

Bolts of lightning and crimson spheres arced towards Harry, who redirected the former and dodged the latter with ease. Rias was forced to strafe to the side, narrowly avoiding Akeno's redirected lightning, and destroyed the summoned knives that followed it as Harry focused on the raven-haired beauty. She grinned at him, preparing to hurl more electrical power his way, only to squawk in outrage as her rings were transfigured into rubber gloves, neutralizing her for just long enough for him to close the distance.

"*Glacia, maxima,*" he thought to himself, not bothering to speak the incantation as he jammed his wand in her direction.

The icy blast hit the devil's wings, making her crash to the floor in a heap.

"I think that's enough for now," Rias panted, the sheen of sweat on her pale skin making it glow in the soft light of their training room. "We've been at this for hours."

"Really?" Harry asked. He honestly hadn't noticed.

"The third task starts in a couple hours," Hermione commented, dodging Luna's stinging hex and sending one of her own at the blonde, who swatted it away with ease. "You don't want to be too tired for it."

"There's no chance of that," Harry chuckled as he landed next to Akeno. Turning to her, he asked, "You okay?"

"Yeah," Akeno replied, undoing his transfigurations and standing up. "You can actually hold your own against us now."

"Well, don't sound too shocked now," Harry replied, and she grinned.

"I didn't mean it like that," Akeno replied. "I just mean that, compared to how you were when we first started training, it's like night and day."

"I've learned more this year than in any other year I've spent here," Harry grinned, "which is somewhat ironic, since I don't think I've ever paid less attention to my classes."

"Well, you did find out that you had an evil professor in your head, which helped," Luna said softly. "How go things with him, anyway?"

"He has nothing more to teach me," Harry replied proudly. "He'll still be a useful resource for as long as the dark wanker lives, but when next we meet, it will be as equals."

"I can believe that," Hermione smiled. "We were actually equals once."

"We will be again someday," Harry assured her. "I noticed that you two were doing well with your reflex drill. We still have time for a duel if you're willing. I'd like to see how you two fight."

"We have to get going," Rias piped up. "Kiba and Koneko will be waiting for us by now."

"You're moving on that lunatic?" Harry asked.

"Yep," Akeno grinned malevolently. "After today we won't have to worry about him again."

“Stay safe,” Harry breathed, kissing both of them.

“We’ll be fine,” Rias assured him. “It’s very likely a minor stray devil, and we’ve faced our share of those.”

“Even still, be careful,” Hermione said. “Overconfidence is never a good thing.”

“Bye, you two,” Luna beamed. “The next time we meet, Harry’s going to fuck you in the ass, Rias.”

“Huh?” Rias asked. “Oh, right, I had actually forgotten. I guess I don’t need to ask if you’re motivated to win today, huh stud?”

“I’m going to win,” Harry grinned, and Rias returned the look.

“Remember what Hermione said about overconfidence, Harry,” Akeno chuckled. “Bye.”

They all said their goodbyes, and the two devils disappeared.

“Alright, I have a couple hours still and really just need to shower, so show me what you’ve learned,” Harry said, taking a step back as Hermione and Luna resumed their dueling stances.

“*Stupefy*,” Hermione cast, opening the duel, “*incarcerous, expelliarmus*.”

“*Diffindo*,” Luna cast, slicing the conjured ropes in half as she effortlessly blocked the other spells with a shield. “*Rictusempra, silencio*.”

Hermione swatted away the tickling charm and blocked the silencing charm before conjuring birds and sending them at Luna, who engulfed the entire flock in flames before trying to stun Hermione. Harry watched the pair of them from the side, satisfied that they’d kept to his rule about hitting each other with non-dangerous spells only. When they dueled him or trained with Rias and Akeno, they were free to use what they liked, but he didn’t want either one hurting themselves in ways that they couldn’t explain to Madam Pomfrey. The duels were still useful, as they let him evaluate their strengths, and whenever they sent conjured things at each other, they were free to demonstrate their true destructive abilities on them.

“*Luna remains lighter on her feet while completely lacking any killer instinct*,” he thought to himself as the blonde danced over the stunner Hermione had sent her way. “*Hermione’s keener to finish fights but slower, even if she has become more athletic in the past few months. She’s also still prone to overthinking, and I have no idea how to train that out of her.*”

Suddenly, an oil slick appeared under Hermione, who didn’t see it coming and promptly slipped. Her wand flew out of her hand a moment later, and Luna skipped over.

“What was that?” Harry asked, vanishing the oil and helping Hermione up.

“Yeah, did you just conjure that silently?” she asked.

“It’s Grease,” Luna replied. “It’s a first-level conjuration spell.”

“From one of the books we got from the room?” Hermione asked.

“Mmhm,” Luna nodded. “I’ve been reading through a bunch of them and they’re full of all kinds of cool spells, but most of them are really dangerous and would violate Harry’s danger rule.”

“I imagine it was flammable?” Harry asked pointedly.

“Yes, but I wouldn’t use fire spells around it until I had dispelled it,” Luna assured him. “I need to break it down arithmantically because if I can figure out a way to have it conjure less and change the actual substance a bit, it would make an even easier lube charm than what we usually use.”

Harry snorted at that and shook his head.

“During the summer, we’ll be spending our time either at Grimmauld Place or in the Underworld, so we’ll be safe to practice magic freely,” Harry said. “I’ll have more time then, hopefully, to help you two with this because while you have improved a lot, you still both have issues that we need to iron out.”

“I still don’t adapt that well,” Hermione pointed out. “It’s why I always lost at chess to Ron. I understand how the game works and what moves I can make theoretically, but throw something unexpected at me and, well...”

“Like I say, we’ll work on it,” Harry nodded.

“You have come a long way,” Luna smiled, “like with our Imperius practice.”

Hermione shot her a look at that, and Luna went still.

“I’m sorry, what?” Harry asked.

“I’ve been practicing the curse,” Hermione sighed. “The more I read about it, the more I realized that it is actually a great test for willpower, both the victim’s and the caster’s. You’ve been busy, so I practiced with Luna.”

“That doesn’t quite explain why you didn’t come to me,” Harry commented, curious.

“You’ve pulled so far ahead of me,” Hermione muttered. “You needed to, and I am happier than I could say that you’re actually in a position where you can fight Voldemort when you need to, but I guess I wanted to try to learn this one thing without turning to you.”

“You don’t want my knowledge to become a crutch, huh?” Harry asked.

“I wouldn’t put it like that...” Hermione replied.

“Show me,” Harry said.

“Show...okay,” Hermione shrugged. “*Imperio.*”

“Not bad,” Harry said immediately, and Hermione just sighed.

“I didn’t even kind of get to you, huh?” she asked.

“No, but I wouldn’t expect you to,” Harry replied. “Voldemort has a pathological aversion to being controlled. It’s why he never turned to the devils or the fallen angels for power, fearing that

whoever he gained power from would seek to rule him for it. Having him in my head all these years imprinted that iron will onto me, which is why even Crouch, one of his most powerful followers, couldn't force his on me. How have you fared, Luna?"

"Being made to dance is far from unpleasant," Luna replied.

"So you've had success with it," Harry chuckled.

"I did feel weird practicing a spell that could land me in Azkaban, but I figured that I needed to know all that I could," Hermione sighed.

"Have you ever read about how the Unforgivables were declared what they were?" Harry asked.

"No," Hermione replied, "or at least, not much. I know it happened while Ulick Gamp was Minister."

"It was a pet project of his, something that he was quite passionate about," Harry explained, "and he expended most of his political capital on getting it done. He was out within a year of succeeding, but he did succeed. The argument for tying the three together was that they all have one thing in common: they can't be blocked, but a more moderate proposal nearly won the way. Can you guess what it was?"

"Just banning the killing curse?" Luna suggested.

"Correct," Harry replied.

"I guess that makes sense," Hermione shrugged. "All three are awful, but the killing curse is, obviously, the worst of them."

"That wasn't actually the reason," Harry smiled tightly. "Try casting it on the floor there. You know the incantation, and all it requires is a desire to kill what's in front of you."

"*Avada Kedavra*," Hermione cast, pointing her wand where Harry had said. "Nothing happened."

"No, it didn't," Harry replied. "You said the words, and you thought that you wanted to kill, but you don't know what killing is, you can't. *Avada Kedavra!*"

The sickening green beam of light burst from the tip of his holly wand and blew a hole in the floor that the room quickly patched up.

"They suggested banning it alone because to use it you had to already be a killer," Luna gasped as she realized what he was getting at.

"We are at war, and you two will very likely end up with blood on your hands by the end of it, but don't rush into learning things that you're not ready for," Harry implored them, "and don't hesitate to use my knowledge. It's the greatest asset we have, other than the library."

"You're right," Hermione sighed. "I was stupid, sorry."

"You're the furthest thing from stupid," Harry chuckled, kissing her forehead. "Now, I'm going to shower. I have a tournament to win."

“Did you and Fleur really have to spend the whole morning apart?” Luna asked.

“Madam Maxine insisted on making sure Fleur was as prepared as possible,” Harry replied. “I’ll see you two later.”

“Bye, Harry,” they said in unison before leaving.

Harry watched the go and pulled out of his pocket the thing that made him so certain that he was going to win the day: a golden snitch. He had little chance of failure, given the decades of magical and tactical experience that he had stolen from Voldemort, but all the experience in the world couldn’t keep random things from getting in one’s way, as his nemesis learned the hard way all those years ago when he first tried to kill him. Luckily, Voldemort knew a lot of magic, and among the countless things the lunatic had learned over the decades was a ritual that Harry had performed on the snitch a couple days ago.

“Alright, now the fun part,” he said to himself, removing his glasses.

Taking a deep, calming breath, he pressed the ritually enhanced snitch against his left eye, and his breath hitched as the vision in it disappeared completely. His concern disappeared a moment later as he was faced with the odd sensation of staring at both the snitch and himself through it simultaneously.

*“Odin gave an eye for knowledge, which was almost certainly the inspiration for this,”* he thought to himself as he let the snitch go and cast a disillusionment charm on it. *“At least I’ll get it back.”*

The snitch was charmed to follow his commands, so it settled down on the counter as he stripped down and walked into the shower. With it, he’d be able to survey the entire maze from the air, knowing at once where everyone and everything in it was, helped by the fact that, though his left eye was not great, the snitch only took his ability to see from him, instead of copying his actual level of vision, meaning that he’d see clearly through it. Being forced to see two simultaneous fields of vision at once would take some getting used to, but he found that he was already adjusting, due in part to the enchantments on the snitch.

He normally wouldn’t have gone so overboard for it, not caring about the tournament on its own and having little fear of what he’d end up facing in the labyrinth, but there was something far greater than a thousand galleons and supposed eternal glory on the line in this task: Rias’ ass, and for that he’d leave nothing to chance.

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“Alright, so, to go over the plan one more time,” Rias began. “The moment that our target triggers the alarm, Koneko, you are blocking the eastern pathway, while Kiba, you’ll block the western one. Akeno and I will approach from the two sides and corner whatever we’re dealing with, and we’ll all converge on their location once contact is made. Any questions? Good, then it’s just a matter of wai...”

She trailed off as a bell on her desk chimed, and a grin formed on her face.

“This prick has gone to a great deal of trouble to get our attention, Rias,” Akeno grinned wickedly. “It would be rude to keep him.”

“I concur,” Rias chuckled. “Move out!”

The four of them teleported over to the nearest sewer entrances to their target's lair, Kiba with Akeno, while Koneko went with Rias, and they quickly made their way down. The layout of that section of the sewers was quite simple, and so long as they blocked off the only two possible ways that their target could go, they could close in on them without fear of being evaded. Kiba and Koneko quickly took up their positions, while Rias and Akeno moved in.

Rias reached the spot that Koneko had marked on their map quickly and reached out to the spot she and Kiba had described, destroying the illusion that their prey had cast to obscure their lair. Her eyes widened at the sight that greeted her, and Akeno reached her just as their prey turned around.

"What pretty guests!" he exclaimed, and both women fought to keep their revulsion from showing at the sight of him.

He was a grotesque figure, still vaguely humanoid, and yet clearly something had gone quite wrong with him. He was short, standing perhaps five foot six, and wore just a simple, worn grey trench coat that lay open, exposing the black chitin. It looked like insectoid armor, and yet it was clearly fused to his skin, which looked like it had bubbled outward in places, forced aside by the black, hard plates. His feet were splayed, featuring long, sharp-looking didactyl claws instead of toes, and his fingers had been similarly changed into tridactyl claws.

The changes in his body paled next to those in his face. His eyes had been replaced by multiple smaller eyes, each socket containing four of them, the color of pitch, while his nose had flattened into a pair of holes. A pair of long, sharp mandibles protruded from her cheeks, covering his mouth, though as they pulled back, the manic grin he was sporting was clear.

"What the hell?" Kiba asked, having responded to Rias' signal to move in.

"Rude, this one's rude," the bugman grumbled, glaring at Kiba.

"I'm sorry, he's new," Rias replied, holding out her hands. "This is your home?"

"My home?" the bugman asked, his voice rising a few octaves between words, "No, not my home. My tribute."

"Tribute to what, exactly?" Rias had asked.

"To great house Malphas!" the bugman exclaimed. "Elias summoned his master and gained his favor, but Elias was unworthy and punished by the chess piece. Elias can do better, though. The right sacrifice will make everything better!"

"Malphas?" Akeno asked quietly, cocking an eyebrow at Rias, who looked at the grotesque figure before her in disgust.

"Unlikely," she replied just quietly.

House Malphas had been extinct since the great war, and while it was possible that some member of the clan had survived and avoided detection all these years, it was highly unlikely. Given that Elias thought that sacrifices were how to gain the attention of devils, though, she figured that she had a better explanation.

Some devil might have parted with a piece, probably a pawn, after some lunatic managed to draw their attention, hoping to turn them into a mindless weapon to throw against their enemies, a living grenade of sorts, only to react with disgust when the process went poorly and their new servant turned into this abomination. Devils weren't actually supposed to turn the obviously unstable into their servants, as such people were more likely to suffer from problems just like this, but the appeal of having someone you could toss at a group of angels not caring in the slightest what happened to them was too tempting for some to abide by the rule.

"That's why you've been ritually killing animals all over town?" Akeno asked. "You've been trying to summon your devil master back."

"Elias just needs to find the right sacrifice," Elias grinned before staring at them in shock as Koneko joined them. "That's perfect!"

"Fuck," Rias muttered, preparing to blast the stray devil away as he went to launch himself at the nekomata.

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"Arry," Fleur smiled as Harry joined her, Cedric, and Krum in front of the maze. "I was beginning to wonder what was keeping you."

"You know me; I had to make sure my hair looked just right," Harry quipped, and she laughed. Smiling at her, he took a step forward, only to barely keep from stumbling, not having seen the unevenness of the ground. "*It turns out depth perception is useful. Who knew?*"

He had already discovered that obvious flaw in putting the use of one of his eyes in a snitch, but given that he had already figured out the shortest, simplest route through the maze and knew how he was going to handle the various obstacles in his path, he figured it was still worth it. The snitch, completely invisible, was flying above the grounds, taking in the sight of the maze and the crowd both. Noticing Karkaroff looking frantic as he spoke to Dumbledore, Harry flew closer to them to get a better look. The snitch couldn't hear, obviously, but he could vaguely make out some of what they were saying by reading their lips.

"*I'm telling you, that's what I heard,*" he thought he saw Karkaroff say. "*Ignore it at your peril.*"

"*Voldemort would never share...damn his beard,*" Harry grumbled as the hair made it harder to read the headmaster's lips. "*...useful information...provide some help...*"

"Fuck," Harry muttered under his breath as Karkaroff slithered away, looking displeased yet hopeful.

"Is something wrong?" Fleur asked.

"Hopefully not," Harry replied. "How did your last-minute preparations go?"

"I'm as prepared as I can be," Fleur replied.

"Try not to sound too confident now," Harry said teasingly, and her eyes narrowed.

"I'll be going in last, thanks to 'ow poorly I did on ze second task, and even if zat wasn't ze case, you and I both know zis would 'ave be quite ze uphill battle," Fleur replied.

“The sad thing is that if not for Crouch’s interference, I’d favor you,” Harry said quietly. “Even with the handicap that you’ll suffer due to the second task, you’re more powerful and capable than they are.”

He signaled subtly to Cedric and Krum, who both looked like they desperately wanted things to begin.

“Ow about we make zis interesting?” Fleur asked. When Harry just cocked an eyebrow at her, she added, “We both know you’re going to race zrough this zing before ze rest of us get close. You were impressive enough at ze beginning of ze year, but now...”

“What do you suggest?” Harry asked.

“Wait for me at ze center,” Fleur whispered, “and let’s settle zis with a duel.”

Harry grinned at that and asked, “What will the winner of the duel get? You know that I don’t give a toss about all this.”

“Ow about ze loser serves ze winner and obeys zem in all zings for a week?” Fleur asked and Harry’s grin widened.

“You have a deal,” he replied. “By the way, have you ever seen the muggle movie Clue?”

“Ze only muggle movie I ever saw was some dreadfully dull zing a cute muggleborn boy took me to a zeater for back in ze summer after our fourth year,” Fleur replied. “Why?”

“No reason,” Harry replied, grinning devilishly, and before Fleur could press him on it, Bagman spoke up.

“Welcome, one and all, to this, the third and final task of the Triwizard Tournament!” the former Quidditch player called out in his magically enhanced voice. “It’s been a long and exciting year with twists and turns both planned out and not. It has not been without some tragedy, but I hope that I can say truthfully that the spirit of international cooperation that we, the planning committee, hoped to foster with it has been successfully...well, fostered.”

Harry rolled his eyes at the blithering idiot, and he wasn’t the only one. Looking out into the crowd, he saw that some people were enjoying hearing the man speak as much as he was. Fudge was standing with Dumbledore and the other judges, surrounded by Aurors and looking as witless as he usually did. The students crowded around to watch yet another event that they wouldn’t be able to see much of.

*“Why even make this a spectator sport if you’re not going to give the crowd something to spectate?”* he wondered to himself. *“Aside from the dragons, there hasn’t been a single thing here that was actually worthwhile for the audience.”*

“...winner will be whoever reaches the center of the maze and lays their hand on the Triwizard Cup first,” Bagman continued.

*“So the cup’s probably a portkey,”* he thought to himself, figuring that that specific wording was intentional.

“The champions will enter the maze in order of their present scores,” Bagman continued. “First up, Hogwarts’ own, Harry Potter!”

The crowd cheered, and Harry, after giving Fleur one last smile, made his way to the entrance of the hedge maze.

“Alright, on my signal, head inside,” Bagman smiled at him, and Harry just nodded.

A moment later, Dumbledore raised his wand, and a loud bang sounded across the field, giving Harry his cue. Running inside, he quickly reached the first split in the path and turned right, pausing once he was just barely out of sight. He could see the entire maze from the sky and knew that both paths led to the center, though there were dead ends later on in it. To the left lay a path guarded by a blast-ended skrewt, a boggart, a patch of limbo mist, an acromantula, and a sphinx. To his right lay a path that was slightly longer but less harshly guarded. It also had an acromantula and a patch of limbo mist in it but was otherwise guarded just by a particularly irritated-looking graphorn.

Casting a disillusionment charm on himself, he then silenced his boots and took a moment to ensure that his scent was completely imperceptible. With that done, confident that he’d be able to just breeze past the obstacles Hagrid had left out for him and the other champions, he continued on along the right side path, noticing through the snitch that Cedric was catching up to him. He chose to turn right as well and ran straight past Harry, who swiftly stunned him.

“Nothing personal, mate,” he muttered, sending a red beam of light into the air to signal that one of the champions was already down before running forward.

The acromantula paid him no heed, unable to see, hear, or smell him, but he stunned the monstrous spider anyway and continued on. The limbo mist would have been very annoying if he hadn’t known it was there, as the acute feeling of vertigo that being suddenly made to feel like they were upside down could be headache-inducing. Luckily, it was easily charmed away, and Harry barely had to break his stride to neutralize and pass it.

The graphorn, still looking as pissed off as it had when Harry first looked at the poor creature, didn’t notice him at all, and he decided to leave it alone. They were mountain-dwelling beasts, and he imagined that it was none too keen about having been snatched from its home and stuck in a flatland maze that he likely couldn’t even consider trying to escape from, provided its handlers had done their job properly.

“Well, I’ll admit that it is an impressive-looking trophy at least,” Harry muttered to himself as he reached the maze’s center a couple minutes later.

He had been planning to just grab the thing and be done with it as quickly as possible, anti-climactic as that would have been, but Fleur’s challenge made him reconsider. He hadn’t dueled her seriously in a little while, and he was curious about just how much she’d progressed since last time. Sitting down on the ground cross-legged, he rested his hands on his knees and closed his eyes, sighing in relief as he was able to look exclusively through the snitch for a moment. Noticing that Krum had followed him while Fleur went left, he relaxed and settled in to watch his remaining competitors make their way through the maze as the organizers intended.

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“Catgirl will please Elias’ master!” Elias cackled, dodging under Rias’ ball of destructive energy and clapping his hands.

A wave of billowing wind barreled towards them, throwing all four of them back into the sewer wall behind them. Kiba landed on his feet first and rushed at the madman, sword in hand, slashing across at his throat only to be forced to block at the last moment as a massive bearded axe came twirling towards him. He slashed through the shaft, knocking it to the ground, only to need to parry a flying sword next.

“What in the world?” Koneko asked, batting an axe that was aimed at her neck out of the sky.

“Is his sacred gear like mine?” Kiba asked, continuing to parry and dodge the increasing number of melee weapons coming at him.

Rias stared in surprise at Elias, who stood calmly in the center of the growing whirlwind of death, destroying his conjured weapons as quickly as she could.

“I don’t think this is a sacred gear,” Akeno replied, too busy dispelling the madman’s conjurations to electrocute him like she wanted to. “I think this is just his magic.”

“Such a pretty catgirl,” Elias breathed, his black eyes hyperfocused on Koneko. “How pretty will you be splayed out for the master?”

“Not happening, asshole,” Koneko growled, grabbing one of his axes out of the air and hurling it at him.

He dodged effortlessly, faster than even Kiba, and she was so distracted by her near hit that she didn’t notice the mace that came twirling towards her, hitting her in the back. She grunted and stumbled forward, barely dodging the dagger that nearly impaled her through the throat.

“Enough of this,” Rias hissed, diving under the pair of blades hurling towards her and sending an arcing blast of crimson destruction at the heart of the magical hurricane Elias had summoned.

He pirouetted out of the way, his movements both fluid and lightning quick, but he hadn’t been her target in the first place. The Power of Destruction could destroy all manner of things, including magic, and as her blast rocked the space around where Elias had stood, it destroyed his spell. Not having to worry about it for the moment, Akeno raised her hands and sent bolts of lightning at the scowling figure, and hissed as he again proved too quick to hit

“You destroyed my spell!” Elias raged. “See how you like it!”

Easily sidestepping Kiba’s blade as the knight tried to run him through, he raised an insectoid hand towards Rias and sent another pair of conjured blades her way. She destroyed them easily, but failed to spot the ball of purple energy that they hid, and took the blow right in her gut.

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“*Who the hell sees manticores and fire crabs and thinks to themselves, ‘yes, they should fuck?!’*” Fleur raged mentally as she finished encasing the blast-ended skewer in the transfigured steel box she turned part of the outer hedge into.

It wouldn't kill the creature, but it would hold it at bay long enough for her to get past it. Its fire had singed the skirt of her robes and nearly burned her, but she had gotten the best of it quickly enough. With that dealt with, she ran forward, figuring that Harry was probably already at the center of the maze.

Knowing that the youngest participant in the tournament was almost certain to beat her in it would have infuriated her if she hadn't gotten to know him so well. She might not have meant to call him a little boy when she first learned that he was going to compete against her, but that didn't mean she hadn't thought little of him. It was only after she saw how utterly calm he was as he waited to face a dragon that she started to find him intriguing.

*"Of course, that was because of the help he'd already gotten from the devils, but he has far more to call on now than just them,"* she thought to herself as she came across something that made her pause.

"'Arry?" she asked, freezing at the sight of him. "Why aren't you at the center? Krum or Cedric could still..."

"Did you really think that I'd forgive you for that stunt you pulled with Rias?" Harry asked, his green eyes cold and cruel.

"'Arry, I..." Fleur went to say, feeling her heart sink.

"You could have cost me everything," Harry continued, "you could have gotten me killed, and why? Because you just couldn't handle the fact that they're prettier than you?"

"What?" Fleur asked, aghast. "No, 'Arry, I explained..."

"I know what you explained," Harry continued, a cruel smirk on his lips, "but we both know there's more to it than that. You have no problem with Hermione and Luna because neither one is as beautiful as you, but Rias and Akeno are different, aren't they? You're exactly as vain and pathetic as those girls back in Beauxbatons always said you were. No wonder you didn't have any friends left by the time you came here. It's a wonder I put up with you at all."

"Stop!" Fleur cried, tears filling her eyes. "Why are you...I never told you about that."

Her eyes narrowed as Harry froze for a moment, and, realizing just what she was dealing with, she hissed, "Ridiculous!"

Harry's robes disappeared, and what they revealed as they did made her laugh. He looked more or less like the real one, save for three missing parts.

"Where'd it go!?" Harry squeaked, his voice rising several octaves as he looked down in horror.

"I know 'ow 'Arry feels about me," Fleur hissed at the eunuch boggart. "'Ow dare you wear 'is face."

Huffing, she left the entity on its own and marched through the maze, thoroughly pissed off. She dispelled the limbo mist the moment she saw it and continued on. Still enraged by the time she met the acromantula ahead of her, she unleashed a wave of fire in its direction, nearly roasting it alive, and the giant spider wisely decided to run off, having barely avoided its fiery fate.

“Hello, champion,” the next obstacle said in greeting, and Fleur just stared, nonplussed at the sphinx.

“Zey really spared no expense with zis, did zey?” she asked rhetorically. Acromantulas and Hagrid’s creations were one thing, but a sphinx would have needed to be imported from Egypt.

“I wouldn’t know,” the sphinx replied politely, her human face a mask of calm. “Answer my riddle correctly, and you can continue on.”

“Speak it, please,” Fleur replied, the genteel nature of the creature before her helping soothe some of her still ruffled feathers.

“What has a tail and yet no body, a head and yet no brain?” the sphinx asked.

“The second half could describe the organizers of zis mess,” Fleur muttered as she thought.

“Is that your final answer?” the sphinx asked, sounding slightly amused.

“Non, it is a coin,” Fleur replied.

“Correct,” the sphinx nodded. “Farewell.”

“Farewell,” Fleur replied in kind, continuing on past the giant lioness.

The sphinx turned out to be the final obstacle in her path, and a moment later she found herself at the center of the maze, staring at the Triwizard Cup and nothing else.

“Where in ze world is ‘Arry?” she asked, her hand tensing around her wand as Krum came into view a moment later, having arrived from the other path.

“Fleur, I...” he went to say before a blast of red light knocked him unconscious.

Harry revealed himself with an exaggerated wave of his hand and rose from his seated position.

“Hello, Fleur,” he said with a gentle smile. “Should I be concerned that I’m your greatest fear?”

“You saw zat?” Fleur asked, her blood going cold. “Ow?”

“I’ve been watching the maze through this,” Harry replied, holding out his hand. A golden snitch appeared a moment later, having clearly been disillusioned. He pressed it to his left eye before shoving it in his mokeskin pouch.

“You sacrifice ze temporary use of one of your eyes to look through ze snitch?” Fleur breathed, catching on quickly. “Zat is amazing.”

“One of many things I’ve learned this year,” Harry replied.

“Ze boggart tapped into my fear zat you will never truly forgive me for ze ritual,” Fleur replied to his earlier question, and Harry’s face fell. “I know, I know, it’s silly.”

“Hey,” Harry whispered, wrapping his arms around her. “I was really pissed at you for that, but you know I’ve moved on. Hell, Rias has largely forgiven you.”

“Fears aren’t always rational,” Fleur shrugged, melting into his embrace.

“That, I know,” Harry said softly. “Why did you turn me into a ken doll, though?”

“It was the most absurd image of you I could zink of,” Fleur replied and he snorted as he stepped back.

“Now, I think I promised you a duel.” Harry grinned.

“I knew zat I ‘ad no ‘ope of beating you in zis contest,” Fleur admitted reluctantly. “‘Ow long ‘ave you been ‘ere?”

“I reached the center of the maze in under four minutes,” Harry replied, and she swore under her breath.

“I might ‘ave much ‘ope ‘ere, but at least it’s something,” Fleur continued, taking a few steps back and taking her dueling stance.

Going up against a fellow student was one thing, but Harry had decades of Voldemort’s knowledge in his head and had long since surpassed her abilities. He would have won the third task easily if not for her request. At least this gave her a chance, even if it wasn’t a good one. Her only hope of beating him was getting a lucky hit in, and so she took her shot.

Harry’s eyes widened slightly at the pair of overpowered stunners that came barreling towards him, not expecting her to attack him without warning, and he jumped to the side, not bothering to try and deflect or shield against either of them. He raised his wand and grinned at his lover, who hastily put up a shield, expecting an instant retaliation.

“Merde!” she swore as the first vines wrapped around her ankles.

She had expected him to hit her hard and prepared to shield against his initial counter move, only for him to transfigure the hedge behind her. She burned the vines to cinders and stepped to the side, expecting him to try and hit her while she was distracted, only to slip in a puddle of something thick and very slippery, falling on her back. She felt her wand get ripped out of her hand a moment later and sighed. As she tried to get up, though, her hand swiped through the thing that Harry had conjured to make her slip and went still.

“Is zis lube?” she asked, staring incredulously up at her lover, who looked like he was barely keeping himself from bursting into laughter.

“Blame Luna,” he chuckled. “It was actually her idea.”

“Why am I not surprised?” Fleur asked, dispelling the lubricant and rising to her feet as Harry threw her wand back to her. “It looks like zis is it.”

“I hoped for a quiet year at the start of this one,” Harry murmured as he looked at the cup. “I should have known that was too much to ask for, but I can’t say this one has been without its...what the fuck?!”

“What is it?” Fleur asked, instantly concerned as Harry looked terrified.

“Rias cast a spell on me not long after we met that let us speak telepathically, even when we were in different countries,” Harry explained. “The spell just disappeared.”

“Disappeared?” Fleur asked, furrowing her brow in concern.

“It honestly felt like someone slammed a phone down,” Harry grumbled. “I can still sense her in Japan, through our bond, the same as before, but something’s gone wrong with the spell.”

“Maybe it needs to be recast now and zen and she forgot,” Fleur suggested. “Zere’s nothing we can do about it now. It will be hours before you can get away with ze award ceremony.”

“Fuck, you’re right,” Harry muttered. “Well, I’d best finish this. Want a lift?”

“Why not?” Fleur smiled. She might not have won the tournament, but as Harry wrapped one of his strong arms around her waist and grabbed the cup, she couldn’t help feeling like she had gotten something even better than the gold and fame out of the tournament.

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“Congratulations on your victory, Mr. Potter,” Professor McGonagall beamed. “I know you didn’t choose to take part in the tournament or want to compete when your name first came out of the goblet, but you rose to the challenge in a way that exceeded all of our expectations, and I am so proud of how much you grew and progressed during it.”

“Thank you, Professor,” Harry nodded. “Um, Headmaster, could I have a word?”

“Certainly, Harry,” Dumbledore replied. “Excuse me.”

The two of them walked through the great hall, passing a vast number of people mingling as they waited for Fudge to get on with it and give him his prize. Finding a relatively empty corner of the room, Harry cast a quick Muffliato charm and turned to the ancient wizard.

“Did you manage to find out anything since we last spoke?” he asked.

“Voldemort was indeed in Argentina for a while,” Dumbledore replied. “He left weeks ago, though, and we aren’t sure where he went.”

“Damn,” Harry muttered. “Did Karkaroff have anything useful to say?”

“I’m sorry?” Dumbledore asked, and Harry fought the urge to roll his eyes.

“Luna spotted you two speaking earlier and can read lips well enough to know that his name was mentioned,” he replied.

“Miss Lovegood is a girl of many talents,” Dumbledore murmured. “Igor shared an unlikely theory earlier; that was all. He’s rather desperate for protection now that his former is back among the living. Tom has never handled betrayal well, after all.”

“You could always give him the DADA spot if he might be useful,” Harry chuckled. “It’s not like they ever last long.”

“Igor is not the sort of man that I would entrust the students of this school with,” Dumbledore replied dryly.

*“Considering that your hiring record includes two Death Eaters, a massive fraud, and fucking Voldemort, that says a lot, actually,”* Harry thought to himself.

“Harry Potter!” Fudge called out, and Harry sighed.

“Duty calls,” he muttered, undoing the charm and leaving his headmaster to go deal with the minister.

Fudge’s ministry had survived the past few months through sheer lack of opposition, from what Harry could tell. The man had expended likely the last political capital he had holding onto the position by the skin of his teeth during the turbulent few weeks after Lucius Malfoy was killed. The lack of significant follow-up travesties after that, since the deaths of the Carrow twins were considered rather minor by comparison, had let the pompous idiot ride things out and survive. All it would likely take was another major tragedy to force him out, but with Voldemort staying out of England and Harry unable to track down and murder more of his followers, things had remained quite calm.

Making his way up towards the minister, he spotted Karkaroff, looking distinctly unhappy, likely both because of his conversation with Dumbledore and the fact that Krum had lost. Amelia Bones was in attendance for the ceremony, standing off to the side with a handful of aurors. He imagined that that was more because of Fudge’s insistence than anything else. Even at the height of the war, Voldemort had never struck Hogwarts, and Dumbledore’s presence was more of a deterrent for the snake-faced prick than the entire Auror department would be.

He spotted Malfoy glaring daggers at him just as he reached Fudge, standing by the high table, and couldn’t resist shooting his old rival a grin.

*“It’s laughable that I ever considered him to be that at all,”* he thought to himself, well aware of how thoroughly he’d surpassed the pureblood in terms of power and ability.

“Ladies and gentlemen, when Ludo Bagman first proposed bringing the Triwizard Tournament back, I just knew that it would be an exciting adventure for all three of these fabled schools, but I had no idea just how exciting it would be,” Fudge began, pausing there as if hoping for a reaction that he didn’t get. “Right, we didn’t expect there to be four champions; it does go against the name, after all, but against all odds, the fourth and youngest champion prevailed, and it is my distinct privilege to present to Harry Potter his prize of one thousand galleons. Give him a round of applause.”

Aside from the Slytherins, whose reaction was muted at best, most people did cheer for him, and Harry smiled, looking around. So many of them had denounced him as a cheater when his name came out of the goblet. It had been just like his second year again, but though it had hurt in the moment, especially since Ron joined the mob in this instance, he’d given them so little thought in the months since that, though having them applaud him was nice, he found that he wasn’t all that affected. Seeing Cedric standing up and cheering for him explained the Hufflepuff tables’ reaction, though they hadn’t been outwardly hostile in ages.

“Please, say a few words,” Fudge beamed, and Harry managed to keep his face neutral despite how badly he just wanted this to end.

“I’m not really one for speeches, so I’ll keep this brief,” Harry began as the crowd quieted down. “When I first found out that I had been entered into the tournament against my will, I was, frankly, terrified. It was for seventh years only and had such a history of death and dismemberment; I was scared. They say that Gryffindor is the house of the brave, or the foolish, depending on who you ask, and perhaps they’re both right, because my response to that fear was to, rather than give up, throw myself into preparing completely, to focus on learning as much as I could, as quickly as I could, and in the end, it worked. That would be my takeaway from all of this: if you dedicate yourself to something completely and give it your total focus, you can do anything.”

It sounded corny as it came out of his lips, but the crowd seemed to eat it up, and he swiftly accepted his winnings, tossing the coin purse into his mokeskin pouch, and thanked the minister before making his way to Fleur, Hermione, and Luna.

“If I had known there’d be a speech, I’d have prepared something better than that drek,” he muttered as soon as he reached them.

“It was alright,” Fleur smiled. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Harry replied. “Are you staying for dinner?”

“Non,” Fleur sighed, shaking her head. “Madam Maxine says zat we are leaving right after ze ceremony. Ze abraxans are fast, and we will make it to Beauxbatons quickly enough.”

“Oh,” Luna pouted, and Fleur just laughed.

“Don’t worry, Luna, we won’t be parted for long,” she smiled, hugging the shorter girl. “Ze year ‘as only a couple more days left. We’re only returning at all so ze ‘eadmistress can take part in the ze end of year ceremonies.”

“We’ll see plenty of each other over the summer,” Harry promised her, and Fleur smiled, though it dimmed somewhat when she recalled the upcoming conversations with her family that she was dreading.

“Oh look, the Durmstrang delegation seems to already be going,” Hermione commented, and Harry looked to see that, indeed, they were, led by Krum, as Karkaroff spoke to Dumbledore again.

“Fleur, ze ‘eadmistress wants us in ze carriage within ten minutes,” Genevieve said, and Fleur nodded.

“I’ll write to you tomorrow,” Luna promised, hugging her again.

“As will I,” Harry added, wrapping his arms around them both and looking to Hermione, who quickly joined the group hug.

“I do hope we can visit France this summer,” the brunette murmured.

“I do as well,” Fleur purred, cupping her cheek. “I know of some wonderful topless beaches zat we would turn all matter of ‘eads at.”

“Fleur,” Hermione squeaked, reddening, and the veela giggled.

“Goodbye, you zree,” Fleur whispered. “Zank you for making my year ‘ere so wonderful.”

They finished saying their goodbyes, and Dumbledore, with a wave of his wand, returned the tables to normal just as their many guests finished filing out.

“Dinner will begin in an hour, so please feel free to return to your common rooms as you please before then,” he called out, and the students began to leave the hall.

“Thank goodness,” Harry muttered.

“You said that you still sensed her the same as before,” Luna said reassuringly.

“She’s incredibly powerful, so I’m sure she’s okay, but it would be nice to confirm that,” Hermione added.

As the three of them left the great hall, intent on going to the Room of Requirement and summoning Rias, they failed to notice an owl fly in and make a beeline for Dumbledore, or how much the old man paled as he read the letter it carried. Without the additional students from the two schools, Hogwarts felt almost empty, and the three had no trouble reaching the seventh floor. The moment they entered the room, Harry pulled out a summoning paper, not bothering to head into the bedroom or training room. With the Gremory family servants having finished up work on the library earlier that morning, it wasn’t like they needed privacy.

“Rias Gremory,” Harry called out, and the crimson-haired devil appeared a moment later inside a summoning circle, looking tired but otherwise fine.

“I figured you’d summon me,” she said, shaking her head. “I’m fine, Harry.”

“What happened?” Harry asked.

“We fought that stray devil,” Rias replied before telling them all the tale.

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*“Rias!” Akeno cried as she saw her master fall to her knees, only to be hit by a flying Kiba the next moment as their foe sent the young knight careening her way.*

*She struggled her feet, intending to fry Elias when a sudden gust of wind blew her, Akeno, and Koneko away, sending them flying through the sewer.*

*“Maybe Elias was wrong after all,” the madman giggled. “Maybe other devils would be the better sacrifices.”*

*Rias grunted, realizing what he’d done. Every active spell she had had been undone, and the ring on her right finger enchanted to glow if it came near any poison had been sapped of its magic as well. She knew now why whichever devil had turned Elias had done so. Though entirely mad, he clearly had significant magical potential. Whether or not he’d been a wizard before he was turned, she couldn’t say, but she could see why someone might want to make him a devil. Untrained, he was a pain in the ass. Had he been trainable, he could have become a major force to be reckoned with, and against any minor devil or exorcist, he’d have been a lethal foe.*

*She was no minor devil, though.*

*Seeing Koneko sneaking up to them, she smiled inwardly. As Koneko had been turned with one of her rook pieces, she could, as the king of her peerage, use castling at will. Koneko was lighter on her feet than most, being originally a nekomata, and with Elias so focused on Rias, he didn't seem to hear her. Pretending to be more injured than she was, she stayed still, letting Elias draw closer to her and Koneko to draw closer to him all while she prepared a ball of crimson destruction in her right palm. The second she was close enough, Rias switched the positions and unleashed a massive blast of power at her unsuspecting foe, hitting him directly.*

*Elias didn't even have a chance to scream as he was atomized by the blast.*

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“So what he hit you with dispelled everything you had cast before?” Harry asked. “Were there any other effects?”

“I should avoid casting spells for a day or so, but that's it,” Rias replied. “I'll need to recast the communication spell the next time I'm here.”

“It feels weird not being able to reach out to you at will,” Harry muttered, kissing her forehead. “I was worried for a second there.”

“I'm sorry about that,” Rias smiled, hugging him.

“It's okay; once I realized that I could still sense you through the master-servant bond I calmed down,” Harry replied. “I won, by the way.”

“Really?” Rias asked, though she knew as well, any of their group how slim the chance was of there being any other outcome. “I guess we're going to have to have quite the party this summer then.”

“I'm looking forward to it,” Harry grinned.

“So devils who end up like that insectoid one are exceedingly rare, right?” Hermione asked.

“Yes,” Rias replied. “Sometimes the evil pieces have unfortunate side effects, but they happen very rarely. Such reactions are more common with people who aren't particularly mentally stable, which is why we aren't supposed to turn such people in the first place, but not everyone listens, and sometimes there are consequences. I'm just glad he didn't kill anyone.”

“Just those poor little animals,” Luna lamented, and Rias took her hand.

“I killed him,” she said reassuringly. “Destroyed him completely. Truth be told, I did more than I expected to.”

“Oh?” Harry asked.

“He was exceedingly, even annoyingly, quick, but he also looked really solid too with his chitinous skin,” Rias replied. “I expected the blast of destructive energy I sent to kill him, but I didn't think it would completely atomize him like that.”

“Was your attack more powerful than you expected, or was he weaker?” Harry asked.

“No idea,” Rias replied. “At any rate, it’s done, and that’s that. Now, I think I’m going to go have a long, hot bath. Summon me tomorrow, and I’ll recast the communication spell.”

“Will do,” Harry smiled, kissing her. “I’m glad you’re alright.”

“I’m glad you won,” Rias smirked. “I would have needed to come up with some other excuse to let you fuck me in the ass if you hadn’t.”

“Dirty minx,” Harry chuckled.

“See you tomorrow, Rias,” Hermione nodded.

“Can I get you ready for him when you decide to try anal?” Luna asked, and Rias laughed.

“Of course, Luna,” she replied. “Bye.”

“Bye,” the three of them replied almost in unison.

“We’ve still got half an hour to go until dinner,” Harry said after checking the time.

“I had my last exam already, so I don’t have anything to do,” Hermione said.

“We could run more training drills if you like,” Harry suggested. “I don’t know what the training room in Grimmauld Place is like, and this is one of the last opportunities we’re going to have to use this one for a while.”

“That sounds like fun,” Luna replied, drawing her wand.

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“Something about this stinks, Albus,” Alastor muttered as he leaned on his walking stick, reorienting himself after the long, international portkey trip.

“*You’re not wrong,*” Dumbledore thought to himself.

Never in a million years would he have imagined that Tom would reach out to Gellert. His old student wasn’t one to share power, and rare was the mentor who didn’t come to regret their association quickly. When Igor came to him claiming to have heard Draco Malfoy receive a howler from Tom discussing future plans, he thought that the man was either lying to him or had been deceived.

Tom using a howler to communicate with young Draco wasn’t entirely out of the question, as they were charmed to self-destruct, something that he might not have trusted the young man to remember to do to any normal letter, and in the comfort of his own room, he was unlikely to be spied on normally. He liked to hope that the Malfoy heir hadn’t already fallen into walking his father’s path and had dismissed the idea outright, and then he got a letter from Anton Eckart, head of the German equivalent of the DMLE, claiming that Voldemort and his followers had been spotted in Germany and that they’d received intelligence claiming that he and a few of Gellert’s old followers were planning to break his old friend out.

“Albus, welcome,” Anton said gruffly as he spotted him. “Alastor Moody, we were not expecting you.”

“I thought another wand might be helpful,” Dumbledore replied. “You’re sure that Voldemort has been spotted?”

“Ve ‘ave eye-witness testimony confirming it,” Anton replied. “I dismissed it at first, of course, but after viewing ze man’s memory myself und seeing just who else ‘e vas vith. I knew it had to be true. I ‘ave already sent word to your ministry.”

“*That’ll go over well,*” Dumbledore thought to himself. “Who else was he spotted with?”

“Ve’ve identified zree of ze five unknown figures in ze memory as Bellatrix Lestrange, her husband Rodolphus, und his brother Rebastian. Ze two we could not identify were less concerning zan who zey vere vith, zough. Vinda Rosier was in zere company.”

“Rosier?” Alastor growled.

“Evan’s aunt,” Dumbledore replied, running a hand over his face. “She was one of Grindelwald’s most loyal followers and one of few members of his inner circle who escaped justice after the war. Most believed that she was dead.”

“Most of us hoped,” Anton muttered. “Seeing zat witch in ze company of a living Voldemort was concerning enough, but zen we received a report half an hour ago that someone fitting the description of Thaddeus Nott was spotted in ze Austrian village of Obergurgl. Zis wouldn’t have been too noteworthy normally, as he is not a wanted fugitive, but I sent someone to investigate anyway, und he spotted Miss Rosier with him.”

“In the Austrian Alps,” Dumbledore muttered.

“Ve have to assume zat zey mean to assault Nurmengard,” Anton replied. “We could handle zem normally, but if your Voldemort is with zem...”

“I’ll accompany your men,” Dumbledore said. “No matter what happens, Voldemort cannot be allowed to free Gellert Grindelwald from his prison.”

The mere idea of having them both free and working together, even if that alliance would probably last for all of five minutes, was horrifying.

“Is that even possible?” Alastor asked. “I thought that you wrested control of the prison’s wards away from Grindelwald.”

He had, or more specifically, he’d wrested command of the elder wand away from him when he bested him in their final duel. Gellert had tied the wards of his stronghold to the wand itself, arrogantly assuming that he would be its master for all his days. It shouldn’t have been possible for Tom to access Gellert as long as Dumbledore lived, but his old student had always been rather good at doing the impossible.

“*What are you thinking, Tom?*” Dumbledore thought to himself. “*Did your brush with death scare you that much, or is there something else here that I’m missing?*”

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"I did miss ze clean, fresh air of ze alps," Vinda sighed, sounding happier than she had since Voldemort met her as she and their party waited, hidden among a thicket of trees near Nurmengard.

"It is somewhat marred by what Dumbledore and the others did to our lord's castle," Angus Macduff muttered.

"Our lord will soon be freed, Macduff," Vinda hissed. "For the first time in decades we 'ave 'ope."

*"I guess every dark lord needs a Bellatrix,"* Voldemort thought to himself wryly as he beheld the sole remaining tower of Nurmengard Castle.

It wasn't the first time in the past several weeks that he'd compared the two, but it would likely be the last. Looking around, he spotted the host of Death Eaters that he'd brought with him, familiar faces all of them, though they'd put on their masks as soon as they arrived. It turned out that, of Grindelwald's followers who escaped after the war, only two actually survived. Vinda had been deeply disappointed by that but it didn't really matter. She was the one he needed the most, her lord's most notoriously devout follower. Everything that he'd schemed rested on her.

"I had thought that Dumbledore would be here by now," Macduff muttered, running his fingers through his long, white beard.

"The Triwizard Tournament ends today," Voldemort explained. "Dumbledore will be delayed by that, but he has apparently never missed an anniversary visit."

"I still don't understand why he keeps this up," Macduff muttered.

"Probably to gloat," Vinda scowled.

"More likely to try and convince your lord to repent his ways," Voldemort murmured. "The old fool is utterly convinced of his own moral superiority and never misses an opportunity to try to convince his foes of it."

They both scowled at that, and Voldemort looked back at his followers. They were silent, all of them, and eagerly awaiting the battle to come. He smirked at that and considered just how much planning had gone into this. Once Reinhard led him to Vinda Rosier, he'd known how he was going to play this and had carefully ensured that every single piece was in place for what was to come. A lot of preparation had gone into it, and many steps had been needed to ensure that everything was perfect.

The most difficult thing had been figuring out a way to make the polyjuice potion work with skin cells rather than hair.

Voldemort smirked, looking through the eyes of the random imperiused muggleborn wearing his face just then, before returning his focus to his actual body as he took his first steps inside Hogwarts in nearly thirty years. Draco's room had never been his own, but one of his first followers had stayed in the room during their fourth year, and he recalled it at once.

"You have done well, Draco," he rasped, gazing down at the genuflecting boy with his crimson eyes.

"I live to serve you, my lord," Draco replied dutifully, and he chuckled.

“You do,” Voldemort agreed. “Give me your arm.”

Draco looked up at him in surprise and undisguised glee, eagerly presenting his left forearm. He pressed his wand against the boy’s skin, and the young blonde twitched at the sudden pinch he felt as the inky black mark flowed into him and took shape. The dark mark stood in sharp contrast against his pale skin, and Voldemort felt the same measure of pride that he always did when one of these proud purebloods let him brand them like cattle. It was, first off, a sign of submission and acknowledgment of his superiority, that which his endless power gave him.

“Rise,” he commanded softly, and Draco did as he was told. “Report.”

“Dumbledore left, as you said he would,” Draco replied. “Professor Snape said that he rushed off for some ministry business. Dinner is about to begin and everyone will be crowded in the great hall soon, save for the Slytherins, whom Nott has convinced to be...late.”

“Does he know why?” Voldemort asked.

“No, my lord,” Draco replied, “not specifically anyway. He just knows that it is in his best interest to convince them all it is in theirs.”

“I ordered him to do as you said,” Thaddeus piped up. “He will obey.”

“Good,” Voldemort smiled, “then there is but one thing left to do. Come, my loyal Death Eaters. Today, Harry Potter dies.”

There weren’t any jubilant cries at that; he’d trained them better. His followers just smiled and put on their masks. This was something that he wouldn’t have been willing to do normally, as it did contain its share of risks, but with Potter having gained the allegiance of a creature like Baraqiel, it was necessary. The wards would keep the Fallen Angel out for at least a few minutes, and with Dumbledore busy in Austria, this was his best opportunity to take out his prophesied foe.

*“Today will be the day that all will know that Lord Voldemort can triumph over even the fates themselves,”* he thought to himself, his thin lips arcing into a murderous grin as his grip on his wand tightened.

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Standing in his sitting room in Agreas, Ajuka Beelzebub leaned his chin against his prized Stradivarius violin and played his favorite piece that his uncle, Lysander Astaroth ever composed. A snifter of Louis XIII sat next to him on his mahogany end table but even it’s enchanting aroma couldn’t distract him from the haunting tune he was playing.

“You came so close, Tartini,” he chuckled to himself as he finished, “but your Devil’s Trill just never quite...”

DING

He paused, blinking in momentary confusion at the sound, and placed his violin down carefully on the leather sofa next to him.

“I know that ding,” he muttered to himself. “What the hell did I...oh, right!”

Grabbing his snifter, he flew to the scanner he'd set in motion so many months ago that he'd nearly forgotten it.

"You took your sweet time," he muttered at the device, looking down at the monitor it was connected to. "Now, let's see which devil left their mark on Potter's sou...oh no."