amusement in Severus' sore eyes does not quell the roiling feeling in Lucius' stomach. “I did everything exactly as I am supposed to,” Lucius states quietly.

Severus gives him a mildly pitying look from over his knuckles. “My sire is a muggle,” he reminded the blonde.

“I don't follow,” Lucius answers. His eyes widening slightly, he bends his head to Severus' ear and hisses, “Are you saying your father did that to you?”

Severus pulls back and rolls his eyes, dropping his hand to his collarbone as though reluctant to reveal his humiliating marks entirely. “My magic-hating muggle father saw fit to rage at his freak son receiving a parcel of expensive wizarding robes for his freak school? Does that really surprise you?”

Lucius swallows, feeling cold despite all the students and families bustling around nearby. “I didn't...” Lucius feels uncharacteristically lost for words. “I'm sorry, Severus.”

The dark-haired boy seems slightly surprised by the apology and that only makes Lucius feel worse. “It's nothing excessive,” Severus says stiffly by way of reassurance.

Lucius blinks repeatedly and Severus wonders with dark amusement whether he has damaged the blonde heir's sensibilities. Lucius asks quietly, "Are you telling me that the state of your face does not count as excessive to your standards?"

Severus looks down, frowning. Lucius notices a cut of about a finger's length on the dark-haired boy's pale skull.

Lucius shifts his weight uncomfortably. "My father dislikes marking my face," he says dully, as though it is some sort of apology.

Severus raises his dark eyes with a vague amusement. "Mine doesn't have that problem. Hardly going to damage my looks, is it?"

"Don't say that!" Lucius snaps.

Severus' eyes widen and he steps back quickly.

Lucius puts out his hands, horrified by Severus' mistrustful reaction. "I wasn't going to..." Lucius heaves a breath and runs his large hand absently through his gleaming hair.

Severus fixes his gaze on the dishevelled effect it leaves. Lucius does not normally look so unkempt even when first woken. It gives Severus a strange feeling in his stomach.

"I will abstain from sending the robes to your residence in future," Lucius states.

Severus stifles a giggle at the absurdity of the situation, as though Lucius' efforts were at all likely to prevent Tobias finding reason to wreak vengeance on perceived faults in Severus. The brunette clears his throat and nods.

Lucius gives Severus a strange, fond look. "I only meant to come wish you off. Only you, Severus, could give me a heart attack before you have even stepped onto the train."

Severus tries to twist his thin lips into a smile but it is uncomfortable upon his scabbed lips.

Lucius notices the discomfort. "Do you want me to heal those for you?"

Severus presses his painful lips together until they turn white. He does not want to admit he had been in too much pain to focus his magic, but he rather thinks Lucius has just surmised that. Reluctantly, Severus gives a stiff nod.

Lucius does so, carefully cupping Severus' face as he draws his wand against it. No one jeers on the platform, and Severus wonders for a moment whether he becomes invisible whenever Lucius gives him that intense, electric stare.

Severus pulls away once Lucius draws back the wand. Unsure what else to say, they stand together on the platform feigning interest in watching the people around them greet classmates and say their goodbyes to parents.

"My parents never lingered like them," Lucius says conversationally, inclining his head discreetly at fawning families.

“I don't remember ever seeing your family,” Severus replies.

“They only came for my first year,” Lucius explains. “They could trust me to find the way myself after that.”

Severus looks at Lucius without inclining his head. He had expected people like the Malfoys to savour the experience of their handsome heir parting the crowds on the busy platform. Severus' own mother, Eileen, had not dared to linger on the platform the first (and only) time she took Severus, feeling to ashamed of her presence in wizarding society after her shame.

Lucius watched the families with a curious, slightly bewildered smile. “Such fuss,” he comments.

Severus considers how Lucius has made the effort to see him off and wonders whether the heir is aware of the discrepancy.

“I suppose I should let you go find your friends,” Lucius announces reluctantly.

Severus decides not to look too deeply into the disappointment that sentence places within his stomach. He nods and is surprised when Lucius crosses the distance between them, presumably to shake hands or ruffle Severus' hair.

Instead, Severus has to hold in the scream as Lucius throws his long arms firmly around Severus' frame in an embrace.

Lucius jumps back at the dark-haired boy's reaction. A few heads turn at the noise, but there are so many exclamations between friends and sobbing relatives that no one takes much notice.

Fixing Severus with a look that freezes him to the spot, Lucius steps forwards and discretely forces his hand into Severus' clothes, roaming the warm skin. Severus flinches at the touch, breathing hard, and the excitement he feels is drowned by the discomfort. Scabs scratch at Lucius' smooth fingertips.

“He didn't just mark your face, did he?” Lucius states crisply, removing his hand.

Severus looks uncomfortable and glances away. Lucius pushes the boy's face back to look at him. “Why didn't you tell me?” the heir demands fiercely.

Severus curls his arms around his body defensively. “Why would I?” he snaps, feeling his face flame and hating it.

“You are mine; I would protect you,” Lucius retorts stiffly.

“I DON'T NEED YOUR PROTECTION,” Severus hisses.

“Don't you?” Lucius sneered. He grabs an alarmed Severus' wrist, ignoring the stifled whimper, and drags Severus towards the train.

“What are you doing?” Severus demands. “You can't go on the train!”

“Watch me,” Lucius responds coldly.

Severus feels a dizzying mix of resentment and hope as Lucius bundles him into the train, aggressively vacates a compartment of first and second years, and deposits Severus, sans trunk, inside.

“Strip,” Lucius orders, slamming the door closed.

Severus gives him a disbelieving look as though he doesn't know exactly where this is going. He doesn't want to admit he has found himself in the damsel role.

Lucius makes a noise of discontent and rips Severus' shirt out from the waistband of his trousers, unbuttoning it with a glare. Severus leans away from the contact but doesn't waste his time putting up a fight.

Lucius yanks the shirt from Severus' shoulders, ignoring the gasp which forces itself through Severus' unwilling lips.

Severus feels Lucius' gaze fall to his mottled body and looks away quickly, frowning in the hope that it will prevent his eyes from burning.

Lucius swears at the sight of Severus' hiding, and that is not the response Severus is accustomed to whenever Macnair thrashes him. It makes the dark-haired boy wonder whether the marks are harsher than he had realised, and he looks down doubtfully.

Or perhaps Lucius merely has a strange relationship with guilt.

Severus feels exposed by Lucius' scrutiny and crosses his thin arms uncomfortably. “Happy with your eyeful?” he snaps.

“Straighten your arms; I'm going to need clear access,” Lucius orders, pulling his wand back out. At Severus' glower Lucius adds, “I can make you much sorer than this if you would prefer?”

Severus snaps his jaw shut and gives Lucius a hateful look.

Lucius ignores it for a moment before snapping, “Grow up!” and getting closer to heal the livid wounds.

Severus shivers at the sensation, but even in his irritation he can't help but acknowledge the sheer relief as the pain vanishes.

Lucius knows he is the bigger man and softly asks, “Is that better?”

Severus gives a stiff nod.

Lucius' lips twist teasingly. “No thank you kiss?”

“Bite me,” Severus mutters, and flinches when Lucius gives him a playfully promising smirk. “Shut up,” the dark-haired Slytherin mutters, his cheeks turning a faint shade of rose.



“Anywhere else I need to heal?” Lucius asks softly, his wand resting in his hand at his side still.

Severus scowls at him. “You’ve done quite enough,” he retorts primly.

“As long as you can sit down on those uncomfortable benches during the Welcoming Speech,” Lucius says as though he is being reasonable.

Severus narrows his eyes, hating that Lucius has a point, but determined to refuse in spite of the discomfort it shall cause.

Lucius tucks his wand away. “Suffer as you wish,” he says calmly. “But you might want to put your robes on now if you want me to refrain from...”

Severus' gaze snaps to Lucius' and the blonde boy smirks at the magnetism. He draws his eyes down Severus' chest and licks his lips lightly, enjoying the impact the action it has on Severus' breathing.

“...Ogling you,” Lucius finishes.

Severus huffs as though put out by the scandal of his treatment, and turns his back to reach for his trunk. He needs to be sure Lucius does not notice the blood rushing past his belly as much as he wishes to cover himself.

He notices the lack of his trunk.

Lucius notices also, and pouts before swooping towards the window. He spots the offending item on the emptying platform and coaxes it towards the window with a flick of his wand.

Severus rolls his eyes as Lucius manoeuvres the trunk inside, but feels distinctly uncomfortable as the boy reaches for the fastening to fetch robes.

“Leave it!” Severus snaps, “I can get it.”

Lucius steps back but thankfully seems oblivious to Severus' sharp desire for Lucius to not know Severus packed the letters from Lucius.

Severus surreptitiously retrieves a robe and dresses quickly.

“If it happens again,” Lucius says slowly. “Owl me. I’ll take you from there.”

Severus is quiet, not bothering to mention he only has access to an owl when someone writes him first. His chest burns at the thought of just leaving the next time Tobias loses his temper. But that would leave Severus' mother alone and defenceless.

Lucius seems to read Severus' thoughts. “I will think of something,” he declares crisply.

Afterwards the two boys sit together quietly. Lucius regards Severus with a brooding expression on his handsome face and Severus tries to pretend he does not notice, and does not find it unpleasant to sit.

“Severus?” Lucius says eventually.

Severus sighs and stretches, meeting the taller boy's gaze reluctantly. “What is it?”

“Have you heard much in the news recently?”

Severus looks utterly perplexed. “I never hear anything during the summer. Why?”

“You know that new friend of mine?” Lucius mutters cagily.

“Yeah?” Severus states questioningly.

“He's been... Well, he might be able to help with your problem with your... With that muggle,” Lucius says carefully. He can't quite make himself refer to the muggle as Severus' father. Not after seeing the state the boy had been left in.

Severus is quiet, but when Lucius sits beside him and whispers in his ear, Severus listens.

Lucius heads to Hogsmeade to apparate once they arrive, but his words stick with Severus all through his third year as he spends time with his dorm mates, Regulus and the Lestranges. Lily seems to notice something is off, but she's stressed by the recent string of muggle deaths and Severus is hard enough pressed trying to feel sympathetic.

Narcissa has started appearing around Severus and he rather thinks Lucius has encouraged her to babysit him. She's rather haughty but nowhere near as bad as her sister Bellatrix. And sometimes accompanies Narcissa, but she is a little distant and unaccommodating for the Slytherins' tastes. Severus notices the irony but cannot help but find her strange.

Through letters and Hogsmeade visits Severus gleans that Lucius and Bella are feeling somewhat threatened by each other in their new hobby, enjoying the rivalry but beginning to recognise that they may not be best suited as life partners.

By fourth year, Bella is more amused by Severus' presence than bitter, but she does not give him an easy time, and Narcissa admits as politely as possible that Lucius is irked. Narcissa tries to act cool, but Severus ascertains that Lucius has started to favour her, and she is pleased with the pairing as she is the youngest Black daughter.

Severus is unsure how he feels about it, but he feels a great sense of relief when Bella marries the elder Lestrangle boy over Lucius, although he would prefer not to have his friend married to such a frightening young woman. Lucius explains it is because Lestrangle is rising through the Dark Lord's ranks, but he does not seem upset by it all, and mentions that Bella is still playing the brothers against each other.

The brothers say nothing of it to anyone.

Fourth year is also the year that Lupin kisses Severus (or maybe, possibly, definitely, it was the other way around) but Severus does his best to remind himself it is also the year that Lily visits his hiding place during Christmas break and sticks her tongue down his throat, enraging and scandalising her sister Petunia.

Lily didn't taste anything like R- like Lupin.

Growing more established and arrogant, Severus feels comfortable with his posse and his increasing command of rather nasty spells, including those he creates himself. He is still antagonised by the Marauders and bullied when alone, but they don't have a clue about Remus, and it's not such a hardship being bullied now that Macnair is mostly bored of the same game.

Lucius continues to whisper in Severus' ear when they see each other, but Severus is more chilled by the young man's lips brushing his skin than any of the atrocities Lucius mentions.

## Chapter 16

“I hope you are studying,” announces a familiar voice from the fireplace.

Severus turns at the voice, stretching and pulling away from the literature spread across his bed. He kneels by the hearth comfortably and responds, “Of course I'm studying.”

“Studying for your exams?” Lucius presses skeptically.

Severus' lips curl into a cheeky smile, his breaking voice cracking richly as he responds, “Mostly.”

Lucius narrows his eyes at Severus' tired but glittering ones. “I knew giving you those books before your OWLs was a bad idea,” he sniffs.

“They're a lot more interesting,” Severus states, leaning back on his elbows. His shirt sleeves are rolled up and he's finally starting to build some muscle, moving his build from scrawny to wiry, and Lucius cannot help but rest his gaze on the pale flesh. It is a reminder that Severus is growing into a young man, and it is a strange sort of thought.

It has been difficult to resist fire-calling Severus several times a day just to hear the ridiculous, endearing, husky, throaty squeak of the dark-haired boy's cracking voice. Severus can tell, his eyes narrowing knowingly at Lucius for the past few days, but never failing to come to the fireplace despite the tiredness of his gait.

Lucius blinks in an attempt to return his mind to the present. Severus waits, accustomed to Lucius' unseemly lapses in concentration. “Whether they are 'interesting' is besides the point; you have exams to pass.”

Severus stares up at the ceiling, his Adam's apple and collarbone rising under his milky skin. “I'm not going to fail my exams, Luce.”

Lucius' head snaps to the dormitory's other beds, but it is apparent the others have the sense to leave Severus in peace to study as his lack of sleep has been making him irritable. Not that he seems it now, smiling a little at Lucius from the corner of his eye.

“How many times do I have to tell you that is not an appropriate form of address, Severus Tobias Snape?” Lucius grumbles.

Severus stretches again and rolls onto his front, still watching Lucius with a small smile. His eyelids flutter a little and his skin has a grey hue even as it reflects the dancing flames.

Lucius curls his lips at Severus' silence and admires his form. He licks his lips and teases, “Anyone would think, with you raising your rear in the air like that, that you wanted me to spank you as admonishment for your impertinence.”

Severus bats his lids and responds lazily, “Maybe you'd enjoy it.”

Lucius stiffens and blinks at the mocking retort, but before he can respond, Severus splutters and reddens, as though his brain has only just caught up with his mouth. Lucius cannot help but be amused at the endearing sight. He leans his defined jaw on his hand and warmly teases, "Are you saying you would too?"

Severus flushes an even darker colour, and curls his arms quickly around his face. "I would not!" he protests, his croaky voice muffled by his limbs.

"Sorry?" Lucius smiles. "Did you just say that you 'feel hot'?"

"Shut up!" Severus states, raising his head marginally over his bicep to be heard.

Lucius smiles at him fondly. "Be a good boy and actually study for your exams, or I'll take away the Dark Arts books and gift you with a hot bottom. Agreed?"

Severus rolls onto his hip, shielding his rump from Lucius' view. Frowning, the younger boy huffs another request for Lucius to be silent.

Lucius bears his teeth in a predatory grin. "I am going to have to do something about your abysmal manners, you know."

Severus sits up, protecting his vulnerable globes. "I might display better manners if I was left alone to study."

"You need study breaks or you will fail to retain anything and I will be lumbered with a mistress with a pert bottom and no OWLs," Lucius points out.

Severus wrinkles his nose. "Don't call me that," he protests.

"Oh, that's offensive to your ears, but 'Luce' just rolls off of your tongue?" Lucius asks tartly with a roll of his eyes.

Severus tries not to smirk at him.

"Enough chatter," Lucius declares. "It is long past time that you wash your hair."

Severus knows fine well that his hair is disgusting, but touches it with an innocent air anyway. It seemed like such a waste of time he could spend reading. Severus gives Lucius a skeptical look. "You just want to steal my books back," Severus grumbles.

"In part, that is true," Lucius concedes, "but you are absolutely filthy and if you do not wash your hair I shall be left with no alternative but to escort you to the showers each morning."

Severus flinches at the suggestion, but knows not to provoke the blonde with a 'you wouldn't dare!' He tries to formulate some other reply, but all he manages is a strangely gravelly squeak.

Lucius disappears for a moment then steps through the fire gracefully. He smirks at Severus and brushes soot carefully from himself as Severus quickly stands.

“Hair,” Lucius orders, crossing to the bed and gathering the books lent by the Dark Lord.

Severus gives them a pitiful look but obediently gathers some belongings and retreats to the shower.

Amused by the pining, Lucius places the books within his own bedroom and waits for Severus to return.

Severus does not leave Lucius for long. He eyes the blonde as he dumps his dirty clothing on his chair. “Why are you still here?”

Lucius smirks wickedly and reaches for Severus, pinning him within an embrace as he reaches for the boy's hair. “You hardly thought I would leave without an inspection, did you?”

Severus squirms, but has grown used to this and Lucius concedes that the hair is passible by a hair's breadth.

Severus tugs his head to pull his hair from Lucius' grasp, splattering water on them both, but lingers longer than necessary before he escapes.

Lucius tries to soften his knowing smile and crosses back to the bed, pulling out certain study materials.

“Back to work,” he orders with fond eyes.

Severus sighs but takes the parchment and flops onto the bed obediently. Lucius wonders whether he will ever get the boy into bed so easily in other, still educational, circumstances.

Severus chews his quill thoughtfully. “When will you be back?”

Lucius takes the unfortunate item from the boy's mouth and places it down. “Tomorrow. To check on your progress.”

“Okay,” Severus says comfortably. He picks up the quill and puts it to his mouth again absently in a manner that he theoretically knows irks Lucius.

The blonde swats Severus' pale hand. Severus yelps, but looks up at Lucius with eyes that are strangely devoid of reproach. After longer than necessary Severus puffs out his cheeks and pouts.

Lucius pinches Severus' bottom lip carefully. “Do not display those lips towards me thus unless you want me to kiss them,” he scolds huskily.

Severus licks the inside of his own lip slowly and stares at Lucius further.

Lucius straightens and glances back at the door. He flicks his wand at it carelessly as he mutters a locking spell.

Severus blinks at him, not even feeling a roiling sensation in his stomach, only expectation.

Lucius sits down beside Severus on a space of the bed previously occupied by borrowed books. The mattress lowers to accommodate his additional weight.

Severus breathes in sharply with anticipation as Lucius turns closer to face him.

Lucius plucks Severus' pale chin with his fingers and draws it slowly towards his face, giving Severus the opportunity to move away if desired.

The boy doesn't, fixing his dark eyes on Lucius' own with an unusual steadiness.

“Well?” Lucius whispers softly.

Severus takes a deep, rallying breath, and forces his lips into another pout.

Lucius crashes his lips down upon Severus' willing ones, and Severus promptly loses notice of anything other than Lucius and kissing Lucius.

He feels heat rushing to his belly and hopes Lucius won't notice, because he needs Lucius to keep kissing him so deeply and never, ever stop. Severus groans when Lucius nips his tongue lightly, and he doesn't even mind, just presses himself closer.

Lucius is exhilarated by Severus' responsiveness, and resolutely pushes down the desire to take Severus right here and now, pressing the boy into the bed and letting the spidery scrawl of wet ink transfer itself across the brunette's writhing, sweating body. Severus' nose bunches cutely against Lucius' own, and Lucius wonders if the urge to kiss it would be as enjoyable as fighting with Severus' snakelike little tongue.

Lucius pulls Severus onto his lap, and Severus barely protests, clinging to Lucius single-mindedly. Lucius continues a kiss for a while, enjoying the way the angular boy fits against his frame.

Eventually, Lucius lifts Severus in his grip, and surprises the dark-haired boy with a moderately firm slap across the centre of his buttocks.

Severus cries out and struggles to pull away, but Lucius holds the younger teen to him, pressing his fingers into the slight warmth along Severus' resplendent rear.

“What was that for?” the surprised boy protests.

“That was for trying to get out of your studies,” Lucius admonishes, fixing Severus with a knowing look.

Severus flushes, too embarrassed to admit that was only about a tenth of his motivation. He presses his swollen lips into a tight line to prevent himself confessing. Lucius would surely be unsufferable with the knowledge.

Lucius surprises the boy with a second, playful spank. “And that one was for being such a hussy,” the blonde teases as Severus squeals in his breaking voice and tries unsuccessfully to wriggle out of Lucius' strong arms.

Severus settles quicker than Lucius expects, and fixes him with a mistrustful look that is not quite a pout, but is still rather tantalising.

“Are you quite done?” Severus sulks.

Lucius smirks and shakes his head. “One more for being my hussy,” he responds, and presses another kiss onto Severus' willing lips.

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Severus rolls his eyes at Evan's questions and resolutely refuses to answer why the dormitory door had been locked. Unable to prevent the curl to his lips or the pinkness rising to his cheeks at the memory, Severus ducks his head to hide behind his clean curtain of hair.

“Hussy,” Evan teases unknowingly, heading for a shower. Severus fights the compulsion to turn from pink to crimson, and mutters something about breakfast, grateful his other dorm mates have already gone.

Severus swipes something from the table before anyone can notice him, and sweeps away from the noise and the people. He heads to unused corridors, chewing idly, and feeling safe in the knowledge it is still too early for the Marauders to be stalking him. Besides, he's become a much better dueller lately.

Severus does not want to think about what Avery, Wilkes or the Lestrangle brothers will have to say when they see him. Neither he nor Lucius remembered to unlock the dormitory door that night. Well, perhaps Lucius did, and just wanted to embarrass Severus further.

A familiar shuffle alerts Severus to Lupin's presence. They seem to have developed a habit of sharing breakfast at least once a week, although for the most part they avoid talking about anything of significance. Such as the feeling of their lips mashed against each other's, which feels a million miles away from the experience of Lucius' mouth last night.

Remus normally seems good at noticing embarrassment and other strong emotions, but this morning he seems sluggish. Ill, even.

Remus seems to get sick a lot. Severus wonders whether this is impeded by stress and a lack of sleep caused by being friends with the insufferable Black, Potter and Pettigrew.

“Are you alright?” Severus asks, then curses himself inwardly for such a question.

Remus fixes surprised, brooding eyes on him. “Are you?” he responds. “It's not like you to ask.”

Severus shrugs. “You get sick a lot,” he says with difficulty. He absolutely refuses to admit 'it worries me.'

Remus' expression flickers as though he is unsure which expression to force onto his face.

Severus throws out his hand as a distraction. “Breakfast?” he offers.



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Severus sits his OWLs at the end of fifth year, and no embarrassment Lucius has ever inflicted on him compares with the public humiliation Potter, Black, Pettigrew and Lupin subject him to.

It hurts.

It hurts worse that Lupin didn't try harder to stop it.

It hurts even more that he snapped unforgivably at Lily, and she completely believes that the action was unforgivable.

It was a mistake.

She's been mad at him a lot recently anyway with his increasing fascination with the Dark Arts, but it does not prepare him for being cut out of her life so vehemently.

Apparently every one of Severus' dorm mates think him devastated, because they agree to tell and send for Lucius.

And he doesn't punish Severus. He lets him cry, and he doesn't tell anyone about it, not ever.

Lily starts dating Potter -Potter, of all people???- a few months later and Severus cannot even begin to comprehend it.

It doesn't hurt as much as he expects. Maybe he's numb. He's not entirely apathetic about it; he's bitter, and a little heartbroken.

But it seems like... a nudge. One that Severus needed.

Severus agrees to take the Dark Mark.

Lily had been his friend since they were nine.

## Chapter 17

“I am livid about this,” Lucius declares.

Severus shifts in the hospital bed. He does not comment.

“Do you not care about it in the slightest?” Lucius snaps.

Severus spreads his arms in response, wincing before he is able to speak. “I am hardly in this situation on purpose.”

“I barely even know what your situation is,” Lucius sniffs coldly. His outrage and indignation comes off of his body in waves, fanned further by the desire for everyone around to feel warned by it, but Severus knows the blonde well enough to recognise what passes for worry on a proud pureblood's face.

“All you need to focus on is that I'm still alive, and I'll be fine,” Severus says carefully.

Lucius rests a hand over one of Severus' own, not caring that it will alert Severus to its shaking. Severus has noticed that already anyway, and knows that for all the righteous rage Lucius is exhibiting, the shaking comes just as much from fear.

Severus knows he looks like death, and could very easily have been dead, or worse. It is quite easy to picture from the tightness on Lucius' strained face how he would look if Severus actually had been killed, and it is strange to think how terrifying he had once been to Severus.

It is well into Severus' sixth year at Hogwarts and Lucius still has not laid claim to Severus' body in the violent way eleven-year-old Severus had once feared he would.

Severus feels physically sick recollecting that he had once thought Remus Lupin a preferable, safer alternative to being deflowered by the Malfoy heir. The nausea is accompanied by a tight pain in his chest, more insistent than his numerous other injuries, closing in on Severus' ability to breathe and making his eyes water a little from the sharpness of the grip.

“Are you quite alright?” Lucius asks urgently, his concern from the way Severus has shot forward clutching at his injured chest palpable on the blonde's pale face.

“Been better,” Severus mutters, squeezing his eyes closed at the pain, eyebrows narrowed, before smoothing his face with difficulty to attempt to gift Lucius with an expression of reassurance.

Lucius seems soundly unconvinced, but appreciates the younger boy's effort.

Severus tries to smile winningly, but between James Potter's insistent handling and the fury of a particular enchanted tree, stretching the swollen, ruptured skin of Severus' ordinarily thin lips is of no real help.

Sirius Black had actually almost succeeded in killing Severus. An equal (at best) match in a wand fight, Black had instead tricked Severus into following a werewolf down a passage, and only Potter's sliver of conscience had been Severus' saviour.

Severus had nearly been killed by a werewolf.

Severus could have been mauled and infected by a werewolf.

Severus had kissed and contemplated coupling with a werewolf.

Lucius has no idea what has Severus so drawn and white-faced, but he is a permanent fixture on the side of Severus' hospital bed for days.

When Lucius finally, reluctantly, leaves, Severus uses his wand to draw the curtains around his bed tightly drawn. He then casts a spell of his own invention, muffling all noise from the confines of his hospital bed.

Severus weeps hot, bitter, frightened tears, and wishes every Marauder dead.

It takes days before Severus is fit enough to leave his hospital bed, and he hardly bothers to concentrate on the books Evan leaves him to study as he was already far ahead of his peers. He would have rather liked to be permitted to actually see Evan, but the nurse insists that Severus is not well enough to visit, and passes the books to Severus herself.

Severus is certain of the lie, as he has heard the Marauders larking about and arguing within their own hospital beds for days. Even sodding Remus Lupin entertains guests.

Severus' own seclusion seems to come from Dumbledore's orders to keep quiet about Lupin's horror of a secret. The matter smarts worse from Dumbledore's disgusting assertion that Severus now owes James Potter of all people a life debt.

Surely admitting that Severus' life was almost forfeit means Black should be punished for his doings, but then when are things in this joke of a school ever skewed towards vile Gryffindors being punished for their sins?

Lupin isn't being expelled either.

No one is being warned about the danger he poses, and Severus is magically bound not to.

Lucius can sense Severus' baulking at the injustice, although they are unable to discuss the details, and Lucius fights to take Severus out of school for a day or two once sufficiently healed, before returning to classes.

Classes with the Marauders, that Severus does not wish to think about. They've been subdued of late in the hospital wing, shockingly seeming guilty for their crimes, but not guilty enough to leave him alone altogether.

“Perhaps some time with our mutual friend will make you feel better,” Lucius murmurs succinctly after Severus makes yet another disparaging comment about blood traitors.

Severus blinks at him and agrees.

“I'd like to... get involved deeper,” Severus says softly.

Lucius blinks for a moment then narrows his eyes. “When you're better,” he declares.

“Can we ask tonight?” Severus murmurs.

Lucius fixes him with a look. “What did they do to you?” he asks again.

Severus sighs, a look of frustration etched deeply into his young face. “You know I can't tell you.”

Lucius meets Severus' eyes, and has no idea how to express his feelings over the boy's pain.

This night's Death Eater meeting is being held at the manor house of the Rosiers. They are related to Lucius' wife Narcissa, and once admitted by a house elf, Lucius leads Severus through the building as though thoroughly familiar with its layout.

Severus feels a little embarrassed that he has never before entered this house of one of his closest friends.

Evan's father is stood bowed over a table with Lord Voldemort and some of the other older men: Avery's father, Roddy and Rab's father, Nott, Mulciber, and Antonin Dolohov. They seem to be discussing strategy of some sort: their hushed voices varying in tones of grim satisfaction.

Severus naturally scans the large room for friends and foes. Walden Macnair is sitting with Crabbe and Goyle, dull-witted but aristocratic men who often gravitate around Lucius' stronger personality, and have recently taken the Mark.

Bellatrix sits across the room from them at the other fireplace, Rodolphus looking bored beside her, as she enthuses with a boy a few years younger than Severus himself. Lucius has brought the boy to Severus' attention recently: the son of a rising star in the Ministry, Barty Crouch Junior is currently one of the youngest but most zealous Death Eaters. Just the sight of Crouch tends to twist Severus' stomach. The boy is shaggy-haired and usually clad in a leather jacket, and paired with his sneering arrogance Severus is always strongly reminded of Sirius Black.

Worst still is that the boy is pale and clever, with soft locks almost the colour of Remus Lupin's in the glow of the fire.

The boy seems like a nightmare merger of some of Severus' most hated foes, and it makes him uneasy in a way he cannot vocalise.

Avery and Nott appear in quick succession in the fireplace and dust themselves down before looking up. They notice Severus immediately and question him almost imperceptibly across the room by the tightening and widening of the skin around their eyes: 'Are you okay?'

It's the first time they've seen him in days, as Dumbledore has somehow obstructed all of Severus' schoolmates from visiting him, with the exception of Lucius, who has legal rights and privileges that so far the manipulative teacher has not managed to overcome.

Severus gives a minute nod of his head -although perhaps that is a lie, because his nerves still feel raw- and looks up to see what has Lucius' attention.

Lord Voldemort is approaching, the other adults clearing away items on the table as though not even house elves can be trusted with the details of their conversation.

Severus feels his limbs stiffen as the amount of times he has been in the wizard's presence seem to do nothing to ease Severus' feelings of fear and inadequacy. Something about the handsome, charismatic brunette oozes danger, in a way that makes Lucius seem like a kitten in comparison.

Lord Voldemort greets Lucius fondly, the blonde responding in kind with measured enthusiasm.

Then Voldemort turns and fixes his strange eyes on Severus. He has a way of reading Severus' skills, bigotries and trigger points, flattering and cutting in a dizzying fashion that tends to create loyalty in the others.

Severus can tell what Lord Voldemort is doing, and rather expects Lucius can too. Lucius is unfazed by manipulation and submits to Voldemort's whims because he believes in the righteousness of the cause.

Severus is unconvinced about that, but he has sworn loyalty to the performance and knows he rather enjoys being valued for his deviousness and skillful duelling.

This silly little club makes Severus feel dangerous, and perhaps that will be enough to protect him from further betrayal and hurt in the future. He finds himself asking Lord Voldemort for the opportunity to be involved in what Lucius has previously alluded to being violent raids.

The grip Lucius takes of Severus' shoulder shows he is appalled by Severus' transgression from the agreed course of action, but Lord Voldemort looks amused and thrilled.

He agrees to arrange Severus' first real bleeding.

Severus stays with Lucius that night, surprised to find Narcissa has her own bedroom, and wing, and that his own guest room is close to where Lucius sleeps.

Severus cannot help thinking about what he could have erroneously given to Lupin, and how rattled and protective Lucius has been of him.

Bravely, Severus gets up and makes his way into Lucius' bedroom.

It is clear that Lucius has been unable to sleep, and sits up to look at Severus the moment the teen steps inside. Lucius is shirtless under the quilt, and his hair is in one of the worst messes Severus has ever seen it in.

“Severus,” Lucius intones softly. “Do you need something?”

“You,” Severus blurts, and pads barefoot to Lucius' bed wondering whether he will be rebuked.

Lucius' eyes widen comically. “Excuse me?”

Severus hovers beside the bed. “Can I..?”

“May you,” Lucius finds himself muttering, but pulls the quilt to the side, granting Severus entry.

Severus stares at the sheets for a moment, unsure whether to actually join Lucius or not. Lucius himself says nothing, watching Severus' actions with bated breath.

Severus darts onto the bed, and before he can lose his nerve, crashes his lips against Lucius'.

Lucius falls back against his headboard with a surprised little gasp, but puts his arms out and gently guides Severus towards him.

“What's this for?” Lucius asks a little huskily, staring at Severus with an intense expression.

Severus licks his lips nervously. They're scabbed over, but healing. “May I?” he asks.

“Where is this coming from?” Lucius asks.

Severus shrugs. “Why are you surprised? Isn't this what you kept telling me would happen?”

Lucius' eyes linger on Severus in a way he cannot understand. “I expected to see it coming,” Lucius replies.

“Are you going to kiss me or not?” Severus asks a little petulantly.

“When I have assessed you to be in your right mind,” Lucius responds, still giving Severus that concerned look.

Severus tilts his chin upwards stubbornly. “Why wouldn't I be?”

“Because you've been in a hospital bed for days and now you are in my lap,” Lucius answers pointedly.

“Lucius,” Severus groans, frustrated, “I-”

“Need comfort?” Lucius suggests, slowly reaching out and brushing Severus' dark hair behind a pale ear.

Severus feels his stomach twist, because hearing it like that makes him feel weak.

Lucius seems to understand, because he presses a remarkably gentle kiss on Severus' nose. The boy looks up.

Lucius wraps the duvet around them both, cocooning Severus somewhere he feels safe. The dark-haired teen slouches down against Lucius' chest and plays lightly with the lengths of blonde hair surrounding him.

Lucius curls his arm around Severus' shoulder.

“I want it to be you,” Severus tells Lucius' hair.

Lucius blinks and looks down, further hiding Severus under the blonde curtain. “You want what to be me?” he asks.

Heat rises up Severus' throat swiftly, but he stares Lucius down courageously. “You know,” Severus mutters.

“I do not,” Lucius responds. “What are you taking about, Princeling?”

Severus prettily colours a bit more. “It,” he mutters. “I want you to...”

Lucius blinks in sudden understanding. “If you cannot even ask for that properly you are certainly not ready to decide upon receiving it,” he says carefully.

Severus chews his rough lip. “It doesn't have to be tonight,” he mutters. “Just... I've decided. I want it to be you.”

Lucius gazes down at Severus' stubborn face, feeling a swell of fondness in his chest that cannot overcome the cold feeling in his gut that something drastic has happened to spur Severus' decision.

“Why the change of heart?” Lucius asks. Severus' hair hangs down against Lucius' arm, mixing with the black, swirling tattoo there. The sensation causes the fine, blonde hairs on Lucius' arms to rise on end.

Severus shrugs, all muscle and bone against Lucius' chest. “Near death experiences give you clarity of mind, right?” he responds.

Lucius rather gets the feeling there is far more to it than that, but nods to avoid upsetting the teen.

“We will discuss this when you are older,” Lucius declares softly.

“I'm almost of age,” Severus protests.

“So you hardly have long to wait,” Lucius points out.

Severus chews his unfortunate lip again. “I want it to be you, Luce.”

Lucius rolls them both onto their sides carefully and pins Severus into being the smaller spoon. “Of course it is going to be me, but you are still going to have to wait until you are a big boy,” Lucius teases.

Severus laughs despite himself, and Lucius smiles, pressing his lips against the other boy's warm neck.

"I don't want to wait," Severus grouches, pushing back against Lucius' form.

Lucius almost chokes, and clamps down hard on any urges to do as he is asked. "Do you remember what happened to you the last time you acted like a harlot?" Lucius growls softly in Severus' ear.

Severus feels his pulse hammer loudly in his ears. He rather wants to initiate something with Lucius, but the blonde is right, he isn't quite ready for... what he's asking. His mouth goes dry. "Yes," he squeaks.

Lucius pinches Severus' bottom, amused at how the smaller boy flinches, and leans over him, staring him down. Severus' eyes are wide and dark.

"You will be patient," Lucius declares firmly, "or else you shall face the consequences."

Severus looks away and shifts their weight, pulling Lucius further on top of himself even as his brain screamed at him to back down. He looks back up at Lucius with an expression that is one part nerves and two parts sultry. "What consequences?" Severus asks breathily.

Lucius takes a deep breath, resting on his elbows as Severus presses his legs against Lucius' own. Lucius takes both of Severus' thin wrists in one hand and scolds, "I will punish you."

"Promise, Luci?" Severus whispers, looking terrified by his own daring.

Lucius cannot help but chuckle darkly, well aware that he is jabbing into Severus' stomach just as much as Severus is poking into him. "Call me that again, Princess, and I will hex off your tongue," Lucius warns.

"Bit of a waste, considering what I'd let you do with it," Severus whispers.



## Chapter 18

Seventh year passes in a blur for Severus, but there are a number of stand out memories.

He comes of age on January 9th, and Lucius ensures the entire holiday period is memorable.

Tobias comes into an unexpected bit of money and spends most of the festive period elsewhere, probably lining the pockets of every barkeeper in the area. It leaves Severus and Eileen free to receive and open presents from Lucius, and Severus is rather certain that Lucius has planned it thus.

It does not make immediate sense to Severus when his mother unwraps beautiful ceremonial robes, but he gathers from her tearful expression that they are the sort of thing she would have worn had she still been wealthy. She clutches them to herself and looks over at Severus, not with her usual distant expression, but with something that helps Severus imagine how she might have looked had her marriage been happier.

Severus is quietly thrilled by the gifts of expensive potion supplies and books, but he receives a few wizarding items that he is wholly unfamiliar with. Eileen explains them to him with a strange, fond expression, as though the rituals they were practical for held memories for her that had once been suppressed, but now reacquainted her with pleasure.

She shyly gives Severus a book that he rather suspects she has sneaked into wizarding London to buy, using money that she has somehow managed to keep from Tobias.

Eileen opens the book before Severus and points out significant chapters, which seem to detail the customs around the arrangement he has with Lucius. Severus is glad to have it, but he is more glad to have time alone with his mother spent in a mood akin to contentment.

Eileen surprises Severus with another gift a few days before his birthday.

“What is it?” Severus asks, examining the gloop.

Eileen's lips press together before she explains, “A puzzle for my talented future Potions Master son. See if you can recreate it.”

Severus is pleased by the puzzle, but equally confused.

He squirms when she later asks him how familiar he is with what will be expected of him by Lucius. Severus merely squeaks, quite unready for such a conversation.

“You... do want the arrangement to go ahead, don't you?” Eileen asks suddenly. “Because I will support you if you don't, of course I will, but you seem... happy.”

Severus blushes, and he feels ridiculous that his mother knows how content he is with his situation. Although... he is apprehensive.

Not just about physical matters, although that is certainly something over which Severus has mixed feelings.

Severus is terrified that something will happen to corrode the fondness between himself and Lucius. He looks at his own parents' marriage for guidance: Eileen had once loved Tobias enough to forsake everything for him, and now she is undeniably and perhaps permanently broken.

Eileen seems to understand her son's misgivings, and merely places her hand over his for a long time.

Ordinarily Severus' birthday passes with little fuss, but the night before Eileen won't let him go to bed, and instead makes him dress in robes Lucius has provided. They receive a letter a little before midnight on January 8th.

Severus' curiosity burns, and Eileen holds out something small wrapped in tissue and attached to the bottom of the letter.

“Portkey,” she explains. Softly she adds, “Looks like the key to your new home.”

Severus had almost no time to process that, as his mother is taking his hand and placing it on the unwrapped key and the shabby little clock in the kitchen is chiming and there is a pull in his naval...

And then they are not in Severus' house any more.

Lucius stands nearby, with a man who can only be Abraxus, and a woman who is presumably Lucius' mother. Severus realises with a twinge of discomfort that he does not recollect her name.

A ceremony passes in a haze, but all Severus really has notice for is Lucius, and the expression in Eileen's eyes.

Before long, Severus is alone with Lucius in a house that is far grander than anything he could have envisioned.

Severus' heart might just break through his chest with the nervous violence of its beating. The moment is too soon; too surreal; and what is Lucius expecting?

Lucius leads Severus upstairs, and the young man starts to feel stupid for feeling excitement for this over the last few days. All he feels now seems to be terror.

Lucius places his hand on Severus reassuringly and the brunette jumps. “Relax,” Lucius says dryly. “I am hardly about to defile you in the next few seconds.”

“Minutes, then?” Severus drawls bravely.

Lucius laughs, pushing open a bedroom door and removing his shoes. He sits down upon the floor, ignoring the bed.

“I am not going to make you do anything you do not want to do,” Lucius points out.

Severus lingers in the doorway. “But I signed the contract. The ceremony-”

“Makes us partners,” Lucius quickly responds. “It does not dictate the speed at which we chose to explore intimacy.”

Severus blinks, and removes his shoes for something to do. His feet sink into a carpet softer and thicker than he had previously known even existed.

“Feel like you can breathe now?” Lucius teases.

Severus looks at the blonde, and cannot bring himself to frown. “Am I that obvious?” he asks.

Lucius leans out across the carpet comfortably, putting Severus to ease from his own calmness. “It is a natural enough feeling.”

“How would you know?” Severus mutters.

Lucius cracks an eye open, giving Severus a quizzical look. “It does not occur to you how recently I deflowered my wife?”

“That seems like a long time ago,” Severus admits.

Lucius makes an odd little noise of mirth, which seems to suggest that the attempt to create an heir has felt very time-consuming indeed.

Severus crawls over to Lucius and stares at him quietly. Lucius puts an arm around him. “Home at last,” he says contentedly.

Severus leans against the larger body (not so much larger anymore) and feels Lucius' heart beating against his own.

“What... what do you want to do?” Severus asks, his mouth feeling dry.

Lucius tilts his head. “Whatever you want to do.”

Severus squirms, feeling silly but wanting Lucius to be a bit more... forceful, as he had imagined him to be on this night. Severus clears his throat uncomfortably.

Lucius seems to understand immediately, and laughs freely. “Are you so eager, consort mine?”

Severus blushes vividly at the pet name, and Lucius stores the reaction away immediately for future teasing.

Lucius reaches out and tilts up Severus' chin. “Well?” he asks. “Tell me what you want then.”

Severus makes another awkward noise in his throat, then sort of growls. “You.”

Lucius gives him an amused look, and pulls Severus onto his lap. “Oh?”

“Lucius,” Severus pouts warningly, not feeling at all taken seriously.

Lucius sits up and licks Severus' neck, causing the young man to bolt upright.

“Not so brave now, are you?” Lucius teases.

Severus huffs, looking down at him, and bravely reaches down to kiss the blonde. Lucius responds fondly, curling his arm lightly around Severus' back.

After a while Severus tugs at Lucius' robes.

“Are you sure?” Lucius asks seriously.

“Yes,” Severus insists in a tight voice.

“We shall go as far as you dictate,” Lucius says sincerely, “and as soon as you want to stop, you tell me.”

Severus nods dismissively and begins to remove his own robes.

Lucius stills him. “Severus?” he intones sternly.

Severus sighs. “Fine, fine,” he huffs.

Lucius leans up and kisses Severus' defined jaw. “Oh cheer up,” Lucius says playfully, “I am certain you are going to enjoy yourself.”

Severus rather thinks Lucius may be right.

\*

Severus is surprised in the morning by the trays left beside their bed. Elves. Severus now has house elves.

Lucius is utterly unperturbed and confidently encourages Severus to breakfast, wickedly instigating some game that leaves the sheets and them both sticky with jam.

Lucius laughs deliciously, a mixture of blueberry and apricot preserves matting his previously platinum hair.

Severus cannot help but smirk. “Your hair needs washing,” he says with satisfaction.

Lucius falls onto his back with booming laughter at their reversed roles. “You want to wash it for me?” he asks with amusement.

Severus blinks, but agrees, and after lounging for a bit longer he follows Lucius into the ensuite. Severus has never seen such a room before but again Lucius hardly seems to note its opulence.

Lucius steps down into a sunken bath which more resembles a small swimming pool and Severus idly wonders about the water bill as the depths fill remarkably swiftly with water and bubbles.

Lucius settles on the floor of the shallow end and reaches out an arm invitingly. His eyes sparkle, and there is still jam on his neck and smeared into the sparse blonde hairs on Lucius' chest. He dips backwards in the warm water, soaking his hair.

Severus wades in after him and Lucius reaches for what is presumably shampoo with a smirk Severus cannot help but mirror.

Lucius leans into the contact and groans happily as Severus lathers his scalp. Severus is skeptical that such an activity can cause such pleasure, but Lucius appears quite sincere in his exaltations.

They spend a decadent amount of time in the bath.

Severus has no desire to dress afterwards, and Lucius gives him a tempted look. "I will spend no more than twenty minutes lazing here with you, then I must get up, get ready and take care of some business."

"When will you be back?" Severus asks comfortably, resting his chin on Lucius' chest.

"Probably no more than an hour," Lucius muses. He smiles into Severus' wet scalp. "Then the rest of my day is yours."

Severus curls into Lucius further. Lucius' twenty minutes is more than two hours.

During Lucius' absence Severus fiddles with the concoction Eileen gifted him. He makes remarkable progress, and is rather smug when Lucius returns to an almost perfect replica.

"What is that?" Lucius asks weakly.

"No idea," Severus responds, peering between the two similar batches of goo. "My mother suggested I would enjoy making it."

Lucius looks uncharacteristically tongue-tied and rather comical.

"What is it?" Severus asks, perplexed.

"Do you... did she explain what that's for?" Lucius asks carefully.

Severus blinks, feeling apprehensive. "No," he replies. "Why?"

Lucius covers his face and has to swallow another laugh. "Never mind," he replies, "I am sure we are going to be glad of your ability to make it up so swiftly."

Severus gives the gloop a deeply suspicious look. "Tell me what I've made Lucius," he glowers.

“Absolutely not,” the blonde chortles.

“Lucius!” Severus snaps.

Lucius grins and leans over Severus, whispering in his ear, “It is very much something we are going to use in abundance when I make you a man, Princeling.”

Severus makes an utterly appalled noise, and Lucius laughs until his ribs ache, not even bothering to defend himself when Severus hits him playfully.

They fall into a kiss.

Severus rather wishes they could stay in their content bubble forever, but Lucius foists him back to school when term starts with the insistence on the importance of good grades.

Severus is rather rethinking his feelings on being a kept woman, although he has heard that Lucius only visits Narcissa's chambers for activities conducive to procreation.

Severus has heard too that sitting his NEWTs is important, and he has certainly studied as though they are, but he barely remembers any of that. All he feels is a mild sadness that Hogwarts is where he lost Lily, an uncomfortable confusion around Lupin, and a strong urge to be gone, accessorising his dark robes with a mask just like Lucius'.

Regulus Black goes missing in 1979. It disconcerts Lucius in a way that Severus does not fully comprehend, but he does miss the haughty, sarcastic, pretty boy brother of Severus' nemesis. Severus liked Regie's company on its own merits, but it also fed and fascinated his ego in a way that was hard to admit. The pale, scathing, dark-haired young man was, to Severus, a mirror to what he could have been were he a handsome, wealthy pureblood. That Lucius had picked Severus over Regulus caused Severus no end of confusion, but it also nurtured a warm feeling in his chest which never truly went away.

Severus' memories of summer are whittled down to three: the birth of Lucius' firstborn heir on June 5th, a particularly cold, wet night where he overhears something he wishes he didn't, and the birth of a dark-haired little boy that Petunia seems to complain about all over the neighbourhood.

It is surreal to see Lucius with a child, as it makes him suddenly seem like an adult in a way that being married to a pleasant girl from school had not.

Severus is surprised and apprehensive about being invited to the hospital. It feels to him to be rather rude to Narcissa, and doesn't she deserve some sort of respect from Lucius after gifting Lucius exactly what was required, and swiftly?

Narcissa astonishes Severus by being superbly cordial and welcoming of her husband's consort. Despite her evident tiredness, she warmly welcomes Severus and promptly deposits a mewling, blond bundle into his arms.

Severus is astonished and a little horrified, but he does not drop the baby.

He is still unconvinced of the merits of children's company, but he feels a growing fondness for the odd creature in his arms. Part of Lucius. How odd.

Lucius himself makes a show of introducing Severus to the young heir with a bit of tongue-in-cheek pomp and a mouthful of names.

“Draco for short, right?” Severus mutters.

Narcissa laughs before Lucius, and responds, “I am afraid we are hoping you will learn the whole thing, as befitting his godfather.”

Lucius smiles widely, giving Narcissa a fond look. His smirk turns teasing as he fixed eyes on a surprised Severus, “He will certainly do so, if he knows what's good for him.”

Severus feels himself blushing, and feels horrified to be caught so before Narcissa, whilst holding her baby.

Narcissa titters, not unkindly, and states, “Rather you than me, Sev.”

Severus looks at her, and gets the distinct impression that not only does she know exactly how her husband treats him, but that she bears no resentment about it whatsoever.

He thought he would find that odd, but he acknowledges to himself that he does not mind her presence in Lucius' life either. They might just become friends.

It leaves Severus with an odd, pleased feeling. He is hardly a sister wife, but Narcissa gives him a look like she is happy to accept Severus and his dirty blood as family. As good enough to be around her baby.

That cold, wet night leaves Severus with quite the opposite feeling.

The irony of Severus' desire to become a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, considering his current hobby, is not lost on him. Perhaps it had grown from the lingering horror of discovering just how Other Lupin is, or perhaps it was an older desire, born of spending so much time having to defend his person both at school and home.

Whatever the motivation, Severus finds himself listening in to the interview of one Sybil Trelawney and overhearing part of something that he regrets ever hearing.

Why Severus thinks to mention the prophecy to the Dark Lord he may never fully understand, but at the time it seems prudent. Laughably natural, like the way Severus walks into the masked masses of the Dark Lord's inner circle and always finds Lucius' side, feeling like he finally belongs somewhere.

Hands under dark robes are always finding Severus' shoulders and arms, complimenting him on something or treating him with a fraternal familiarity. It is hard for Severus to process how these people could be so accepting of him when his blood had once made him feel so alien.

What would it have been like if Severus had not been lucky enough to have been Sorted as he had been? Lily had not faced the bullying he had, despite her lesser blood, but she had found

kin in a blood traitor, whilst Severus was here, accepted, in the most righteous wizarding order.

It was supremely odd to think of Lily as being a mother, when Severus himself barely felt like a man. It had only been a few months since Lucius had made him one, and yet not much earlier Lily had been conceiving an actual child.

It still makes Severus' stomach churn to think that the baby is also Potter's, but perhaps he would get used to that. He cannot quite accept the union, but it does not creep into his thoughts as often as it could have done, had Severus not had Lucius and their masked associates to serve as an effective distraction.

However, the distraction fails eventually. To Severus' horror, he recognises Pettigrew at a Death Eater meeting. He feels cold, sick, and nervous in a way he does not truly understand yet.

That August Severus learns that The Dark Lord has decided that Lily's baby fits the overheard prophecy and marks the Potters for death. Severus understands the fear he had been feeling, and it increases hugely.

Severus asks for Lily to be spared. It is a strange moment.

The Dark Lord gives Severus a look that is surprised, confused and calculating all at once, and then seems utterly, terrifyingly unreadable.

Severus can hear his heart hammering and blood pounds in his ears and what if this bigoted wizard says no?

The man to whom Severus has sworn his allegiance agrees to 'try' to avoid spilling Lily's dirty blood, but it does not appease Severus.

Desperate, Severus then approaches a man he knows he cannot trust and warns Dumbledore of the attack planned on the young family. Severus has nothing to offer but his loyalty, but offers it freely to keep Lily safe.

His childhood friend. His first friend.

Dumbledore assures Severus when the Potters go into hiding that they will be safe. Severus really wants to believe the platitude, but it feels hollow in his gut.

Lucius asks Severus whether he is sick. Severus doesn't know how to explain his irrational feelings, but he tries, and Lucius does his best to be reassuring. Lucius has not had much practice yet doing this in any other situation than business or soothing a teething infant, but Severus appreciates the effort.

Severus listens as though addicted to every sliver of news he hears, but immediately discards any information that does not directly involve Lily or her safety.

It takes a long time for the memory of hearing about Wilkes' death to trickle back to Severus' notice. He exclaims it with a start days later to a sombre Lucius, who arches a tired brow. The



blonde ensures Severus attends the funeral, but Severus feels stunned and numb.

It is a horrible lesson that this 'war' does not only happen to other people. Evan Rosier is a notable absentee of the funeral, and the plainclothes Death Eaters present commiserate that Evan took a piece of the auror's nose when they captured him, as though that is a satisfying comfort.

Severus feels sick. He imagines Lily's grave, his fault for opening his smart mouth, and the world seems to jump up and take his vision away for a minute.

Lucius catches him, a firm presence holding Severus to appear to the world as though he is not having major doubts, and ushers away onlookers' attention with a demurrer to grief and firewhiskey.

A Fidelius charm is cast on the Potter residence in Godric's Hollow in late October, but Severus does not hear about it until later.

Apparently Sirius Black is the Secret Keeper, but after seeing Pettigrew, Severus cannot quite accept that. Black had almost gotten Severus killed not so long ago from reckless stupidity, would Potter really risk his family's safety to the protection of such a person?

All the Marauders seem to Severus to be lacking as Secret Keeper material in their own ways. Petunia could hardly be a worse option, and she would tell anyone who would listen (and plenty who wouldn't) anything that might bring her sister misfortune.

Severus' fears are confirmed on All Hallows Eve, and he drops everything to get to the compromised hiding place as quickly as possible.

It's too late, and he does not know whether he will ever see anything else when he closes his eyes.

It affects Severus more than he expects to walk past James Potter's cooling corpse, but he hardly even notices Voldemort's body at first when he reaches the nursery.

All he notices is that all he can hear is a baby screaming, not a single raised voice, and then he steps further into the room and sees Lily and something within Severus... shatters.

Draco has programmed Severus to respond to a baby's cry, but on this occasion Severus cannot bring himself to even consider the baby sobbing wretchedly in the crib. The guilt Severus feels is overwhelming, as it occurs to him that in his single-mindedness to protect Lily he never once really considered the safety of her child.

How could he have been so childish?

Severus knows fine well that he is not going to find Lily holding on to life, but he approaches her body anyway. She does not respond and it feels like something less concrete than her has died; perhaps his childhood, perhaps his hope, perhaps everything... Severus clings to her and suddenly he's crying: deep, racking sobs which rival the weeping from the small Potter.

Eventually Severus notices a photograph on the floor. He stares at it: Lily and the baby, looking so happy and alive he can hardly bear it.

Now torn asunder.

Severus rips the photograph, expressing instinctively his horror at the situation, but cannot bring himself to drop down Lily's image.

Severus looks at the baby, understanding that the cry is not the pain of teething or colic, but fear and distress from neglect. Severus has no idea how to help that when he himself feels broken and empty in a way that he cannot fully understand.

It's only Lily. They're not even friends anymore.

Why does it feel like Severus cannot breathe? It feels like something vital has been torn from him.

Severus pockets the photograph and considers: the baby needs an effective adult; not a snivelling child like Severus. Dumbledore is the apparent choice, as he has always seemed to know how broken Severus is.

Feeling incapable and unworthy and HURT, Severus glides towards the door almost in a trance. He is jolted a little out of his stupor by the sight of Voldemort, prone and silent on the floor.

It is the oddest feeling.

Severus' left arm starts to itch from overthinking and he realises that he is marked as an enemy of those who have won the war. Lucius is equally marred.

Perhaps Lucius can at least throw money at his own problems if the aurors care to sniff them out.

That's a conversation for another time.

Right now Severus needs to report to Dumbledore, because who else would know what to do with the baby? Petunia won't want it, and Severus does not know any of Lily's other family since her parents passed away.

The days blur and Lucius does not seem certain whether Severus will ever recover. Some time between the late fall and early winter, a Death Eater called Karkaroff denounces Severus in the Wizengamot in what was probably a desperate plea bargain. Dumbledore voices for Severus' loyalty, and Severus does not say a thing, knowing he is bound now to protect Lily's child at any cost.

Even although placing the babe with the Dursleys seems like the exact opposite of doing so.

Lucius is discretely supportive of Severus, but it is clear that were Severus more lucid, Lucius would be having words with him about the dealing with Dumbledore.

They both know the coot cannot be trusted.

Things are never quite the same after that, and Severus supposes this is what it is like to grow up.

In 1982, just when all of the blood traitors and mudbloods thought themselves safe, Bella and the boys hunt down the Longbottoms. They torture the couple at length, breaking their minds even more than people quietly whisper that Severus' has broken.

Bellatrix, the last of Severus' dorm mates, and his brother, find themselves in Azkaban.

As Narcissa's husband, Lucius is one of the first to hear, and he shares the news quietly with Severus in the drawing room of Malfoy Manor. Narcissa is anxious and has taken to bed, preferring to knaw in an unladylike manner at a quill she is tempted to use to pen Andy a letter.

Bella's incarceration should not have been much of a surprise to Severus: karma had surely earmarked her for years for such a fate. However, the family chosen could just have easily been those prophesied, if Severus had just tried harder and been smarter.

He feels an overwhelming urge to hurt something, and perhaps he isn't quite so different from Bella after all. Perhaps it was never Regulus Severus should have been comparing himself to, but Bellatrix. Is he not pale, dark-haired and twisted like she is?

Severus laughs then: a thin, dark, barking thing which sends chills up Lucius' spine.

Lucius entwines his fingers with Severus' and looks him deep in his dark eyes.

“Severus,” the heir intones concisely.

Severus focuses on Lucius with a tired, pinched expression.

“You've still got me,” Lucius says firmly.

Severus blinks, and although he feels broken, drowning, the assertion gives him pause. Lucius places his other hand on Severus' shoulder, and Severus drops his tired head to Lucius' strong shoulder.

“Don't... don't ever leave me,” Severus whispers.

Lucius raises his fingers to stroke Severus' ghostly face. “Perfection never dies, my love,” he responds.

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