

Venenum

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Venenum

by [Koryanderi](#)

Summary

Hermione travels for the year 1943. All she wants is to return to her friends, but her evasive attitude and behavior that breaks the standards of time, ends up arousing interest of Tom Riddle that soon turns into an obsession.

Oxyuranus

Chapter Notes

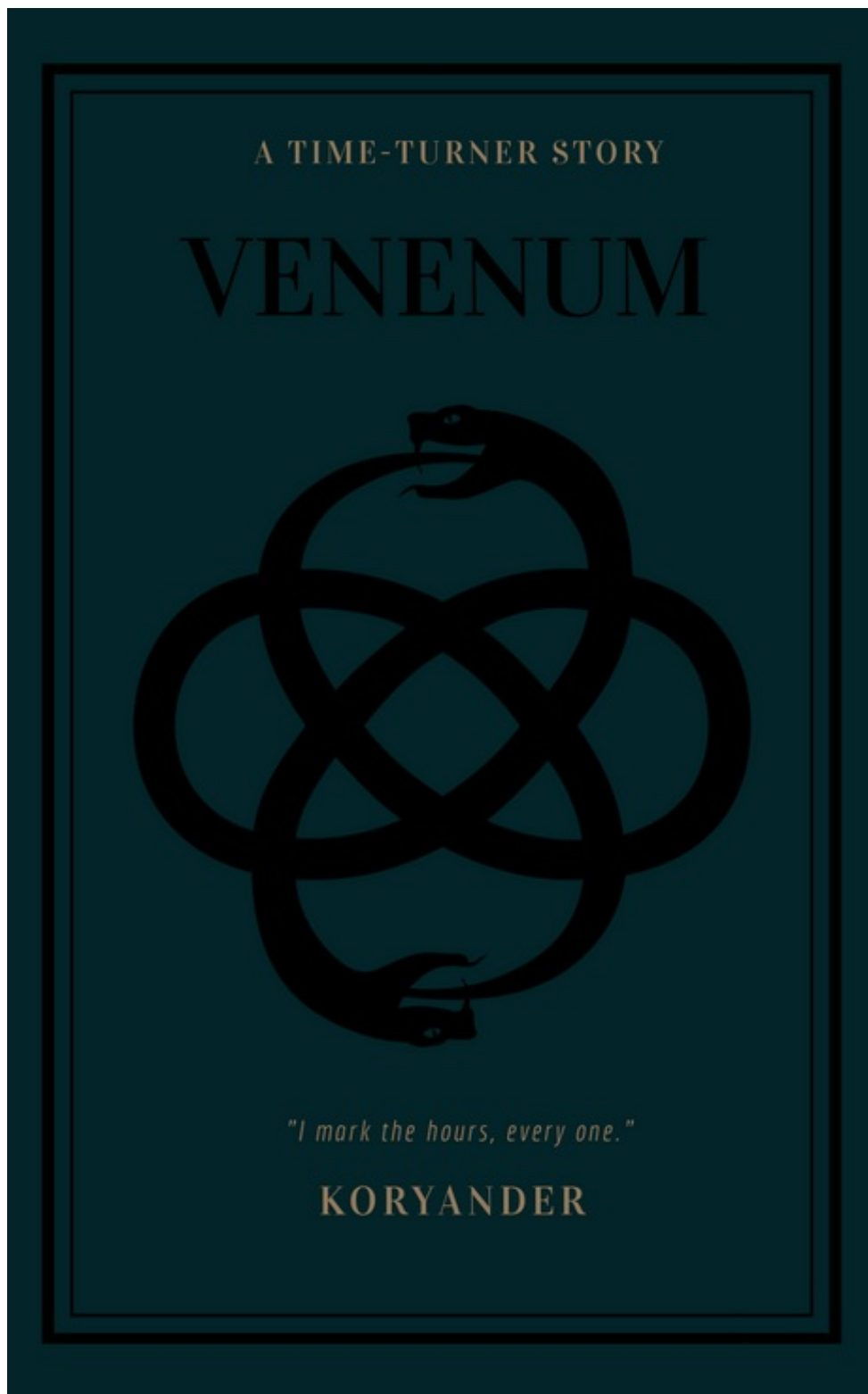
Hello, guys!

-The story and characters of the "Harry Potter" saga belong to the writer JK Rowling

- This chapter was edited on June 24th (2020) by my beta-reader Kcarmen.

Please give her all the love for all the work she is doing in helping to edit the text to improve your reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)



Prologue - Oxyuranus.

The tension was palpable in the Room of Requirement. The students who will be the future Death Eaters looked at each other, sucking in their breaths as they waited for their leader. There were accusatory glances, each searching for a possible culprit that would explain why they were all gathered, yet everyone within shared a common emotion: fear.

They could taste the fear on their tongues, they felt their heart hammering in their chest. Each beat aggravated their affliction. The silence was so vast that a pin could be heard if any fell on the floor.

How bad is it going to be? They wondered similarly. *Mercy*. Who would not want to receive mercy in this situation?

The door opened abruptly, announcing His infuriated arrival . Some of the future Death Eaters cringed, watching the door slowly close and with it the tension within the room growing as they witnessed their only means of escape disappear. In this conjured room there were no windows, no doors and their only way to escape had been vanished by Him. They were trapped. Trapped with imminent death, torture, and sadism embodied within a young man whose contrasting physical appearance was deceptively handsome, almost unearthly. An Fallen Angel.

Tom Riddle came in like a hurricane, rage flickering across his face. He walked with firm and quick steps, his teeth sawing in frustration. He had his shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbow, the Slytherin's tie slightly loose, having forgone the rest of the official uniform attire.

The Knights of Walpurgis upon seeing their leader's wrath quickly moved away, trying to move out of Riddle's field of vision, but nothing and no one could save Alphard Black.

"Riddle..." Alphard begins, but is abruptly stopped by Tom, who pulls him by the collar of his shirt, slamming Alphard's back against the wall, then punching the pit of his stomach.

Tom, in all his psychotic and princely aura, watched his servant slide down the wall, place his hand on his stomach to futilely appease his own pain and fall on his knees. Through the tousled hair obscuring his vision, Alphard glanced and raised his chin up defiantly, awakening Tom's berserk fury. Tom's hands trembled as he gripped them into tight fists, the strong, dark, vengeful magic revolved around him, red light crossing through his eyes. A bestial roar welled up in Tom's throat as he glanced at Alphard Black, any trace of coherence was lost and then he lunged at the boy. What came next was brutal.

Even Alphard - who had a brave, almost Gryffindor spirit - couldn't contain his screams. The sequence of punches on his face and kicks in the ribs dazed him and he was rendered unable to defend himself. Tom's angry magic permeated and smothered the room, and as if it were alive when Alphard tried to drag himself away, his magic intensified.

He will beg.

He will not run away.

Tom dragged Alphard back by his legs and then punched him again. He gritted his teeth and must have cast some spell unconsciously, as irregular cuts opened the skin on Alphard's face. Tom wished to undo Alphard's face, because the image of him smiling at her was still fresh in his mind, and all he wanted was to make it impossible for Alphard to smile ever again.

He would ingrain it in Alphard's mind that every time he tried to approach her, this would be the

consequence of overstepping such boundaries. And punishments would get worse and worse and worse. And they would have more blood and more blood and more blood.

Tom felt a fury so blinding that when a crack was heard, he seemed to awaken from a trance. *I broke something. What was it? The nose? No, no. This one I broke when I hammered his face against the wall. Ah, the jawbone. You can't smile now, can you?*

He stood up slowly. There was a splash of blood on his face, on his shirt and on his hands, his knuckles were sore and Alphard's face was unrecognizable, yet it was still not enough.

He looked at his servants, watching intently their horrified and fearful expressions. Tom laughed. He actually laughed out loud as if he was privy to a secret joke. An involuntary tear appeared at the corner of his eye and he wiped it away before it was released, his hand staining his pale face with more blood, and then he fixed his gaze on Alphard, who was sprawled on the ground, unmoving except involuntary spasms and grunts of pain.

Isn't he a treacherous one? Trying to steal from me and right under my nose. How dare he try to take her away from me? Tom stopped and pondered. *To kill or not to kill?*

Tom's hand twitched. Oh, how he'd like to squeeze his throat and see his puny life slowly leave him, to watch his skin turn purple from breathlessness until nothing was left of him. It was tempting indeed, but the Black family was one of the most important connections he could have in the Wizarding World and also, it would be bothersome to deal with another murder after what happened to Myrtle. This time there would be no Hagrid to blame, not that this was the problem, he could find another victim of his manipulations. The problem was all the work that would have to be done and well, he didn't have the patience for it. And on another important note, this was a Black. Investigations would certainly carry more weight simply because of the damn surname Alphard carried.

Tom placed his hands on his hips and stared at the ceiling of the Room of Requirement. *Fuck, I cannot kill him!*

He couldn't kill him, but it wouldn't mean that he couldn't impart on him a remembrance, a reminder. Tom then stepped slowly and hard on the fingers of Alphard's hand. Alphard tried to make some sound, a cry of pain, but his broken jaw wouldn't let him to even obtain this small relief and if he tried, the more pain he would feel.

Another 'crack' was heard throughout the room, and everyone knew that Alphard's fingers were broken. Nothing could be darker than the smile that Tom Riddle had on his face in that moment. After what seemed to be an eternity, Tom stops stepping on Alphard's fingers and gives a final kick to his stomach, indicating the end of the punishment.

It was certainly ironic that The Dark Lord, a powerful wizard with extraordinary dark magic, chose

such Muggle methods to deliver retribution on someone. Yet he wanted to feel the blood on his hands, and show that even without the use of his unparalleled magic, he was superior in every way. He drew back, his footsteps were the only noise in the Room, his servants stood frozen, staring at the floor of the Room of Requirement as if it was the most interesting thing they had ever seen, just to avoid his gaze. Tom stored his wand in his pocket and with a graceful hand movement, the blood stains on his clothes, hands and face disappeared. He could not wander the halls of Hogwarts with anything less than an impeccable appearance.

He glanced over his shoulder, "Clean this mess." It was an order, his voice cold enough to make his servants shudder. "I hope you have understood what happens when you practice Quidditch. Someone always falls off the broom. "

There it was, the lie everyone would tell. Tom left the details of the lie for them to handle. Without further ado, the door of the Room of Requirement appeared, and Tom Riddle left.

When *that* door disappeared again, they all went into hysteria.

Chapter End Notes

Author Note : *Oxyuranus microlepidotus* is the scientific name of the most poisonous snake in the world. It is known as Western Taipan

Pseudonaja

Chapter Notes

-I would like to thank everyone who favoured, followed and commented. I admit that I was a bit afraid to post in a language that is not mine, but I wanted to share the story with as many people as I could. And I was happy to know that I was able to produce the text in a way that you understood. So, thank you again.

-I would like to thank Guest, Anon, Seanymphe, TheLoverOfLit, Meg, Cfps3000, AriHuntington and Eve for the comments!

-Before continuing, I want to make a warning about the character 'Tom Riddle': Tom Riddle has a complicated personality. He is probably sociopathic, egocentric, sadistic/masochistic, narcissistic (in various subtypes) and manipulative. And I believe that if he got into a relationship, he would probably develop codependency, obsession, and possessiveness. So the maximum I can rate him for this story is as "anti-hero."

-The story will be classified as Explicit / Mature. Due to future scenes of violence, blood and sexual.

-I gave preference to put the scenes of the films, due to the fact that there are people who only know the saga "Harry Potter" by the films. But whenever possible, I intend to put book references in the most explanatory way possible.

For those who have not read the books: I recommend it. It's a great book saga.

-This chapter was edited on June 26h (2020) by my beta-reader Kcarmen. Please give her all the love for all the work she is doing in helping to edit the text to improve your reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1. Pseudonaja - Time Turner

1998

Hermione was still standing, staring intently at the back of Harry Potter, who was making his way to his death. She took a deep breath, her chest aching and a lonely tear trickling down her cheek. Next to her Ron also stood. When Harry disappeared from their sight, both gasped, not knowing

that they were holding their breath. Ron was the first to move, turning the opposite way from Harry, ascending Hogwarts' grand stairs.

"We need to help him, Ron," she said.

"You heard what he said. We have to wait and kill the snake. "

Ron continued up the stairs without turning to look at her, putting his hands in the pockets of his coat as if to hold himself back. .

"He can't go. He's going to die!" Hermione said, a little desperate. "There has to be another way. We can't abandon him! He's our best friend!"

"I know, okay!" Ron finally turned to face her. His face held an expression mixed with anger and sadness. There were tears in his eyes and he struggled to keep them contained. His lower lip trembled. "I know," Ron murmured softly. His voice reflected sorrow for all the friends who had been killed, for his brother Fred and now for Harry Potter, his best friend. "I know," He repeated again.

Hermione ran to hug him tightly, holding him like a lifebuoy, weeping in his arms.

"I just need to tell Ginny," He holds Hermione while hiding his face in the tangle of her hair. "She needs to know."

After a while, he released her and went upstairs. She sat up, tears streaming down her face as she tried to dry them with the palm of her hand.

Hermione was alone in the rubble of what once was the beautiful and magical staircase of Hogwarts and now in its place stood nothing more than destruction, dust and gravel, and the smell of death. The pressure of the environment made her tense, making even her small beaded bag feel heavy, the silence was making the sound of the wind seem ghostly. Alone, in there, she was nauseated and weak, sad and desperate. Everything around her seemed dead and hopeless. And now, with Harry walking to his death, the gravity of the situation finally seemed to be too heavy to bear.

No!

Hermione condemned herself for her faithless thoughts. She couldn't lose her courage now, otherwise, all the acts, the deaths, the time surviving, obliterating her parents, the sacrifices... Everything would have been for nothing. They can't give up now.

She lifted her gaze, determination shining in her brown eyes. Hermione wiped the traces of tears from her face, she breathed heavily as she stood up, her genius mind starting to make a plan to kill the snake. She had to go to Ron. They had to kill the snake.

As soon as she took the first step up the stairs, she froze. Her breath caught in her throat and a shiver ran up her spine. Hermione swallowed - she slowly turned to the source of sibilant whispers in a strange tongue, rare even in the Wizarding World, resembling Harry's. Similar to **You-Know-Who**.

She screamed for Ron, asking for help, alarmed at what was going on there and all she heard was the echo of her voice. She squeezed Bellatrix's unyielding wand, seeking some security and ready to attack whoever was hiding. There was only one small problem, Bellatrix's wand didn't want to bow to her and was extremely demanding. Instead of her magic running smoothly through, Hermione had to intently concentrate on the spell she wanted to cast. It was clear that she hadn't won the fidelity of the wand, and they simply didn't get along. It would be hypocritical to say that she had tried, but the truth is that Hermione hated this wand and the apparent hatred was mutual. Which left her a little at the mercy of luck if Bellatrix's wand decided to fail at the wrong time, and Hermione could surely die.

Against all the basic principles of survival that sounded in her mind, Hermione made her way to the constant whispers in Parseltongue. Hermione might not know Parseltongue, but she was smart enough to understand that there was a complexity in what was being said and there were also her instincts that she learned to never neglect. With her wand in hand, she walked out of Hogwarts, attentive to the slightest strange movement. The night was cold and morbid and combined eerily with the destruction of Hogwarts, akin to a late funeral.

She would never ask a stupid question like 'Who's there?', screaming and denouncing her position. They were at war and only a foolish person would do such an unthinkable act. When she pinpointed from where the whispers came, Hermione swallowed. The hand that held the wand tightly was shaking when she pointed the wand to the darkness of the Forbidden Forest.

Okay, maybe this should have been the time when she should have turned back and ran, went into Ron's arms, stayed near the Weasley family her classmates, and tried to keep a cool head to plan the next step for the battle. However, this didn't match her personality.

Hermione did not get a reputation for being authoritative without reason. She was knowledgeable of the rules, a perfectionist, known to impose order and was a little judgmental - almost always correcting people. The vast knowledge she had, combined with her intelligence exceeded all

expectations.

This side of her personality almost convinced The Sorting Hat to put her in the Ravenclaw, but there was another side of her personality that made the Sorting Hat stand in extreme doubt.

Hermione remembers how the Hat took four minutes to decide which House she should be sorted in. It seemed to quarrel with itself, almost as if it had known her before, and though it said that her brain was impressive, the part of her personality that was curious, determined, courageous and loyal seemed to catch the attention of the Hat. In the end, she entered Gryffindor and to this day she didn't regret where she had been placed.

It was a fact that Hermione was a lover of rules, but she lost the count of how many rules she broke while she was with her friends. Even though she was a stickler for rules, firmly believing in logic and intelligence, the part of her curious and brave nature always spoke louder. Like now, when her curiosity and determination made her enter the Forbidden Forest. The type of curiosity that made her have almost suicidal tendencies.

She knew there was danger. It could be the Snatchers, the Death Eaters or Voldemort himself who might be stalking her, but Harry could be there too.

The whispering stopped abruptly. Hermione clenched her jaw and narrowed her eyes in the darkness of the forest. The silence became disturbing and whoever or whatever was there, was staring at her. Hermione could feel the attention she was receiving.

She squeezed her wand further, preparing herself. It's someone. It's someone!

Her eyes widened quickly but before she could make any move or cast any spell, the wand flew from her hand, heading into the darkness of the Forbidden Forest. Her heart began to beat faster.

A non-verbal Expelliarmus! Whomever her attacker was, it was someone powerful. A non-verbal spell was always very difficult to perform and required mental discipline. Bearing in mind that the strength and speed with which the wand flew from her hand, whomever her attacker was should not be underestimated.

Before she could have a second thought, Hermione was hit by a green light and was turned upside down, as if an invisible hook had lifted her from her ankle.

Levicorpus . She recognized fearfully.

From her upside-down view, she noticed someone approaching through the fog of the Forbidden Forest. Hermione narrowed her eyes in the hope that she could tell who it was that was coming toward her, her heart pounding against her chest and her affliction mixed with adrenaline began to rise in the pit of her stomach.

She was released from the spell, banging against the ground, the impact on her craned head

shocking her slightly, and before she could even stand up completely she was trapped by the Incarcerous spell.

After all, what did she expect? Courtesy? She snorted mentally at this thought.

Hermione finally looked at her attacker and instantly her skin froze.

Who was this person? She couldn't tell. There was a black robe covering the whole body of the person, leaving no idea to distinguish if it was a man or a woman, but she assumed it was a man from his way of walking in her direction. The sleeves of the robe covered his hands only showing half the wand he held. But what scared her the most was the face. The hood of the robe covered the head of the person, but the face... Where his face should be, or a partial view of it, there was only darkness. Void, dark as if nothing was there. But she knew better.

Some kind of Charm, maybe? There had to be a face there, the person just wasn't willing to show it. It was a very realistic portrayal of how the personification of Death. He only lacked the scythe. Whoever it was, he approached her with calm steps, with deliberate slowness, stopping just in front of her. This wasn't an ally, he resembled more a Death Eater in those clothes.

Hermione swallowed, but refused to show fear and instead cast him a fierce glare.

"Who are you?" She asked, her voice sounding more confident than she actually felt.

Hermione would not ask something like 'What do you want?' to a possible Death Eater, because it was very clear what they all wanted. But she thought it fair that at least she knew the identity of her attacker if she was going to die now. She took a deep breath, soothing her heart that beat against her chest. She supposed that at the time of her death, she should feel more desperate or should cry, but she was frankly surprised that she was not feeling any of this right then. Maybe it was because she had no regrets that she carried with her. She had fought bravely for everything she believed in, she had protected her parents, she was recognized for her student efforts, she had danced at the Yule Ball, she had true friends, she had **kissed the boy she liked**.

Her attacker tilted his head to the side, analyzing her and Hermione could swear he was almost smiling behind this Charm of Darkness. She writhed within the ropes that held her as she watched him approach her. He was holding something in his left hand and she leaned back, trying to distance herself from his grasp.

He bent down at her level - which was on her knees - his hands reached around her, trapping something around her neck. *A necklace? A medallion?* Hermione couldn't say for sure, but she supposed it was a medallion from its weight.

What the hell is that? A new kind of ritual of the Death Eaters? A collar to identify Muggle-borns? She wouldn't put the last option past them, those people were very sadistic and enjoyed humiliating others they considered lessers.

Then she heard a noise, like a roulette wheel spinning, and he began to speak in Parseltongue as he held the medallion. Hermione's head snapped up to stare into the void of his hood - this wizard was the source of the whispering that had attracted her to the Forbidden Forest! Before Hermione could dwell more on this, she felt the beginning of magic activating. He was uttering foreign words at the medallion that he had tied around her neck. A spell.

Now she was starting to feel desperate. When he stopped, she stared intently into his darkness, this time highly alarmed.

"What did you do?!" she asked furiously.

He didn't bother to answer and took her wand out of his robes. Or rather, Bellatrix's wand and put it in the pocket of her coat. He returned her wand back to her. Hermione looked at him like he was crazy.

So, he's on our side? A 'click' came from the medallion and she looked at her chest, trying to recognize what was locked around her neck, but when the restraints of the Incarcerous spell fell apart, she looked at him again. Within seconds she was on her feet and aiming her wand at him.

"Who are you and what have you done to me?" Hermione asked deliberately slowly and menacingly. In a quick gesture, she grasped the medallion around her neck and looked at it. *A Time-Turner?* "Answer me!" She demanded fiercely, trying to pull the medallion from her neck, but it seemed to be locked. The Time-Turner on her neck did another 'click' before turning again.

Hermione was about to cast a *Confringo* when she heard noises in the forest. She looked at her - possible? - opponent, waiting to see if he would alert others and denounce their position.

She realized that in no time he withdrew his wand and aimed it at her, but since she had not trusted him in the first place, she was on her guard ready to cast a defensive spell.

When the noises grew closer to their position, Hermione understood that she couldn't stay there. The Death Eaters were too close, probably hunting Harry and there would be too many of them for her to deal with efficiency, especially with a wand that refused to respond to her completely.

She retreats a few steps, never taking her eyes off the person in front of her, the Time-Turner does another 'click' and turns again and Hermione is desperate to get it off her neck. The noises get closer and closer and she retreats more, yet the person in the cloak does nothing to stop her. So she concludes that he could very well be an "ally", but what he did to her, she has no idea.

Hermione takes one last look at him, before turning her back and running as fast as she could. The Time-Turner does another 'click' and spins again.

She is running in the Forbidden Forest with Death Eaters hunting, searching . She's not the prey they want - they want Harry Potter - but if they catch her, they'd probably use her as a bargain in exchange for Harry and Harry would certainly accept the exchange.

The Time-Turner does another 'click' and Hermione is worried, she wants to stop it and pull it away from her neck to analyze why this Time-Turner is making noise. Seems to be different and she's really scared of what this might mean. However, what makes her most angry is that the chain that holds the medallion is actually locked, stuck and doesn't look like it will open easily.

In the distance, she sees someone standing in a glade. *Harry? Harry! It's Harry!*

He's standing there alone and it looks like he's finished talking to someone. Hermione was surprised for a moment before calling him.

"Harry!"

He turns at the sound of Hermione's voice. Surprised, Harry is about to contest why she's there. She's not supposed to be there. Then he notices the movement behind her and starts to run towards her.

"Hermione!" He warns her of danger.

A Death Eater caught her by the hair, pulling Hermione back. She sees Harry pick up his wand and point it at the Death Eater as Harry manages to grab her arm. The Time-Turner makes one last 'click', sucking all three in.

It was like Apparating in the wrong way. That's how it felt. They were spinning and spinning in a fall that seemed infinite. Hermione only felt that the fall stopped when her body hit the ground.

The impact made her sore and she was vaguely conscious of a few screams all around her.

The light of the sky in the afternoon makes her eyes burn when she opens them. Hermione tries to stand up to know where she is, but she is met with the sight of Harry being thrown in the air as a victim of an Expulso.

She crawls on the ground, picking up her wand that she didn't realise she dropped before as she registers the Death Eater's intention to cast the *Avada Kedavra* into Harry. Before that happens, Hermione uses a *Confringo* , forcing her enemy to erect a shield.

Harry is unconscious and she is starting to feel dizzy, her vision also starting to blur, but she will not give up.

oOo

1943

Tom Riddle looked serenely at Slughorn, pretending to pay attention to the explanation he gave about a potion, but internally Tom was yawning and bored. He hated Slughorn's long lectures, but he had to put up with them. Being the Head of Slytherin House, it was always advantageous to have Slughorn as his ally.

He was counting the minutes for the Potions class to end, when a wave of strong magic ran through the walls of Hogwarts. He glanced at the classroom doors, his classmates copying his movement. It was impossible for anyone not to have felt this. The murmurs began, and Tom did not fail to notice when Slughorn grasped his wand. As a precaution, Tom also held his wand tightly.

Accelerated steps in the hallway were heard and the Potions students got up from their chairs immediately. It was impossible for an attack to happen at Hogwarts, because the school was extremely protected, but you never knew. Tom looked at his Slytherin companions, who were also on alert. Footsteps approached and then the doors opened with an audible thud.

"Professor Slughorn, Professor Slughorn ...!" He was a third-year student of Slytherin. "On the courtyard ... duel ..." He pointed out of the classroom, speaking breathlessly. "On the courtyard there is a duel!"

When the sentence was completed, the students rushed out to see, despite Slughorn's orders to stay in. It was impossible to stop the students from a good gossip, and they soon left Slughorn behind. The hallways of Hogwarts were quickly filled with students from other classes and years, all of

them moving in the same direction towards the grounds, curious to see what was happening in the courtyard, all ignoring the orders yelled out over their heads by their teachers.

As he came close to the area of commotion, Tom saw a girl dressed in strange clothes aiming her wand at a man who had an aura he knew from afar. Dark magic, this man was a dark magic user. The girl seemed to protect another person, a boy, who was lying down and appeared to be unconscious. She lifts a strong shield before casting an *Expulso* on her opponent, who was thrown into the nearest wall. The sound was loud enough for everyone to hear and everyone murmurs about what they were witnessing. The girl limped to the unconscious boy, and kneeled to try to check him.

Tom wonders if he should or should not intervene. He analyses what he can gain if he helps the girl. Well, it is clear that it was the girl who is at a disadvantage.

In the end, he decides to go to the young woman's help. His decision has a bit of recklessness, but he assumes that being the best student in Hogwarts it is expected of him to come to the aid of a lady. He also enjoys dueling and he would gain more fame and Tom enjoys reminding everyone why he is considered the best student Hogwarts ever had.

He goes toward the then and as if on cue, the fallen boy begins to scream, and it is loud and horrible as if he were on the receiving end of a powerful *Cruciatus Curse*. Oh, Tom Riddle was more than familiar with this unforgivable curse. The girl cries in shock and tries to calm the boy, who seems to be convulsing. Tom frowns, realizing that the girl was very focused on the well-being of her friend and ignored her surroundings and her opponent, who now stands to attack her.

Tom points his wand at the strange man in black robes. He tries to control himself, knowing he can't use forbiddenly dark spells with a crowd around him watching intently the scene before them. He fights, and takes into consideration that his opponent is good at dark magic, but Tom is better.

However, when a *Fiendfyre* is thrown at him, Tom understood the kind of duel he was in. It was life or death.

For an instant, he considers what these two had done to incite this kind of attack, but his thoughts are cast aside as the girl stepped in front of him. Protecting him. And this is the moment when Professor Dumbledore and Headmaster Dippet arrive, disarming his opponent and countering the *Fiendfyre* before it is released.

His attentive eyes analyze the girl, realizing that there is blood on her strange clothes and that they are also dirty and torn. Her hair - if it can be considered so - is more like a lion's mane. There are thin cuts on her face and she seems to be disoriented. She blinks several times as if she wants to adjust her vision and before she can take a step further, she faints, almost hitting the ground if he hadn't caught her at the last second. Tom looks at her for a moment before his attention turns to the boy screaming in agony. He notices that there is a lightning bolt shaped scar on the boy's forehead that is still healing and Tom thinks this was the cause of the boy's pain.

Tom holds the girl as he looks at Dumbledore and Dippet.

Chapter End Notes

- *Pseudonaja textilis* is the scientific name of the Oriental Brown Snake. The second most poisonous snake in the world.

Bungarus

Chapter Notes

I would like to thank everyone who favored, commented and gave kudos. Thank you very much.

Thank you Embossross , Seanymphe , LarkWilder, Biomecaria, Bbibbi, Jennieb89 , Danimals, Izaleana, aga1127 for the comments and the affection.

This chapter was edited on July 24th (2020) by my beta-reader Kcarmen. Please give her all the love for all the work she is doing in helping to edit the text to improve your reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 2. Bungarus - Time travel .

1943

Hermione awoke, feeling her head throb. She placed a hand on her temple in a pacifying gesture to relieve her headache. As soon as her eyes adjusted to the light, she rose abruptly as she recognized where she was.

Hogwarts. I am in the Hogwarts Hospital Wing.

She noticed apprehensively that her clothes had been changed to flannel pants and a shirt - hospital pyjamas - with the Hogwarts emblem on the upper left side of the shirt. After getting out of the bed, she looked around, a little surprised and startled to realize that nothing was as destroyed as she remembered it to be. The Wing was fairly empty and clean.

The school has been rebuilt. Did we win the war? Great Merlin, we won the war! The happiness she felt was extreme. Hermione had never felt so happy. They had won the war, otherwise, she would have been dead by now.

Without thinking twice, Hermione left the Hospital Wing, running through Hogwarts' corridors, down to the third floor, looking for her friends. The paintings moved, hiding from her, sometimes gossiping about her yet she didn't care. She didn't have the mind set in that moment to care about her clothes, nor the state of her hair nor the fact that she was barefoot. All she wanted was to see Harry, Ginny, Luna, and all the others. She wanted to see Ron, to hug him and feel his arms around her. To kiss him again. They had finally declared their love for each other.

Hermione entered the first classroom that she saw, opening the doors loudly in the hope of finding someone to tell her where her friends were. The smile on her face was slowly undone. The faces of several students turned to face her, whispering as they looked at her. Hermione frowned, shaking her head slightly not believing what she was seeing. She didn't recognise any of them.

"What...?" Hermione didn't understand. *What is going on?* She asked herself.

Hermione placed a hand on her head, trying to appease the throbbing pain in her head that started again, clouding her vision and echoing in her ears. Something was wrong. She turned and walked only to bump into someone.

"Forgive me, miss." The voice was masculine.

Hermione raised her gaze and exhaled the breath that was trapped in her lungs. She was surprised at what she saw.

"Sirius ...?" Her eyes filled with tears. *Is this Sirius Black? He looks a lot like Sirius.* The hair, the eyes, the face. He's just clearly younger.

As Hermione was confused she didn't notice the boy's glare. He scanned her from top to bottom, noticing the clothes she was wearing as a slight blush took over his cheeks.

"My lady, take this. I don't think it's right for a lady to walk around in such clothes." He handed her his Slytherin robe, putting it on her shoulders. Hermione accepted, still too confused and too surprised by how much the young man looked like Sirius Black to consider refusing. Her eyes followed every move he made.

The students inside Galatea Merrythought's class stole furtive glances, putting their heads out of the classroom door, curiously trying to get a look at the strange girl who had invaded the classroom. The noises of Professor Galatea's shoes woke Hermione from her trance, standing by the young man who looked so much like Sirius, and in a swift movement she turned and grabbed the teacher's arms.

"Who won the war?" Hermione pleaded, shaking Professor Merrythought. Hermione's hair was wild, giving her a fierce appearance and the desperation in her voice was remarkable. Behind the teacher stood the most handsome young man Hermione had ever seen, who was approaching her position with suspicion written across his features. He was wearing Slytherin robes, although their cut differed slightly from what she was used to seeing. On that thought, Hermione noticed that the cloak draped around her was also fashioned in a different style, along with everyone else's that had failed to notice before. The majority of the male students were wearing a blazer, and few others wore a cloak.

Professor Merrythought's eyes widened in surprise when Hermione mentioned the word 'war'.

"My dear, were you at the war?"

"Yes!" Hermione replied quickly, glad to have found someone who understood what she was saying. "So, did we win the war?"

Professor Merrythought's gaze softened and she comforted Hermione with one hand, steering Hermione to walk next to her.

"Mr. Black, you're late for class. Enter the classroom immediately and wait with the other students, I will accompany this young woman to the Hospital Wing."

In reality, Merrythought didn't have to accompany Hermione because the matron Olga Derwent was running down the corridors looking for her missing patient. Hermione was advised to return with Mrs. Derwent to the Hospital Wing and this irked her a bit. Everyone was treating her like a fragile doll.

Where is Madam Pomfrey?

Unaware of what was going on, Hermione let herself be taken to the Hospital Wing more willingly for the headache she felt. Before following Mrs. Derwent on the path, Hermione glanced over her shoulder, looking at the handsome boy who made a curious eye contact with her. Beside him were the young man who had a likening to Sirius and another, blond as ... Draco?

Sitting on the bed in the Hospital Wing, Hermione waited, her mind working to understand what's going on. *Maybe it's my mind playing with me, it would not surprise me if I am going crazy and imagining all this. Not much really.* In fact, she could be very well at Malfoy Manor, still being tortured by Bellatrix and as a protection mechanism to relieve her despair, her mind could be playing with her reality. This had happened to other people.

"My young lady, I am Olga Derwent, the matron of Hogwarts. I've been taking care of you." Derwent spoke calmly and passively as if Hermione were some kind of wild animal.

"Where is Madam Pomfrey?" Hermione dared asked. She was afraid to know the answer.

"Who?" Mrs. Derwent frowned, confused.

Hermione narrowed her eyes, swallowing hard. As she tried to ask another question, the doors of the Wing opened, with Dumbledore entering. When Hermione saw Dumbledore, her eyes widened, not believing the image she saw.

I AM crazy.

"Headmaster Dumbledore?" She murmured. Dumbledore stopped, looking at her with intelligent and slightly curious eyes.

"I think you mean 'teacher.' Do you know me, child? "

" Yes, it's me, Hermione Granger! Don't you remember me? "

"Child, how did you manage to overcome the school's Anti-Apparation spells? "

When Dumbledore narrowed his eyes in an accusatory manner, Hermione froze. She didn't understand at first what was happening. The pain in her head increased as the flashes of memory began. She began to remember what happened and in reflex Hermione touched her neck, feeling the locket trapped. Her breathing accelerated.

"Harry. Where's Harry?! "

"The boy who was accompanying you? "Dumbledore asked and Hermione confirmed, suddenly very tense. "I am afraid to say that he was sent to St.Mungo's, our dear Mrs. Derwent could not help him from the kind of coma he entered. I must say I've never seen anything like it. "

"But will he be okay?" She was frightened and Dumbledore noticed.

"That, young lady, only time can tell."

Dumbledore also noticed how pale Hermione was and how his words seemed to affect her. He narrowed his eyes, trying to decide whether she was friend or foe and what were the reasons for her abrupt arrival. His gaze fell to the locket that the young lady touched and he felt magic radiating from it. It was strong, suggestively protective enchantments that could very well be dark magic.

"Miss Granger," Dumbledore said, attracting Hermione's attention which seemed momentarily lost. "I'll give you some time to get yourself in order and I'll wait for you in my office. Headmaster Dippet is currently waiting for the Aurors, who are heavily interested in your arrival. "

" Aurors ...?" There was a little alarm in Hermione's voice.

"I dare say, young lady, that yours and your friend's arrival warned the whole community. The Ministry of Magic has certainly sent Aurors to investigate what happened," Dumbledore explained, watching her swallow.

Without much else to say, he nodded before turning around and leaving. Hermione stood there, alone. She brought her hand to her mouth in a clear gesture radiating concern. Matron Derwent came shortly thereafter, carrying the neutral Hogwarts female uniform with none of the colors of the Hogwarts' Houses.

Hermione was quick to dress, she had no time, she needed to talk to Dumbledore before the Aurors reached her. Her hands were shaking, but she didn't really care. She needed to stay calm so she could get out of this situation. She was afraid of the question she was going to make to Mrs. Derwent. Her lower lip trembled, her heart beat hard against her chest and she took a deep breath, her legs jelly-like trembling with fear.

"What year are we?"

"1943, my dear." Mrs. Derwent replied, for a moment the matron thought that the girl had a concussion or loss of memory.

The matron observed the expression of terror that took over Hermione's face, her eyes widening and her skin turning pale and for a moment, she thought the girl might faint. In the blink of an eye, Hermione grabbed the locket around her neck as if the object was choking her. Without thinking twice, she tried to turn the Time-Turner's hourglass, but was locked. Impossible to turn.

It was an unthinkable act of despair. In her defense, she would have never turned the Time-Turner in her right mind, but in her situation, all she was overwhelmed by the horrible realisation of being in the past.

Dumbledore. She needed to urgently talk with Dumbledore.

Mrs. Derwent was trying to convince Hermione to stay a little longer in the Hospital Wing so she calmed down before she met with Dumbledore, but Hermione didn't want to wait. She couldn't afford to wait.

As she walked along the halls, Hermione silently thanked them for being empty. The students were still in the classrooms or in the courtyard. She only stopped when she stood face-to-face with the door of the Transfiguration teacher's office. She took a deep breath and when she closed her fist to knock on the door, the door opened itself. Hermione entered slowly, with soft steps, watching Dumbledore who was sitting at his desk reading a book. She stopped in the middle of the room and Dumbledore still had not taken his eyes off the pages. Silence set in and the only noise that could be heard was the ticking of the clock. At a glance, Hermione noticed the crimson red of the bird's feathers. He flew around her before finally settling on his perch. The size of a swan, the Phoenix opened his wings to her and nodded in acknowledgment.

"Fawkes!" Hermione smiled, walking toward the perch. The last time she had seen the Phoenix, Fawkes had left Hogwarts. The bird's black eyes watched her as he tilted his head to the side. Recognizing Hermione's pure heart, Fawkes lowered his head as if bowing, introducing himself.

Dumbledore watched with fascination Fawkes' interaction with the girl. He knew that Fawkes was an extremely intelligent bird, able to see good and evil in people. To discern between those who wanted to do good and those who wanted to do evil. A great judge of character. Then, watching Fawkes being so inclined to accept the young lady removed the initial mistrust he had.

Dumbledore made a sound in his throat, drawing Hermione and Fawkes's attention. Gently, he said:

"Lemon drops, Miss Granger?" He offered. She refused.

Hermione took a deep breath and ran her tongue over her dry lips. She did not know what to say to Dumbledore, but he needed to know that she was not an enemy.

"Headmaster Dumbledore... I mean, Professor Dumbledore." She began, remembering that during this time, Dumbledore was a teacher. She glanced at her clasped hands, without the courage to face him. "I'm not evil," she says. "I don't want to hurt you or anyone. Neither does my friend. What happened was an accident. We don't know how we got here, we were running away and ... And we got caught- "

"That is a very interesting locket, Miss Granger. "

Dumbledore was closer to her. Slowly, Hermione raised her gaze to face him. She felt his fingers pick up the locket that was laying around her neck.

"A Time-Turner?" It was not really a question, it was more of an affirmation. Dumbledore looked at her over his half-moon glasses, raising an eyebrow. "They are controlled by the Ministry of Magic. However, this seems a little different, doesn't it? "

"It's stuck. See?" Hermione tried to turn the Time-Turner's hourglass right in front of Dumbledore, but she couldn't. "My friend and I didn't want to use it. Merlin knows we did not want to go back fifty-five years into the past."

"If the Ministry of Magic knows about the illegal use of a Time-Turner, you will go to Azkaban. If what you say - going back fifty-five years - is true, you and your friend will be in big trouble. "

"I need to help my friend and try to find a way to get back to our time. "

"You'll have to be careful with what you will be doing here, young lady. Messing with the past can bring consequences for the future. But I suppose the future is not so safe, is it? Who was the man who attacked you? "

Hermione knew that Dumbledore probably had a notion of what was going on, but maybe he wanted to hear her account of the event.

"I don't know him. Not personally," she said. "He is one of the many who defend the purity of blood and the death of Muggle-borns. What has happened to him? "

"This man was accused of practicing the Dark Arts, with no scruples in using the unforgivable curses. He claims to be Edmund Pyrites. The Pyrites family denies any involvement with him, the Ministry of Magic believes he is a helper of Grindelwald, for his ideological similarities." Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a moment. "He was sent to Azkaban."

"Professor Dumbledore, please..." Her voice was suffocated by the tears she tried to contain. "Help us."

She felt Dumbledore's forefinger and thumb on her chin, raising her face so that he could see her eyes.

In the brown color of her eyes, Dumbledore saw suffering, sadness, despair, and truth, plus a fierce glow of determination.

"I believe we had the honor of meeting in the future, I presume."

Hermione blinked, confirming. He ran his fingers back through the locket tied around her neck and narrowed his eyes to the letters around the circle that held the Time-Turner. In a swift movement, he hid the locket in her sweater, right before the door opened. Hermione gasped as she saw Dippet with two Aurors, one a man, and the other a woman.

"Dumbledore, I see you're already with the intruder," Dippet said, looking closely at Hermione.

"I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding."

"Mr. Dumbledore, I'm Leeza Zabini and this is my partner, Ronan Travers." Hermione swallowed, as the dark-haired lady with almond-shaped eyes introduced herself. If she depended on the help of a Zabini and a Travers, Hermione would already be one foot inside Azkaban. "We were sent here to ascertain the magical disturbance that the arrival of two young people caused and obviously their involvement with the self-declared Edmund Pyrites, who is imprisoned in Azkaban for practicing the Dark Arts."

"This young lady" Dumbledore put a hand on Hermione's shoulder "Was in contact with me for some time before her arrival from France. Grindelwald's recent attacks forced her and her friend to move and I offered shelter. In fact, they arrived earlier. I hoped they'd get to the Hogwarts Express next semester to start their sixth-grade classes, but the war seems to have caused an unexpected."

At every word from Dumbledore, Hermione's eyes burned, she tried to keep her composure and hold her tears, but she could not hold it together and found herself crying when realising that Dumbledore was not only saving her life, but also Harry's.

"Forgive me, Dippet, I should have told you before. The disturbance we felt in magic was caused by a Portkey. "

"And the dark wizard who was with you?" Leeza Zabini directed her question to Hermione.

"He attacked us. He tried to kill us. He grabbed us when we were about to be transported." It wasn't a lie at all. In fact, this really had happened.

"Why was he chasing you?" Travers asked.

Feeling a kind of judgment, Hermione knew she needed to give credible information that would satisfy the Aurors. She had to give personal information that satisfied the reasons for being pursued. It wasn't the information that would change everything, yet it was significant enough for her to have a sense of the game she would be playing from there on.

"Because I'm a Muggle-born," she murmured. Her tone was cold.

Hermione noticed the slight wrinkling of Zabini's nose, just as she noticed she lifted her upper lip slightly. Disgust. An expression of disgust.

Corrupt. Corrupt Aurors. How in their right mind did they dare proclaim to be defenders of law when they shared the same ideals that led the war? HerBut Hermione was fooled for even a moment. She had expected nothing less from a Zabini.

Leeza Zabini glared at Hermione, ready to absorb the lie Hermione had professed. Her gaze switched to Dumbledore. He was an exceptional wizard and a very influential figure. He was *the* Albus Dumbledore. Who could accuse him of lying?

"I understand." She eased her glare. "But we'll take the Portkey that was used. It will be taken to the Department of Magical Transport and will be destroyed. "

Dumbledore removed his hands from Hermione's shoulders and headed towards his desk, and from one of the drawers he took out a letter opener. Carefully, he handed Travers the Portkey.

"It was with her, as a precaution I kept it with me until your arrived." Dumbledore lied. Hermione noticed how Travers looked at the letter opener, inspecting it to see if it was somehow special. Confirming, Travers turned to Zabini.

"Before you go, I would ask that the condition of our new students be kept confidential," Dumbledore asked, aware of the exchange of looks between Zabini and Travers. "In the face of

recent events and ideological positions, we wouldn't want Miss Granger and her friend to suffer more. "

It wasn't really a request and couldn't even be considered a threat, it was more of a warning that if details on the circumstances of Hermione and Harry left this room and fell on the wrong ears, he would know who had spread them.

"Of course, Mr. Dumbledore. Our duty is to protect. We understand the delicate situation. "

It was understood that the Ministry didn't want any more conflict than the already ongoing. Dumbledore knew that they would protect Hermione's "secret", because from the moment that the public was made aware that Grindelwald's followers were hunting muggle-borns and apparating inside of the school, chaos would be installed. It would be impossible to withstand the pressure of the people, and the Daily Prophet would love to spread and fuel such information. Considering also Myrtle Warren's death before the holidays, the students' parents would certainly ask Hogwarts to be closed.

"I will accompany the Aurors, I hope to have the opportunity to talk with Miss Granger later." Dippet intervened, leaving with the Aurors out of the room of the Deputy Headmaster and Transfiguration teacher.

Hermione smiled at Dippet before he left, noting that he did not look like a bad person. In fact, he could certainly remind her of someone's gentle grandfather, just by his way of speaking.

"Thank you," she murmured to Dumbledore. "Thank you, Professor Dumbledore." Surprising Dumbledore, she hugged him, and Fawkes, on his perch tilted his head to the side, watching.

"Would you like to stay for tea, Miss Granger?" Dumbledore offered. "Maybe we can talk more about what happened."

Hermione accepted with a smile, the first smile she had allowed since everything happened. A little quieter, she sat in one of the armchairs and watched as Dumbledore served tea on a coffee table, Fawkes distracted on his perch, wiping his crimson feathers with his beak.

He sat on the armchair in front of her, after giving her a tea-cup and serving some biscuits. It provided for a cozy, warm feeling as if someone had placed a blanket over her shoulders, a calm and peaceful environment she had missed for a long while. Hermione knew that this feeling would not last long. After taking a deep breath, Hermione raised her gaze.

"I don't know where to start and I admit I'm afraid," she said. "Not afraid of you, far from it, but I'm afraid of what I'm doing. I'm scared to be in the past with my best friend at St. Mungo's and how that leaves us. If all the books I've read about time travel are correct, I'm afraid of what I should not do or not talk about. Certainly, it was not like in the third year when I used a Time-Turner to be able to watch as many classes as I could. It's a lot more complex than that. "

She paused, taking a deep breath, watching Dumbledore's reaction. Hermione ran her tongue over her lips because they were dry again and it is also a pacifying gesture for the anxiety that begins to emerge in her.

"In the future... There will be a war. A war that many say is worse than this, which is happening now. A dark wizard will appear, probably more powerful than Grindelwald and everyone will be afraid to say his name. He shares an idea similar to Grindelwald's, which is the extermination of the Muggle-borns and Muggles. He propagates the ideals of pure blood. Nothing can stop him, no Aurors, no laws, no Ministry, except for my friend, who was sent to St Mungo's and I care a lot about him. Harry, perhaps, can be considered the heart of the whole problem and also, the only thing that prevents this wizard from taking control of the wizarding world. Before we got here, we were in what could be considered the final battle." Hermione clasped her hands together. "It was us or them. It was about fighting for what we believed in. We've seen friends battle with us, sacrifice themselves and die for what they believed in."

She looked intensely at Dumbledore.

"We had to flee, hide and fight. Before we came here, I believe one of the followers of this dark wizard activated the Time-Turner with some kind of spell that I'm not familiar with. I ran, fleeing, into the Forbidden Forest, trying to find my friend Harry, when another of the followers pulled me by my hair. Harry went to my aid and Time-Turner fully activated and brought us into the Hogwarts courtyard and then, you know what happened from there."

Hermione tried to find the best words to continue.

"I know that if I say the name of this dark wizard you can probably defeat him and it's probably the right thing to do, but ...What's going to happen when we get back? If I say this, how much of what Harry and I know can change, Professor Dumbledore? "

"This is a delicate situation, Miss Granger. I certainly understand your affliction. In fact, the idea of being able to avoid future conflicts is tempting, however I dare say that a simple disturbance in the timeline is crucial to existence. Some believe that even interfering, whatever has to happen, will happen. And that nothing can change what is marked to happen, so is destiny. However, others say that if a time traveler moves a simple glass of water from its place, a chain of events will happen and may even threaten existence itself. I'm afraid I've never seen anyone travel so long into the past. "

"So you think I should let things happen, even though I have the power to change the future? "

"My advice to you, Miss Granger, is for you to be very careful about what you do here... Not only for the timeline, but also for you and your friend's life. If the information that you are from the future falls on the wrong ears, you will be in great danger. Both, by the Ministry, and by a dark wizard. "

"You mean Grindelwald." Hermione deduced and Dumbledore confirmed. "It's really annoying to have to run away from dark wizards."

She said seriously, but soon she opened a smile that turned into a laugh and against all seriousness of the conversation, Dumbledore also smiled, sharing her sense of humor. Hermione wiped a tear from her eyes, still laughing, but another soon fell as well and then another and another. Dumbledore had already stopped smiling, realizing that the girl was crying and hiding her crying in her laughter.

"I'm sorry," she said, wiping her tears with her hand. "It's just that it's so hard." She sniffed. "But I'm very happy to see you again."

Although not apparent, Dumbledore understood the suggestion behind the choice of words she used. Of course, he would not question her for more information, but he noted the drastic change in the mood she had. Remembering something, Dumbledore got up from his chair and went to his desk, and from his drawer he removed two wands and a purse.

"I believe this is yours and your friend's." He offered her the two wands and the bag.

"Our wands!" Hermione took the wand that was Bellatrix's and Harry's.

When she touched Bellatrix's wand, she felt the magic along with a flash of rejection as if to say 'do not touch me'. It was just like its original owner - a wand that felt deranged, snobbish, discriminating. Hermione knew it was overly peculiar to describe a wand in such a manner, but she found no better way to describe it. Angry at its rejection, she grabbed Bellatrix's wand, and she began to bend the wood that was already slightly curved, but Hermione bent it further past its limits - dividing the wand in two parts. She broke it. And it was relieving, freeing.

Dumbledore witnessed the scene cautiously, watching closely the behaviour of the young girl before him.

Hermione looked back at Dumbledore.

"This wand shouldn't be used by anyone. You have no idea what the real owner did with that wand." She tried to justify herself and Dumbledore accepted the vague reasoning, still looking at Hermione as she tossed her wand into the fire.

She sat down in the armchair again, this time touching Harry's wand.

"This is my friend's wand," she explained, running her hand over the war-battered wood.

Harry's wand responded to her touch as if saying 'I know you. A friend' and complied to Hermione's magic by accepting her. This did not mean in any way that the wand had abandoned Harry, rather it was as if it knew that at this point it needed to join forces with Hermione until its real owner returned. Hermione did not dismiss the possibility of a wand being sentient, on the contrary, if a wand did not understand what was happening, how would it choose its wizard? Was there a better example than the Bellatrix's wand, who hated and refused to obey her? Wands understood in their own way, and at this moment Harry's wand understood that it was better to stay with Hermione and await the return of his owner. And luckily, the wand let Hermione's magic run smoothly, serving as a filter and control.

Then, Hermione picked up her beaded handbag, which she knew had all the things needed for survival, some books and some galleons. She breathed in relief at its familiar weight.

"What happened to Harry?" She asked worriedly.

"You two collapsed after the battle in the courtyard and were unconscious for three days. Your consciousness was coming and going, but you responded to Mrs. Derwent's healing, while your friend apparently went into a deep coma, which our beloved matron could not help. We preferred to send him to St. Mungo's. "

"Do you think he will recover? "

" I'm sure the mediwizards will do all they can to help him. "

" Will I be able to visit him?"

" As soon as possible. "

" Professor Dumbledore ... Can we stay here? You know, until we get a way back to our time? Hogwarts is our home and the only safe place we know. "

"Of course, my young lady. Hogwarts will be open for you and I will help you with everything I can. You've been to Hogwarts, haven't you? "

" Gryffindor. "Hermione laughed, drinking some more tea and Dumbledore smiled to find someone from his House.

"I'm afraid to say, Miss Granger, we're in the final exam phase prior to the holidays. It would only be fair to allow you to also partake to keep up appearances. Tonight, at dinner, you will participate in the sorting of the Sorting Hat. A little unusual for a student transferred to participate in the classification shortly before the holidays, and this will not go unnoticed, but this cannot be helped. "

"I understand, Professor. "

oOo

After talking with Dumbledore, Hermione felt a little more relieved and safer; Surely there was no better place than Hogwarts and close to Dumbledore to find the answer of how to get back to her time - the future. Even if she had to sit through all classes again to integrate, she was safer there than outside.

In fact, she was more relaxed and peaceful now, as she watched the setting sun from above between the clouds peeking through the trees of the Forbidden Forest.

She walked toward the Hospital Wing because she remembered that she left the Slytherin robe that the boy so much like Sirius lent to her. A Slytherin loaning something to a stranger? She could almost laugh at that thought if she had not witnessed it. But she supposed it had something to do with chivalry from the 1940s.

With her handbag in one hand and holding Harry's wand in the other, Hermione entered the Hospital Wing. Mrs. Derwent's eyes were expectant when she saw her. There was no sign of Mrs. Pomfrey, she thought with regret, but knew that for then on she had to get used to it. Mrs. Derwent smiled at her when Hermione confirmed that she was a new Hogwarts student, relaying the whole story that was concocted by Dumbledore. It was certainly better to keep a single version of the story. And Mrs. Derwent very sweetly said she was sorry for Hermione and her friend coming from the war - *'People are not as they used to be. You see, the whole world is at war. What is the need for wars? '*. Hermione internally understood that it was something that all doctors, whether Muggles or Wizards thought about given the start of World War II and Grindewald's regime.

Oh, if she knew that in the future there will be a worse war, how saddened would she have been then... Hermione thinks.

Hermione asked her for the Slytherin robes that she had left there and with a smile, the matron retrieved it for her, but she had little time to pay any further attention to Hermione as two first-year Hufflepuff students came in, one of them surely having been hit, and quite successfully at that, by a Pimple Jinx or in other words, Furnunculus. As they passed by, their eyes widened, something between fright and awe. *I'm probably the school gossip.*

She smiled at them because they looked cute with their child-like hairstyle typical of the 1940s, and in response to her smile they were delighted with her.

With her wand and loaned Slytherin robe in her hands, Hermione threw a Scourgify, not because the robe was dirty, but she thought it was polite to deliver a clean robe and she does not wish any grounds for enmity, especially with the Slytherins. Even though they did like to create messy conflicts, she thought with some irony.. If she wanted her and Harry's existence to remain neutral in the past, she had to avoid being the center of intrigue. After the robe was cleaned, she folded it.

She didn't know where she'd find the boy and she certainly wouldn't go to the dungeons to wait, Merlin free her to be near of that place. However, Hermione was certain that at some point she would find him.

While walking in the halls of Hogwarts students were looking at her as they were on their way to the Great Hall for dinner. They whispered and Hermione knew it was about her, hearing the hushes and whispers at her back. She had already gotten used to it, partially because she was a *mudblood* as the Slytherins loved to kindly remind her and also because of the adventures she had had with Ron and Harry. Somehow it was strange to witness the style of the '40s. It did not really fit her character. The boys were with hair gel and the girls with styled pin-up coifs. All of them carried an air of styled perfection. It did not fit her at all.

For her luck or misfortune, she found the boy who was looking outside the door of the Great Hall with a group of Slytherins talking, probably all from the same year.

Don't go there. Don't go there. Don't go there . She repeated like a mantra in her head. *Never walk alone towards a group of Slytherins* , but there was a lot of Gryffindor courage in her to be able to ignore her own advice.

He has his back to her as she walks toward him. A blond boy soon looks at her, narrowing his eyes at her sudden approach. When she's close enough, she makes a sound with her throat, trying to attract attention. *I do not need to talk to others, I just need to hand over the robe.*

"Hello, princess, what can I do for you?" The blond takes a step toward her, a side smile on his face.

"Rosier, please don't scare the girl." Said the most handsome boy she saw. His features are vaguely familiar for some reason.

The blonde, Rosier, snorts and retracts a few steps, raising his hands.

"Yes?" The boy who looks like Sirius now turns to her, staring at her intently.

Hermione takes a deep breath, she is more mature than that. Wiser than playing with teenagers.

"I would like to return this to you. Thank you for helping me earlier. I appreciate it," she says, looking into his eyes and handing over the robe. It's just strange how much he looks like Sirius.

"You're welcome." He smiles, in a flirtatious way almost as if flirting with her. "Alphard Black, at your service." Before she can stop him, he is taking her hand and kissing the back of it.

She noticed how all his friends snicker, watching him with amusement at how he flirted with the school's newcomer. All but one. This one rolls his eyes and watches closely how quickly she pulls her hand away from Alphard's uninvited lips.

"Forgive my friends, they do not know how to behave," another boy says, putting his hand on her shoulder. He has dark brown curly hair with black eyes. "Allow me to properly introduce them - this is Alphard Black, as you already know."

He points to the boy who resembles Sirius and she nods in acknowledgment. She notices how his hair is reaching all the way down the neck, conveying a rebellious style breaking that which is suitable for the 40's.

"This is Angus Nott." He points to a boy who has wavy hair neatly cut, split aside and with a caramel tone. Freckles dust his nose and he dons a lateral smile. Hermione catches the smart and malicious look underneath the eyelashes.

It can't be.

"This is John Avery." He points to a green-eyed blonde, who smiles confidently at her.

It can't be.

"This is Polumetis Mulciber." He points at the shortest boy amongst all, with hair that was a medium between blond and brown and who was scratching the back of his head like he was feeling awkwardly.

It can't be .

"This is Adrien Rosier." He points to the boy who called her 'princess.'

It can't be.

"I'm Lestrage." He points to himself. "Radalphus Lestrage II."

It can't be!

She wants to get away from him and clean her shoulder that he touched, as if he has some contagious disease, but she just can't. She's paralyzed.

"Is it true that you were fighting in the war?" The handsome boy asks, cutting off Lestrage's introduction. Hermione only has the strength to confirm with her head. "Oh!"

"And this is your savior. He helped you in the battle in the courtyard." Lestrage smiled while pointing to a handsome boy.

"Will you attend Hogwarts?" He asks, and again Hermione nods. He cannot be who she thinks he is. "How curious, a transferred student," he observes. "Anyway, what we saw in the courtyard was impressive. I hope that you will be selected in Slytherin, we will certainly welcome you. "

It can't be! When he spoke, all Hermione could imagine were snakes looking at her with a sly grin on a face with piercing eyes.

"Oh, forgive me for not introducing myself. Tom Riddle, at your service." He motions his head forward and slightly tilts it downwards, looking at her from under his eyelashes with a piercing look. Never really bowing.

Her insides did a somersault..

Chapter End Notes

Bungarus candidus also known as Krait Malasiana, is the third most poisonous snake in the world.

Dendroaspis

Chapter Notes

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-Thank you aga1127 , Bookgirl (ariadragoncrest) , sikaloolala, Pandorasora, Kaja for the comments and the affection.

- This chapter was edited on July 27 (2020) by my beta-reader Kcarmen. Please give her all the love for all the work she is doing in helping to edit the text to improve your reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 3. Dendroaspis - The lion or the snake.

Her legs are trembling, her throat is dry, her heart pounds against her chest, her lungs seem to ache with every intake of air and her eyes burn with the tears that are beginning to form. Hermione thinks she's at the beginning of a panic attack or is hyperventilating.

Oh, she recognises him now. The boy who tried to help her and Harry. Oh, she remembers. Remembers him fighting and how she protected him from Fiendfyre. She had no idea who he was at the time, but if she had known... If she had known that he was the cause of so much suffering and terror that tormented her and her friends, if she had known he was a murderer and a terrorist, if she had known that he was the future Dark Lord, if she had known he was Lord Voldemort ...

She wouldn't have thought twice before letting the Fiendfyre hit him. How ironic it would have been to see the Dark Lord being charred by one of his Death Eaters. Oh, she would have liked it. Merlin knows she would. She would dance in his ashes, she would set off fireworks like the Wildfired Whiz-Bangs, drink a barrel of mead and one of Firewhisky and laugh like a drunk. Merlin, she would swim naked on the Great Lake. All this to commemorate the death of the Dark Lord. But no, she'd saved him, put herself in front of him to protect him from the attack.

In her defense, she thought it would have been a worthy act, to sacrifice herself and protect a student who tried to help her and Harry - even if this student didn't know what he was getting into. It was the right thing to do and Hermione didn't want to see any more deaths.

It would have been the right thing to do... if this person was not Voldemort himself!

Hermione mentally kicked herself. If she had let the *Fiendfyre* hit him, then all the problems of the wizarding world would have been solved. Even if it was against the advice Dumbledore gave to her, even if his early death changed all the trajectory of time, for a moment the idea was tempting for her.

"Miss ...?" He tilts his head to the side, his voice sweet and with eyebrows united, as if he were

worried.

Hermione so far said nothing, she was petrified in her place, still trying to absorb the idea of being face to face with young Voldemort and his most loyal followers. *This can only be karma* . A rebellious tear trickles down her face and she dries it quickly, trying to compose herself to face him. For everyone present, the girl's countenance and pallor did not go unnoticed, not even the tear.

"Forgive me," she says, swallowing. "I remembered some memories of the fight."

"Oh, it's understandable that you're scared." Riddle puts his hand on her shoulder, lowering slightly, so that he is at her eye level. Hermione's eyes widen at the sight of him so close. It is not a sixteen or seventeen-year-old boy that she sees, but, the pale, noiseless, red-eyed monster with a snake face.

His hand is on her shoulder and Hermione thinks that as soon she has a chance to take a shower, she will rub her shoulder for at least thirty minutes.

"But I'm sure you're safe at Hogwarts." He smiles, trying to convey security.

"Uh ... uh, thank you." She murmurs.

Their attention is drawn to two more boys who are approaching. One has blond hair so alike to Draco's, closely resembling platinum, with green eyes and white skin, walked serenely and yet, arrogantly. His lips were strangely rosy as if he had passed lipstick, but Hermione supposed it was only the color contrast with his skin. The other had a rather long face, dark hair, his nose seemed a little crooked as if he had broken it and never healed right or he never bothered to go see a mediwitch, however, he didn't seem to care much about anything. He was a little more corpulent and strangely familiar.

When they finally got close enough, they stopped and looked at her with interest.

"This is Abraxas Malfoy." Riddle introduced him. Abraxas looked at her from under his nose, this being the only trace of recognition of her presence he gave.

Obviously, he was a Malfoy, such physical appearance could only come from that family.

"And this is Antonin Dolohov."

Hermione swore that the tea and biscuits she had eaten with Dumbledore were coming back up her throat to her mouth. *Oh, it's karma* . Her stomach churned and she was sweating cold.

Where did she and Harry get in? They were in the middle of the snakes, literally. Draco and his gang were nothing compared to this, they were small snakes like those of gardens, without poison and only visually threatening. Now, these? These were the real dangerous snakes, najas, poisonous and with their King guiding them .

"This is Miss ...?" Riddle stopped, staring at her, remembering that at no time had she given her name.

"Granger. Hermione Granger. "Her voice is thin and low.

Before anything else can happen, the whole group of Slytherins stiffens in the presence of Dumbledore.

"Professor Dumbledore." Riddle is the first to speak, putting his hands behind his back, straightening his posture and raising his head in a very composed way.

Dumbledore arrives e as her savior and for a moment and Hermione inaudibly breathes a sigh of relief..

"Mr. Riddle," Dumbledore greets, looking over his half-moon glasses. "I believe, gentlemen, that it is time for dinner. I suggest that you join your housemates. "

"Of course, Professor. We were just introducing ourselves to Miss Granger. She was returning the robe Alphard lent this morning." Lestrangle speaks and as if to confirm, Alphard swings a little the robe in his hands.

"It's true, Professor Dumbledore," Hermione confirms, more to ensure her safety than theirs. Oh, Merlin save her from being a target of this gang.

"Very well." Dumbledore accepts such an answer, releasing the Slytherins who soon enter the Great Hall. "The Sorting Hat awaits you, Miss Granger." Dumbledore smiles slightly, before entering the Great Hall as well.

Hermione stood there, staring at the doors to the Great Hall. She admitted that she was a little anxious and so she took a deep breath, trying to calm down. When she entered the Great Hall, the whole conversation died and an awkward silence remained. She was the target of curious looks and as she walked towards the stool placed at the head of the Great Hall, there was a nostalgic feeling growing within her. The four tables representing the four great Houses of Hogwarts, the ceiling with floating candles and enchanted to look like the night sky with stars, the teachers' table, the Headmaster, the ghosts and portraits. For several moments in her previous time, Hermione thought she would never see all of this ever again.

She walked more confidently, feeling more assured than the eleven-year-old girl who had walked - will walk - through this Hall. She was maturer and wiser, so when she climbed the few steps to reach the Sorting Hat, she smiled at Dumbledore, who held the Hat.

She sat on the stool, Hermione was facing the whole Hall with all the students who were silent and looked intently at her. She took another deep breath before she felt the Hat being placed on her head. For some reason, it seemed heavier, but it was probably her impression and a result of her

concern.

Hello, child. The Hat's voice resounded in her mind. Have we met before? Hm ... What do we have here? A paradox, are you? Interesting. At the Hat's comment, Hermione fought against the Hat's invasion of her mind. Relax, child. Let me in.

Just put me in Gryffindor . She ordered.

It's not that simple. Let me analyse you.

She was reluctant to let the Hat in and know everything that had happened to her, but it seemed inevitable, so, gradually, she let the Hat in to know all the traits of her personality and how the events she passed through modified her.

Hm... I see. You are loyal as those of Hufflepuff House to those who can win your heart. You are dedicated, work hard and see everyone as your equal, regardless of status. The Hufflepuff House would welcome you. Helga would certainly be happy to have someone like you in her house.

However, your brain is fascinating. You are extremely intelligent, have good reasoning and are quite logical. Independent and an insightful observer, besides having intellectual curiosity. The Ravenclaw House would accept you for who you are. Rowena would be amazed by you. But you're not as tolerant and patient as you think you are.

"It's a Hatstall," someone murmured.

"Are you sure?"

"It's been four and a half minutes." Another responded.

There's your fear . The Hat spoke confidently and Hermione swallowed. The Slytherin House. You mustn't fear them, not really. Against everything you think, you really do have the traits that belong to this House. The Slytherin House values ambition, cunning, intelligence, and determination. These traits you've already presented. The House also values self-preservation and you have also presented this trait, haven't you? You don't expect them to act in your defense and you feel they are also judgmental. But are you wise enough to survive in the Snake House? Will you be able to manipulate people so you can get out unharmed? Remember that everyone there shares the same traits as you and they will test you to see how far you are able to go and if you will be able to settle down in that House.

Oh, please don't! They will kill me if I enter their House .

Salazar Slytherin himself would rise from his grave if he knew that a Muggleborn was in his House. But all Hermione heard was Hat's somber laughter.

"It's a real Hatstall," one student confirmed. "It's been six minutes."

Oh, Gryffindor. Brave, adventurous, fearless, stubborn and competitive. This is the Gryffindor House. Godric Gryffindor himself would be impressed by your courage. You are fearless and face your fears and enemies for what you believe, you are faithful to your friends and although sometimes go against their actions, you do not abandon them. You're stubborn when you think you are right and you are competitive, always willing to win first place. And though you say you're a rule-lover, you're not afraid to break them if you have to.

"It's been seven minutes already." Another student said, impressed.

Which house should I put you in? Hm ...

Gryffindor! Hermione ordered, the Hat laughed at her command.

Once was, maybe. I know the you of now, Hermione Granger. Your attitudes have changed, you hesitate between being merciful or being merciless. Sometimes you question yourself and seem to select those who should receive your kindness and your effort. Despite your loyal manner, you don't belong to Hufflepuff House.

Ah, here's the problem. The Hat noticed . I can put you in any of the three remaining Houses. You certainly have the traits of the Ravenclaw House, this House suits you well. With your intelligence, your thirst for knowledge and wisdom, you're brilliant for Ravenclaw House, though ...

You would die for those you love and would fight until your last breath for them, you already sacrificed for them and would do it again, despite fear, you face your enemies and sacrifice yourself for a greater good. Courageous, you are. But ...

What you went through, the things you had to do, changed you a little. You still question your attitudes, but don't think twice about what has to be done to achieve what you want. You would kill for those you love, you will manipulate your enemies if necessary. You are ambitious and thirsting for recognition. You want people to know who you are and that's why you stand out. Determined, you are.

Be careful what you do here - paradox. The Hat alerted.

Your heart is and always will be -

" - Gryffindor!" The Sorting Hat, with a powerful voice, announced.

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief, but the tension in the Great Hall was palpable and all were silent. Everyone looked at her and when a student took a sip of pumpkin juice, it was heard throughout the Hall. She felt the Sorting Hat being pulled from her head and she looked at Dumbledore, who smiled at her and then, the Gryffindor's table burst into applause and smiles. It was like her first year, Hermione thought.

Her gray clothes turned into the colors of Gryffindor House with just a snap of Dumbledore's fingers.

More relieved and confident, Hermione walked towards her table. They made room for her to sit down and she had to restrain a smile, for sure enough, she was happier to be among Gryffindors.

"Come on, you can pass twenty galleons each." A tall, strong, red-haired boy spoke. He had green eyes and freckles on his nose and an extrovert demeanor. To Hermione, he reminded her of Fred and George.

"Argh, you're extorting me." Another red-haired boy complained. This one had lighter hair and bright brown eyes, but what scared Hermione was just how much he was like Ron.

She couldn't control herself, and all she saw was Ron. Her heart squeezed and she looked at him,

fascinated.

"Well, well, if you didn't keep betting against him, he wouldn't be taking your money." The girl sitting in front of Hermione, said. She had light brown hair, green eyes, and lips coated with lipstick. "I'm Enid." The girl reached out, greeting Hermione.

"Hermione."

"Welcome to Gryffindor House. This is Bilius Weasley." She pointed to the red-haired boy sitting next to Hermione. "And this is Ectur Prewett." She gestured to the red-haired boy who looked like Ron. "Don't mind them. They were betting on which House you would enter. "

"It was a fair bet. You're a Hatstall, after three minutes the bets were made." Bilius shrugged, talking cheerfully to Hermione. "Well then?"

"What?" Hermione tried not to laugh at the look of anticipation on Bilius's face.

"Which House was the Hat in doubt about? After what I saw in the courtyard, I knew you would be in Gryffindor, but our Ectur here thought you would be in Hufflepuff. "

Hermione looked at Ectur and found herself blushing because he reminded her of Ron. But it didn't escape Hermione that she was possibly talking to the father of the future Mrs. Weasley. She swallowed hard and took a deep breath, trying to keep negative thoughts away.

"It was in doubt between Ravenclaw, Slytherin, and Gryffindor," she said solemnly.

"Thank God," Ectur murmured. "Glad you didn't get into Slytherin."

"That's true," Enid confirmed.

"Look at them," Bilius said, and inconveniently Ectur, Enid, Bilius, and Hermione looked at the Slytherin House table. "They probably eat poison for breakfast."

Enid tried to hide her laughter before she spat out her pumpkin juice and in a very delicate way, she wiped the corners of her mouth.

"The basic rule of Hogwarts: Don't trust a Slytherin," Ectur told Hermione, as an advisor to the school's newcomer.

"I'm truly surprised you decided to come to Hogwarts after what happened-"

"Bilius, no!" Enid censored. "Don't scare the girl."

"What? What happened?" Hermione asked, now very curious about the abrupt change in the conversation.

Both Ectur and Enid became silent and stared at their food plates.

"Well, I mean, it's not to frighten you." Bilius tried to undo the conversation.

"What is it?" Hermione demanded softly.

"We are really surprised that someone wants to come to Hogwarts after the attacks and death of Myrtle Warren. She was from the Ravenclaw House." Enid explained, more gently and politely. Trying to appease some supposed terror that Hermione, a fledgling in their eyes might have. "For a moment, we all thought the school would have been closed. But apparently, it's been solved. So

you can stay calm. "

As Enid spoke, Hermione lowered her head, remembering why she was there. For a moment she almost forgot where she was, seeing the students' interaction at the Gryffindor table, being in the Great Hall, engulfed by the pleasant aroma of the feast and looking at Enid, Ectur, and Bilius, and how comfortable they made her feel. When she saw the resemblance to Fred and George, Ron and Ginny.

The image of the Weasley siblings... It fell apart from her mind's eye to reveal Bilius, Enid and Ectur. The truth felt heavy on Hermione's head, as if an odd pressure had settled there. These weren't her friends, it wasn't even her generation.. They were their ancestors. The future parents and grandparents of her friends.

When she remembered that Enid mentioned Myrtle Warren, the Moaning Myrtle, Hermione shuddered. Now she understood where she was and whom she was talked to at the entrance to the Great Hall. The killer of Myrtle. He was there, a few feet away from her.

She didn't resist the pull and looked at the Slytherin table, Enid's voice, Ectur's, and Bilius' faded away and she focused on Lord Voldemort.

Oh, it was weird. It certainly was strange to watch the young Dark Lord eating. He was educated and ate quietly, had a proper posture, seemed to know about dining etiquette and made a face every time he saw someone eating and talking at the same time.

He was pale, really pale, as if his skin could not get tanned. His complexion was flawless, his mouth was full and of proportionate size, his nose was enviably Greek, his eyebrows were deep set which intensified his eyes, his hair was black as the color of a crow but his eyes were peculiar... They were extremely colored, a dark green which was not bright, but a color that could be mistaken as black if he were in the dark or could be gray if he were in the light. Hermione begrudgingly admitted that he was highly symmetrical, perfect almost,, overly handsome and Hermione asks herself if his favored appearance could be an effect of the Amortentia potion his mother gave to Tom Riddle senior.

But Hermione could see through his physical appearance, because she knew what he was capable of. She could feel the austerity in his aura and noticed the few dark circles under his eyes as if he had not slept right, but she knew, she *knew* it was the Horcrux. He had made a Horcrux within that time period. Hermione's blood ran cold through her veins. Oh, he had already managed to oust Hagrid. Oh, he was already a *killer* , a *murderer* . *Hagrid...* she mourned.

As if he felt himself being watched, Tom Riddle, the Dark Lord, raises his gaze and looks directly at her and Hermione avoids his gaze quickly.

Now she's sure she needs to get out of here. She needs to find a way to get her and Harry back to their time.

Decided, she picks up some food and puts it on her plate.

ooo

At first, Tom Riddle observed her interacting with his servants and housemates. He noticed the look of terror she had, the pallor that her skin had become and how she struggled against tears.

None of it went unnoticed by him. He found odd both her behavior and the fact that she appeared to avoid the smallest possible contact with him and his group. And it was surely not attributed to the propriety of a female's avoidance of males lest she enter into contact deemed improper... No. It was something else.

His servants were trying to attract her, trying to impress her with their family names and all it carried, as they did with all the other girls. For them, she was one of many others and they were playing a game between them with her. She was a trapped mouse and they were snakes ready to devour her.

He remembered her that morning, when she apparanted a schizophrenic, walking barefoot in hospital pajamas and with wild hair. Altered and nervous.

Ordinary people had the need to have their psyche in good condition, but any unusual experience breaks their minds very easily and they develop some kind of panic, which was what happened to the girl. She appeared to have developed some sort of post-trauma, and how didoes he know that? He knew from the moment her voice sounded thin and low, when she said she remembered a few moments of the fight. Tom almost rolled his eyes.

But, to keep up appearances, he smiled. Tom knew that he didn't *feel* like most people, sometimes he mused he was unable to feel any emotion. As if he were hollow, empty and nothing and no one could awaken any feeling in him that was not contempt. And it was not like he needed to feel anything beyond that.

As a child, he was unable to convey any emotion, being apathetic and without childish charm, but he had been smart enough to understand since then how the world and people worked.

Oh, it was so simple. He was an attentive, insightful observer and recorded every expression people made to convey an emotion. Happiness, anger, anxiety, fear, guilt, sadness... He memorised each one of them. He discovered how easy it was to manipulate people. Say in their ears sweet words, praise them, make them trust you, be patient and then, they start talking. Telling their fears, their secrets, and when they least expect it, he has already applied the bite. Like a snake, he slowly squeezed until it broke their bones. Soon, each one was in the palm of his hand. They barely realised what they've given to him, all the weapons they unknowingly gave him so that he can destroy them.

He laid his hand on her shoulder. Touch. In order to instill trust, touch was necessary, eye contact was necessary, it masked the lies and disguised that he really didn't care whether she was well. The mask he puts on his face, imitating an almost genuine expression was for her. It was the first step for her to open up to him and tell him everything he wanted to know.

He was a curious one from birth. Tom doesn't like not knowing who the people around him are. Hogwarts is his castle and here he is King. And a king needs to know who his subjects are. If she really was in the war, as she stated, then he wants to know more. He wants to know why her arrival

had such a disturbance in magic that all wizards and witches felt it. He wants to know why she was being hunted. Well, it was no less than fair that she gave him answers, after all, he risked himself - well, that's half truth - to save her and her friend, brother or whatever.

He also remembered that she stood in front of the Fiendfyre to protect him. Unnecessary, he notes. He could save himself. But he promises that her actions will not be taken in vain. He'll be a little nicer to her and if she's interesting enough, he'll give her a favor. After all, a Lord, a King, is benevolent to those who show loyalty.

Then Dumbledore arrived. The old man ticked him.

Dumbledore was what could be considered the stone in his shoe. He managed to get all the teachers and even the Headmaster to fall in for the character he has created, except for Dumbledore. The old madman was like a shadow behind him, always doubting his words and attitudes - and rightly so - but it was frustrating and bothersome to have to deal with the famous and illustrious Albus Dumbledore watching. Waiting for him to slip. The only person who knew his past, who knew that he lived in an orphanage and the guilty one of him sending him every Summer holiday to that rotten and filthy place he hated. He would very much enjoy burning that place with everyone inside. He hated it, its people and what they did to him.

Ah, but his revenge will be slow and deadly.

With a nod, Tom walked to the Great Hall. Malfoy, Dolohov, Mulciber, Rosier, Avery, Lestrangle, Nott and Black walking behind him like puppies after their mother. If he told them to lie down and roll, they would all do it.

Fear . Tom yawned. What people do when they feel scared, when they feel threatened. It's very amusing.

They walked and some girls sighed, laughing like hyenas, blushing and fanning their lashes wildly. It was disgusting. Tom Riddle, smiled at them. Females could be really annoying. His group was famous among them and on the opposite side envied by the boys. Good-looking, that's what the girls said. Each of them was a kind of ideal man, they sighed. Sportsman, intellectual, musician, flirt, charismatic, introvert, cheeky and Tom Riddle, ah... Tom Riddle was *all* . A bit of each of these things in a perfect measure.

There really was an advantage of being the best, he observed. While walking, people made way for him, the Slytherins made room for him to sit at the table, looking at him, admiring, cautious, envious. Hogwarts was his castle and here he was King.

And then, she entered. Tom realized that her attitude had changed. From a frightened little girl to a confident young lady. The Great Hall was silent at the arrival of the newcomer. Everyone was curious about the girl who fought in the courtyard.

He noticed the deep breath she took before she had the Hat on her head. He stood there, watching her closely. If anyone looked quickly, they would think she was ordinary, but if they stopped to notice her, they would see that she could be considered aesthetically reasonable. Her hair was really full and uncontrollable - at first, he thought her hair was that way because of the battle - but no, her hair was like the mane of a lion. Her eyes were brown, she had a few freckles on her nose, her lips were thin but not overly so, her eyebrows were held low as if she was almost always serious, thoughtful.

He thought it would be quick, but it wasn't like that.

Come to Slytherin . If she were selected for Slytherin House, she would be under his control. It would make his work a thousand times easier. But then, he waited and waited.

"It's a Hatstall," someone murmured at Slytherin's table and he cast a somber look on the person.

When it was past five minutes, Tom was already impatient, and that had marked her on her bad side. To add to this, in less than a day, the girl managed to become the interest of the school. When it reached six minutes, tension marked his jaw.

What's so different about her? He asked himself, suspiciously. He promised himself that he would pay due attention to the girl.

When she hit the seven-minute mark, it was indisputable that she was a Hatstall. Tom remembered when he had the Hat placed on his head. It hadn't taken long, the Hat knew what he was capable of, how much magic he had. He was selected for Slytherin without undue delays.

Slytherin was really his House. It was his home. **He was the Heir of Slytherin.**

"-Gryffindor!" The Hat announced and all the appreciation he felt for the girl collapsed.

Really? The House of Idiots? He snorted. Well, he was still going to keep an eye on her, but now she was nothing but a disgust- He notices the look she gave Dumbledore as if seeking approval. How curious. In Gryffindor House, she was right under Dumbledore's wing. The look Dumbledore gave her, he was also aware of it.

Dumbledore knew something.

Curious.

He eats patiently, tasting his meal. To each of the boys who eat with their mouths open or talk while eating, he makes a face. Tom rolls his eyes internally. *These people are mommy's little children and don't know the least of how to behave at the table.* It was really disgusting and gave him the urge to vomit.

Tom Riddle felt it. He feels when someone's looking at him. It was like some kind of sixth sense he had developed. A way of always being conscious of what was going on around him. When he looked up, she was looking back at him. He would have smiled at her, thrown the bait for her to catch, the girls always fell for that, but before he has the chance she quickly fled from his gaze. As if ignoring him.

His jaw locked and his teeth ground with the pressure he applied. His eyes narrowed.

The Slytherin students walked back to the dungeons to retire for the night. The cheerful air between them was noticeable. But it was only between them. The Slytherins didn't get along very well with people who were from the outside, and newcomers had a certain type of '*smell*' . Slytherins only fought for themselves.

But as soon as everyone passed by the stone wall, the environment changed. The Slytherins were not overtly cheerful and extroverted, but it was really amazing how everyone changed from the moment they were in the Common Room.

And it changed because of him.

Malfoy, Lestrage, Avery, Black, Mulciber, Nott, and Rosier spread out in the Common Room as they watched Riddle sit on his favorite armchair near the fireplace. The combination of the darkness and the low light that the fireplace provided augmented him to appear more terrifying than he was. At Slytherin House, there was a very obvious hierarchy and Riddle was at the top.

Slytherin's regular students talked softly, respecting the space of Riddle's gang.

Malfoy sat down on one of the sofas after taking his robe off and calmly started reading his book. Although it seems that he was focused on reading, it was not so, he was very attentive to what was happening around him and especially the tension in the Common Room.

Black lied on one of the sofas, loosening his tie and winding up the sleeves of his shirt. He looked at the green lamp as if it were extremely interesting. Dolohov was sitting on the arm of the sofa that Alphard was lying on.

Nott and Mulciber were seated, starting a wizard chess match and occasionally glancing through the windows of the Common Room at Hogwarts' lake.

Avery and Rosier were quietly standing talking to each other.

And Lestrage was walking from one side to another, like a caged animal.

"A waste of time," Lestrage complained. "The new one is a stupid Gryffindor."

Avery and Rosier exchanged glances and smiles at Lestrage's comment.

"Calm down, some Gryffindors are good," Avery said.

"Even if it's to kill time." Rosier completed.

Nott and Mulciber laughed, Dolohov shook his head, but there was a smile on his face. Alphard was silent, still contemplating the dark green colour of the chandelier. Malfoy sighed and rolled his eyes before pretending to continue to read.

The Knights waited until the Common Room was occupied only by them. Some Slytherin girls said goodbye with a silly smile to Avery, Rosier, and Lestrage, others talked to Dolohov. Mulciber and Nott were undisturbed while playing chess. Riddle, well, no one dared to talk to Riddle when he was thinking. For girls, it was like observing a beautiful painting from some museum - see, but do not touch. And now, the Nines were alone in the Common Room.

"Lestrage." It was Riddle's voice that sounded.

They froze immediately when they heard Riddle's voice. Oh, they had made a mistake. They made a terrible mistake. Alphard quickly adjusted his position, sitting straight on the sofa, Malfoy stopped reading and sat more upright, Nott and Mulciber left their chess game, Dolohov was more attentive now and Avery, Rosier, and Lestrage also sat.

Their breathing became shallow as they waited for what Riddle would say. They still remembered the terrible mistake they made in their first year. They joined up against Riddle and questioned his blood status, mocked him and cursed him, and even today they had nightmares of the remembrance of young Riddle when he had taken revenge. That... That hadn't been normal. How could a little

boy invoke so much fear in other little boys?

That pale, handsome little boy with green eyes and perfect face... With a dark smile on his face, with his wrath and strong magic around him. A magic so strong they all felt it within themselves. It was a living thing. That smile he had given while they screamed and felt as if their bodies were on fire.

If one day they had questioned what Riddle was, they never did anymore. Especially now.

"Yes, my lord," Lestrangle said in a low, submissive voice.

"Your father has contacts in the Ministry, doesn't he?" Riddle asked, his voice calm, focused. He seemed quiet and serious.

"Yes, my lord."

"Wouldn't it be nice if he could get us some information about what happened to our new student ... What's her name? Oh, yes, Miss Granger." Tom rested his head on his hand, which was clenched into a fist and his arm rested on the arm of the cushioned seat.

"I can try to talk to my father and try to get the information," Lestrangle responded quickly, almost stammering. Tom frowned a little.

"Are you going to *try* , Lestrangle?" There is a somber tone in Tom's voice, indicating the change of temper. Tom swung his wand lightly, playing with it between his deft fingers. It was a trap for Lestrangle, depending on what Lestrangle responded, he knew what could happen to him.

"I mean, I'll get the information," Lestrangle corrected himself quickly.

"My?" Tom insinuates.

"My lord," Lestrangle corrected himself again.

"Great." The change in Tom's voice is immediate. "Isn't it wonderful when we all cooperate, hmm?" Tom smiled. It was terrifying.

It was just terrifying.

Chapter End Notes

Dendroaspis polylepis is also known as Black Mamba. The fourth most poisonous snake in the world.

Notechis

Chapter Notes

I would like to thank Cfps3000, aga1127, A, CHRain, sikaloolala, Jennieb89, mulbr, PrincessRosalean, Pandorasora, Kaja for the comments and the affection. And all the others for reading and following the story and for the Kudos.

Thank you for understanding that English is not my native language and for being understandable with some errors in the text.

I mean, I'm working hard to improve the writing, but with the help of you telling me where the error in the text is, it will make it easier and I'll correct it and try not to make the same mistake. Improving the chapter and making the reading experience better. So, let me know if the chapter is good or if it needs some change. Again, thank you for all the affection. I love you, guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 4. Notechis - The beginning.

Inside the Gryffindor Common Room, Hermione felt like she was at home. It's safe, cozy and familiar. Enid, Bilius, and Ectur talked with her cheerfully, trying to make her comfortable.

She had the pleasure of meeting Algie Longbottom, Enid's fiance.

"See Hermione." Enid showed her hand, moving her fingers to highlight the wizard-style engagement ring. "Isn't it beautiful?" She smiled, giving a kiss on Algie's cheek.

Algie hugged Enid closer, smiling at her. He is the Gryffindor monitor just like Enid was and everyone was sure that the two would be Head Boy and Head Girl respectively next year when they enter the seventh year.

"Enid, Hermione is the sixth girl you showed your ring to today." Laughed Ignatius Prewett, his comment attracted everyone's laughter.

Ignatius was Ectur's older brother and was in the same year as Algie and Enid.

Hermione still had the pleasure of meeting Frederick Longbottom, Algie's brother and Lyall Lupin, the father of the future Remus Lupin, who were in their third year, eager to start their fourth year.

"Let's go, guys, let the freshman rest. I'm sure today was a hard day for her." Algie comments and for being a good leader, everyone agrees with the comment he made.

They wish Goodnight, making the opposite way to the female dormitory, while Enid and Hermione up the stairs.

It's a fact that all the things Hermione has been in her little handbag. Books, materials and everything important to her and Harry's survival is in there and with a simple Accio, she summons one of her pyjamass.

When she lies down, the weight on her shoulders finally seems to alleviate. It's the first time in a while that she can lie down a little more relaxed, even though she's still worried.

Hermione turns, hugging the pillow. Sleep came easy, but she woke early the next morning - courtesy of the time she spent in the tent.

Quietly, she picks up the things she'll need for today in her handbag and then goes to the bathroom, doing her morning routine, and watching her sleeping roommates. Down the stairs, she was surprised to find Ectur already awake.

"I'm happy to find someone who also wakes up early," he says, smiling.

"Good morning." She smiles at him, carrying her school bag. "Let's have breakfast?"

"Sure." He agrees, holding out a hand to Hermione. She looks at his hand, a little disconcerted.

"What?" She asked, not understanding what he wanted.

"Your bag, silly." He chuckles. "Let me take it."

Oh, the chivalry of the 1940, Hermione realizes. She isn't accustomed to this kind of attitude and, awkwardly, she gives him her school bag. Ectur smiles at her behaviour, finding it somehow cute the way she behaves. Taking their bags in one hand, he offers the other arm to Hermione who hesitantly accepts.

"I don't bite," he says, teasing out a laugh from Hermione.

The Great Hall has few students, but Hermione is sure it won't be long before it gets full. When she glances at the Slytherin table, Hermione can't tell if she's really surprised to find the young Dark Lord already there. She thinks it's a bit obvious he was there so early. Of course, Voldemort gets up earlier than the others and probably is the last one to sleep. It's possible that the boy mistrusted his own shadow.

Hermione thinks it will be difficult to get used to seeing the Dark Lord eat. It's certainly hard to imagine Voldemort doing such things as basic and human, but she does her best to focus on what Ectur is saying.

At first, they don't eat, and they keep talking for a long time. Ectur is thrilled to talk to Hermione and tell her everything about Hogwarts, and she plays her freshman role very well, listening to all he has to say. Ectur is charismatic and friendly and his cheeks turn rosy with ease.

The Great Hall is filled with students. Algie and Enid sit side by side, talking to Ignatius. Lyall Lupine and Fred Longbottom are excited about the Quidditch finals and Hermione watches Bilius and Ectur arguing eagerly, but she smiles at them. They are eating, when a Slytherin girl walks toward the Gryffindor table. Bilius follows the girl's movement with her eyes, watching closely where she was going. He nudges Ectur with his elbow and nods so that Ectur notices what is happening as well. Hermione is just a bystander.

"We need to talk." The girl stops right next to Ignatius.

"What is it about, Miss Black?" Ignatius narrowed his way Ignatius spoke wasn't pleasant enough

for the Slytherin girl.

"You can be sure that I wouldn't be talking to you if it wasn't necessary. So I need to talk to you." The girl cast a grim look at the Gryffindor table. "Alone" she emphasized.

Ignatius sighed before getting up, gesturing for the girl to walk ahead. The two left the Great Hall and Hermione noticed that it was not only the Gryffindors who were watching the couple leave, but the Slytherins were also as well.

"Who is she?" Hermione asked quietly.

Ectur leaned in and whispered in Hermione's ear.

"She's Lucretia Black." He satisfied Hermione's curiosity. "See those there?" Ectur discreetly pointed to the Slytherin table for three Slytherins - two boys and one girl. The Black family, Hermione acknowledged. "That's Orion Black, Lucretia's younger brother, he's in the fourth year. That is Walburga Black, and she is Alphard's older sister, who is sitting next to her." Ectur explained. The three of them were staring at the doors of the Great Hall. "They are relatives of our dear Bilius." He tapped Bilius on the shoulder, which made a face.

"My mother is Cedrella Black," Bilius explains. "My father is Septimus Weasley, who is considered by the Black family as a Blood Traitor." He mumbled with disdain the last words. "My parents' marriage was not accepted by the Black family, and they excluded my mother. I have no contact with any of them." Bilius shrugged. "My maternal grandmother is Lysandra Yaxley, which makes me connected to the Yaxley family. My aunts are Charis Crouch née Black, who has a four-year-old son named Barty and Callidora Longbottom née Black, who is Algie and Fred's grandmother. "

" In other words -" Ectur speaks. "Everyone's connected."

"I see," Hermione says. She certainly has a notion that all wizard families are somehow connected, which is one of the motives that make Muggle-borns so excluded, but it's certainly interesting and a bit terrifying to look closely at what marriage connections do.

They're still talking when they notice Orion, Walburga, and Alphard, are getting up and leaving the Great Hall. It is known that the Black family cherish their members and protect themselves, so seeing them coming out is an indication that the problems are coming to Ignatius. But to everyone's surprise, he doesn't take long and comes back with a sulky and disgusted face.

His friends try to question him about what happened, but he says he's not in the mood to talk about it and they respect his decision. Only Alphard and Walburga return to finish their breakfast and Orion probably stayed with his sister.

The first lesson that Hermione will have since she went back to the past is Potions with Horace Slughorn. Ectur and Bilius walk beside her, Ectur was holding her school bag and offering her the arm. In the corridor, as they passed a group of Ravenclaw girls, Hermione gets a deadly look from one of the girls.

"What was that?"

"This is Mary Runcorn and you've been holding the arm of her passion since the third year," Bilius says with a laugh. Is his time to take revenge on Ectur for the comment on the table in the Great Hall?

Hermione automatically releases Ectur, which makes Bilius laugh even more. Ectur rolls his eyes

and has his cheeks pink.

"Don't worry, Hermione." Bilius continues.

"I don't want any trouble."

"You won't have it," Ectur reassures her. "She and I have nothing."

"Not for Miss Runcorn's lack of Valentine's Day she will likely give him the greatest declaration of love ever made at Hogwarts."

"Desired you are, hm?" Hermione enters Bilius's play, only to hear a grumbling from Ectur.

They arrive in the Potions room, Professor Slughorn is already there, waiting for the students. It's a Gryffindor / Slytherin class and when she realizes that Tom Riddle and his gang are there, it's like popping the little bubble of happiness she had thirty seconds ago. Hermione's blood freezes.

When Slughorn notices the presence of the celebrated Miss Granger, to which all the teachers were speaking, including Headmaster Dippet, he approaches with a smile for Hermione. Ectur sits next to Bilius after handing Hermione, her school bag.

"Miss Granger, it's a great pleasure to meet you. Dumbledore talked about you. I must say you are brave enough to have been in the war. "

"Thank you very much, Professor Slughorn. It's a pleasure to meet you too" Hermione says. *And Dumbledore saves my skin one more time*, she thinks. Certainly, Dumbledore talked to Dippet and the other teachers, probably to keep the lie about her arrival.

"Congratulations on being chosen as Head of the Slytherin House. Professor Dumbledore told me," If her knowledge is correct, Professor Slughorn is given the title of Head of the Slytherin House by that time. To her relief, Slughorn opens a smile, indicating that Hermione was correct.

"Thank you, Miss Granger." Slughorn thanks. "Dumbledore told us about your delicate situation." He continues. "That is why I recommend you to sit beside our dear Mr Riddle. He's one of the best students- "

Hermione looks at the empty chair next to Riddle and then looks at him. She's pretty sure he's paying attention to what Slughorn is saying and that's why he smiles so softly and lowers his gaze as if he's shy about being praised by an unfamiliar person.

"- I'm sure he'll help you with whatever you need." Hermione looks back at Slughorn who continues to speak. "But if you have any serious questions, be sure to ask me."

Hermione is reluctant to accept. She wanted to say that there's no need to be with Riddle, she's smart enough to learn by herself, and she knows everything about the entire fifth year. But, against her will, she sits next to Riddle. She is almost at the edge of the chair, eyes trained on Slughorn as she slowly picks up a quill and parchment.

"Good morning, Miss Granger. I hope you're adapting well to Hogwarts," Riddle says.

"Good morning, Mr. Riddle, I'm adapting very well, thank you for asking," Hermione replies, after a few seconds debating whether or not to talk with him. But she considered it would be more suspicious of her to ignore him when, then, he supposedly didn't do anything for her.

She feels Tom Riddle's gaze on her which is disconcerting and makes her feel insecure and

anxious. He is analyzing it, even if very discreetly and that is not good.

He tries a few times:

How can I help you, Miss Granger?

Are you in need of help, Miss Granger?

Are you having any questions?

She denies all the questions he asks. She was almost curled up in her chair, her eyes following every move Slughorn made. Suddenly the Potions class became extremely interesting, just because she was very willing to ignore Tom Riddle and go unnoticed. But when the class was over, she gathered up her material quickly, trying to escape Tom's presence, but one of her quills fell and before she could catch it, Tom took it.

He looks with interest at her quill, before looking at Hermione.

"Here, Miss Granger." He offers the quill to her, looking intensely, never blinking. His eyes... His eyes never looked appealing as they are now, the colour green-grey almost glowing. Attracting to look at him.

Hermione got stuck in his gaze for a moment before she understood what he might be doing. *Legilimency ...!*

Terrified, she runs from his gaze, taking her quill and cursing.

"Thank you, Mr. Riddle." She says softly, before turning and walking quickly towards Bilius and Ectur.

Hermione breathed more relief as she put a distance between herself and Tom. Bilius noticed Hermione's state of mind and how her hair seemed to bristle.

"Are you okay, Hermione?" He asked, worried.

She smiled at the worried, chivalrous expression of Ectur and Bilius that made her remember how Fred and George were when they heard Draco calling her a mudblood.

To calm them down, she placed one hand on Bilius's forearm and another on Ectur's shoulder.

"I am fine. Don't worry," said. She wanted to feel more confident than how her words sounded. It's really hard to feel safe with Voldemort so close, she thought.

"Did Riddle do something to you?" It's Ectur who asked.

Oh, he did - will do - many things, she wanted to say. However, trying to bring some enmity to the young Dark Lord didn't seem the best survival tactic and so she denied it.

"No, he didn't do anything," she replied. "He was very considerate," she emphasized, but the last words didn't sound so true to her.

"If something happens, tell us, okay?" Bilius says.

"It's true. If you need anything, talk to us." Ectur reaffirms.

Hermione smiles at the Gryffindor spirit they had.

Hermione is much calmer for her upcoming classes to be with Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, but as soon as she has time, she goes to meet Dumbledore. She takes a deep breath and knocks on the door of the Deputy Headmaster's office. The door opened by itself.

"Good morning, Miss Granger. What do I owe the honour of your visit?" Dumbledore asks. "I hope your first day is going well."

"Good morning, Professor Dumbledore." She greets him. "Everything is going very well. All the teachers and students welcomed me very well," Hermione says. "My visit is not for a complaint. It's another request for help." She explained. "Again," Hermione laughs, a little embarrassed.

"What is it about?" He looks at her over his half-moon glasses.

"I wish you would teach me Occlumency ."

"Occlumency ?" Dumbledore asked, suddenly interested in the girl's desire. "I want you to know, Miss Granger, that you're safe in Hogwarts. What would be the need to learn Occlumency? Do you want to tell me something?"

Hermione passes her tongue through her dry lips.

"I know I am safe here and have your protection, Professor Dumbledore. I also know that you are aware of how important it is that my mind is to be safe. My mind has information that many wizards and witches would kill to have. I have the knowledge of the future and walk unprotected until I come back to my time, it worries me," she explains. "I'm worried about Grindelwald. If my arrival with Harry did cause an alarm in the wizarding world, Grindelwald must also have felt." She looked uncertain. "I'm getting ready to get advanced information on the Magic of the Time and I'd love for you to help me. If the magic that was used to bring me here was from the Dark Arts, the answer to take me back is also."

"The Dark Arts, my child, should not be underestimated. Though at first innocent, the temptation in them may corrupt"

"I know." Hermione looks determined. "But my desire to do good and protect the people I love is greater."

Dumbledore raised an eyebrow, impressed by the strength of the words she chose.

"I know the basics of Occlumency, but I don't think it's enough." She's sincere. "Please, Professor Dumbledore, think of what I said. I appreciate all the help I can get. "

She said goodbye to him, before leaving the room and going to lunch in the Great Hall.

When she sits at the table, Enid asks.

"Where were you?"

"I had some problems to solve," Hermione responds. "But I hope everything is right."

She serves up some food for her, watching with a bit of good envy, Enid and Algie together. If she and Ron had confessed their love before, they would have enjoyed it more. *Probably yes*. It wouldn't have Lavender Brown or Viktor Krum, or jealousy and offences, or crying. It would have been so much better. But of course, it's common for people to talk only about what they feel when they think they're close to the end, and now she condemns herself for all the fear she felt for telling Ron about her feelings for fear of being rejected. Now she realizes she acted like a fool.

"Argh, I'm screwed in Transfiguration classes." Fred Longbottom complains beside her.

"What happened?" Hermione asks.

"Transfiguration is one of the most important matters and I cannot even finish my essay." Hermione can hear the desperation in Fred's voice.

"Your essay is with you?" She asked and Fred confirmed, handing her the parchments.

Hermione reads, ignoring her food for a moment. For her, a third-year essay is easy, but she understands the desperation of Fred. When she was in the same year that he is, she was like that too. His essay is not bad, in fact, it's very good, just a few mistakes, but nothing too scary. Dumbledore will probably like what will see from Fred.

"It's very good," she reassured Fred. "You should focus more on vertebrate animals. They are the biggest challenge when it comes to the spell Evanesco. If you can do that, then nothing will stop you in the matter of Transfiguration when it comes to your turn to do the OWL's. "

When she finished, Ectur was looking at her.

"Why didn't you come earlier, Hermione? I really need some help with my OWL's " He spoke a lot like Ron.

"You mean you're a Know-It-All?" Bilius looked at her, a smile, opening on his face. "Good to know."

"And now they'll be on your feet." Algie laughed.

"Please, let the girl breathe." Ignatius was laughing too. He leaned against the table. "So, Hermione... Are you good at Defense Against the Dark Arts?" He murmured.

Hermione laughed softly. That sounded a lot like her time with Harry and Ron, when everyone came to ask her about something. Some things don't seem to change.

The next morning, during a free period, Hermione passed in the library, meeting Madame Imogen Gleeson. She went straight to advanced magic books, taking the book of Spell Potions and the Advanced Potion-Making because perhaps the person who attacked her bathed the medallion in some potion and used some spell to complete it. She got the book of Spells, Extreme Incantations and Abracadabra. She tried to find something that might be referring to the Magic of Time, but there was nothing.

She tried to get the Most Potent Potions, but Madame Imogen requested permission. She could ask Dumbledore or Slughorn, but she wanted the book now. She begged a little, saying it was for her OWL's. Madame Imogen authorized, however, that the book was with another student, in the end, Hermione had to wait.

It was then that she remembered the most terrible and dreaded book - Secrets of the Darkest Art - that was with her all the time inside her handbag. She took the books she requested at the library and went straight to the female dormitory, grabbed her bag and looked around. She couldn't read that book in the library or in a place with much access, where people would see what kind of book it was, so she took everything she needed and went to the Astronomy Tower, which was empty at that time.

In a 'safe place' she finally holds the locket around her neck. She looks at him a little fearful and curious, at first she thought it was some sort of heavy medallion with the Time-Turner built-in, but

no, it was actually a locket. The Time-Turner's hourglass stood in the middle, the sand in the hourglass was emerald green and was interestingly divided equally into both sides of the hourglass.

The locket was silver, there was a pattern in the circles around the hourglass - they were still perfect circles, however, in a twisted pattern, like Celtic circles. And around the Time-Turner were words, words she didn't understand. They were vowels followed by vowels and many 's' and 'h'.

Hermione tries to move the hourglass, but nothing seems to make the hourglass move. It's when Hermione's brilliant mind put together all the initial pieces of the puzzle.

Every 'click' that the Time-Turner made meant a decade. They totaled five clicks, meaning five decades into the past. On the last turn, the hourglass stopped in the middle. Five and a half decades. Fifty-five years. This Time-Turner is different and the person who created it, wanted her to be right where she is, she realized.

Rules, she needs rules to not make mistakes. What were the mistakes she's already made? A little desperate, she picked up the parchment and a quill and began to write:

1) **Hermione Granger** - *I gave my real name.*

It was an innocent mistake, she was surprised to see Dumbledore and gave her real name.

2) **Harry** - Important! *Harry's identity must be kept confidential, not just for who he is and will be. If You-Know-Who knows who he is and the danger he poses to the future of this person, You-Know-Who will try to kill him sooner. It's also important so that the information doesn't clash with other people of his family. He is now Harry Evans.*

3) **Find a cure for Harry?** *I don't know what Harry has. I need to visit him at St. Mungo's. I think it has to do with You-Know-Who.*

4) **The locket is the key.** - *It was a special spell cast on Time-Turner. For all the spells a counterspell is needed or I'll have to create one. But in order for me to create a counterspell, I need to know the basics of the spell that was used.*

Hermione stopped writing, again grabbing the locket around her neck. She looks at the locket, narrowing her eyes... Parseltongue!

"The spell was in Parseltongue, the words around are in parseltongue". There's a tone of happiness in her voice that soon undoes as she realizes what she has just said.

Oh, I'm so screwed, Hermione thought. She would never be able to translate what was written in the Time-Turner, she wasn't a Parselmouth. The only person who could do that was the Dark Lord - Tom Riddle.

Hello, Could you do me a favour? You can translate what's written in this Time-Turner so that I can go back to my time and try to kill your future self because you are a dark wizard and want me dead. She snorted at that thought.

Obviously, she couldn't ask for help from him with that. If what she remembers is correct, Riddle never told to anyone that he is a Parselmouth. The only people who knew about his skill were Dumbledore and his followers - she still has some doubts.

It would be very strange for her to ask for his help when he had never said he could talk with the snakes. Especially after the attacks came and they were looking for the Slytherin Heir.

Tom Riddle would kill her before she could say 'Ah!'.

How will I translate? She wondered.

With a little headache, she took the parchment which she noted the important steps she would have to follow and cast an *Incendio* , observing the parchment catch fire and fall into ashes.

After collecting her things, Hermione was walking down the stairs of the Astronomy Tower, when she heard voices. By reflex, she hid.

There were two people, arguing eagerly. One of the voices she recognized as Alphard's.

"Walburga, that's enough," Alphard said.

"That's important, Alphard!" She questioned him again. "He hasn't received the letter yet."

"Merlin, Wally! You know how it works. Cygnus's birthday is during our vacation. He'll get the letter. "

" What if he doesn't get it? What if he's a squib !?" Walburga's tone increased.

"What if he is?" He questioned. "He's still our brother."

"What are you saying, Alphard? I don't have a squib sibling. If he is a squib, Mom and Dad will throw him away! "

"Take back what you said, Wally," Alphard ordered. "Take it back, now!"

"No!"

"Wally, you do everything to be unbearable, you know?" Alphard grunted. "Cy is not a squib. He's done some accidental magic, remember? "

"He better not be. Have you thought about the shame it would be for us if our friends knew that our younger brother is a squib? "

"Merlin, Wally is enough! Cy being a squib or not, is not the reason for me to thank every night. Do you know what really makes me thankful every night? That I'm not going to have to marry you." He shuddered at the thought. "Thank God our cousins had Orion Black and you're engaged to him. That's what I thank every night. "

" You're cruel, Alphard." She responded after a while absorbing his words, her voice a little tearful.

"Am I?" He replied petulantly. "Which one of us was trying to throw our little brother into the Muggle world?"

"You idiot!" She pushed him, before leaving with firm and strong steps.

Hermione heard the whole conversation, trying to control her breathing. *Incest... If Orion Black had not been born, the Black family, with their fanaticism for the purity of blood, would marry Alphard and Walburga .* She swallowed hard at that thought.

She waited a while, not hearing anything else, and she came out of her hiding place.

"It's very rude to hear other people's conversation, Miss Granger." Alphard stood there, motionless, leaning loosely against the wall with arms crossed.

Hermione looked at him with uncertainty, she opened and closed her mouth like a fish, the books she carried, weighing in her arms. She had been caught in the act.

"So ...?" He raised one eyebrow.

She squeezed her jaw and her lips became a thin line and she swallowed.

"I didn't want to hear it," she admitted. "Was an accident. I was leaving the Astronomy Tower when you two showed up. Instinctively, I hid, but I didn't want to hear. "

He nodded as if thinking of the answer she gave.

"You didn't become one of those crazy fans, did you?" He asked, very indiscreetly.

"Excuse me?" She frowned.

"You know just what I'm talking about. These girls who are chasing us and hiding." He gestured with a grimace, then loosened his tie.

"Wait ... What?" She looked at him in disbelief. *Their pride is so great that they think they own the world and all people would fall at their feet?* Hermione was referring to Alphard and the rest of Riddle's gang.

A minute of silence passed, they were silent, and then Alphard began to laugh.

"You should see your face," he said almost breathlessly. His attitude only made Hermione have a poker face.

"I know you didn't want to listen," Alphard said after he had calmed down. "You don't look like one of the stalker girls."

"Do you have a double personality?" Hermione asked, really serious, which made Alphard laugh again.

"Oh, Merlin, you're going to kill me."

Hermione ignored him and started walking, making her way back to Gryffindor Tower.

"Hey, hey, wait! Let me help you. " He took half of the books she was carrying before she could stop him.

They walked in silence for a while, Hermione glanced at him a few times, realizing that he looked more serious and sad. A great contrast to the laughter he was giving a few moments ago.

"Are you okay?" She asked and he shrugged. "You want to talk about it?" She was referring to the conversation he had with his sister.

"You're pretty curious, aren't you?" It's a rhetorical question, he sighed and then spoke. "It's the same as always. Wally shouting, an exaggerated concern for Cy and the fear of shame." He rolls his eyes. "But it's just the Black family."

Alphard didn't know why he was opening up to the freshman, but somehow she seemed to be more trusting than his housemates. However, anyone seemed to be more trusting.

"That's not very Slytherin," she murmured. "I thought you loved the names of your families and the connections."

"And what do you know about the Slytherins, freshman?"

"Well, the Gryffindors speak." She shrugged.

They both smiled at each other. That's basically how it started. It was the beginning of a strange friendship. They didn't speak in public, she was still talking more with Bilius, Ectur, Enid, Algie, Ignatius, Lyall, and Fred. But sometimes, when she was alone and he just showed up, Alphard would sit next to her and talk about anything.

He realized she was some sort of Know-it-All and library rat. She always had books, always reading and seemed to be doing some kind of research. She also always seemed focused and sometimes frustrated. She really didn't give a damn about the fame that Alphard and the others had and when he was accompanied by his housemates, she didn't even give him a second look.

In one morning that all the students were excited to go to Hogsmeade, that the Daily Prophet newspaper ad.

IS GRINDELWALD CLOSER?

The Ministry of Magic says there is no danger and they are working on the capture of the dark wizard Grindelwald. However, there are reports and indications that contradict this version. Where's the truth?

But obviously, no one paid much attention. Bilius and Ectur were trying to persuade Hermione to join them and the others, but she refused, saying she was tired.

Was true, she was tired of reading and researching and her encounters with Dumbledore. Her head was aching, Harry hadn't yet been discharged and her efforts didn't seem to be leading anywhere.

She was really reluctant to go, but she thought that a walk in some 'different' environment might help her with her headache or maybe give some idea. In the end, after dressing, she went to Hogsmeade alone.

oOo

"My lord." Was Lestrage, who spoke. "Here is the letter I received from my father about the information you wanted."

Lestrage hands the letter to Tom, who was sitting in his favourite armchair in front of the fireplace in the Slytherin Common Room.

He reads the letter with extreme interest, the frustration appearing in his features when he locks his jaw and his eyebrows drop.

Nothing! There's nothing about her in the Ministry!

He crumpled the letter before his hand caught fire and burned the paper in his hand. Lestrage swallowed, nervously.

He considered himself a reasonably patient person. Tom knows that to achieve his goals, he has to be a patient person, but it was really frustrating to deal with Hermione Granger.

He was the golden student, the perfect and considerate boy for her. He smiled so much that once his cheeks get sore. He played the role of a young gentleman very well, but nothing seemed to enchant her.

Started with Slughorn, who served him well. Slughorn practically gave it to him, Hermione Granger. Placing her next to him in the classroom, and so did the other teachers, when it was a Gryffindor / Slytherin class. Tom thought that would make it easier for him to get close to her, but it wasn't that easy.

She didn't speak more than necessary, she didn't look at him, and she avoided contact. She was afraid of him.

Tom cracked his neck.

So, he was an observer of her attitude. How she managed to fall on Dumbledore's good graces without doing anything. Was in a class where Dumbledore told her:

"Miss Granger, about those private lessons you asked for, we started this afternoon, during your free period."

Her eyes flashed and a smile took over her face.

"Thank you so much, Professor Dumbledore. I'll be in your office at this time," She replied with excitement.

He noticed every time she met Dumbledore, how Dumbledore trusted her so much that he gave her free access to enter the Deputy Headmaster's office.

But the interesting thing was that she wasn't an idiot. When she was asked, she answered the question with confidence and wisdom, but if she could avoid being the centre of attention, she avoided it. It's like she doesn't want to be noticed.

During the Dueling Club class, Hermione showed a little of her potential. The Club was led by professor Galatea, a teacher experienced in DADA, but what Hermione thought of the Club was summarized as shame.

She was really annoyed by the student's behaviour. While most girls preferred to watch, those who tried to participate were treated as if they were made of glass when they were duelling against a boy. They cast the most basic and simple spells with a false pretext of 'I don't want to hurt you,' when they actually underestimated their opponents and laughed when the girls were hit by some spell.

But of course, the Feminist Movement hadn't yet reached there, despite her irritation, Hermione didn't intend to participate in some duel, but when Professor Galatea called her to perform a duel, Bilius and Ectur asked if she was okay with it and she raised an eyebrow.

"Mr. Dolohov, one step ahead, please. Be gentle to duel with Miss Granger." Galatea spoke, gesturing with her hand for Dolohov to approach. He smiled very convincing manner, in his Slytherin robes.

Hermione's heart stopped for a few beats. Antonin Dolohov, the culprit of her having such an ugly scar crossed her breasts and went towards her lower back. It seems that in the end, some fights don't seem to change the characters.

Hermione admits she's afraid of him. Dolohov is known for being a brilliant duelist and for a fleeting moment she wants to tell Professor Galatea that she doesn't want to fight, but the anger she feels about him is greater. Merlin, she has a grudge against Dolohov.

She reflexively ran her fingers between her breasts, remembering the scar. Hermione felt the

weight of Harry's wand in her hand. Is the first time she'd test the connection between her and Harry's wand.

She looked at the wand.

Tom saw it. When Galatea announced that Dolohov was going to duel against Granger, he had to restrain himself from laughing. Dolohov was an exceptional pupil, very good at duelling and a loyal follower. He felt sorry for Granger, of course, if he could describe it like this.

He looked at her and watched her trace a path through the space between her breasts. For some reason, he took a deep breath when he saw the gesture. She looked at her wand, *perhaps a little fearful*. But the next look she gave was fierce and fearless.

She began to take her robe off Gryffindor and handed it to Ectur Prewett, who stared at her astonished.

Like a boy, she began to roll the sleeves of her shirt up to her elbow and moved her shoulders as if trying to relax. Dolohov raised an eyebrow, still with a very convinced attitude.

Tom glanced at the movement of her skirt, which rose slightly with every step she gave while climbed the few steps to enter the duel area.

He watched her gaze at Dolohov and how her rosy lips became a thin line. Her uncontrollable hair seemed more bristling and electrifying and he felt the reason behind it. *Magic*. She was releasing magic. Strong Magic, and it chills the hairs of his arms.

Dolohov was underestimating her and no matter how Tom understood that she could be potentially different, he still bet Dolohov would win the match.

"I promise to be gentle, Miss Granger," Dolohov spoke, bowing, but everything Hermione heard was a sort of teasing and she didn't respond.

It was just too fast. Five seconds, at most. She was ready. Before Dolohov could say Expelliarmus, she cast a Stupefy. The force of the spell lifted Dolohov and threw him back in a spinning move. All the students followed with their heads, Dolohov stopping across the room. Everyone in the room was silent.

"Impossible," Rosier muttered beside Tom.

One of my best followers finished in seconds, Tom thought. Everyone watched as she walked to the middle of the room, while a groggy Dolohov tried to stand up. With a gesture and a non-verbal spell, Dolohov's wand flies to Hermione's hand.

She looked at Dolohov from above, his wand in her left hand. She had an immense desire to break his wand in two, but all she did was leave his wand there, on the floor.

Tom Riddle inclined his head, his eyes were in that strange grey-green colour as he watched her turn away from Dolohov. She was graced by her housemates, but she didn't look so happy, just smiling gently at the comments.

Dolohov humiliated the Slytherin House, losing to Granger in a few seconds. Tom would have a special conversation with Dolohov tonight in the Room of Requirement.

"Why did you lose to Granger?" Tom asked again, the Room of Requirement was occupied with him and his followers, who were silent, observing with a strange pleasure, Dolohov being tortured.

Some of them had a smirk on their faces.

"Because I underestimated her," Dolohov replied in a hoarse voice of so much screaming.

"It's quite obvious, isn't it? How many times did I say that people shouldn't be underestimated? It doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman. You were just an idiot. How can you not perform a simple Expelliarmus?" Tom sighed and then said, "Crucio," He talked like he was saying the weather was hot.

Dolohov screamed and struggled with the effect of the spell. After what seemed an eternity, Tom stopped.

"I'm worried," He said, his gaze to his followers who until then, were not in trouble with him. "I wondered if you were all like Dolohov."

Nott and Mulciber swallowed hard, the smile fading from their faces.

"So I asked myself, why not train more?" Tom continued. "Let's practice some very dark spells, so you don't make the same mistake as our dear Dolohov."

"What should we practice, my lord?" Abraxas asked.

"Isn't it obvious? We have a perfect guinea pig right here." Tom pointed to Dolohov. "No one leaves here until I'm sure everyone is fit. Until I say that's enough. Until I'm tired."

It was a long night for Dolohov.

Chapter End Notes

Notechis scutatus is also known as Tiger Snake. The fifth most poisonous snake in the world.

Naja Oxiana

Chapter Notes

Remembering that English is not my mother tongue, but I worked hard, so I hope the text is readable to you. Let me know if the text is good. Or if I need to fix something

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 5. Naja Oxiana - Act like a guy.

The Clock Tower Courtyard area was apparently empty on that sunny afternoon. Most of the students were studying for the OWL's inside their Common Room, but Tom Riddle was standing there and listening to the love confession of a Hufflepuff girl. She had her hair in caramel tones, freckles on her nose and cheeks and hazel eyes.

She wasn't ugly, and she was brave enough , Tom had to admit.

Most people didn't have the determination to come face to face with a love letter, but here was this girl, handing him a letter, while timidly talking about her feelings.

What a romantic place, Tom thought with disdain and irony. Just near the old fountain on a sunny day.

The girl lowered her eyes, not having enough courage to look at him, running her tongue over her lips and stammering. Probably the girl's heart was beating extremely fast.

Now that the girl wasn't looking, Tom let the 'good guy' mask fall, revealing the look he gave to her, which conveyed anger and disgust. It was then that he had heard a sigh. The girl in front of him didn't notice that, she was very focused on talking about her feelings and too nervous to be attuned to the environment around her, but Tom listened. He looked up from the girl and saw her ... Hermione Granger.

She was standing there, a few feet from where Tom and the Hufflepuff girl were. Granger had a

frightened look, her mouth a little open, holding a book tightly against her chest, her hair around her - loose and unmanageable.

He blinked and she turned around quickly, almost running, very frightened. It was then that Tom knew, she saw; She watched as he took off his mask and revealed the true emotions he had. She saw it and got scared. *She knows.*

She avoided him for the rest of the day and Tom knew he had to get close to her to know how much she saw or how much she knows.

It's really funny how fate plays in his favor. At night, while doing a patrol as Prefect, he saw her leaving the library with some books and parchments, she was still on time, but it was perfect for him to have her alone.

"Miss Granger."

She startled and slowly looked over her shoulder through a few strands of her uncontrollable hair, hugging the books against her chest.

"Mr. Riddle," She greeted him.

"Let me help you." Tom steps forward and she backs away.

"No need." She refuses quickly.

"Please, I insist. Let me escort you to Gryffindor Tower. "

Granger actually seemed reluctant to let him accompany her, but in the end, she relented. He wanted to walk more slowly so he could have time to inquire her, but she accelerated her steps, always looking forward.

"We haven't talked much since you arrived, Miss Granger. I must say that I expected you to be in Slytherin, but I hope the Gryffindors are receiving you well." He tried to talk to her, but all he received was silence. "You were a Hatstall, which is very interesting. You're the first student I

know to be a Hatstall."

" Hm." That was the only answer she gave.

"By the way, what you did at the Dueling Club was impressive. I admit that Dolohov was a little angry, but it's all his fault. He was not ready for you." Tom bites his lower lip. "But I think teachers do it on purpose, you know? Put the Houses to fight against each other. I think they like to feed the rivalry between the Houses, as for example: Gryffindor against Slytherin. You against Dolohov. It's bullshit, isn't it? "

" Certainly," she answers.

She really difficult my side, Tom thinks.

"You seem to be a very studious person, I realize. But don't you worry about stress? Because I do. Sometimes we take so much responsibility that we get stressed, don't we? It happens to me sometimes; for example, today. I was so tired, but I still wanted to pay attention to the lady who was talking to me. "

Okay, he had thrown the words, waiting for her answer. He smiled internally.

He noticed as she began to breathe more quickly and as she began to paler, he stopped her, holding her by the arm.

"Miss Granger, are you okay?" He asked with false concern.

Her eyes grew larger as she saw how close he was to her. At first, he really thought it was a waste of time, but when she got really pale and started to sweat cold, he understood that she would faint right there. Tom released the books he carried and placed a hand on the back of her neck, her expression becoming a mixture of anger and dread, but that was not what caught his attention, it was how his magic reacted to her.

A kind of charge of energy passed between them and Tom took his hand from her skin quickly. Something seemed to warm the palm of Tom's hand and he closed it and opened his hand a few times. Tom's magic reacted invitingly and he tilted his head, moving closer to her.

She put herself against the wall.

"Interesting, Miss Granger," he murmured softly, much more interested in the reason why this had happened.

"Mr. Riddle, I believe your behavior is not acceptable." She stammered, referred to his closeness.

The two of them stared at each other as they heard footsteps. Slughorn was just a few feet away, a silly grin on his face and cheeks and the tip of his nose slightly rosy. He turned and walked away, giggling like a fool, without giving Hermione and Tom the chance to explain themselves.

Oh, shit, Tom thought.

Time enough for Hermione to collect her things that had fallen and run away from Tom.

Tom returned to the dungeons after the patrol, his thoughts with the sensations and images of Hermione Granger. The noise of the Bloody Baron's chains made the dungeons darker than they really were and it was true that the students had a pre-concept of dungeons and Slytherins, almost always avoiding walking around these areas, which in the end, gave freedom to the Slytherins.

Tom murmured the password, the wall moved and opened space for him to pass. His followers were gathered in the Common Room, Mulciber was trying to heal Dolohov who was still injured after the night in the Room of Requirement.

"You're a horrible mediwizard," Dolohov complained.

"I wouldn't need to heal you if you were not an idiot." Mulciber countered Dolohov's comment.

Angrily, Dolohov tried to grab the collar of Mulciber's shirt, but the movement was very quick and caused more discomfort.

"Granger will pay me." Dolohov threatened.

"You're mad about because you lost to Granger. Pathetic, Dolohov. She's a girl." Lestrangle looked down at Dolohov, a petulant smile on his face.

"Are you all dumb?" It was Malfoy's turn to speak. "She's different."

"I admit she's a strange girl. Have you seen how she behaves?" Avery said.

"That's not what I'm referring to." Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Dolohov lost not only because he is an idiot. The girl came from the war, that's what was said. "

"In any case, what Granger did will not go unpunished," Dolohov argued.

Tom listened to the conversation of his Housemates in silence.

"I like her," Alphard said out of nowhere.

As Alphard commented, everyone turned his head toward him, including Tom.

"Alphard, are you serious?" Nott asked, there was a tone of laughter in his voice as if he didn't believe what he was hearing.

Alphard shrugged.

"So many girls out there and you like Granger?" Rosier raised an eyebrow.

"What? She's still a girl. She's different, she doesn't wear make-up, she has wild hair and freckles on her cheeks and nose, apparently, she has a nice body and she's smart." Alphard shrugged again. "Have I told you that she beat Dolohov in a duel?" Everyone laughed at Alphard's comment, except for Tom. "It's something new. It's refreshing. Even if to kill time."

That night, Hermione's thoughts were turbulent.

The locket reacted to Tom Riddle, she thought. Obviously he would react to him, it is likely to be a Time-Turner that Salazar Slytherin himself created. But why would Voldemort have ordered one of his followers to put Time-Turner in a mudblood? Something that can be a family heirloom? It doesn't make sense, unless he wanted to make sure his younger version knew the future and changed what he might call "a mistake."

"Oh, no." she murmured, hugging the pillow.

When Riddle touched her, the cord holding the locket warmed in her neck. It wasn't bad and it wasn't good. It was kind of a reflex of magic.

oOo

Tom was lying face down on his poster-bed, the green curtains surrounding the bed was closed, giving him privacy. Tom's raven hair was clinging to his forehead because of the sweat, he was frowning and his lips were tight. Tom was dreaming. The eyes were moving behind the eyelids.

You're special, Tom. You're different.

Tom had awakened, his green eyes were frightened, and his breath was racing. He took a few deep breaths, trying to calm himself. Suddenly the room had gotten too hot for him, must be courtesy of early summer. Quickly, he started unbuttoning his pajama shirt and threw his clothes on the foot of the bed. He is usually organized with the few things he owns, but this time he doesn't give a shit.

He had a strange preference for dreaming when he was asleep, but for some reason, the dream without images he had just had disturbed him. The female voice that had spoken to him was still tormenting his senses.

My mom? He wondered, questioning the identity of the voice.

His feelings about his mother are complicated, partly he doesn't care about her and considers her weak for giving up magic because of a Muggle, there is a trace of rancor in what he feels for her. **He had not been enough to make her want to live.**

On the other hand, he admires what she gave him without thinking. She gave him the purest magical blood that has ever existed. And even though he is disregarded by who she was, he doesn't accept anyone speaking shit about his mother or his family - **The Gaunts.**

From what he has researched, he understands how disgusting and humiliating the Gaunt family was, but if all he planned was going to work, Tom wants to put an end to what's left of the Riddles and Gaunts on his summer vacation.

In the morning, everyone was getting ready to go to Hogsmeade, the last weekend before the OWL's. Virginia Flint was surrounding Tom, hoping he would invite her to go along with him and the others to Hogsmeade when she didn't receive an invitation from Tom, she went to Lestrage. Of course, Lestrage with a smile said that they might meet while they were there, but that he first wanted to have fun with his friends.

Rosier coughed to hide his laughter, and Mulciber bit his lower lip. If wore skirts, Lestrage would take it. But what the girl Flint did not know is that he'd said the same thing to three different girls. Avery raised an eyebrow.

"What?" Lestrage shrugged, after Virginia Flint left. "It wasn't me who called her to go to Hogsmeade, she came to me because she wanted to."

"You're terrible." Nott shook his head, smiling at Lestrage's attitude.

So they left their Common Room and went to Hogsmeade.

oOo

Currently, Hermione was in the Hog's Head Inn, drinking the second glass of Firewhisky, some bags of the Honeydukes store were next to her.

The Hog's Head Inn was, fortunately, empty except for her. The emptiness of the room seemed to match the way she felt and the glass of Firewhisky. She didn't think she was getting into any kind of depression, though she often got sad about her situation, she couldn't say that she was the happiest girl ever. When she entered through the pub door, she raised an eyebrow to the pool table that was there in the corner and dusty. This wasn't something she remembered that had in the Hog's Head Inn in her time, but it's possible that Aberforth threw the table away after realizing the little use.. *After all, what wizard would play with something so Muggle?* She asked to herself with irony...

Hermione sighed and drank the rest of the liquid from her glass. She had seen Alphard and the rest of Riddle's gang earlier, when she had left Honeydukes, Tom and the others had not noticed her presence - which she had been grateful for - but Alphard noticed. They nodded each other from a distance and went their own way. She, alone and he with Tom and the others.

Alphard had asked her once about her behavior when he was with his friends, Hermione had just said:

"I find them a bit intimidating. Don't get me wrong, Alphard, but sometimes I'm afraid of them. I respect you wanting to walk with them, but I will not."

He respected this and made no further comments.

Hermione was about to leave, when the Hog's Head Inn door was opened, laughter and conversation, Tom and his followers. Hermione froze in her seat, the conversation and playfulness stopped for a moment when they noticed her presence.

"Miss Granger," Tom said, his footsteps were heard as he approached where Hermione was. She was still on her back, staring at the bottom of the glass she was holding. She heard more footsteps and felt as they spread through the surroundings of the Hog's Head Inn.

She glanced over her shoulder, analyzing them. Avery and Dolohov were near the door, Nott and Mulciber near the tables and the windows on the left, Black and Rosier were near the pool table, Tom was right near her left side, Abraxas was on her right side.

Shit, they surrounded her. Hermione glanced at Alphard. *It was him. He saw where I was going and brought them here.* Even though I was afraid of them. Alphard betrayed her.

So, this the good uncle of Sirius? He's a son of a ...

"Well, gentlemen, I was just leaving," she says, picking up Honeydukes' bags.

"Oh no, Miss Granger. Please accompany me in a drink." Tom took her arm gently, but didn't let her escape.

He was silent for a moment, she looked around and sighed in defeat.

"A glass. After all, a girl shouldn't be long in coming back to a safe place when it's night, right?" She said the last words with irony.

Riddle released her arm as she turned. She had not settled, still standing. As soon as he entered, he realized. Granger was wearing strange clothes. A pair of strange blue pants, very tight on her legs, defining her thighs and calves. Her hair was in a clumsy bun, she wore a dark blue summer sweater and strange boots, much like the men wore in the Muggle War.

But she smelled good. The perfume - if she was wearing one - was soft and delicate, however, irresistible.

Tom looked at Granger's hand, noticing the chocolate bags she carried.

"Chocolates, Miss Granger?"

She looked down at the bags.

"Yes, it's irresistible."

"A girl, after all." Abraxas commented and Lestrangle laughed.

"What do you mean?" She glared at Malfoy.

"Don' t mind with them. I also like chocolates," Tom said.

Hermione moved in her bags and pulled out a bar of chocolate and handed it to Riddle. *Who knows, he'll leave me alone.*

Tom raised an eyebrow, but picked up the bar anyway.

"Thank you, Miss Granger. On the night before -" Tom cannot finish his sentence, because the two cups were placed respectively in front of each. Tom took his glass and brought it to his lips, but didn't even drink. He was very impressed with how quickly Granger took the glass and drank the liquid in a few seconds in a single gulp.

Tom had a strange expression, Abraxas was astonished.

She drank like a boy. Like a man, Tom thought. Weren't the women supposed to drink gently?

After finishing, Hermione wiped her lips against her hand. Alphard laughed after a time when they all stared at Granger.

"Hermione, you're awesome." Alphard clapped a hand and she glanced at him.

Hermione? Tom was surprised that Alphard had called her by her first name.

"Well, gentlemen, if you'll excuse me, I'm going" She hurried. "Thanks for the drink, Riddle."

"Hermione," Alphard called out. "Play with me." He pointed to the pool table.

"What is this?" Malfoy asked.

"It's a pool table," Alphard explained.

"And what this thing do?" It was Rosier who spoke.

Oh, they don't know. They live so much in their pure-blooded world that they don't know what it is.

"She doesn't do anything," Hermione explained to Rosier, Tom looked at her.

"It's a Muggle game," Alphard continued. "So, let's play, Hermione?"

Son of a...! He doubts my blood status. He's manipulating me, Hermione realized.

"How do you know this game, Alphard?" Nott asked.

"Is that serious?" Alphard slapped Nott's head. "There are those who say that those who don't know about things don't know how to defend themselves."

"And how does playing a Muggle game make you smarter, Alphard?" Avery asked.

"It's a way of saying, Avery. However, Muggles do some cool things." Alphard shrugs.

"A Muggle lover, that's what we have here." Lestrangle rolled his eyes.

Hermione was trying to escape as fast as she could to get out of that place. She didn't like the direction this conversation was going and didn't like the look Dolohov was giving her.

"So, Hermione, let's play?" He asked again.

"I don't know how to play," she lied.

"It's very simple, put all the balls in the holes and don't let the white ball go together." He looked at her. "If you want I can teach you"

Alphard summarized very badly how the game worked, he also had no idea how the game worked, but that's fine. She was silent.

"Come on, Miss Granger, play with Alphard. Help the heart of this poor boy who loves you." Lestrangle spoke indelicately, laughing, and slapping Alphard on the shoulder. With his comment, the boys made a noise. "Everyone knows he likes you."

Hermione, like the others, approached the table. Tom was still close to her, looking with interest as to where this was going. He watched as her gaze darkened and how she snorted at Lestrangle's comment.

"Of course." She picked up a pool cue, holding it with her right hand, while the fingers of her left hand dragged through the pool table slowly.

"Everyone knows you love me, isn't it Alphard?" She said, walking patiently around the table, past Tom - who followed her with his eyes - Abraxas, Rosier, and Avery. "Yes, everyone knows," she murmured scornfully, heading toward Alphard. "You're really very loyal." She was face to face with Alphard, Lestrage made a funny face.

Hermione stared at Alphard for a moment before leaning against the pool table with her pool cue stick. Tom looked at how her pants seemed to tighten even more in the right places when she made that move. In one play, Hermione managed to score, but she didn't want to stay there any longer.

"I'm sorry, Alphard, I really don't know how to play this game."

She was not really referring to playing pool, but to that kind of manipulation game that Alphard was getting her into.

Angrily, she picks up the chocolates, walking through Dolohov, but before she can make the move to open the door, something catches her attention through the window. She retraced a few steps, narrowing her eyes and looking at the men in black, Hermione lets the chocolate bags fall, Tom goes to her side and looks in the same direction as she looks, he also narrows his eyes.

Hermione knows when problems will come. She is aware of when there are people who want to do something wrong and are looking for something and right now, these five men who are wanting to enter the pub are reminding her very well of the Death Eaters.

Tom and Hemione exchanged glances.

"Problems." The two murmur together.

In a quick move she turns around, Aberforth is coming down the stairs, she looks around and goes to a window leading back to the pub, without a second thought, she opens and walks out the window.

Tom and the others observe Hermione's movements. Tom also doesn't think twice, he also does the same thing as her. If there's anything he cherishes, it's survival.

When they see their leader coming out of the pub, everyone else walks through the window as well.

Tom is waiting for them and watching Hermione walk away with quick steps. She is walking towards the fork of the road that crosses the Forbidden Forest.

"What's going on?" Malfoy asks.

Before anyone can respond, an explosion of magic occurs, everyone bows down by a simple act of reflex.

"Aberforth ..." Hermione murmured, her eyes wide. There was a fight going on inside the pub.

But none of them has much to think about, because three of the five men who entered the pub are out there looking at them. Hermione knows better than to stay, she runs towards the path that crosses the Forbidden Forest.

"Shit, shit, shit, shit!" Avery shouts.

For some reason, they begin to follow Granger or maybe it was because of her she was going to the only place that seemed to be an escape.

Tom is good at everything he does. So if he's running, he's fast. The boys soon seem to have an advantage over Granger, running faster. Alphard, Rosier, Dolohov, and Tom are leading the race, but the most impressive thing for them is that they begin to notice a girl with unruly hair - now loose - reaching them.

She succeeds in passing through Rosier and Alphard, strives to reach Dolohov and is now side by side with Tom. Turning aside from the obstacles and now Tom understands why she wears those masculine-style boots.

Mulciber is falling behind and the pursuers are casting spells on their backs. Hermione stops and with a quick movement, turns around and cast a spell.

"Reducto!" She shouted, her spell saving Mulciber from being caught and seemed to throw the enemies away.

She was breathing quickly when she stopped running. They were all breathing deeply, trying to calm down.

"Who are they ?!" Lestrangle demanded.

"I don't know, I don't care." Hermione started walking. Lie, Hermione cared a lot about who those people were and why they seemed to have a specific target.

"Come back here, girl." Dolohov took Hermione's arm.

"Let me go," Hermione ordered.

"Dolohov, release her now," Tom ordered darkly. His temper was changing and all his followers noticed.

They began to walk in silence, heading toward Hogwarts. Could anything be worse than walking alone through the Forbidden Forest with Voldemort and the Death Eaters? Hermione would pay to see.

As they walked, the smell of gasoline became more and more stronger. They were in the field of plants that seemed to release pus.

"It's Bubotuber," Nott explained.

Tom was silent, walking beside Hermione. They hear a grunt from Rosier as he inadvertently stepped on a small Bubotuber and squeezed it, causing the plant to explode pus and dirty his clothes.

Tom smell the burn. Turning slowly, he watches Fiendfyre is coming toward them. The fire element spell seems to intensify in the middle of the gasoline smell that the plants release. A wall of fire separated Tom and Hermione from the others. A kind of fire that no Aquamenti would erase. Both turned to face their enemy.

Tom finally pulled out his wand, holding it firmly in his hand, he gazed darkly from under his lashes, letting his magic come alive and run free. The great amount of power left Hermione shocked. Part of the fire surrounded Tom, working with his magic, shielding him.

But man didn't mind with Tom and turned the tip of his wand toward Hermione, casting a spell in her direction. Hermione raised a shield that protected her and Tom and Tom took the opportunity to attack, using Bombarda. Although his patience was diminishing, he didn't want to use the most dangerous spells in Granger's presence.

As he attacked, making the man pay attention to him, Hermione looked around.

"Carpe Retractum!" A rope of light came from the tip of Hermione's wand and she used it to pull a Bubotuber into the man as if it were a sling. The plant hit the target and exploded pus, running with acid from the eye and on the skin. Hermione took Tom's arm and started to run.

Groaning, Tom let himself be taken by Hermione. He didn't like to leave an unfinished fight, it gave him the same feeling of an itch he couldn't scratch. However, he was almost casting a death spell to end it all at once. They were making a steep descent, when Hermione slipped, rolling down the hill. Tom tried to catch her, but she carried him along in her fall.

Tom hits the ground, he grunted in pain from the blow he had hit his head, but what he feels is the weight of Granger's body against his. She is on top of him, one leg on each side and face to face with him. Her eyes are open savagely, her full hair becomes a sort of curtain around them. She is looking directly into his eyes and her breath is very close.

He tried to move her body, but she put her hand in his mouth, making a sign of silence, throwing a Delusion spell over them.

Tom glanced over her shoulder, watching his attacker search for them. She cast a great Delusion spell, he thought.

They were silent and watched the man Apparate. After a moment, Hermione undoes the Delusion spell and moves away from Tom.

Before he can comment, she is already walking. Tom watched her, noticing her pink cheeks.

They were after something. No, they were after someone ... Granger? She knows something, she did something and Dumbledore protects her.

Tom's mind begins to think of theories.

Didn't take too long before they meet the others again. They were gathered, staring at something, when Tom and Hermione are close enough, she makes a shocked noise at what she sees.

"Did you kill a unicorn?" She asked with dread and anger.

"What? Damn! Of course not!" Rosier cursed.

"Manners, Rosier. Have manners." Lestrangle yawned.

Suddenly they seemed very calm, as if that run, the fight and almost being hit by a Fiendfyre was just fun.

"It was already dead when we arrived," Malfoy explained.

Nott bent down and conjured a knife and began to cut the hair from the unicorn's tail, then try to cut the horn.

"What are you doing, Nott?" Avery asked.

"You don't have many opportunities like that. Do you know the various potions I can do with unicorn hair and the horn?" He spoke excitedly.

Tom raised one eyebrow.

"What's wrong with you ...?" Hermione muttered.

They turned their heads toward her.

"Oh, Miss Granger, I hope you understand that this is simply academic. My student side can't resist." Nott continued with a smile.

She retreated a few steps, colliding with her back with Dolohov.

"Miss Granger, don't you think I forgot our duel, did you?"

Hermione turned quickly, trying to escape Dolohov's grip.

"Don't touch me!" She screamed and with a non-verbal spell, she made Dolohov's tie tighten more and more against his neck.

At first, Dolohov continued with his grip on Hermione's arm, but he was forced to release as his tie began to tighten around his neck. He gasped and got to his knees, breathing with difficulty. Hermione held on to the spell, her magic spinning around her, moving her hair like the wind.

Tom looked at her a little fascinated by what he was seeing.

"Hermione," Alphard called out. "Hermione, enough! You're going to kill him! "

She left Dolohov and turned his wand toward them.

"He wanted to hurt me!" She told Alphard. "He has the right to do what he wants with me, but I can't return the favor? I saved your ass! "She's hysterical.

Alphard hands raised and approached Hermione.

"It's okay, Hermione. I would never let the Dolohov hurt you." He slowly placed a hand on Hermione's arm that was holding the wand. "Come on, Hermione, let's go back to Hogwarts. It was a very stressful day, wasn't it? "

Avery approached Tom and whispered in his ear. Hermione didn't like it at all.

Hermione moved closer to Alphard, using him as a shield.

"Congratulations, Dolohov. You got one more night with Tom in the Room of Requirement." Mulciber whispered to Dolohov, who was trying to get up, " You lost to Granger again. "

Hermione can't hear because she was already walking with Alphard to Hogwarts, a helpless girl in the midst of snakes.

Everyone was on their way to Hogwarts, Tom approached Hermione almost as they were about to cross the gates of the castle.

"Miss Granger ..." Tom put a hand on the back of Hermione's neck, his hand began to warm, his magic reacting and that strange electric current passed through them, but this time he did not shrink, he looked directly into Hermione's eyes.

Hermione didn't look away, looking into Tom's green eyes.

He looked and looked, but nothing happened. He collided with the mental barrier in her mind. Occlumency. The initial smile that he had, was undone when he realized that he wouldn't be able to take anything from her. She pushed him and entered the gates of Hogwarts, now being in the protection of the castle.

"Try to Obliviate me." She narrowed her eyes.

Before he could move toward her, Professor Galatea ran toward them.

"Are you all right? All the students and teachers were worried about you. You were the only ones who had not returned." Galatea looked at the condition of their clothes. "You were on the attack. There was an attack from Grindelwald in Hogsmeade and in France at the same time. "

" We're fine, Professor. We made our way through the Forbidden Forest to Hogwarts. "

" Great Merlin! "

"We're fine, Professor Merrythought. I just want to go back to my dorm. "Hermione turned her back.

"Miss Granger, allow me to accompany you. It's been a rough night and be all by yourself, it must be stressful for you," Tom said, taking a step toward Hermione. "It's my duty as Prefect."

"No need, Mr. Riddle. I think you've noticed that I know how to take care of myself. "

She turned and started walking toward Gryffindor Tower, a smile appearing on her face. It was only the first clash, but Hermione was glad she was victorious.

Tom's hand clenched into a fist. All this time he underestimated her.

ooo

Her friends were very worried. They asked why she had not gone with them. They asked her how she was and if she was not hurt in any way.

Hermione thanked them for their concern, but she said she was fine. What worried Hermione was the fact that she had a Grindelwald attack on Hogsmeade. She didn't remember. If this was an inopportune event, it meant that her and Harry's presence were changing the time.

The next day she ran away from Riddle and her gang as the devil flees from the cross, as the Muggles would say. But she felt his looks on her, which is why she preferred to be in public and in the company of Ectur and Bilius. But it was when she was alone in the library that Alphard approached her.

"Is everything okay?" He had sat in front of her.

She didn't have the patience for him.

"How did you find out?" She asked, getting right to the point. She looked up from the parchment she was writing, looking at Alphard.

He sighed and ran his hand through his hair.

"Granger is not a very wizard name, is it?" He whispered.

"And why did you want to throw me at the wolves?" She whispered angrily.

"I just wanted to confirm. Don't get angry, but it was the old man with half-moon glasses who told me. "

"Dumbledore?" She asked.

"Is there another Transfiguration teacher who has this description?" Alphard was leaning against the table. "The old man asked me to protect you."

Hermione narrowed her eyes.

"You and not Ectur or Bilius?"

"Because I'm in Slytherin," Alphard explained. "If others know your blood status, they will want to kill you."

"And what do you gain by helping me?"

"I am a mistake that the Hat refuses to admit. It was for me to be in Gryffindor, but for fear of my parents, I asked him to stay in the Slytherin House. "Alphard shrugged.

"Insightful, but not very reliable," she murmured.

"It's understandable, after last night. But remember, I play on your side only with different colors." He winked at her. "Shh .. your secret is with me."

He stood up and left.

At night, Hermione was in the Astronomy Tower, which was empty this time. She was reading Secrets of the Darkest Art, but when she started yawning more than three times, she knew she had to go to sleep.

She hugged the book against her chest and went down the stairs to the Gryffindor Tower, when she turned her back, she heard the voice.

"Miss Granger, will you please give me the pleasure of a conversation?"

Tom stood there in his Slytherin robe, his hands behind him, holding his wand. He had a raised eyebrow and green eyes, a wicked grin on his face.

Chapter End Notes

Naja Oxiana is the most poisonous naja species of the naja type. Naja is the sixth most poisonous snake in the world

Daboia

Chapter Notes

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Remembering that English is not my native language, then forgive me if there is any mistake in the text. Let me know if there are any errors or if the text needs to be modified.

I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 6. Daboia - Priori Incantatem.

Hermione fortifies the grip on the book against her chest. She swallows hard by noticing the kind of look that Tom has on his really tried to avoid him, and tried to be the neutral girl, but he developed a kind of obsession and distrust.

It's like he's got a strange kind of sixth sense.

Fearful, Hermione took a few steps back.

"What do you want?" She asked. Hermione's expression changed from surprise to an expression of ferocity. She knew better than to believe that Tom wanted to just talk with her.

"I think we have an unfinished conversation, Miss Granger." Tom walked with a side smile on his face, playing with his wand with his fingers. "But I don't believe that here, in a corridor, is the best place to talk. Then I ask you to accompany me." He blinked a few times. "But of course, you'll come wanting it or not." He threatened.

Before she could take her wand out of the holster and cast a spell, Tom made a silencing gesture, much like the working of a zipper. Hermione's mouth went silent and she was unable to say a single word, she turned and tried to run, but was quickly stopped by Tom, who took her arm, causing her to drop the book she held.

She stared at him, her eyes already filled with tears. She actually tried to stay out of reach Tom Riddle, but all the events seemed to serve as a kind of catalyst to make Tom get even more interested in her.

I tried, Harry.

Tom glanced at the book she dropped, he was surprised and angry to realize what book it was. He

tightened the grip on her arm.

"Where did you get this book?" He demanded, shaking her. It was impossible for this book to be with her because this book was currently with him. Inside his trunk, along with his belongings and more dark magic books. *How did she get it?* "It doesn't matter, you're going to tell me everything when we get to a special place. "

The Chamber? The Basilisk? Hermione didn't have much time to think, the darkness took over her and she fainted. Tom had manipulated her consciousness.

When she opened her eyes, a little groggy, Hermione looked at the ceiling of the Room of Requirement. She tried to stand up, raising only her torso, her heart beat faster when she saw that she was surrounded by the future Death Eaters, watching with pleasurable attention. Tom himself was in the centre, looking at her in a very confident and petulantly way. He felt superior to her.

She glanced at Alphard, who pressed his lips together and locked his jaw in disgust at the situation that Hermione was in.

"Well, Miss Granger, I believe our conversation can already happen, don't you think?" Tom smiled at her.

She crawled, making noises very similar to the noises that a mute person makes, while tears ran down her face.

"Oh, of course. You can't talk. Let me help you." Tom snapped his fingers.

"You monster!" Hermione screamed at him.

"Oh, Miss. Granger, I think this is a terrible way to start a conversation." He frowned. "Allow me," Continued. " Crucio. "

Hermione was struck by the torturing spell, her body writhed and her screams echoed in the Room of Requirement. It was only seconds, but it seemed like hours.

"Tell me, Miss. Granger, what do you know? Who are you? Why do you have this book?" He demanded. Tom's tone changed.

At first, Hermione thought she would go crazy. Bellatrix Lestrange was certainly fit to practice the Cruciatus curse, but Tom ... Tom was different, was special. It was a thousand times worse than the Bellatrix Cruciatus. The pain was so intense, that it gradually became like something deep in her mind. She no longer felt the pain as at first and did not know if she was screaming or not.

Every time she denied the answer to his questions, remaining silent, Tom increased the power of the Cruciatus. He realizes that she is much tougher than many of his Knights, Dolohov or Mulciber would already be begging and crying, curling up in ball form, begging for mercy for him.

In that last Cruciatus, he increased the potency of the spell as he gritted his teeth, the Knights were frightened, and Hermione's scream was deafening, but she didn't break.

Tom paused, breathing quickly. His anger rising.

He laughed.

"I must say, Miss. Granger, I'm impressed. I confess that each of these boys presents here, would have peed in their pants if they were in the Cruciatus curse as you are." He approaches her.

Hermione opened her eyes, a little numb, but still with a fierce look on her face. Her throat is dry and irritated from screaming, so she's hoarse. Tom gritted his teeth as he realized that she still had that fierce look on his face. He sat on her, with one leg on either side of Hermione's body, she is still looking at him with determination.

"You're going to tell me what I want to know, Granger?" He asked, pointing the wand at Hermione's neck. "Or I'm going to have to tear it from you, hm?" Tom raised one eyebrow. "Don't doubt me, Granger. I have very effective methods." He put his forefinger and thumb to lift Hermione's chin.

Tom touched her hair, a thoughtful act of his curiosity to know what the texture of her hair was, and he was a little surprised to find her hair soft and silky to the touch.

"Don't touch me!" She ordered, fighting against his weight on her.

Tom tried to control her movements, but Hermione, for all her boldness and courage, grabbed Tom's raven hair, messing up the perfect hairstyle out of his hair, yanking a few strands of his hair and spitting on Tom's face, apparently shocked, was Hermione's chance of being able to push him. She gets up quickly and calls her wand from Mulciber's hand.

The Knights are shocked and Dolohov is the first to take a step towards Hermione, Alphard is the first to draw his wand - because he knows that from now on, things will get worse. The others pull out their wands, ready to curse Hermione.

Tom rose slowly, wiping Hermione's spit with the sleeve of his shirt in the process, he laughed softly, but when he looked at her, his eyes were glowing red.

"The next one who takes a step will join her," Tom threatened.

The Knights, very fearful of Tom's anger, step back, out of sight of Riddle. Nobody wants to be the lost target.

"I must admit that Gryffindor fits you well. Bold, fearless, foolish. With an undeniable desire for death." His grip on the wand increases. "You, Miss Granger, knew how to irritate me. I know this is going to give me more trouble, you know? But I'm sure I can manage everything in the end. However, you gave me so much anger, that I'm in the mood to kill you. What do you think of that?"

"It will not be today, Riddle. Do you want to know everything I know? Well, I see you, Riddle. I know your tricks and the masks you put on for everyone else. The perfect boy?" Hermione snorted. "No one is more *pathetic* here than you."

Hermione convinced herself that she really had a wish of death. Still, she couldn't stop talking. *Who did Tom Riddle think he was to think he could threaten her?* She would probably die someday, but it wouldn't be today.

Riddle was so angry that he began to breathe faster, his magic came to life and he let the wand be the conductor of his fierce magic.

" Avada Kedavra! "

He shouted, pointing his wand at Hermione. The Knights' eyes widened savagely as they saw the green light emanating from the tip of Riddle's wand, they tried to hide, even if they weren't the target of that curse. And Hermione...Hermione was there, but she was ready. She saw in his red eyes the intention of using that Unforgivable Curse and she was prepared for it. Harry had often

spoken of how he managed to get out of his various clashes with Voldemort. She concentrates because she knows what will happen and holds Harry's wand - which is hers for now. - with both hands. It is when the magical shock occurs, the spells - both conjured at the same time - met and clashed against each other. Both the magic of Tom and of Hermione are felt by the other occupants of the Room of Requirement. It's the Priori Incantatem. Their wands remained connected, a thousand rays rising above Hermione and Tom, crisscrossing around them until they were enclosed in a golden dome-shaped web, a cage of light, protecting the two. There was no "echo" because neither of the two wands managed to defeat the other, it was a tie.

Tom is brilliant, from a very young age, he is a great duelist, even without having real battles. It's his magic, he's too strong, and he has a magic to spare, but finding an equal is something new to him. Try to enchant her didn't work, trying to break her didn't work and now he is tied with her in a duel. His wand is attached to her wand, his anger is diminishing as he can't break the bond between the two wands. He doesn't understand what's going on.

Tom again underestimated Hermione. He thought she didn't know what the Room of Requirement was, that she did not know how the Come and Go Room worked, but Hermione knew this Room very well and knew that this Room would become whatever the occupant wanted most. Hermione took advantage of the fact that the desire of Tom Riddle and the others in the Room was weak and strongly desired that the Room is transformed into a labyrinth, capable of separating each occupant from that room and showing her the exit.

The Room attended Hermione's request and thick concrete walls were erected between Tom and Hermione, between Hermione and all the other Knights. The interference and Hermione broke the Priori Incantatem. Hermione turned her back and the Room was already with the doors open for Hermione and she ran with all her efforts out of the Come and Go Room.

Before Tom could force his magic over hers, a concrete wall began to come between him and Granger, she managed to undo the bond between the two wands, the Room had become a labyrinth, and he knew there was something to do with Granger. He undoes Hermione's desire, asking the Room to become as was before, giving him time to see Hermione running away.

She slipped through my fingers, Tom thought.

The Knights look frightened at Tom, who has an icy look on his face. He growls and casts some curses in random directions, almost hitting LeStrange and Malfoy.

Tom has more questions than answers, however, he didn't come out empty-handed. He has the book, that Granger supposedly stole from him.

Her muscles were sore from Tom's torturing spell, her throat also didn't escape this description, due to the screams she gave inside the Room of Requirement, and despite her body requesting immediate rest, she found the strength to run back to the Gryffindor Tower, where she thought she would be safe.

Tell Dumbledore everything, don't be stupid Hermione! She thought. *Show him the images about Tom and end it all at once.* A part of her mind spoke. *Yeah, do it and break the whole timeline. You will probably hurt your existence and the existence of your friends if you do.* The other part of her mind spoke.

In the end, Hermione only breathed more relief by being in a place away from Tom Riddle, putting a hand to her chest - trying to soothe the muscles in her chest and lungs. Hermione threw herself on one of the sofas in the Common Room and squeezed the wand in her hand.

I lost the book. She thought angrily. The only chance of trying to find an answer and I let Riddle take the book. Hermione gritted her teeth. I have to find a way to get the book back.

Grunting in pain, she drags her feet to the female dormitory. Hermione's roommates are already asleep and Hermione doesn't have to make much effort to fall asleep either.

When Hermione woke in the morning, her body felt even sorer than before, she took one of the muscle pain potions she had in the medical kit in her bag. Relieved, but not improved so much. What gave her strength to face that day was the anger she was feeling about Tom Riddle. She was like a ferocious lioness, people who cross her path today had to be careful.

She already has an idea of how to retrieve the book, but for this, she needs Tom Riddle to be a little far away. Far enough for her to be able to transform into him with the last Polyjuice potion she has in her bag. It's the worst idea she could have, but it's the only one that gets her into the Slytherin Common Room, where the book probably is. She needs hair from Tom Riddle and if Alphard is really reliable, she'll test him now.

At breakfast, Bilius and Algie are trying to talk to her, but Hermione is serious and quiet, her eyes glaring at the Slytherin table and the members. She sees the looks that Tom's gang gives her and it annoys her so much that she gets up from the table, abandoning breakfast. Ectur follows her, worried about her state of mind.

He touches her arm and she grunts through aching muscles, Ectur frowned.

"Hermione, are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Ectur." She put a hand on his shoulder. "Don't worry."

Ectur did not seem very convinced by her words and paid close attention to her walk and behaviour. The first lesson she has is Herbology, being a Gryffindor / Ravenclaw class. Hermione can't say that she was really focused on the lesson, humbly saying, she's already been through the fifth year, but that's not the reason why she is so deconcentrated, it's anger. A kind of anger bubbling inside her, giving her a feeling of discomfort, snorting every five minutes.

Her facial expression is clear - today she is for few friends - low brows, lips like a thin line, tight jaw, a bright, fierce look and uncontrollable, loose hair. That's how Tom Riddle and his gang met her when they passed her in the hall. Rosier and Mulciber do not know how to react to her presence, they were unsure of what to do, but in general, everyone maintains a stoic expression. Hermione can see the glow of anger in Tom's gaze, few would notice, especially because he opens a smile. Imitating a 'welcome' expression.

Hermione's bubbling rage threatens to burst, but she is adamant about her role here. She controls herself.

"Miss Granger, you're-" Tom has his sentence cut off as Hermione walks past them straight, she doesn't even look at any of them, mostly ignoring him.

He wanted to play with her psychologist, torture her in public, manipulate her and know how much she told of their meeting last night, but he wasn't prepared for it. Tom blinks, and his facial expression falls a little, especially his smile. She passes between him and Abraxas, her movement makes him smell the perfume of red fruits that are in her hair. No, he wasn't prepared for this kind of behaviour. He expected the fear in her eyes, tears, an old attempt to run or bargain with him, even if she later begged him for mercy, but he didn't expect to be ignored.

Tom breathed more quickly, his temper changing. Oh, she can actually activate conflicting feelings in him and that's not welcome.

He turned, casting a look at Granger's back.

"Miss Granger." It is Abraxas, who speaks, demanding that she turn. She simply ignores it.

"Miss Granger, why are you doing this? Did I somehow hurt you for you to ignore me? If I did, I ask your pardon, it was certainly an unnoticed mistake on my part. "

Tom says, his voice with false concern. Oh, Tom plays with her, *two can play this game and win who is the best*. They have an audience, students who lick the floor wherever he goes - no matter the House.

Even with his theater, she ignores it.

"Granger." It's Dolohov who chases her, taking her arm. Dolohov has a short temperament, his patience is very limited and now, Hermione is his target. She added Dolohov's rancour list the night in the Forbidden Forest.

Hermione is prepared and with a simple movement, she turned and pointed the wand at Dolohov.

"Don't touch me," She commands.

They have an audience, but she doesn't care about it, even though all the students are looking with interest at what is happening.

Tom breathed in. *Oh, the magic*. Tom is an admirer of magic because magic was the only thing that has never failed him, he feels the magic like no one else will ever feel and he believes that magic is the only thing that matters. Then, feeling the strong magic of Hermione, the wand waiting to be a conductor of such magic is amazing and manages to catch his attention. He sees the magic differently and can see her magic, acting around her, intensifying the environment and it's like ... like him. It somehow equals him and he doesn't know how to handle it.

He really doesn't know how to deal with her. Last night was a fucking disaster, a catastrophe and he didn't control his impulses, she saw something she shouldn't and she's alive and he doesn't know how to handle it. She prevented a Death Curse - no one can stop a Death Curse, no one could ever stop any curse that he really wanted to do, but here she is. She stopped it. - She fought against his Cruciatus, she did not break and acted against him and he lost.

No, he really didn't. Tom tries to calm his wounded ego. *It was a tie*. A fucking tie and it never happened to him. He just doesn't know how to handle it.

Tom is divided between the interest of who she is or the threat she represents. If he can't break her and undo that kind of attitude she has, then he'll be leaving loose ends, someone who doubts him. Of course, he has a thousand people in favor of him against one, but this 'one' has an ally that is the stone in his shoe. Granger is in the Gryffindor House, right under Dumbledore's nose, she has free access to the Deputy Headmaster's office and shit, Dumbledore protects her. She's a loose end, who saw him casting a Death Curse. She's a loose end.

However, there is something wrong. He feels, he sees. He doesn't know where Granger's interests and loyalty are. *With Dumbledore?* He was beginning to doubt it. *If she is Dumbledore's new favourite student, then she is a failed student. Her attitude don't match Dumbledore's idealism*. You see, he's not really complaining, *but the girl who is Dumbledore's new pupil tries to hang Dolohov? Or can you feel the Dark Magic? And read the darkest magic book?* Her actions

put him in check. *Who is she? What does she really want? Is she like him? Is she manipulating Dumbledore?* Oh, he likes that last version. *If so, then she is more precious and poisonous than I thought.* Being able to wrap the old half-moon glasses around her little pinkie.

And the book ... She didn't steal it. His book was still with him, in his place, with his belongings. Tom stayed a long time in the night, looking at the two books alike. *What would a Gryffindor girl be doing with such a book? Having her own added to her personal collection?* So he had asked the question himself for the tenth time: *Is she like me? The answers are there, magic, the duel, the tie, the academic interests.* He doesn't know what to do with it.

"Miss Granger, why are you doing this?" Tom asked, trying to get closer to her.

She still has her wand up, this time pointing at him. She snorted at Tom's question and then smirked, before turning and walking away. He looks at Granger moving away from him. Bold, but foolish, she has supposedly offended the Hogwarts golden boy in some way, if depends on the other girls and even the other boys, Granger is a dead person. So, it's delicious to play with people's psychological in public.

Hermione feels like a mess. She's starting to understand better the kind of pressure Harry was having with Voldemort always there, waiting for the slaughter. She is currently in the office of the Deputy Headmaster, stroking Fawkes - which is the only thing that calms her recently and Fawkes seems to notice and let her gladly touch his feathers.

"Alphard spoke to me." She tells Dumbledore, who is writing on the parchment, not taking her eyes off Fawkes. "He told me that you asked him to help me. Why him? "

"Mr. Black is an interesting young man, I must say, I was surprised that he had entered the Slytherin House. He seems to have distinct ways of thinking different from his Housemates." Dumbledore is still writing on the parchment. "I dare say, Miss Granger, as I believe you know, that the recent ideological positions in the wizarding world are influenced by pureblood families. Many of the members of these families reside in the Slytherin House and your blood status may not please everyone." He looks up from the parchment to her.

"Why Alphard? Why tell him?" She asked.

"Mr. Black seems to have a tolerance for the status of your birth, something unusual in the Black family. He seemed like the right person who can work on Slytherin House to mitigate any facts that might occur against you."

"How much does he really know? He knows that I came from the future?"

" Mr. Black is only aware of your blood status. I suppose our idea is to keep your identity hidden."

" Good," Hermione murmured, turning back to Fawkes.

It's a few minutes past, before ...

" Granger." Hermione hears Dumbledore's voice behind her, she turns and Dumbledore is looking directly into the eyes. *Legilimency* . He looks at her and nothing happens, but Hermione can feel that light creep of Dumbledore trying to enter subtly through her Occlumency shields. "Good, very good, Miss. Granger." Dumbledore walks away from her. "I must say you are a quick and formidable apprentice."

"Thank you." Hermione sighed. "Professor Dumbledore, what happened in Hogsmeade? Were those people really allies of Grindelwald? "

"I'm afraid your fear is real, Miss Granger. Those men were from Grindelwald and I believe he knows about your arrival. He, like everyone else, felt it when you arrived. "

" But how did he know I was in the Hog's Head Inn? "Hermione asked.

"I believe, Miss Granger, that the Time-Turner trapped in your neck is to blame. There is a strong and unique magic in him, but that is still discreet as if he did not want to attract attention. Few would be able to notice such magic. "

" So he's tracking me down because of the Time-Turner magic? "

" That would be a way of saying it. Grindelwald is Grindelwald, a powerful wizard, that's why he has a notion of Time-Turner. But I believe magical barriers can hide the presence. "

"Like Hogwarts." She finished and Dumbledore nodded. "How is Aberforth? When we left the Hog's Head Inn, he was fighting some of the pursuers. "

"My brother is certainly hard to beat. He's fine. "

"That's very good. I'm so happy he's okay. What about France?" Hermione asked anxiously. "Was there really an attack?"

"Yes," Dumbledore confirmed. "The British Ministry of Magic with the French Ministry of Magic are deciding what to do."

"They're going to unite the countries to try to end Grindelwald," Hermione realized.

"But it's relative," Dumbledore said. "Many people in power are in favour of Grindelwald's cause, even if they don't publicly assume."

"Yes, I know." Hermione lowered her eyes. "However, it is dangerous. If Grindelwald knows the location of this meeting - which may or may not occur - then he will kill all the representatives. Or he can leave alive those who join him," she said. "He's already taking over Magical Europe, isn't? That's why it's so hard to catch him. "

Dumbledore let out a sorry sigh. "Yes"

But Hermione knows more, even though it's terrible to see Grindelwald's invasion and dominion with her own eyes, she knows that in the end, he will fail. At this very moment, she was looking at the only one capable to stop Grindelwald. Dumbledore. He wants to avoid duelling against Grindelwald, but he will not escape it and soon he will be victorious.

With compassion, Hermione touches Dumbledore's shoulder.

"Everything's going to be okay, professor. I truly believe in that."

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Hermione is getting more and more annoyed, if she has to divert any more silly spells, the next person casting some spell toward her will be hit by a Bombarda.

It's really weird how Riddle and his gang have a kind of fan club or whatever that was. ' The crazy fanatical girls' as Alphard had said. Hermione is no stranger to this kind of behaviour, she saw it with Krum, with Malfoy, with Diggory, with Harry and his fame of 'The Chosen One' and even with Ron in the sixth year, but to this day she couldn't understand how some people can be stalkers.

She just rolls her eyes at this kind of behaviour and gets even angrier at Riddle for putting his fan club to look like a shadow chasing after her.

She waits for everyone to enter Duel Club class, it's the last class before the OWL's, waiting for Alphard. Incredibly, he's always late for class.

"Hermione?" It's Alphard's voice. Hermione pulled him into a corner.

"I need your help," she says flatly. Alphard frowned.

"What?" He asked.

"I need your help," she repeats.

"Are you okay?" He's worried. "I mean, after yesterday, you know what happened." No one talks about what Riddle does in the Room of Requirement. "You were tortured in *that curse* and escaped from *that other curse*," he whispered.

"I-I'm fine," she responds.

"No one escapes that curse, Hermione. Nobody escapes from Riddle. And you did it. He wants your head now. "

" You think I don't know?" She replied, letting her anger leave with her words. "Why are you walking with them, Alphard? You're not like any of them. "

Alphard looked surprised but recovered his facial expression quickly.

"I saw what Riddle does to those he considers an enemy, I don't want to stand in the direction of the tip of his wand."

"Is that it? Because of fear? "

" Oh, please, Hermione, I'm a survivor. The Hat didn't accept my request to stay at the Slytherin by chance. Inside the Slytherin House, things are different. You don't know anything. "

Hermione hesitated.

"All right," she says more composedly. "I still want your help. You promised that you would be by my side, just in different colours. Prove. "

" What do you want? "

"I want you to get Riddle away from Slytherin's dormitory. I want you to tell me where his dorm is and the access password to get in."

" Do you want to invade the Slytherin House? Are you crazy? "

" Riddle stole something from me and I want it back. "

" Even if I do all this, the other students will recognize you."

" Luckily, I know how to take care of myself. Help me, Alphard. "

" You know, if Riddle finds out, you're going to die, don't you? "

" He already tried to kill me, remember? "

Alphard seemed uncertain about accepting to help Hermione, it was too risky. If Riddle found out that he had betrayed him, he and Hermione would have targets in the back. Riddle would never let this go unpunished.

"Please, Alphard." Hermione intensifies the request.

Shit, he doesn't know why he's going to help her.

"All right." He accepted after a while. "We have to set a day for that to happen. I'll tell you the password and his dormitory, but do nothing but take what's yours. If Riddle finds out, you will also be putting me in the line of fire. "

" I would never say about you. "

" After OWL's, it's better. On the last day of class. I'll tell you all the information and it will give me time to think of a pretext for Riddle. "

" Thank you." She smiled at him gently.

"Whatever."

The two of them enter the Dueling Club room together. Their sudden entry is noted by Professor Galatea and some students. Galatea always implied Black's delays and today is no different.

"Mr. Black, Miss. Granger would be kind enough to set an example for the other students and take part in a duel. "

Hermione grunted internally, Alphard froze as he felt the eyes of Riddle and his companions.

"Come on, Alphard. Finish with her." Mulciber whispered Alphard gulped.

"Huh ... Professor Merrythought, I'm not feeling very well. I think I'd better not duel." Alphard said. He is not crazy enough to step on the duel area with Granger on one side and Tom sleeping in the same dorm as he.

"Mr. Black - " Galatea begins but is interrupted by Tom.

" Please, professor, allow me to duel with Miss. Granger. She was brilliant in the last class. "

Rosier and Avery exchange glances at Tom's request. Professor Galatea cannot refuse a request from the golden boy, Alphard has gotten rid of it, but who is actually hanged in the act is Hermione. She almost says she's not feeling well either.

"All right." Professor Galatea agrees.

Tom is waiting for all that behaviour Hermione does while duelling, but she doesn't give him this pleasure. She didn't take off the Gryffindor robe, didn't wrap the sleeves of her shirt, and he interpreted it as if she thought he was unworthy of her.

She is on the other side of the duel area, looking at him fiercely determined. He wants a rematch, he doesn't accept what happened in the Room of Requirement, but he cannot begin the duel with fire.

He waits, but she casts no spell in his direction, forcing him to move first. Tom casts some simple

spells, but she diverted them all. She makes no move, she's defensive. He begins casting more spells, spells that are more powerful and specific to battles, but she deflected and lifted a shield.

Tom's anger shines in his eyes.

He's going to try to kill me. That's all Hermione thinks.

"Expelliarmus!" The two scream simultaneously, the 'sisters' wands connect again, and the Priori Incantatem occurs. The strength of the spell is so great that both are thrown to the extreme sides of the room. The noise of their bodies hitting the floor is loud, but the two rise. Tom has an angry and surprised look, looking directly at Hermione. She has a more fearful look, but not less angry.

She was preventing this from happening. Tom noticed. Whatever the connection between the two wands, she didn't want it to happen.

"Great Merlin! Are you okay? You must go to Hospital Wing now." Galatea orders.

"I'm fine, Professor Merrythought," Tom reassures her.

Hermione can't say the same. Her body still has the effects of Tom's Cruciatus curse and now, being thrown across the room, it just made her limp more.

"Miss Granger, you must go to the Hospital Wing. Mr. Riddle, accompany her. "

"No need, Professor Merrythought, I can go to the Wing by myself," Hermione said. Not even in dreams, she'll be alone with Riddle after the duel.

"I insist, Ms. Granger. I was the one who asked for the duel, I'm responsible for your state of health now. "

Hermione thought of screaming for help.

"Let me take her, Professor." Ectur appeared as the knight in Hermione's shining armour. Hermione smiled at him and looked at the teacher, but Tom intervened.

" Let me take her. I am responsible for the accident, you must attend the class and also, it is my duty as a prefect. "

There is no way to argue with the golden boy and responsible prefect. Soon Hermione finds herself walking on Riddle's side in empty corridors, heading toward the Wing, after a duel. It's a nightmare. Hermione tries to walk faster, but her leg won't let her, she wants to get away from him as fast as she can.

Riddle walked beside her in silence, without making any menacing movements. She's surprised, but Hermione knows best, *it's a trap. It's a trap.*

And she's not wrong, as soon as they were away from the classrooms and in an empty hallway near the Wing door, Riddle's peaceful expression changed, he turned and cornered her against the wall, wand pointing at her temple. But Hermione is also prepared and pointed the wand at Tom's neck, right under his mouth. He smiled at that.

This is Hermione's golden chance.

"Get away from me," she ordered.

"No, no, no, Miss Granger. I'm the one making rules here. "

"I want you to get away from me." Hermione grabbed Tom's hair by pulling a few strands and shoved him.

"Who do you think you are?" His eyes glow red, he grabbed Hermione's hair as well and placed her against the wall again. "Who are you, hm? Loyal to Dumbledore? I think not. What are you doing with that book? ? "

" It's none of your business! "She pushed him again, this time slapping Tom's face.

It's a 'slap!' very loud in the ears. Tom turned his face, his pale cheek soon turning a reddish colour. Tom's raven hair are falling against his face. His face slowly returns to the ideal position, there is no red glow in his eyes, but his eyes are the purest green colour she has ever seen. He looks at her amazed. The big, bright green eyes. Slowly he touches his red cheek and then looks at his hand as if his hand were a Boogeyman. His hands shake.

"You ... You hit me," He says softly as if he didn't believe what he was saying. He looked at her.

His eyes are green in a second, in the other, they're red, in a blink of an eye. He raises his wand and points it at her head. That's when Hermione knows, she's gone too far.

The door to the Wing opens, and they both glance in that direction.

The matron opens the door, finding Riddle and Granger. He's got one hand on her shoulder, in a weird grip, but she doesn't notice it. All she sees is his smile.

"Mrs. Derwent, we came to the Wing because Miss Granger was injured during the duel in the Dueling Club. "Riddle said.

"Oh, come here young lady."

Mrs. Derwent points to one of the beds, Riddle is reluctant to let Hermione go, but the matron doesn't notice. All She realized is how messy his hair is and how his cheek is red and how Miss Granger also has messy hair and a frightened and limping look.

Riddle leaves Hermione in the Hospital Wing, leaving, not before giving her a look. When he returns from the patrol at night, his followers are gathered in the Common Room as usual.

"What happened to your face?" Abraxas is the first to notice.

"That looks like a slap mark," Mulciber commented. "What is it? Have you been rejected by a girl?" He laughed lightly, but he swallowed his words like acid, by the mortal look Tom gives him.

But Alphard knows who possibly gave that mark on Riddle's cheek.

Tom goes straight to his dorm. Already lying on his bed and with the curtains around the bed, he touched the cheek that she hit. Of course, he could have healed himself, but for some reason, he didn't. His cheek is usually pale, but now is red and hot. *Fierce, aggressive, strong, uncontrollable, that's what she is* and he doesn't know how to deal with her, but he's having a dizzying feeling.

oOo

"Are you sure you wanna do this?" Alphard asked for the thousandth time.

"I have to." Hermione is determined. "You already know you have to keep him away for at least an hour."

"Good luck." He wished Hermione. "You'll really need it."

The OWL's finished and she's not worried about it. She waited all these days for this moment. After what happened in the Wing, Riddle ignored her. What Hermione didn't know made her calmer or more worried. She was so diverted from the spells of his fan club that it became a routine.

People were a little flustered with the end of OWL's and for tomorrow to be the last day before the Hogwarts Express for the start of the summer vacation. She combined everything with Alphard for today, he would remove Riddle from the Slytherin dorm by at least an hour, which would have to be long enough for her to find the book.

"Thank you, Alphard," she murmured to him again.

He, very disconcerted, confirmed. Alphard still didn't understand why he was helping Granger, of course, he made a promise to Dumbledore to help her, but it was too risky. What he was doing was going against Riddle, which is practically going against the whole Slytherin House. He understood that what Riddle was doing was 'wrong' on some level, but shit, joining Riddle's personal circle was a free pass for less trouble-or so he thought.

He glanced at Hermione again, before turning away. Merlin would help this girl, Alphard wanted less information as possible about what was happening, but he would do what he promised her.

Hermione watched Alphard leave, the count on the clock started now. She removes two small jars from her school bag, one containing Riddle's hair that she took off in the incident outside the Wing door, the other was the last jar of the Polyjuice potion she had.

She took the strand of Tom's hair very carefully, bringing the hair up to her eye level before adding the hair to the potion. Before drinking, she transfigured her clothes into the masculine version of the Slytherin uniform. The Polyjuice potion became a dark, black colour with some green reflections, when she drank, the taste of the potion was the taste of Death - if she could describe it that way. It was like swallowing ice cubes that cooled her throat and burned at the same time. It was slimy and for a moment she thought she was tasting the taste of a snake's skin - even though she had never tasted such a taste. - but only at the end, in the last sip, the potion became sweet, but it wasn't enough for her to remember the taste or to take the other experiences.

When she finished, Hermione looked at the mirror in the ladies bathroom, the famous Moaning Myrtle bathroom. It was certainly ironic the place she chose to become Riddle, but this is one of the only places that students don't dare to enter. The moment she entered the bathroom, she wondered where Myrtle was, Hermione called for her a few times, but Myrtle didn't show up.

As she was still staring at the mirror, her stomach turned and she felt a little sick, her skin began to bubble like hot wax as it slowly turned to Riddle's pale skin.

This was literally the worst idea that I could have, she thought.

In the end, Hermione looked in the mirror, watching as her face became the perfect face of Tom Marvolo Riddle Jr. She took a deep breath, staring at her reflection- now Tom's appearance- and took a deep breath, looking into her eyes - now green. She took a few breaths, taking the courage to leave the bathroom. She swallowed and settled, ten minutes had passed, and time was running. She left the bathroom.

With quick steps, she headed toward the dungeons, everyone looked at her, seeing Tom. The girls smiled like fools to her, the boys made room for her, all because they thought she was Tom Riddle.

Hermione now understood the kind of popularity Tom looked at her with expressions of confusion, but let it pass.

In the dungeons, the Slytherins looked respectfully at her, and very eagerly she murmured the password to enter the Slytherin Common Room. They found Riddle's behaviour strange, it was unusual for him to demonstrate his expressions, but of course, no one commented.

When she entered the Slytherin Common Room, she sucked her breath. Divided between something classic and sombre, the Common Room was up to its upper-class members, but what surprised her most was the silence that formed with the few people there. They all looked at Hermione - Tom - with some respect and admiration, hoping to hear what she - he- would have to say. But Hermione - Tom - very clumsily went upstairs to the men's dormitory. Troubled and anxious, it wasn't something common in Tom Riddle.

Dormitory, dormitory . It was all Hermione thought. *Last bed, the bed farthest in the room, near the window*. She was passing on the information Alphard gave in her mind. *Last closet, last trunk*.

She rushed into the closet, feeling the magical protections. She supposed that the magical protections for Tom's housemates or for other people were complicated protections, but not for her. She was Hermione Granger, the girl who was part of the Golden Trio.

She searched in the closet, the dresser by the bed, where now she was looking. Hermione was surprised to find that few things, were very well organized. She was so focused that when she came across the diary, she froze. Her hand began to tremble, with the slight inclination of the diary to be so close. The Horcrux. But she felt the magical protection in him more powerful than all the others, it was too dark. Dark Magic. And was whispering to her.

She ran, abandoning her search. Feeling dizzy, nauseous, strange. Tom's dark magic was infiltrating her, whispering things, crawling, licking her skin. She just had to run away, running away from that thing. Desperate, she ran away like a five-year-old girl. Running, she passed by Abraxas, who looked for her in a very suspicious way.

She needed to get back to a safe place.

Upon arriving at Myrtle's bathroom, Hermione ran to one of the sinks and poured water on her face a few times, trying to feel firmer and less dizzy. In the mirror, the reflection of Tom Riddle stared at her. Not even the frightened look on her face had undone the perfection on Tom's face.

What aroused Hermione from her dizziness was a few clapping. She looked toward the entrance, the real Tom was there, with Alphard on his diagonal.

"You're so interesting, Miss Granger." Tom smiled in his last words. She looked at Alphard accusingly and he tilted his head to the side. "You know, Miss Granger, being friends with some ghosts or having people loyal to you, has its advantages." Tom wasn't looking at her, he was contemplating, philosophizing.

Alphard approached her, circling, looking closely.

"And didn't she really become you?" He arched one eyebrow, talking to Tom.

Tom looked at Granger, seeing her transformed into him. He looked up and down.

"Leave us," Tom commanded.

Alphard glanced over his shoulder at Hermione and glanced at Tom's back and then left. Tom

stood there, hands behind his back, waiting silently for Alphard to leave.

Hermione, transformed into Tom and Tom Riddle himself, were alone in that bathroom that was the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets.

Tom approached with calm steps, deliberately slow, looking at her from top to bottom, a strange gleam in his eyes. Hermione didn't understand what that look meant, what was going on in his mind, it is likely that no one would ever decipher. He was releasing magic into the air, it was in his aura. Powerful, domineering, this was his magic.

He circled her, watching intently, his hand sometimes touching the Slytherin robe she wore. In one of his moments, his hand moved up her arm to her shoulder. He circled once more, stopping right in front of her. Now that she was transformed into him, they were at the same height. Tom Riddle looked at her, looking deep into her eyes, meeting his own green eyes, but they conveyed emotions that Tom Riddle himself could never convey.

She didn't look away, they were a few inches away, his gaze had a strange glow and she noticed a kind of smile before she felt his lips against hers.

Tom was kissing her. Crushing his lips against hers, surprised, she tried to pull away, but he pressed her against him. His tongue invaded her mouth, savouring her taste. He pushed her against the bathroom sink, she was between his body and the sink, being kissed. In a quick move, Tom turned her to face the mirror, he kissed her neck a few times before placing her head over her shoulder and with one hand, he held her jaw, making her look at the reflection in the mirror.

His eyes flashed in a grey-green, a smile on his face.

"Don't you think you're perfect like that, Miss Granger?"

He asked, looking at the reflection just as she was looking. In the mirror, the image of two Tom Riddle was reflected. One domineering and another submissive and kissed. The real Tom Riddle was holding Hermione Granger tightly in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Daboia russelii, also known as Russell's Viper, the sixth most poisonous snake in the world.

Author Note: One of you asked me how I imagine Tom Riddle in a private message, so... I imagine Tom Riddle as Frank Dillane in Harry Potter and Half Blood Prince

Acanthophis.

Chapter Notes

I would like to thank everyone who is following the story, for the 8582 hits, 70 bookmarks, 364 Kudos. Thank you guys, for giving to me and the story a chance.

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This chapter was more focused on Tom Riddle

Remembering that English is not my mother tongue. So forgive me for any mistake in the text. I have given my best and hope it is good for you.

If there is an error in the text, let me know so that I can correct it;

Love U, guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 7. Acanthophis - The Mortal Kiss.

Moving away from her, Tom tightened his grip on her jaw, forcing Hermione to look at him. The Polyjuice potion was losing its effect and Hermione's features began to appear. The hair that was once dark returned the brown tones that belonged to Hermione and began to grow again and rebel, the green of the eyes turned to light brown, the face became feminine again and she was back to her normal height.

Tom watched her from above, watching with interest the effect of the potion ending.

The kiss didn't mean anything. Nothing but the urge to tease her, to play with her psychologist, to torture. If there was any interest, it would be nothing more than the love that Tom Riddle had for his own image. After all, he considered himself perfect and unfortunately, he wasn't wrong. Regarding his appearance, Tom had no flaws.

Not taking eyes from Tom's furious expression, Hermione felt his fingers sink into her cheeks, while he forced her to look at him. A rebellious tear ran down her face.

"Don't tell me you're afraid, Miss Granger?" He murmured close to her, making her feel the warm breath of mint on her skin.

Hermione didn't dare to reply, she didn't think she would be able to control the whirlwind of emotions she was feeling, she would probably scream and cry and yet, Hermione did not stop staring at him.

He looked at her, his eyes taking longer than necessary, recording her expression in his mind. Tom swallowed, still feeling her taste on his tongue.

"Let's make things clear, Miss Granger." A soft threat was present in Tom's voice. There was a slight tilt to the upper corner that indicated the shadow of a smile, a sneer. Feeling the hand that was holding her by the cheek, fading into the tangle of her hair, Hermione found herself being forced to tilt her head back, Tom Riddle's pale, long fingers pulling a few strands of her curly hair. His wand pointed at the small space between her eyes.

"You're not going to do things like that anymore," he ordered. "You will respect, you will obey me. The book, Dumbledore and all the other things I want to know, you're going to tell me." With a muffled laugh, Tom continued. "Otherwise, I'll make sure to make your life a hell." He threatened, very serious this time.

"So, I suggest," Tom's voice suddenly softened, a sudden and almost unbelievable change. "to you cooperate with me, because all I have done for you is not a third of what I am capable of."

He looked around the ladies' room, his gaze discerning as a Machiavellian smile took over his face.

"You know, I hear you're a good friend of Bilius Weasley and Ectur Prewett, even Longbottom and Lupin. You wouldn't want to see your friends harmed, would you? No, I don't think so. I thought for a while..." Tom released her, one of his hands holding his wand and the other hand, with his index finger tapping his chin in a thoughtful gesture. "Which one of them would you care more about. Which one of them would you cry and beg for me to stop? Of course, we can make theory a practice, after all, they are all available. What do you think, Granger? "

He turned to her.

"I'm giving you options, consider yourself fortunate. It's so much more than I give most people. You can go the easy way or the hard way. It's your choice, Granger. I'm very willing to do any of the options, believe me." Appearing pleased with himself, Tom took a deep breath. "Take the vacation time to think about which of the options you will choose. I must also remember to be careful about what you're going to say. You've seen things you shouldn't, so... to make sure you don't spread certain comments around... There's a curse on your tongue."

" You're lying," Hermione accused, her breath racing as she considered the possibility.

" I'm?" Tom raised one eyebrow. "I would not test it if I were you." A victorious, prepotent grin appeared on Tom's face. "Oh, don't cry, Granger. I liked you better when you were ferocious, but sometimes, all we need is the right person to show us where we belong. " Tom patted Hermione on the head as if she was some kind of dog. "Thank me later, Granger. For showing you, what's your place. "

Proud of himself, Tom left the bathroom, leaving Hermione alone in the ladies' room.

Hermione was shaking, a few tears falling down her face as she stared at the door of the ladies' room, where Riddle had just left. Her tremors were more by imminent rage than by fear, though deep down there was a trail of fear that Tom Riddle could do with her.

Like a fool, that's how she behaved. She is without the book, she is with Riddle's threats and a curse on her tongue given by a deadly kiss. But the worst part is related to Alphard Black. She fell for his charms and his friendly flirtation, which looked so much like Sirius Black, and especially, for his tolerance of her blood status - *and that shouldn't even be considered a quality, because everyone here is a wizard*. But everything was a lie.

Still staring at the door, Hermione cried. She finally let the emotions flow, such emotions that were trapped, contained like a dam. Tears came to the hills and she began to sob. Hermione was desperate.

As if by suggestion, Alphard entered the ladies' room. He had a startled look, but what surprised him most was to find Hermione in Slytherin's men's clothes, her hair bristling and rebellious, while she was weeping and shaking.

"Hermione!" He ran to her, holding her by the shoulders, trying to calm her down. "Are you okay?"

Angrily, Hermione moved away from his touch. Alphard tried to hold her one more time, but she did not allow it and when she looked up at him, Alphard moved away as he noticed the anger she had in her gaze. Hermione pushed him, trying to hurt him physically, obviously, the use of the wand was more practical, but Hermione was not a torturer. She hadn't reached that level yet.

"Idiot! Traitor! How dare you touch me after what you did !?" She shoved him. "Attracting Riddle here, denouncing me to him!"

"Did he do something?" Alphard asks, and Hermione shuddered at the suggestion behind Alphard's choice of words.

No, he didn't do that and Hermione thinks it's impossible for Tom to have some sort of obscure sexual desire, but perhaps it wasn't so strange to think he was capable of such a repulsive act. After all, it would be one more thing to add to Tom Riddle's list of cruelty. However, she doubts that part, Riddle considers himself refined and elegant. He rarely gets his hands dirty and seems to have an extremely dubious moral compass.

Hermione shook her head. He did many things, he tortured her, cursed her and threatened her, but she will not accuse him of this kind of crime. It's the Gryffindor side of her talking louder, asking her to be fair.

"But what's the point?" Hermione asked accusingly. "Isn't that what you wanted? You didn't want him to discover the truth? That he would torture me? Isn't that why you brought him here? "

Listening to the accusations, Alphard replied sharply.

"I saved your life," he said and Hermione snorted at that comment. "You can say what you want, but nothing will change the fact that I saved you. You're smart, but you don't seem to understand how things work. "

At this comment, Hermione looked at him, the tears still trickling down her face.

"Riddle needs to think he's always in control, that he knows everything. If he later discovered what you did, I'm afraid of what he would do to you. And to make matters worse, Moaning Myrtle found it and told about you," Alphard explained. "Riddle cannot be deceived and if he is, for a mere second, his vengeance will be worse."

They stared at each other for a second, before Hermione turned around and with a defeated sigh said,

"Just leave me alone." Her voice sounded defeated and weak. She went to a corner of the bathroom, sat on the floor and hugged her legs, hiding her face.

Alphard observed her for a few seconds and sighed, he walked and sat down next to her. One thing Alphard hated was seeing a girl crying. It could be his flirtatious nature or perhaps it was the

education that he received on how to act with the ladies, but the truth is that *a crying girl always has her reasons*. However, he seems to be more inclined toward Hermione. She grew up inside him very quickly, but that doesn't mean he'll be having afternoon tea with her - both have a divergence of opinions - however, he cares for her. There is a fire in her that he has never seen in another girl. The boldness, courage, and ferocity charmed him. He even envied her on a certain level.

With a wave of his wand, Alphard transfigured Hermione's clothes into Gryffindor's women's clothing.

"Don't cry," he mumbled beside her, taking a few strands of her rebellious hair.

She looked up at him and he could see the suffering expression on her face.

"What went wrong, Alphard? What did I do to arouse Tom's interest? "

"You turned out to be an opponent," Alphard answered simply. It made sense or at least was more logical, but no one could say with a hundred percent certainty what was going on in Riddle's mind. No one ever did.

Hermione snorted and rested her head on Alphard's shoulder, stretching her legs and weeping and Alphard allowed himself to be her friend's shoulder. He let her cry and cry, not questioning her motives and the reason she seemed so desperate.

It's a fact, girls don't always make sense.

At some point, Hermione fell asleep and Alphard very slowly lifted her into his arms. He had to take her to the Gryffindor Tower to deliver her to Enid.

When he was leaving the ladies' room, he was startled to find Pearl Lovegood in the hallway. Dressed in the colours of the Ravenclaw, the girl turned her face at him, her straight blond hair so pale it almost looked platinum, contrasting with the blue hair tie that was large enough to look like mouse ears. *The girl was crazy.*

Some said she was part Veela because despite being crazy, the girl was very beautiful.

"Alphard," she greeted him.

"Pearl," he replied.

Pearl looked with interest at Hermione with her clear blue eyes.

"Is she okay?"

"Sleeping."

"Mhm... She doesn't look very well. "

" She was crying." Alphard suddenly felt himself at a trial.

"People can die from crying," Pearl said suddenly and almost insensibly.

"Can?" He frowned, Alphard didn't know if what she was saying was literal or figurative.

"The Broken Heart." She said as if that explained everything and that's why Alphard was sure he would never get into the Ravenclaw. In the ranking of the best students, Tom was in first place and Pearl was second.

"Do you want to accompany me?" Alphard asked, and Pearl nodded. Maybe it was better that Pearl accompanies him to Gryffindor Tower, it would be very strange if he took Hermione all the way in his arms alone, as if they were a couple.

oOo

Hungry ... Hungry ... Master ... Hungry ... Alone - The Basilisk was whispering in the Hogwarts pipes, chasing rats. The Queen of the Snakes - yes, queen, because the basilisk was female - was talking with Tom, following through the piping network of Hogwarts, complaining that she was hungry and that she felt alone. Obviously, the monster felt alone, it had been dormant for a long time until Tom's arrival. Tom knew he had to go into the Chamber of Secrets one more time before the summer vacation to put the Basilisk to sleep again, however, today he ignored the complaints of his monster.

Arriving at the Slytherin Common Room, he was greeted by Malfoy and Lestrage.

"My lord." Malfoy greeted him, as did Lestrage. "Do you find yourself well?" Abraxas dared to ask, probably noticing Tom's sudden change of behaviour this morning. He confused Tom with Granger and now, Tom knows that the little witch could play a dangerous game.

Tom did not deign to respond, going up the stairs to the side of the male dormitory. Abraxas may belong to the Malfoy family, which is one of the most important families of the wizarding world, but he knows his place. So stingy and prepotent, the Malfoy Family has more dirt on their hands than Tom's shoe sole, claiming to be one of the purest wizard blood that has ever existed - *what a lie*. Everyone knows and comments on how the Malfoy Family has licked the floor that the Muggle aristocracy stepped on, excluding squibs and denying involvement with muggles. So, Abraxas shouldn't even think about questioning Tom.

That's how it has to be, Tom thought, already lying in his bed after doing his nightly routine. *I need to keep control of my Knights*. Tom cannot afford to vacillate his control over the Knights, otherwise, they would turn against him and Granger threatened all this control with her behaviour, confronting him in front of the Knights, resisting the Cruciatus, and challenging his magic.

Tom knew that the Knights whispered and if they began to doubt his power, then they would rebel this is something he cannot accept, so ... punishing Granger was necessary, not only for himself but to reaffirm control that he has over the whole Slytherin House.

Well, he can't be fooled, which brings him to Alphard Black. It didn't go unnoticed by Tom, Alphard's behaviour towards Granger or how he seemed frightened when Moaning Myrtle told him that there was a strange girl in the ladies' room. ' *That's what I came to say, my lord*, ' Alphard said. Curiously, he found Granger transformed into him, scared and nauseated. I can still taste it on my tongue, Tom thought.

Honestly, it wasn't Tom's first kiss. He doesn't see much logic in sharing saliva with people who don't matter to him, which reduces the number of people to zero. However, Tom has used his masculine beauty and flirtation to achieve goals with other girls, other times it was out of curiosity. You see, groups of young boys with hormones at their peak, constantly talk about their experiences and desires - some desires are so dumb that they make Tom roll his eyes - but Tom is happy that much of the time he can suppress such primitive impulses and that make him so human.

It's dawn and Tom has not been able to close his eyes and sleep, his mind is very alert, the Basilisk is whispering, he's thinking about Granger and Tom's dorm roommates are already asleep. He is tired of lying down and with an impulse, he gets up from the bed.

Anyway, I have to put the Basilisk to sleep, he thought with a shrug.

Picking up his wand, Tom also picks up the Diary. Wearing his robe, he left the men's dormitory and the Slytherin Common Room, in the dungeons the Bloody Baron is making noise with the chains. All Hogwarts is asleep and he walks peacefully to the ladies' room of Moaning Myrtle, Tom knows this castle like the palm of his hand and knows how to walk unnoticed. In the bathroom, he looks around before entering.

"Tom?" Moaning Myrtle says, she is levitating near the window.

"Hello, Myrtle." He says her name like a caress. He knows she doesn't like to be called 'The Moaning Myrtle'. If ghosts could blush, Myrtle would look like the colour of a tomato. "Thank you for today, Myrtle. What would I be without you?" Tom flirts with her, knowing the one-sided, platonic, pathetic love Myrtle feels for him. While alive, Myrtle couldn't even see him without blushing and running to hide. The Muggle-born girl was extremely passionate about the image of the perfect boy Tom created.

Myrtle gets so excited that the edges of her ghostly image undulate. Tom makes the sign of silence and Myrtle confirms repeatedly, that she cannot stand in Tom's presence and fly to one of the toilets to hide. Tom stood, watching the scene, before shrugging and turning to the entrance of the Chamber of Secrets. He looked at the tap with the figure of a snake.

Open it. He commanded in the tongue of the snakes, in that strange whistle.

At the same time, the tap shone with white light and began to turn, then the sink began to move. In fact, the sink was out of sight, leaving a large pipe exposed, a pipe big enough for a person to slip inside. Tom slipped into the entrance of the Chamber of Secrets. He didn't quite understand why Salazar Slytherin had chosen the main entrance of the Chamber of Secrets to be a slide, but he supposed Salazar didn't have many options to hide the Chamber.

When he had finished slipping, Tom stood up and took some of the dust off his shoulders. The hall of the Chamber lit up with the dark green colour of the torches connected to the wall and as he walked, a pair of torches lit to illuminate his path. Tom stopped in front of the solid wall with the image of intertwined snakes.

Open it. He ordered again in parseltongue.

The snakes' gaze seemed to light up as if they were alive, and the solid wall retracted, opening Tom's path to the true Chamber of Secrets, which lit up in the presence of the Slytherin Heir.

Tom stood in the centre of the Chamber, looking at the statue of Salazar Slytherin with his mouth open, which meant that the Basilisk was free, hunting to feed. But Tom knows the monster will not be long in coming back since she probably felt the presence of his master. Tom's gaze flickered to the corner of the Chamber, he walked over and looked at the grey brick wall, groping until he found a more dislocated brick and pressed in. The bricks trembled and another passage opened for him.

He entered the room, looking around. Here was the 'lair' of Salazar Slytherin. There was a bookshelf never known by other wizards, books of various potions, spells, and magic were there. Some books were so obscure that black magic sang at the touch of some wizard. A fireplace that heated the room, a large bed in the colours of Slytherin and a good place to practice the alchemy of potions and spells. Obviously, Salazar Slytherin spent some of his precious time here, studying and perfecting his magic.

Tom sat on the bed and took a deep breath, opening the Diary, after getting a quill to write.

Hello. Tom wrote.

Hello, Tom. How are we doing? The Diary replied.

We're fine. No one found out about the Chamber of Secrets and Hogwarts won't be closed.

What's bothering you? The Diary asked.

Tom mused, should he tell about Granger? Yes, he should. The Diary is made to protect him, the Diary must know about everything.

There's a girl.

A girl? Tom could almost hear his own voice of disbelief.

Yes, a girl. Granger. Hermione Granger.

He waited for the answer, even the Diary itself seemed to think. It was unusual for Tom to worry about anything and anyone, especially if it was a girl.

What is wrong? The Diary replied.

I'd better show.

Add the memory. The Diary ordered.

This version of the Diary, was the old version, without the knowledge of Granger's arrival and what happened afterwards. This is why The Diary must be fed with new memories, such memories that contain Tom's emotions, thus allowing the Diary to be equal to Tom himself.

Tom took the wand and took a deep breath before pointing the wand at his temple. A bright white line came out of Tom's head and he directed the memories into The Diary and with a gross gesture, he cut off the memory link with his wand. The Diary brightened as he received Tom's memories and emotions about recent events. Tom waited until the Daily absorbed everything.

So...? Tom asked, asking for the Diary's opinion.

She's different. The Diary didn't know how to describe her better. *She resisted our magic, she faced us. Keep an eye on her.*

Tom smiled at the conclusion of the Diary itself. Not unlike what he himself had concluded.

See you.

See you later, Tom. The Diary said goodbye and then it closed.

Tom sighed and put the Diary in the office near the bed, sealing it with protective magic. Here, The Diary would be safe. Under the protection of Hogwarts, beneath the castle, protected by his own magic, hidden inside the Chamber of Secrets, protected by the Basilisk, in a place that only him - Tom Riddle-could open. The Horcrux was safe.

Master ... Master ... The Basilisk was whistling outside the room.

Tom left, watching the Basilisk, that great snake, standing in front of the statue of Salazar Slytherin, swallowing a rat that had just been hunted. The wall of the hiding place inside the Chamber closed behind Tom.

He went toward the snake, which slid into her scales, whistling - growling if that were possible - surrounding Tom with her large body. She looked directly at Tom, those hypnotizing, murderous yellow eyes, but Tom wasn't shaken by those eyes and simply tilted his head to the side. The Basilisk was, somehow, in need.

She opened her mouth, showing those big, grotesque, poisonous teeth, the drool dripping.

The Basilisk lowered her head and Tom put his hand on the scales and hard skin of the snake, and he felt the snake's breaths. She was sniffing at him, recognizing Tom. He stroked the snake a few times.

It's time to sleep. He whistled in parseltongue for the snake. The snake retracted, showing her row of teeth, her yellow eyes shining, and the snake's tail sliding from side to side. She was against the idea of sleeping again.

Tom smiled. The Basilisk was a very simple animal, very clean and not very demanding. She'd just been a little excited to finally use her skills after a long time of sleep.

Go to sleep. He ordered. The snake slithered to the statue of Salazar Slytherin, and entered the statue's mouth, heading for her hiding place. The statue of Salazar Slytherin closed his mouth and it was as if the giant snake had never been there.

Tom took a deep breath, lifting his chin as he stared at the statue of his ancestor. Proud of himself.

In the morning, before lunch, that's when he saw her. All the way to the Deputy Headmaster's office, Tom was cursing Dumbledore mentally. That stupid old man. It was as if Tom was walking to death because he knew he would have to hand his wand to Dumbledore and that to him, it meant death.

He knocked on the door a few times, taking a deep breath and doing his best to keep the expression on his face stoic. The door opened by itself and he came in, surprisingly meeting Hermione there. She was sitting in an armchair near the perch, drinking tea and reading a book. She took her eyes off the book momentarily, narrowing her eyes in anger when she saw him, and then she turned her attention back to the book she held. Tom tried to read the name of the book, but her hand prevented him from seeing.

"Where is Professor Dumbledore?" He demanded.

She ignored him and he gritted his teeth at her behaviour. It hadn't been a day since their meeting in the Moaning Myrtle bathroom and she ignored it as if none of that had ever happened. That's it, he definitely hates being ignored. Whether or not moves with his supposed feelings for being an orphan or something about abandonment, Tom doesn't give a shit. However, the truth is that she knows how to trigger conflicting feelings in him.

"I asked you a question," Tom says.

"If you didn't notice, it's just me who's here," she answers, not taking her eyes off the book.

"You shouldn't be here. What is your relationship with Dumbledore? Don't tell me you ... "

He can't finish because Hermione interrupts him.

"Be careful what you suggest, Riddle. I will not allow you to put my integrity and the integrity of Professor Dumbledore in check," she responds angrily.

Tom swallows his words.

"Answering your first question: Professor Dumbledore left. He used Floo's network." Hermione pointed to the fireplace, still keeping her eyes on the book. "He said it wouldn't take long."

Hermione would never tell Riddle that Dumbledore was going to help her go to St. Mungo's to see Harry. She would never tell him about Harry Potter.

It's an embarrassing silence that sets in, and when Hermione notices that he made no move to leave the room, she finally stares at him.

"Well, what do you want?" She asks, very serious.

"You didn't forget our conversation, did you?" Tom tilts his head a little, at the mention of what happened, his eyes seemed to glow in vivid green, the shadow of a smile appearing on his face.

Hermione touches her jaw, her lips turning into a thin line.

"It's a little hard to forget, isn't it?" She replied.

Before the conversation could continue, the crimson bird, The Phoenix, flew out the window, taking a few turns before settling on the perch near Hermione. Both Tom and Hermione swallowed the offence to see that they were being watched by Fawkes.

It didn't go unnoticed by Tom, that Hermione also restricted her comments in the presence of the Phoenix, but anyway, he was the only one who seemed to be at a disadvantage in this room. Since the Phoenix seemed to choose Hermione's side.

Dumbledore had the bird to protect her.

"Until lunch, Ms. Granger. Thanks for the information," Tom said softly, a smile on his face. It was such an abrupt change that Hermione had to blink a few times to understand what had happened and before she could respond, Tom was already gone.

At dinner, Tom saw Dumbledore. The reality was that Dumbledore had arrived sometime before, but Tom didn't bother to look for him in vain. Sitting at the Slytherin table, Tom watched Hermione at the far end of the Hall, she was there, sitting equally as a beautiful challenge, and when she looked at Dumbledore expectantly, Dumbledore nodded and her smile appeared.

He didn't know what kind of relationship she had with Dumbledore, but Tom was sure they both had secrets.

Headmaster Dippet gestured for the students to calm down and pay attention to what he was going to say. Dippet was making the year-end speech, something that Tom has already memorized in his mind - if he wants, he may even repeat it. *This is another year has gone and blah, blah, blah, blah ...* - now, Dippet was talking about the incidents that happened and about the death of the muggle-born Myrtle Warren, which was a difficult year for all but mostly for the Ravenclaw. Tom bit his lower lip to hide a giggle. Dippet would deliver the Hogwarts Cup.

"Fourth place, it's Gryffindor with three hundred and twenty points, third place Hufflepuff with three hundred and fifty-two points, second place it's Ravenclaw with four hundred and sixty-three points. Five hundred points, Slytherin. So, gentlemen, the Cup will go to the Slytherin House. "

Clapping, the Main Hall was decorated with the colours of the Slytherin House. The students clapped in celebration, especially the Slytherins.

"Go ahead, Tom. Go get the Cup." Otis Parkinson spoke and the whole Slytherin table agreed.

Tom got up from the table and headed for Dippet, who held the Cup in his hands, very happy to deliver the Cup to his favourite was radiant because the Slytherin house had won. Tom felt the Cup in his hands, being the centre of attention, listening to the claps of the other students and the teachers. He looked around, feeling euphoric, drunk with emotion, the taste of power in his tongue.

He looked at Winky Crockett, the Slytherin House Headboy, who nodded. Tom didn't need anyone's approval to do what he wanted or what he thought would benefit him. Although Winky was perfect, Tom was in charge of the Slytherin House.

"Headmaster Dippet," Tom said. With Tom's voice, they all stopped the celebration, silently watching closely what was happening. Tom did his best to look happy, innocent and worried, even a bit hesitant. His facial expressions are more convincing than any actor in a drama play.

"Tom?" Dippet asked.

"We, from Slytherin House, are very happy to receive the Cup. My housemates and I worked hard to get the points. But we agreed that if we won the House Cup, we would deliver the Cup to the Ravenclaw House. It was very horrible what happened this year." Tom looked down, still feeling the weight of the Cup in his hands, imitating an expression of regret. "Especially with Miss Warren. So..." He offered the Cup to Dippet again.

Tom looked at the rest of the Great Hall and gave a weak, hesitant smile. The girls from all the Houses were blowing up with hormones, wishing they had Tom Riddle. Tom looked at Slughorn and lowered his eyes, pretending to be embarrassed.

"Well..." Dippet took the cup. "Look, students, this is an extremely honourable act of Slytherin House, who thought in their classmates instead of gratification. Miss. Dorothy Greengrass, come and get the Cup. "

Dorothy Greengrass, in her uniform perfectly neat and her hair black with no hair out of place, up the stair to Dippet. In front of Tom, she reached out for a greeting and for a moment Tom saw that familiar glow as she looked up at him. Lust and libido. She smiled with those red lipstick lips and turned to Dippet, picking up the House Cup.

"Thank you very much, Headmaster. Thank you very much, Mr. Riddle and thank you to every one of the Slytherin House. Your act will not be forgotten by the Ravenclaw House. "

The girl could have gotten very well into the Slytherin House.

The Great Hall burst into applause again. When Tom sat down again, Greengrass was still staring at him at the Ravenclaw table. Her gaze told him a lot as she bit her bottom lip. Rosier and Avery noticed the look Greengrass was giving to Tom and they looked at each other as they laughed.

"Looks like someone wants to have her skirt lifted today" Lestranger muttered and Mulciber and Nott laughed.

Tom snorted and lifted an eyebrow, propping his elbow on the table, while his hand was supporting the head. Behind the figure of Miss Greengrass, Tom noted the 'beautiful challenge' at the opposite end of the Hall, Granger. Hermione Granger. She looked at him too, her lips thin, serious. And Tom knew, *she knows*.

She knows it was a theater.

In the Common Room of Slytherin, Dolohov complained.

"I can't believe we won in Quidditch and had to hand over the Cup to the Ravenclaw."

"Whatever." Alphard shrugged, sitting on one of the sofas as he watched a girl.

"Anyway, we'll get the Cup next year," Rosier concluded.

"Don't be stingy," Lestrangle said and everyone looked at him in disbelief that he was the person who was saying that.

"No, Lestrangle is right," Tom murmured, sitting in his favourite armchair. His comment caught the eyes of everyone. "Give alms to the poor. It's the moral code, isn't it?" He chuckled, making others laugh.

Tom watched silently and attentively all the others, paying special attention to Alphard, who was leaning slightly over Madame Blentchley, leaning one hand above Madame's head, smiling at her and biting his lower lip. She, in turn, was blushing.

Tom got up and left the Common Room, heading toward the Deputy Headmaster's office. He didn't even have to knock on the door because the door had already opened for him and in the centre of the office was Dumbledore. Granger was out of sight.

"Come closer, Tom." Dumbledore said.

Tom's jaw clenched with a bouncing nerve. He took deliberately slow steps, holding the wand with an iron grip.

"Professor," Tom greeted. He looked at the Phoenix, who stared at him with the same intensity in his gaze, resting on the perch.

"Lemon drops?" Dumbledore offered, and Tom denied it. "Well," Dumbledore raised his hand, leaving the palm of his hand sample, asking.

Tom squeezed his wand a little more, refusing to give his wand to Dumbledore, his interior was corroding with the idea of giving up his wand for another year.

"Professor, please," he begged, looking at the wand in his hands.

"We've had this conversation, Tom."

"Please, let me stay. I don't want to go back to the orphanage. Let me stay in Hogwarts this summer. I promise I will not cause any trouble ... you will not even feel my presence here. I do anything! I even help the elves!" Tom spoke quickly, almost without pause. Offering himself to do any job, because all he wanted was to stay in Hogwarts.

"I'm sorry, Tom. But you must go back to the orphanage," Dumbledore said. He felt that Tom had grasped magic and power very quickly, Tom needed to have contact with Muggles and the outside world to alleviate that ambition that Dumbledore so much saw in him.

"Please, Professor! I do anything! I helped find the monster that was hurting the students! I don't deserve this reward? I return the medal! "

Dumbledore looked at Tom's despair for a moment, recognizing the genuine emotion that these

green eyes conveyed. However, when Tom quoted the supposed 'monster' of Hogwarts, Aragog, Dumbledore's suspicion returned.

"I'm sorry, my young man," Dumbledore denied with regret in his voice.

Tom lowered his gaze again at Dumbledore's refusal, the grip he held on his wand was so much that it was possible to hear the sound of his hand clutching the wand's wood. Tom took a deep breath, regrouping, and raised his face to face Dumbledore, his chin slightly pointed up, wanting to indicate superiority. Dumbledore has no idea how difficult it was for him to have to beg to stay in Hogwarts. He hates to beg, gives him the same feeling that someone is tearing his skin off. His pride makes him angry.

"Here." He held his wand in Dumbledore's hand. Refusing to face Dumbledore for another moment, Tom turned and walked toward the door.

"Good vacation, Tom." He heard Dumbledore say, before closing the door.

Someday I'm going to drown this old man in his own blood and with my own hands. Or who knows, I can throw him out of the Astronomy Tower.

Tom came back cursing Dumbledore more than when he went to the office. In a corner of the hall, Tom stopped, hiding behind a pillar. He looked forward to see Granger and the two Prewett brothers. They were talking to each other, basically, Granger and younger brother Prewett were comforting the older Prewett, and hugging Ignatius, an act that surprised both brothers, including Tom himself. Her hands went up and down Ignatius's back as if she were comforting a child. Above Ignatius's shoulder, her face had a strange expression. A mixture of anguish and understanding. When she separated from Ignatius, Ectur put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed, as if to say 'thank you.' Ectur waved at her and patted Ignatius on the upper back. The brothers asked Granger about something, bid her farewell, and made their way to Gryffindor Tower. Granger stood still, watching them make their way to Gryffindor's home and then she turned to the image of the night with the new moon shining in the clear sky. A clear summer night. The wind blew her hair lightly, she sighed and made her way toward Tom, not knowing he was hiding.

He leaned against the pillar, folding his arms. The figure of his person mingled with darkness, the only colour that stood out was the green of his eyes and the green of the masculine uniform of Slytherin.

When Granger noticed his presence, he noticed her hesitation to continue on the path, but in the end, using Gryffindor's courage, she continued with firm steps. Riddle raised one eyebrow and looked with interest as she passed him. The only movement he did was with his eyes, those green eyes following her movement. He waited and finally gave the 'snake grip' on her, grabbing her arm.

"Making your way to Dumbledore, Granger?" He asked, holding her arm. "Shall I remind you again of the curse?"

Of course, he didn't overcome her ignoring him after all that had happened. It's not common for his victims to ignore him.

She snorted.

"Now I'm sure you're bluffing about this curse on my tongue. You wanted me to be scared, to cry and beg for you." She replied, face to face with him, even though she was still under his grip.

A side grin appeared on Tom's face. If he couldn't curse Dumbledore, he would do it on his favourite student.

"Really?" He raised an eyebrow. Tom leaned down so that his lips were touching against her ear. His breath shivered Hermione. "It would be a shame if the snake image under your tongue would release the curse and infect you. This curse would rot your tongue and mould your mouth until necrosis and nothing remained. "

Tom returned in the ideal position to look at Granger's face and see the look of horror on her face.

"Of course, this will not happen if you don't say anything about that night in that room or in that bathroom. Because, let's face it, Granger, our little secrets shouldn't fall into the wrong ears. "

Chapter End Notes

Acanthophis Antarcticus. Also known as Death Adder, the seventh most poisonous snake in the world.

Crotalus.

Chapter Summary

I came back guys!

I would like to thank trulymadly, aga1127, Mayamelissa, sikaloolala, MelissaRod00, Kaja, Trash4VillainousMen, meruhime, AmeliaFuentes, Olsaint, VelvetJuly07 for commenting, for their kindness and for their full support in the comments. Thanks! What would I be without your words?

I would also like to thank the 458 kudos and 90 bookmarks. Thank you.

English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if I have any errors in the text. Let me know so I can correct.

Thank you, I love you guys! <3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 8. Crotalus - Locked with a Lioness.

Hermione took a deep breath and looked at her clothes for the third time, due to the looks she was getting from her clothes. She was not wearing the appropriate women's clothing for the time. People looked at her with pity - *maybe she was eccentric or had permanent brain damage*, that's what they thought.

For a long time, Hermione thought the Wizard Community was a little more advanced than the Muggle when it came to being less judgmental, but little by little she realized that this wasn't quite an absolute truth.

She sighed, in her thoughts, the clothes were the least of worries.

Realizing her mood, Dumbledore squeezed her shoulder in an affective act of companionship. She smiled weakly at him, very eager to get to St. Mungo's Fourth Floor; the floor for people who are 'severely injured' by jinx, hexes, charms or brain damage. It was on this floor that her friend Harry Potter was. And that scared her.

Many things were scaring her. Riddle scared her. He is strangely compulsive, cold, arrogant, malicious, and perhaps it would be worse to deal with a young Dark Lord than with a snake-faced Dark Lord. While the future Riddle has become a powerful yet impulsive and non-coherent wizard, young Riddle is much more controlled and no less deadly, he is sneaky and intelligent. And that doesn't even make much sense since Hermione doubts how sane he is.

Which leads her to the magic tattoo under her tongue. After that fateful night she spoke with

Riddle, she felt the magic in her tongue. In the Gryffindor dormitory ladies' room, Hermione picked up her wand and looked in the mirror, she raised her tongue and used a spell to reveal the curse. In her pink tongue, the black outline of an image of a snake appeared. The snake was curled into itself, resting, which meant it had not activated the curse. If she remembered well, Riddle said the curse would be triggered if she talked about the night in the Come-and-Go Room or the Moaning Myrtle bathroom, which left a huge amount of space of what not to do.

Well, we all agree that she can't talk about these events. But Hermione doesn't know how far this curse goes.

Can any word that is connected with these events activate the curse? Can I write about those days? Can I make someone guess about what happened? There are many theories, and she selfishly admits that she will not test all theories. She values her life too much for taking such a foolish risk, preferring to spend a few hours studying some way to break the spell.

All her thoughts are cut off when she finally reaches the Fourth Floor. Her heart clenches, her breathing falters and her hands begin to sweat. Hermione walks deliberately slowly, admitting to herself that she is afraid to see what condition Harry is.

To answer her questions, a Healer is waiting for her and Dumbledore. He guides them both to Harry's bed, opening the curtains so she and Dumbledore could see him.

Harry was... fine, or so it seemed. Hermione's breath came in ragged as if her lungs couldn't expand right as she inhaled. She took a few steps toward the bed, her hand lifting to initiate touch on Harry's skin. At first, she saw nothing wrong with him. Harry was without any injuries, however, he was a little pale. His dark hair was a little longer, rebellious and going in any direction, reminding Hermione a lot of his hair at the time of the Yule Ball.

She sat on the edge of the bed and lightly ran her fingers through his hair, brushing the strands of hair from his forehead. With her thumb, she traced an invisible path across his forehead, where the scar that made him recognizable should be. To her astonishment, the scar was no longer there. She looked down at his face, watching his eyes tremble behind his eyelids.

"Harry...?" She tried to wake him.

"It's no use." The Healer said. Hermione finally paid attention to the Healer, still not leaving her position.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"All the injuries that were possible to heal, we healed. But your friend doesn't wake up... There's still brain activity, but it's like he's sleeping. We do not know what this is. We've tested everything, what's left now is waiting. "

Hermione's nose wrinkled in disgust at the Healer's response, she really couldn't blame him, but she expected some good news.

"I want to see the report," Hermione demanded. Dumbledore was surprised by the tone of voice Hermione took.

"Child, I believe a young lady like you would not understand." The Healer said.

"That, who will judge, is me." Hermione held out her hand, waiting for the report.

The Healer looked at Dumbledore for approval and Dumbledore nodded for him to do as she

asked.

No jinx.

No hex.

No charms.

No torturing spells.

No injuries.

Patient Status: Unconscious - Deep Sleep.

Hermione's hands began to shake as she finished reading. She wiped the cold sweat off her forehead and ran a hand through her hair in a pacifying gesture of her growing anxiety.

This is bad, she thought. This is very bad.

If the 's Healers have already done their best to wake Harry through potions and spells, and yet he hasn't woken up, then this is very bad.

Hermione put both hands on her head, trying to think, trying to find a safe way for her and Harry, but nothing came to her mind. She felt her eyes sting as she fought back the tears that threatened to fall.

She looked at Harry, realizing that his eyes were still moving fiercely behind his eyelids.

"Harry...?" She tried again, taking his hand with hers. "It's me, Hermione."

Harry's grip tightened as she mentioned her name. Her brows drew together as a strange expression of sadness and happiness took over her face. The tears she tried to hold now were streaming down her face.

Somehow Harry recognized her voice.

"I'll be with Harry," she said suddenly.

"Miss, I believe—" The Healer was interrupted by Hermione.

"I'll stay with Harry," she said. Her tone showed that it was non-negotiable.

She couldn't leave Harry. They were best friends. They were like brothers. Harry would die for her and she would die for him. It was the meaning of loyalty. Not even when Ron left the tent did she leave Harry, even though the sadness in her heart grew bigger. All three were at the height of their stress, and the Salazar Slytherin locket did nothing but intensify their fears and stressful situation. However, neither was it able to drive her from what was right or make her forget about Harry's friendship.

She didn't even realize that the Healer had left, her energy focused completely on Harry Potter. Hermione felt as Dumbledore sat in an armchair near the bed while she was still holding Harry's hand.

"Your loyalty is remarkable," Dumbledore muttered. "I'm impressed."

"Harry is my best friend," Hermione replied, not taking her eyes off him. "I always thought there

was a difference between the friendship that Harry and I have for his friendship with Rony. Don't get it wrong, the three of us are friends, but I'm not a boy - obviously. "

"However, when Harry and I enter the wizarding world, we understand each other," she continued. " We both knew nothing about the wizarding world, we were innocent and ignorant in certain matters, even though Harry was a half-blood wizard. Then he knew how I felt; he always knew. "A tear fell down her cheek. "I always say that Harry is my best friend, but the truth is that he's like a brother. A brother I never had. And Rony... Oh, Rony. He must be going crazy with worry. "

She looked down to observe the union of her hand and Harry's.

"Rony..." Hermione smiled as she quoted him. "Rony brought joy to us. Admittedly, some of his comments were very acidic, but he's... Rony. He complained too much, was too scared, but never turned his back when we needed him and always defended us. To this day I remember when he tried to defend me from Draco when he called me a Mudblood. Ron cast the Slug Spell, but his wand was broken and the spell eventually came back to him." She laughed at the memory. "Harry was the first to realize my feelings about Ron, just as I realized the way he looked at Ginny."

Hermione looked at Dumbledore, her lips trembled as she avoided crying like a child.

"I have to stay with him. I have to find a way to help him and find a way back. I have to find a solution... I can always find a solution, but I... I... "

She didn't want to tell Dumbledore that she was really afraid she couldn't find a way out of this whole problem.

"Patience, my child. If we always act in despair, we will miss important moments of our journey. Take time for yourself and calmly think about what has to be done. "

Dumbledore kept her company all afternoon, he was reluctant to leave her there, next to Harry, but she assured that it would be okay, after all, she had her special bag. She sat in the armchair that was recently occupied by Dumbledore. Hermione is aware that she cannot arrest Dumbledore her presence, she knows that he is important during this time and she cannot be a distraction to him when Grindelwald is at the height of power.

She never left Harry's hand, she talked to him and tried to reassure his deep and disturbing sleep. Somehow Harry seemed to be a little aware of the surroundings, even though he was sleeping. That's what she thinks, because all the while Harry's grip never loosened.

Eventually, Hermione fell asleep leaning over Harry's bed, however, constant murmurs aroused her. Sleepily, she opens her eyes, blinking a few times and testing her taste buds. She recoils from the position in which she fell asleep, feeling a slight pain in her back. She looks around, noting the bluish light coming through the windows that indicated it was dawn.

She sighs and looks at Harry, who was still sleeping when her ears pick up the constant sounds. Hermione gets up slowly, her breathing becoming low and she takes her wand out of her holster. With slow steps she walks toward the sound coming from the corridor, her wand ready for any confrontation.

Hermione was surprised when an elderly man grabbed her by the arms, coming face to face with her. Startled, she does not react, but to stare into the blind, cloudy eyes of the old man with gray and tousled hair and a long beard. He muttered meaningless things, shaking her like a rag doll. Hermione fearfully wanted to let go of the man's grip, but what he said made her stop momentarily.

"I see. I see! " He shouted at her. "This is not your time, but I see!"

"Please, let me go!" She asked. "You're hurting me."

"Mr. Mopsus!" A nurse was running down the hall, accompanied by the male nurses. "Mr. Mopsus, you can't run away like that, running all over the hospital. "

"I saw it! I saw it! " Morphus was being taken back by the two nurses. "I saw the dead lioness with the snake coming out of her mouth! I had a vision!" He shouted as he was taken back.

"Don't be afraid." Hermione was startled when the nurse spoke and touched her shoulder. "He is Chaos Mopsus, of the Mopsus family, descendants of the wizard seer Mopsus. Apparently, clairvoyance is hereditary, or so he thinks. He may not make sense, but he doesn't hurt a fly. However, today he seemed agitated." The smiling nurse said. "By the way, I'm Poppins. How can I help you? "

"I ... I'm with my friend," Hermione said.

"And who would he be?" Poppins asked.

"Harry P-Evans." Hermione almost said Harry Potter.

Poppins seemed to think, that's when she looked the way Hermione seemed to come from.

"Oh, poor thing," Poppins muttered. "Your friend is the sleeping boy. I hope he gets better soon. We're doing our best, but I think it's just a matter of time before he wakes up." Poppins smiled and winked at Hermione before making her way down the hall.

Hermione turned back to Harry and leaned toward him and again traced a path on Harry's forehead where his scar should have been. She made a repetitive movement of back and forth with her thumb as it occurred to her: You-Know-Who.

She let out a breath she didn't know she was holding.

She felt anger in her heart, a merciless desire to hurt. She locked her jaw as she tried to reconcile emotions with logic; the logic she almost threw out the window. No one could really blame her for having such impure and angry thoughts, besides the irresistible desire to hurt Tom Riddle. After all, it was all his fault.

Hermione clenched a fist, also closing her eyes, trying to control herself. She sat in the armchair by Harry's bed and crossed her arms, rocking back and forth, looking at him.

There was a strange whispering voice deep in Hermione's mind, asking her to go after Riddle and put an end in this. *Was it possible that Riddle's death would awaken Harry? What would the odds be?* She wondered. For all she knows, it should be easier to kill the young Dark Lord.

He wasn't that powerful yet, was he? Maybe she could kill him. He already has a Horcrux. Well, he only has one Horcrux, sure is easier than the six. But, oh, shit ... It's the diary. It's the fucking diary. Merlin knows where he kept the diary. Hermione exasperated. No one ever knew where Riddle kept the Diary during the school time. She scratched her head at the obstacles and failures of her plan.

This was part of July for Hermione. She was there, always beside Harry, sitting in that armchair, sometimes praying for some force beyond her comprehension to help them both. Other times she would try some spells to help Harry. She talked to him constantly, even though she never had an

audible answer, Harry pressed his hand against hers and she knew that maybe he understood. The armchair next to Harry's bed could already be addressed in the name of Hermione Granger, because she barely left this place. She was very much like a mother there, but no one can judge, because, over the years, Hermione has developed a strange kind of maternal instinct toward Harry and Rony.

She developed a friendship with nurse Poppins. At first, Poppins passed her just to check on Harry's health, the other day, during break time, Poppins was talking to Hermione. Until one day, the two had lunch together. The conversation between them was friendly, but not so deep. Hermione would never open herself and tell her all her story and fears, however, she thought it would be beneficial to have someone who cares and who can tell her all about Harry's conditions when she can't be there.

After that strange night, Hermione slept less and remained as alert as possible. Dumbledore always sent letters, often protected by magic. Of the letters, most of them, Dumbledore gave her advice. Important advice or just updating it, telling about the kind of Ideological War within the Ministry or Grindelwald's advances. It was nothing very specific, he didn't go into details. Until one day a letter protected by spell arrived. A letter with a message she couldn't ignore.

Hermione,

Dangerous. Move. You are in one place for a long time. It's time to find a new place to be. Your dear friend will be fine. I give my word.

Albus Dumbledore.

It didn't need to be said much, she knew who it was: Grindelwald. That meant that Grindelwald was tracking her, either out of curiosity or self-interest and well, she wasn't in the mood to find out what Grindelwald's motivation was.

Hermione thought it took too long before that happened. However, she also thought that the strong magic barrier that protected 's made Grindelwald's search a bit difficult, and let's face it, nobody attacks a hospital. It's against the rule of war - if really have one - or rather, it's anti-moral.

Hermione looks at Harry once more, pressing his hand against hers and lowering her face until it is level with his ear.

"I have to go for our own safety, but I'll be back, Harry. I'll find a way to get us out of here." She whispered to him and felt his hand squeeze hers. Harry trusted her, he always did.

She bites her lower lip while retracting to the ideal position. She hates what she's doing, she doesn't want to be a part with him. Separating makes both weak. Together they are stronger. But it's necessary.

She takes one last look at Harry before turning her back.

ooo

She is walking through the crowd on the north side of Diagon Alley, which never seems to be empty. Hermione already has everything she needs in mind, which is why she goes straight to the Eeylops Owls Emporium. She needs an owl to deliver her letters, an owl who was quick and smart and who was good at camouflaging herself.

As soon as she entered, the bell at the door indicated Hermione's arrival. She looked around

curiously, noting some differences in the store. The assistant surprised Hermione when she suddenly appeared in front of her.

"Hello, how can I help you, Miss?" She smiled.

The girl didn't look much older than Hermione, she had light hair in an almost undone bun, with owl feathers in her hair. She had pale, kind green eyes with freckles on her cheeks and the tip of her nose, her lips were thin and her two front teeth were slightly larger than they should be, and they were square. Hermione smiled as she noticed something in common with the girl. She remembered well what her own teeth were like.

"I'm looking for an owl," Hermione replied.

"Oh, feel free to look around the store. The manager is not here, but anything you want, you can call me. My name is Jane." She introduced herself. "Oh, by the way, I believe owls are like wands, you know? They choose their owners as well. Well, at least that's what I think. So be calm and don't be afraid. We don't want an accident like last week," Jane muttered. "An owl's claws can be quite destructive when they want to, but owls, in general, are good. Of course, it's not very advisable for those who are afraid of birds of prey. But, be calm..."

"Thank you," Hermione said, quickly realizing that if she didn't move away from Jane, the girl would continue to talk endlessly, rambling on her conversation.

Hermione walked further into the store, her boots clattering on the hardwood floor. She looked around at the owls. Every time she tried to get close to an owl that caught her eye, the owl would fly away or simply turn her neck one hundred and eighty degrees so she wouldn't have to look at her.

Owl feathers slowly fell to the floor and Hermione followed her with her gaze as a black feather slowly descended into her open hand. She held the quill and brought it to her eye level, observing the details until in her field of vision she noticed a dark cage in the corner of the store. Curious, she moved closer, squinting to try to understand the image she was seeing.

That was when a pair of ruby-red eyes looked at her when the owl turned the head toward her. Hermione was surprised for a moment, staring at the owl that winked calmly at her. Unlike the other owls, this one didn't seem to want to get away from her and reflected in her ruby eyes the same curiosity that Hermione had.

"Asio Stygius or also known as Devil Owl." Jane's voice made Hermione jump in fright. She put her hand on her chest to calm her heartbeat.

"Come here, my sweetie." Jane opened the cage and with a leather glove, let the owl land on her arm and then she brought the owl into the light so Hermione could see.

At first, Hermione thought that because of the owl's appearance in the darkness, the owl looked like a little demon, with dark feathers and red eyes and two small, horn-like feathers above its head. But as soon as she saw the owl in the light, the initial idea fell apart.

The owl still had black feathers, but in the belly area it had yellowish and white feathers, the feathers above the head were still up, but now it gave the owl a cuter expression. And the eyes lost the ruby shade to be oranges.

It was a large owl with claws curling into Jane's leather glove and as if to show this fact, the owl spread the wings before bringing it against her body.

"This is an owl from South America. The eye tint is typically yellow or orange, but when the light reflects on the owls' eyes when they are in darkness, the eye colour turns red. Combined with the colour of the feathers, these owls became known as Devil Owls." Jane explained. "But really, they don't hurt anyone, right, my boy?"

Hermione looked at the owl and smiled. The owl was calm and blinked again, looking at her. Hermione put her index finger close to the small feather area near the owl's beak and petted it a few times.

"Looks like this boy here liked you," Jane said.

"I'll take him."

"Great!" Jane smiled. "I will prepare his things. Let's go to the cashier."

Hermione closely followed Jane with her new owl.

While putting the owl in the cage. "Oh, those owls are really nocturnal," Jane said. "So, do you already have a name for him?" She asked.

Hermione looked at the owl, who quickly managed to camouflage himself in the darkness of the cage. It was then that Hermione spoke the first name that came to her when she looked at the owl.

"Nix," she answered.

"Nix?" Jane questioned.

"Yes. Nix This is his name." Hermione concluded. "Despite being a female name, Nix was the deep night goddess and protector of witches and wizards according to Greek mythology. Isn't that a proper name for him? "

"Well, looking in that way. " Jane shrugged, a smile on her face. "Looks like Nix is a good name."

Jane handed Hermione the cage with Nix inside and some snacks for Nix after Hermione paid with galleons.

"Well, it looks like it's you and me." Hermione told Nix, who winked at her again.

Hermione apparated, holding Nix's cage and her small bag. When she reached the destination she desired, she smelled the salt spray and listened to the sea, the boots she wore sank into the sand and the sun shone in that uninhabitable and safe place. She looked back and watched the ocean before starting to walk on the sand to a flatter area.

"Come on, Nix." She murmured to the owl, who was now her constant companion.

Hermione set Nix's cage on the floor and pulled of her holster wand. Her gaze faltered a little as she focused on the spells. She began to put up the same magical barriers she used at the time she, Harry and Ron hunted the Horcruxes.

"Cave Inimicum," she whispered. "Protect Totalum." She continued. "Salvio Hexia. Repello Muggletum. Muffiliante. Disillusion Charm. "

Hermione used a sequence of protective spells for her and Nix's safety. She was confident of the spells she cast. Following basic reasoning, Voldemort was considered more powerful than Grindelwald, if the Dark Lord couldn't track them while hunting the Horcrux, Grindelwald

wouldn't find her either, if she placed the same sequence of protective spells.

She let out a relieved breath. From her small bag, Hermione called the tent with an Accio and began to set up the tent with magic. And there she was, that damn tent that reminded Hermione of the worst moments of her life and yet it was the only place Hermione could call home.

When she had finished setting up the tent and entered, Hermione placed Nix's cage in a corner and conjured a perch for him beside the bed. Then, she opened the cage and let Nix out, which quickly flew and settled on the perch, spreading his wings momentarily. She gave him some snacks, but Hermione would let Nix hunt tonight. It would be good if he developed a bond of trust with her.

Focusing on arranging things allowed Hermione to escape her anxieties and concerns. She spent all afternoon putting everything in place, the books on the shelf, making a place for alchemy and brewing, cleaning and making the environment cozier. In the early evening, after she had finished the magic, Hermione took a hot shower and put on her pajamas and put the kettle on to warm up, so she could make some tea and let Nix out to hunt.

As she sipped her tea, Hermione began to think of the next steps she should take. Here, she would have time to research how to break the curse that was upon her and how to go back to her time. Unconsciously, she picks up the Time-Turner around her neck and looks at the object that caused so much trouble. The emerald sand inside the Time-Turner hourglass seems to glow in the light. She runs her fingers gently over the parseltongue words and feels the magic in the necklace. Hermione raises the Time-Turner to eye level and for a fleeting moment, she thinks she can hear the same murmurs that made her enter the Forbidden Forest. Startled, she lets the Time Turn fall around her neck again.

Even if it was fast, the intensity of her interaction with Time Turner makes her have a headache.

Hermione finished the tea quickly, brushed her teeth and went to bed. Tomorrow she will send a letter to Dumbledore and another to Poppins.

Professor Dumbledore,

This is Hermione and this is Nix, don't be alarmed by his appearance. He is a quiet owl, but so far, he's lovely. I followed your advice. I'm in a new place where the sun, the sea, and the sand is constant, it's a familiar place that I can call home. Don't worry about me. Please keep me informed. I hope everything is alright.

Hermione.

Poppins,

It's me, Hermione. I apologize for not saying goodbye to you, I had to go home as soon as possible. I hope everything is fine. I'm worried about Harry. Would it be bothering you to ask you to keep me informed about him? Forgive me for the inconvenience. I wish that one day we could repeat that afternoon. Thanks for everything.

PS: Don't be afraid of the owl.

Hermione.

That morning, after writing the letters, Hermione handed it to Nix for him to take. She wondered if

it was impolite or unkind of her to ask Poppins that favour, but big problems call for desperate measures. She just hoped Poppins's response would be positive.

The month of August was the month Hermione used her vast knowledge about magic. She tested potions, read books, and used spells. One time, as she tried to break the curse on her tongue, it made her tongue heat up as if she'd eaten pounds of pepper. She cried and for a moment she thought her tongue would fall. Another time, she tried to reveal the magic in the Time-Turner, the Time-Turner bounced off the magic and she looked like a poodle when the electricity of the magic hits her hair.

The constant failures were getting the best of Hermione and she was soon becoming more stressed second by the second. And without any company, but Nix, she was feeling a little lonely.

Fortunately, Poppins responded positively to Hermione's letter and she constantly sent letters to her. Dumbledore also, however, explained that he was constantly in the Ministry of Magic - that he was afraid of Grindelwald's influence on Durmstrang.

But it was on the nineteenth of August that she received a letter from Poppins.

Hermione,

I'm sorry, your friend not yet awakened ...

Hermione didn't dare to finish reading the letter because her hands were shaking so hard that she crumpled the letter. Hermione's breath got more panting as drops of tears wet the paper in her hands. That familiar anger began to rise within her. The same anger that Harry described.

It's all his fault, Hermione thought. It's all Riddle's fault.

She couldn't control her impulsiveness, a very trait of her personality that was little used, but that made her a member of Gryffindor House. She really couldn't control it. Her emotions spoke louder and then she apparated.

She was in an alley in London, which wasn't quite as she remembered, but she was sure she was in the right place. After all, when she came here, London was different and very updated, but she can't require much. It is in 1943, during the time of World War II.

Hermione walks out of the alley she apparated, waving her wand so that her clothes would change into a woman's clothing of this era because now she would walk among the Muggles.

Her steps were steady, she was determined, emotions bubbled up inside her.

As she neared the place where Tom Riddle was born and raised, her steps slowed. Hermione analyzed the Wool Orphanage carefully, her eyes narrowing. When she stepped into a newspaper, she looks, reading what was written.

Churchill, Roosevelt and Mackenzie King meet in Canada.

The First Conference of Quebec, Hermione acknowledged in amazement. Her attention was captured when she heard rapid footsteps, someone running toward her. She looked up and saw. Tom Riddle.

He stopped just inches from her, panting from the run, his cheeks red and he is slightly altered. There was an adrenaline smile on his face that faded as he recognized her. His eyes widened, two green orbs that glowed red for a second. He swallowed, and then his mouth made an 'O'.

They were both outside the gate of the Wool Orphanage.

Hermione looked him from the top to down, and her eyes caught the ring on Riddle's finger. That ring. The second Horcrux.

"Granger...?"

The double entrance door of the Wool Orphanage opened and a man, who limped out on one leg, came out with an angry expression on his face. Both Tom and Hermione turned their faces to see the man approaching.

"Kid, come here!" The man shouted, presumably to Riddle. He opened the entrance gate, his eyes fixed on Riddle until he noticed Hermione. He looked her top to bottom and the voice softened a little. "Forgive me, Miss. I hope he's not bothering you. "

Hermione just shook her head in silence as she watched the man grab Riddle by the back of his neck, tilting Riddle's head and chest down as a form of punishment, and pushing him inside. They entered and Hermione could hear the man grumble and curse. For a moment she saw Riddle's gaze on her. It was a cold look.

oOo

Tom was now locked in the basement of the orphanage, the place of punishment for those who break the rules. He touched the damp, cold grey wall after he took off and threw his jacket on the floor. By reflex, he touched the left corner of his lip, wiping the small trail of blood from the slap he received from Mr. Wool.

None of this would have happened if he had not run into Granger. She distracted him and important minutes were lost. If she hadn't interfered, he would have returned to the orphanage in time, and Mrs. Cole would never miss him and warned Mr. Wool. But no, Granger had to come and see him in that humiliating situation, had to know the conditions he lived in when he was out of Hogwarts.

Did it have to be her? He wondered. *Calm down.* He said to himself. *You still have the power in the situation. You are more powerful.*

Yes, he was more powerful. Tom touched the ring on his finger, looking at the dark stone. It was the other Horcrux. His second Horcrux.

I did it, I killed them all.

There was no one else that was the blood of his blood. His father, and grandparents, were all dead. Everyone died by his hands. By now his uncle must be on his way to Azkaban. Tom raised a hand to the sunlight streaming through the small basement window. His skin paled, the ring stood out in his hand, and the dark stone didn't shine. That's when his attention went to his own skin and he watched the sweat droplets.

Now he was realizing that his breathing was heavier and he was starting to feel cold and sweating. He leaned his forehead against the cold wall, trying to appease the warmth that seemed to be in his head, caused by the slight headache. Tom closed his eyes and tried to take a deep breath.

The small price to pay to escape death. Before coming the 'immortality' given by creating a Horcrux, comes fatigue. The body tired and adapted to the lack of a soul piece. And Riddle was feeling it, and it sure was worse than the first time, but that's what made him stronger and more powerful. Or so he thought.

Tom was still leaning his head against the wall when he felt that familiar 'whoosh'. A pressure on gravity that broke the standards of Muggle logic. Magic. He lifted his head a little and slowly looked out of the corner of his eye at his new company. The invader.

She was there, she had conjured an armchair for herself, which she made look like a queen's throne, sitting upright with her arms resting on the armrests and with her legs crossed.

Tom watched her. Her hair was still full, but somehow more controlled, she had put a clip to hold some strands of hair to one side. Granger was dressed in a short-sleeved white ladies' social shirt, the godé skirt marking her slim waist, and the length of it that was just below her knees and dark blue.

He didn't resist, looking too hard at her calves, his gaze rising over her skin until the sight of her legs was hidden by her skirt.

It was then that he looked at her expression. She was passive of emotions, her expression was serene and he felt she was analyzing him. Her cheeks were flushed from the sun, wherever she was on vacation, she was definitely enjoying it. She tilted her head slightly and her left hand moved, drawing Riddle's attention to the wand she held.

What was she doing here? Tom wondered. Is Dumbledore involved in this? Does he know what I did and sent his gold student to find out? Because it's too much coincidentally that she knows exactly what orphanage I am in.

Riddle contemplated his options because now she seemed a threat. He could do magic without using his wand, the problem is that the spells he would use wouldn't be considered accidental magic. Obviously, wouldn't be considered accidental magic, him, an exemplary student with formidable magical control. Of course, there could be exceptions, but this would not be one of them.

He could steal her wand, however, wands can be traced. It was with this method that he was able to make his uncle, Morfin Gaunt, guilty of the death of the Riddle family. And if Granger got hurt by a dangerous spell caused by her wand, Dumbledore would probably investigate. That is, he has no way out.

He really has no way out until he knows what Granger wants. Tom now realizes that it is she who is playing the game at that moment. And he notices, she breathes and raises her chin in defiance when she realizes that he understands.

He is locked with the lioness.

Chapter End Notes

Crotalus is a genus of snakes in the Viperidae family. Also known as Rattlesnake. The eighth most poisonous snake in the world.

Echis.

Chapter Notes

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I would also like to thank the 511 kudos and 104 bookmarks. Thank you.

English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if I have any errors in the text. Let me know so I can correct it.

Thank you, I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 9. Echis - All this and more.

Tom felt as if the surroundings were spinning as he moved to face Hermione. He was feeling weak and tired, but he didn't want to give her the pleasure of seeing the true conditions which he was in. So, he did his best to stand, putting his hands in the front pockets of his pants and lifting his chin a little.

"Well, to what do I owe the honor of your presence, Miss Granger?" He asked, a tone of disdain in his voice.

His tone didn't impress Hermione, who was still passive and with an 'air' of superiority. She blinked solemnly.

"What is the counter-spell for the curse you put on me?" She asked.

Tom snorted.

"What makes you think I would tell you?"

"Must be because I'm in advantage here." She replied, unshaken by Tom's words.

"I don't think so." Tom grinned mischievously. "It doesn't look like you have the upper hand since you need to ask me how to break the curse."

It was Hermione's turn to smirk.

"I always try to ask politely first, to have a clear conscience later. The answers I get are not always positive, so I stop and think: Well, no one can judge me, I tried to be kind." She answered thoughtfully. "Which brings me back to you. So, yes, I'm in advantage here."

"What makes you think that?" Tom raised an eyebrow. He knows he has to manipulate her.

"You have no wand." She answered quickly.

"Why do you suppose that?" Tom's nostrils flared as his face changed to something dark, the veins showing in his jaw.

"Silly boy." Hermione snorted. "You're obviously without her, otherwise you would have already raised your wand toward me." She observed. "Let's face it, you do that a lot to be different this time. So, we get back to the point where I have the upper hand. "

Tom narrowed his eyes, breathing like a bull, his eyes focused on Hermione as the basement seemed to swirl with the discomfort he was feeling. That little witch managed to push his buttons in a way no one ever could. Her smart remark catching him off guard.

"You don't look very well," she observed. "Something left you cold?" She asked very seriously.

"What are you implying, Granger?" Tom practically growled. He didn't like the insinuation in Hermione's words. It is impossible that she was referring to the death of the Riddle family, there was no way she could know. Maybe it was his imagination, obviously, he would be suspicious of anything.

Hermione shrugged, putting a blank mask on her face.

"Where were we? Ah! Yeah. What's the counterspell, Riddle?" Hermione's tone changed. It was demanding and almost an order.

"I thought you were smart enough to find out." Tom licked his lips. She would never find out, this was true. Because it was a spell that himself created.

"Oh, I could try." She replied and Tom coughed to hide the laugh that threatened to break out. "But I thought for a while ..." Tom's green eyes returned to Hermione, paying attention to what she was saying. "Why not get the answer from the source of all my problems?" She continued.

Hermione stood up, the armchair she conjured disappeared. She used her full height, ie 5'5, to intimidate Riddle. That wasn't what made Tom Riddle think, but the wand she raised toward him.

"Are you going to torture me, Granger?" Tom almost laughed at the thought. What would Dumbledore think of his favorite student torturing someone?

"Why wouldn't I do that?" Hermione spoke through gritted teeth. She didn't like the fact that Tom didn't seem to take her seriously. "You did the same thing to me. Why shouldn't I return the favor?"

"Ah, here's the reason. Revenge." Tom said. "But I'm not surprised. The world revolves around that. "

"My motive is much bigger than that." Hermione contradicts him. "You think you know me, but you don't know anything about me. But I know a lot about you. What you're capable of, the things you do, the place you live." Hermione looked around. "Such pride coming from someone who is in a Muggle orphanage."

What a low blow, Hermione thought to herself. The truth is that he is not to blame where he was born and raised, it was not his choice and probably not something anyone would choose. No one wants to be an orphan and grow up in an orphanage.

Her words seem to hit him because she notices the swirl of uncontrollable emotions in his eyes that reflect her. But strangely, there is a sneer on Tom's lips.

"I didn't think you were so cruel, Miss Granger," he said. "I'm downright surprised," Tom continued.

"Proof you don't know me," Hermione replied.

"So...? What is going to be? The Cruciatus? Or are there some dark curses hidden in that little head? "

"Nothing other than what you deserve," Hermione said, raising her wand and pointing toward Tom.

Tom narrowed his eyes when he noticed the glow in the tip of the wand, she was decided, and then the sound of the basement door opening caught their attention. They both glanced toward the basement stairs when they heard footsteps, they looked at each other momentarily and a breath escaped their mouths before Hermione cast a Disillusionment charm, hiding from the muggle's vision.

Tom glanced at the place she hid, right in the corner of the basement, but still giving her a privileged view. For a moment he was jealous of her, that she could use magic so freely, then Mr. Wool appears, coming down the stairs with a buggy whip in his hand. Tom's eyes went straight to the whip. When Mr. Wool finished coming down the stairs, he stopped in front of Tom, in his breath, Tom could smell rum.

"Where have you been, kid?" He asked brutally.

In fact, even if the name of this gentleman is the name of the orphanage, it was who handled most of the child-related things, but whenever punishment was related, precisely to boys, Mr. Wool seemed to willing. Of course everyone grew up afraid to challenge Mrs. Cole and her severity, and that got worse when it came to Mr. Wool, but of course, that fear didn't apply to Tom. He was too sneaky, too smart to be caught in the breaches of rules he committed. Doubt could always hang in the air, but no one could point a finger at him and accuse. There was no evidence.

Here, they were afraid of Tom. The weird things that happened around him and how somehow he always seemed to be involved in the problems that happened, even if they couldn't prove it.

Mad, had problems, evil incarnate, demon, the antichrist. Tom has been called all of that. **Doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, priests and even the beginning of an exorcism attempt.** All of this had once come to him, but obviously he managed to escape with the help of something that made him unique: **Magic.** It was easier at that time when he was a child, where even terrible things could be justified such as lack of control and self-preservation. Simply a child's attempt to defend himself, not now. Not when he is supposed to control magic.

So Tom blames Dumbledore again. Dumbledore 'breaks his legs' when he leaves him without his wand - supposedly defenseless - because of the stupid rules he has so attached to. And of course, Mr. Wool with all the grudge he has for Tom, wouldn't let his punishment pass and to make matters worse, he has Granger as an unwanted audience and he's chilling and sweating like a kettle.

"Where have you been, kid?" Mr. Wool asked again, almost growling.

Tom refused to answer, avoiding eye contact, trying to focus on anything other than Mr. Wool's face with rum breath. But apparently looking around was not a good idea. The basement seemed to spin more with the dizziness he was feeling, the pressure in Tom's ears made him ignore what Mr.

Wool was saying, was when the whip hit the skin of Tom's arm.

Tom turned his head so hard toward Mr. Wool, that he looked like a big cat. He growled, jaggling and baring his teeth in anger. The whip arm wound appeared in the shape of a bloodline, the fabric of Tom's social shirt tearing. The sight of his own blood made Tom's volatile emotions bubble.

How dare a muggle try to hurt him? The heir of Slytherin. He would not allow himself to be flogged.

Tom reacts, trying to take the whip from Mr. Wool's hand. He's sick of having to come to this shitty orphanage, he's sick of faking it, taking orders from foolish people and having to put up with a smile on his face. He will no longer accept it. No longer.

But his body falters and doesn't cooperate with the work of his mind. All he knows is that he reaches for the whip, but his hand catches the emptiness. It is dizziness that makes him see things where they are not.

Mr. Wool pushes him, Tom falls and gets whipped again. This time the whip hits the centre of his back. He grunts in pain.

"Where have you been, kid?" Mr. Wool asks again.

"I got to meet my father," Tom answers through his teeth, trying to get up.

He stares angrily at the grey basement floor, fighting the tears of hatred and the burning pain in his back. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

"And apparently Daddy reneged you again." Wool sneers. "But I can't blame the man. Who would like to have a child with that horrible woman? Who would like to have a child like you? She gave birth to a demon. You don't fool me, boy." He points to Tom. "I see the evil in you." Mr. Wool makes the sign of the cross. "God took pity on that man and drove him away from you."

Tom began to laugh at Mr. Wool's last sentence. *Did God have mercy of Tom Riddle Snr or the Riddle family? That could only be a joke.*

Still laughing softly as the last remnants of his laughter, Tom turns his face toward Mr. Wool, he's still leaning on his arms - shaking with the effort - he swallows a shaky breath as the pupils in his eyes widen. His laughter dies and he breathes heavily like a bull.

"Yes." Tom agrees. "Yes, I'm all that and more." He says. "And I'll be your worst nightmare." Tom looks under his lashes. "And I promise you, that you and everyone else will pay me."

It's a threat he intends not to become an empty threat. He will fulfil whatever he is willing to conquer and master.

The whip hits him again and again and again and doesn't seem to stop. His back hurts and stings with each blow, but he refuses to cry or scream.

Hermione looks at that scene. At first, she thinks he deserves every blow he gets - that someone condemns her if wants - but Tom Riddle is vile and mean and all the things he has done - and will - deserve the most torturous punishment. However, when the whip hits him for the eighth time, her eyes start to burn with hot tears. She's scared at how he doesn't scream, just grunts in pain, but she can see his eyes with tears he refuses to give in. When a lonely tear runs down her cheek, she knows she can no longer see that scene.

Then she closes her eyes, but the sounds of the whip hitting Riddle, tearing the fabric of his shirt, Tom's grunts of pain and the old man's anger, seem worse.

She covers her ears, shaking her head from side to side, refusing to see or hear. But then, the unmistakable scent of blood seems to be carried by the basement dust into her nostrils, and that's when she opens her eyes.

Hermione looks around, drawing her arms close to her body, a frightened look on her face. She has seen and experienced many acts that caused her to be in shock, but she has never been a spectator of such torture. Mr. Wool is nowhere to be seen and all that remains in the basement is her and Riddle.

She takes a hesitant step forward but soon hesitates to continue. Riddle is there, a few steps away from her, lying face down with the back of his bloody torn shirt. He is pale, so pale that the colour of his skin is almost white and the contrast with the blood is bewildering. Strands of black hair like the colour of a raven, falling down his face.

She swallows as she watches the fallen Dark Lord like a King who suffered a checkmate. Her breath sounds too loud for the environment that has become so quiet, and it is likely that the Disillusionment Charm she has cast upon herself is gone, as Tom Riddle's eyes open and he looks straight at her.

Hermione can't escape eye contact, she's stuck like a deer get stuck watching a car's light. Tom's eyes are bright green and pure, but there's hell burning in their colour. The red veins are highlighted in the white sclera of his eyes, from the containing crying or even the hatred he transmits in a simple look he gives her. He shudders, with involuntary muscle spasms, he makes a deep throat sound as if he wants to contain the sound, but his eyes never escape her eyes. He doesn't even blink.

She doesn't know what to do. She runs away. She Apparated to the safety of her island. To the safety of the tent.

Hermione almost vomited, but she managed to keep the contents of her stomach. She walks into the tent, putting her hand on her heart to calm the heartbeats, looking at Nix on his perch, who returns his gaze.

Hell, no one could judge me for leaving Riddle there. That's what she tells herself for the thousandth time that early evening, after taking a shower, trying to forget the scene she saw.

She is sitting, staring at the wood of the table, her fingernails drumming on the porcelain cup of tea she drinks.

My conscience is clear. She sighs, trying to make herself happy.

Hermione gets up, throws away the rest of the tea she was drinking, brushes her teeth and lies on the bed. Lying down, she looks up at the tent ceiling, her hands folded above the blanket, her thumbs tapping repeatedly, a reflection of her anxiety and thoughts that don't want to shut up.

Don't think about it. Don't think about it. She repeats several times, but the sight of Riddle's body on the floor is very fresh and vivid. *He deserves. Of course, he deserves it.* Hermione tries to convince herself.

She spends the next day trying to convince herself that she is doing right to ignore Riddle's conditions. Let's face it, he's done things a lot like that to other people, but she can't stop thinking

it's too cruel. Maybe it was a catalyst for Riddle's anger, maybe it wasn't, but what she knows is that she thinks no one deserves such treatment.

She thought about herself as she was being tortured by Bellatrix - Riddle's fault again - and how she would like someone to save her as soon as possible. Of course, Harry and Ron came to her rescue, but for a fleeting moment, she thought she would die there and had the same hatred for Bellatrix that Riddle displayed to Mr. Wool.

"Don't even think about it!" She told to herself. "No, no, no! It's out of the question to help Riddle." Hermione continued. "What would Harry think? He will kill me if he knows! And all the others? What would they think of that? Obviously, they would be unhappy! What about my parents? Argh! My mother would talk until my ears bleed because I didn't help. So...? He's Voldemort and I'm a Muggle-born Gryffindor. Riddle wouldn't think twice before letting me die there if the situation were different." She took a deep breath. "Okay. Okay. We came to a conclusion. "

Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it.

Hermione apparated to the orphanage's basement.

She looks around to see if there are any muggles nearby and to her surprise, Riddle is still there, in the same position she left him. He has his eyes closed and shaking like a jackhammer.

Hermione hesitated for a moment, really reluctant to help him, but when Tom grunted slightly in his misery, she advanced toward him.

What am I doing? She wondered for the thousandth time.

She knelt beside him and put a hand on his back, making him hiss in pain like a snake when threatened.

"Riddle? Riddle?" She called him a few times. Hermione saw his eyelids flutter before he opened his eyes.

"G-Granger...?" Riddle muttered with a husky voice and dry lips.

"I'm here to help you. Can you get up?" She asked, watching his eyes roll in his eye sockets. "Come on, Riddle, help me so I can help you."

Hermione wrapped an arm around her shoulders and held him tightly around his abdomen, her grip taking some more grunts of pain from Riddle.

"Sorry," she muttered.

She noticed his effort to get up and when he stood up, his entire weight fell on Hermione. She flinched, trying to steady both of them. For a slender, muscular boy in perfect measure, Riddle was considerably heavy for Hermione. His head tilted forward, sweat-damp hair falling down his face. He tried to look at her, but when he opened his eyes, he probably thought it was a bad idea, given how quickly he closed his eyes again.

"Riddle, hold on to me. Try to hold on tight. I won't let you go." Hermione ordered.

At first, she doesn't know if he really heard her, but the squeeze of his hand on her shoulder made her realize that at least he was aware. She Apparated.

The first thing she did when she reached the tent was to put him on the bed, lying on his stomach.

In addition to easing his weight on her, she needed to take care of his wounds. Riddle was at this point almost unconscious.

With the tip of her wand, she made a straight line on the side of Riddle's shirt, which was cut off as Hermione made the move. Underneath his dress shirt, he wore a white men's tank top, which Hermione removed with the help of her wand.

As soon as she looked at Riddle's back, she let out a breath she didn't know she was holding. There was blood and several line-shaped wounds had their flesh open. She wiped at the blood, feeling him shudder every time she touched him, and then she took the potion kit to ease his pain and aid the healing process lastly, Hermione applied an ointment to the seals and then bandaged his back.

It was hard work, she wasn't a Healer, though she had plenty of knowledge. She took care of him like she took care of Ron, spending much of the night looking at him, sitting in an armchair near the bed, with Nix beside her on the arm of the armchair.

He had a fever, she had noticed. The way he was sweating indicated that he had gotten worse in the last few hours, which she diagnosed as an effect of his injuries, almost as if it could be an infection. She put a damp, cold cloth on his forehead to soften it.

Hermione wondered how Riddle couldn't defend himself against a lame man like Mr. Wool. Riddle was a tall, strong young boy, surely he could beat or push Mr. Wool away from him, yet he was acting strange since she had arrived in that basement. This is where Hermione looks at his hand.

The ring, she recognized. The Horcrux. Creating a second Horcrux left him temporarily weak.

Hermione sighed, and suddenly the notion of helping the young Dark Lord fell on her. She didn't know how he would react when he woke up, but she knew what he had already done and she wondered again if it was right to save Riddle.

Unwilling, she fell asleep. Taking care of a person already required a lot of attention, taking care of someone with Riddle's injuries was tiring, and certainly being alert against someone like Riddle required all-body effort. Hermione wakes up in the middle of the night when she hears a loud noise. Riddle fell off the bed as he tried to get up.

"Riddle? Riddle!" She runs to him.

He is kneeling, breathing heavily, and placing a hand on his head. She bends down to his level and tries to help him, but with one hand he shoves her.

Hermione rests on her elbows, looking at him, startled and surprised. She watches him stand up, tripping over his own feet, his wobbly walking as he bumps into things and throws everything he feels with his hand to the floor.

He is delirious. She is insightful to note.

She doesn't know what caused this. Maybe it was his fever, maybe it was his belated reaction to try to defend himself. Hermione watched him take a few steps before falling hard and completely against the hardwood floor. She and Nix look at each other and then she slowly gets up and walks towards Riddle. With a strange expression that mixed curiosity and fear, Hermione hesitantly approached him. She notices that he passed out.

After she put him in bed again, Hermione checks how his injuries are. She does so because she believes that some of Riddle's sudden movements may have hurt him even more. Fortunately, it's

nothing serious, on the contrary, it was much better than a few hours ago. Magic is really amazing.

Hermione doesn't think Riddle could die if she had left him in the basement of the Wool Orphanage, having Horcrux make him technically immortal. Unless someone destroys the Horcruxes, Riddle would not have the final encounter with death, yet he can feel pain and hurt himself as far as she understands. Well, it's obvious he's only two Horcruxes, it's nothing compared to seven.

Her gaze falls on his ring. The Horcrux is right there, just inches from her, so easy now. Just take the ring off his finger and destroy it. She would be doing everyone a favour. Hermione took Riddle's hand, staring at the ring. Some might say she had a soft heart, she was classifying herself in this way. That is, she has compassion for broken things and people. Even if she was angry, Hermione tended to forgive or feel for people when she came to understand their motivations. For example, Snape. Snape was never kind to her, his comments to her were always sour and sarcastic. He thought she was just a Gryffindor smarty, yet after all, she still can't stop crying when she saw his death.

There was also Grawp, or when Dolores Umbridge injured one of the centaurs - that was cruel and she is ashamed of harming a centaur indirectly in order to have Dolores out of Hogwarts. There were also her attempts to give rights to the Elves.

She doesn't know if Riddle turned into Voldemort because he was born this way or if it was a series of factors that contributed to creating the monster, the only thing she knows is that things are really complicated.

Hermione drops his hand from hers, ignoring the ring on his finger. Ah, that urge to destroy Horcrux is there, just slip the ring off his finger and it's done. But she couldn't do that, first because as soon as Riddle woke up and missed the ring, he was going to kill her and second - and most importantly - was the timeline. Destroying Horcrux could now trigger a series of events that could change everything she knows.

You are already destroying the timeline. The voice of her conscience was speaking. *Riddle shouldn't be in this tent.*

That is right. Riddle shouldn't be here, however, she doesn't want to worsen the damage already done.

She looks at Riddle's face. Perfect is too little to describe it. Tom Riddle is really very handsome, Hermione knows that Riddle supposedly pulled all his father's genetics into appearance, but damn... she's pretty sure the love potion his mother gave Riddle Snr must have helped. The reality is Tom Riddle Jr is the perfect match for his parents' genetics. He took all the beauty of the Riddle family and took all the magic of the Gaunt family. A dangerous combination, certainly.

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Tom opened his eyes slowly, blinking repeatedly to adapt to his blurred vision. He looks up to find a pair of big orange eyes staring at him, surprised he retracts in one swift motion, banging the top of his head against the wood of the bed. He lets a little ouch come out of his lips. He looks around, lifting his chest and leaning on his elbows, trying to understand where he is.

The owl above his head flies and lands on the perch, looking curiously at him. He watches his surroundings, noticing a broom that sweeps the floor alone, the sound of a boiling kettle and the smell of soup.

He looks under the blankets, realizing that he is not naked as he had originally thought. He still wears the same pants he remembers. Then he makes an analysis of his chest, which is well bandaged with clean bandages.

"Finally. I thought you would never wake up. "

The female voice catches his eye and he looks at the entrance and then sees Granger. Her hair is loose, a few strands to the side, and she wore pants that reach her calves and a short-sleeved shirt. Tom freezes, looking at her with huge unblinking green eyes, he retracts on the bed, his gaze never leaving her face.

That's when the memories come back to him. Granger saw things she shouldn't see, made threats she shouldn't do, and they offended each other, yet in the end, she helped him. Granger sat in a chair near the bed and looked at him.

"Are you alright?" She asked softly.

He narrowed his eyes at her.

"What do you want?" He almost growled at her, but she didn't seem surprised by the tone of his voice.

"Nothing. I don't want anything," she replied. A moment of silence passed between them before she spoke. She sniffed a little and scratched her nose slightly as if she were as uncomfortable as he.

"I'll get the food. You must be hungry. When you're done, I'll check how the injuries are." She gestured with her finger.

"I don't want your pity." Tom almost spits out the words.

Pity is for the weak, for the foolish and he doesn't want to be part of this portion of the population. She offends him in the worst possible way with her pity. She shakes her head and sighs before getting up from the chair. Tom watches her movements curiously, indecisively, with anger still encapsulated within him. She comes back carrying a tray with a plate of soup and he looks at her like she's crazy.

Hermione makes no mistake, she's not a formidable cook, but she's not as bad as Ron made it sound either. Obviously, she has no years of cooking experience or a knack for cooking, but her food is not bad. Ron's criticism was largely based on the influence of Salazar Slytherin's locket.

She sits in the chair she was occupying moments earlier with the tray on her lap and the soup bowl extended toward Riddle.

"I hope you enjoy it. You need to eat." Hermione speaks softly. She doesn't want to attract Riddle's wrath and wants to be patient with him.

Riddle looks at her in disgust.

"I'm not hungry." He speaks and it seems he's so happy to deny her effort with his words.

"You need to eat." Hermione tries again.

"I'm not hungry," Tom growls at her.

Hermione gritted her teeth in frustration, her patience over. Just like that, so fast. He can get her

crazy. He is like a spoiled and rebellious child, delighting in undoing the help and efforts of everyone else.

She took a deep breath, glaring at Riddle.

"Fine," she says abruptly. "Don't eat. Starve yourself. "

She gets up, takes the tray away from Riddle and turns her back on him. Riddle watches her from the bed, and that's when his stomach decides to make a long noise, loud enough for both of them to hear. She tries to control the threatening laughter.

Well done, she thinks wryly.

Of course, after two days without waking up, waking up only on the third day at noon, Riddle would wake up hungry.

Tom looks at her taking the food away. He knows she heard his stomach complain about the food, but she doesn't stop and doesn't come back with the tray. This little witch... If she's thinking he's going to beg her, she's very wrong, however, she is moving further and further away.

Damn it! He curses mentally.

"Wait!" Tom says. She stops. "The food," he says. "I want the food."

She turns around, tray in her hands.

"What's the magic word, Riddle?" She asks with a sneer on her face.

What a bitch!

"P-please."

The word came out, almost as if he was choking on saying it.

Hermione almost corrected him, that he should say the word more softly, but she was content for the moment with his discomfort and his need to ask her. So she returned, sitting back and resting the tray on her lap, taking the soup bowl and lifting the spoon toward him, offering.

He narrowed his eyes again at her.

"I have hands," Riddle said and Hermione dropped the spoon into the soup bowl, which splashed a little on him.

"Ignorant," Hermione murmured, covering the word with a slight throat clearing. But that didn't go unnoticed for him.

Luckily she didn't take the soup away, handing him the soup bowl. He mixes the soup back and forth, trying to figure out what it tasted like. Hesitantly he takes the liquid to his mouth, tasting it. Not bad, but not wonderful either, though it was certainly better than the cabbage soup he was eating at the orphanage due to Rationing.

He ate a few more spoonfuls, his stomach warming as he received food. It was quiet, but Tom knew he was being watched by her.

"I don't want your pity," he murmured, keeping his eyes on the bowl.

"I have no pity."

At her response, he turned his head toward her.

"Why did you get me out of there? We don't have a good relationship, in fact, we are practically declared enemies and if I remember correctly you would do something similar. What a hypocrite." He shrugged.

"Hypocrite is you," Hermione replied. "You had already tortured me with one of the unforgivable curses. If I did that, it wouldn't be any different from what you did to me. "

"Then why? Weren't you happy with what you saw? Didn't you like it?" He said, throwing the tray with the bowl and spoon away, and dropping the rest of the soup on the floor. With the noise, Nix flew off the perch.

"Pity and compassion are different things!" She shouted at him, rising from her chair.

They both fell silent, breathing heavily.

"If you didn't like my help, that's fine. Get up." She walked to a trunk and took off one of Harry's shirts. "Get dressed." Hermione tossed the shirt on the bed. "I'll take you back to that place. Come on, let's go! "

Tom fell silent, his hands gripping the covers tightly. He didn't want to go back to this place, not to that hell. His relationship with Granger can be complicated, but she's familiar, with her he doesn't have to fake it, and he doesn't have to hide about magic.

He looks around. He sees the bookcase full of books about spells and potions, even some muggle books. He sees the alchemy table with the cauldron, he sees the broom sweeping alone, and he sees the owl that is back on the perch. Here is something he likes. All this is what he likes, what he considers normal, is an environment he dreams of conquering for himself, is magic and she is giving him the opportunity to stay.

"Otherwise," Hermione speaks more softly as she observes the negative movement of his head. "Don't treat me badly. Don't act like I've done something bad to you. "

He nods. A moment of awkward silence sets in.

"Okay, get up," she says. *What? But I hadn't agreed with her. You can never trust.* "Sit here, I want to check how the wounds are."

Her words cut his thinking. He blinks solemnly and after a few seconds he gets up slowly. When he is standing, Tom feels his leg muscles tremble, because of the long-time lying in bed.

He takes hesitant steps toward the stool she indicated. As he sits, he feels her settle behind him. She begins to undo the bandages and when it is over, he feels her fingers gently trace the wounds.

"They are healing. One more day and soon they won't be visible." She explains to him, rubbing the ointment on his back. "I think you can move now, they certainly didn't bother you anymore. However, I'll still leave with the ointment and the bandage to finish the healing process. "

Tom simply keeps silent. He feels her begin to wrap the bandage around him, the silence is awkward, but he ignores it. Her warm breath touches his skin as she approaches to wrap the bandage across his chest, signalling him to raise his arms a little.

When she finishes, he feels her move away. She doesn't seem to mind seeing him basically half-naked. He knows he's considered handsome by the other girls, and he understands that his physique is attractive, but he doesn't know how much it is for Granger now that she has seen the scars on his back. But damn, he knows what he's capable of, not with Granger, though.

Tom turns toward Hermione, who is handing him clothes. The shirt and a clean pair of pants this time.

He approached her, looking at her with his eyes slightly closed, the intense green of the colour of his iris. He was taller than she, which forced Hermione to raise her head a little to face him. The intensity of his gaze was different from other times and she didn't know how to react to it, but against her will, her cheeks flushed.

Tom watched the color on her cheeks before she blinked and cut eye contact, offering him the clothes. He took the clothes with one hand. Suddenly Hermione snapped her fingers, the broom stopped sweeping and went toward Hermione's hand, which caught her.

"Take it." She handed the broom to Tom.

"What am I going to do with it?" Tom asked. It was an ordinary broom, a muggle broom.

"Clean up the mess you made," she replied, pointing to the floor with shards of the bowl and the rest of the soup that spilt. "I'm not your maid."

Tom narrowed his eyes at her.

Chapter End Notes

Echis carinatus, also known as Saw-Scaled Viper. The ninth most poisonous snake in the world.

Author's Note: Hello guys, I would like to know some things and this will only be possible with your help; just a few questions.

1) I want to know what you think about the text. As you know, English is not my native language, so I would like to know if text translation is good for you or if text needs to improve.

2) About the story, what are you thinking? Is the story in a good rhythm? Is it too slow?

3) And most importantly, are the characters well-represented or they are too OC? I know this is a fanfic and that the chosen pair, ie Tomione, already makes it very original, but I wish you had some feeling of recognition with the characters.

Those who can help me by answering me, I greatly appreciate it. Please, guys, don't leave me in the dark.

Love u <3

Micrurus.

Chapter Notes

Forgive me for taking so long to post the chapter. Unfortunately, I received a private message that shook my structures about this story. I was very sad to be called by certain words. I really thought about deleting this story.

Merry Christmas! This is the only way I have to give you a gift. Thank you all for showing me kindness and for leaving a comment, kudos and favoriting.

My special thanks to Skyvler, aga1127, Mleanne, OliverM, macmacsmack , kilicious, Viper27,ThiaHilmarsdottir, Karine, PrincessRosalean , Perséfone, LostOFallonGirl ,Tima249s for show me your kindness.

English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if I have any errors in the text. Let me know so I can correct it.

Thank you, I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 10. Micrurus - Nowhere.

After he finished cleaning - something he did cursing her mentally all the time - Tom curiously looked around, trying to figure out where he was and to see what Granger had. The first thing he did was look at the books about the magic she had. He realized that she wasn't obsessed with just one theme, in other words, there were several books about various spells and potions.

Frankly, Granger has vast knowledge. He admits to himself grudgingly. But what surprised him most was that she was reading about advanced magic, far ahead of Hogwarts's fifth and sixth grades. Well, he can't judge her, given the fact that when he was in second grade, he already read and practiced magic of sixth and seventh grade, but this behavior is not common. *But what is common when it comes about Granger?*

He looks at a slightly misplaced book as if recently placed on the shelf. *Magic and Time*, he reads, but doesn't touch.

Tom walks, his long, pale fingers making a smooth path across the table where the cauldron and potion pots were. He makes a mental note, looking with interest at everything he could, yet he doesn't touch anything. Granger seems too organized to notice if something was out of place.

He goes into the small room with a two-seater sofa, a shag rug with a coffee table and an armchair. He doesn't have to walk far to go to the kitchen, there is also a small dining table. This all seems very lonely to him, so he asks himself a question: *Where are Granger's parents?*

Tom has decided, he needs some answers and he will get from Granger. He looks to the right where the light comes in and finally decides to go out to talk to Granger. The first thing he does when he leaves is stumble. And guess what? This is not common for him. Tom Riddle always had great posture and balance, however, he wasn't prepared to step on the soft sand when he left. Tom quickly redid his composure, now looking back and forth, not expecting to see the beach landscape. He looks left and then right, noting the length of the beach and the foliage that indicated he was far from civilization. Or at least, far from industrial civilization.

His eyes finally fall on the small figure sitting on the flatter sand, facing the sea, watching the sun. Granger. He walks over to her.

Hermione had to move away from Riddle's presence to get her thoughts in order. She didn't know how she should act now that she helped Riddle and brought him to the island, to her refuge. One thing is to be in his presence while he was still unconscious, but now he is lucid and awake. Hermione knows she won't escape Riddle's questions, he is very observant, she just needs to keep the same line of reasoning and keep a safe distance with the 'walls of protection' erected against him.

"Where are we?"

Speaking of the devil, she thought.

Riddle had stopped right beside her, she looked to right, expecting to find his face, but all she saw was the pelvis area and his legs. She blushed at the sight and his closeness to her, Hermione looked up to find Riddle staring at her from above, his hands in his pants pockets. She blinked a few times.

"Where are we?" He repeated.

Tom looked at her, watching the way she was sitting, hugging her legs and the wand in one hand. Her cheeks were rosier than he remembered and he looked toward the sea and the sun she was staring at. *T here is the reason. Now things were making more sense.*

She got up to face him.

"Nowhere." She answered simply, Tom narrowed his eyes at her answer.

"I'm not kidding, Granger. Where are we? "

"Nowhere," Hermione replied again, raising both eyebrows as she explained to him.

"Can you answer the question?" His tone increased slightly due to the frustration he was beginning to feel.

"We're, literally, Nowhere." She raised her voice a little, gesturing around. "It's an island."

Tom narrowed his eyes again at her, doubting the credibility of the words coming out of her mouth.

"We are on a small, really small, island that is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean somewhere near Europe. Apparating without knowing or seeing the chosen destination is really difficult. Naming the place you want to go makes it easier for the wizard or witch to remember the place. When I first came to the island, I had only imagined a secluded place that was close to the sea and well, here we are. So I named the island." Hermione explained.

"You mean to tell me that you named the island 'Nowhere,' Granger?" Tom asked skeptically and

Hermione shrugged. "Such a lack of creativity." He continued and it was Hermione's turn to narrow her eyes at him.

Tom Riddle made a mental note. *She knows how to apparate.*

He sighed and rolled his eyes as she began to speak, trying to justify herself and explaining that it was not a lack of creativity.

Sure she's from Gryffindor, she's always trying to make a point.

Tom scratches his ear with his little finger, trying to tell her that he doesn't give a shit about her explanation, that she's talking too much and that her words make him bored at best. But a sound that shouldn't be in this heavenly environment catch Tom's attention. He stared in alarm at the horizon of the beach.

"Shut up." He orders Hermione.

Hermione is about to answer, her tongue itching to say no one tells her to shut up when she hears the sound too. She stops, looking in the same direction that Riddle is looking, hearing the sound approach. Hermione steps forward.

"Granger." Tom calls her, recognizing the kind of sound that was coming their way.

"Shut up." It's her turn to order.

Riddle takes her wrist with an iron grip, but not in a way that hurts her. It is at that moment that the owners of that noise appear. Warplanes, they were the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force, passing right now over their heads.

Riddle's hand goes from her wrist to her arm, holding tightly while keeping his eyes trained on the planes until they disappear on the horizon again.

"They ignored us," he muttered.

"Not interested, basically because they couldn't see the island."

"What did you do?" Tom asked, his head gesturing at her wand.

"I put on protections," she replied. "Repello Muggletum is one of them."

"What is the extent of the spell?" He asked curiously.

"The whole island?" She arched an eyebrow.

"Fascinating." Tom complimented. Hermione was surprised by the compliment, her eyebrows went to the limit and her mouth formed a small 'O'. Realizing what he had done, Tom soon corrected himself. "Don't be so happy, Granger. I just hope you didn't put us on a war route. "

He seems particularly troubled and walks toward the tent as if he already owns that island.

In the tent, there is an awkward silence as Hermione sets the dinner table. Riddle is sitting in the far armchair of the room, quiet and unmoving, his legs crossed male, looking curiously around, sometimes looking at her in a very fleeting way.

Yeah, certainly very lonely. Tom notices. He is waiting for the right moment to start questioning her, to know how far what she says is true, where the lies are. There is something wrong with this

situation, he is sure of it. So, he manipulates Hermione in a way that she doesn't realize is under his domain, namely: Silence.

People are uncomfortable when they are in an environment with someone else who is silent. People feel the need to establish a conversation, something to build empathy, very long periods of silence bother them. Tom waits patiently for the perfect opportunity to begin to reach his goal.

"What do you think?" She asked softly.

This is a perfect time, he smiled to himself.

"About?" He replies.

"The airplanes. This is the first time I've seen them pass through the island. "

"For more accurate information, we'd have to go to Muggle civilization." Tom shrugs.

"Do you think something happened?"

"Something's always happening," He continued. "Muggles are at war."

"It's not much different, isn't it?" Hermione muttered. "The Muggle War and the Grindelwald War."

"I don't know." Tom looked at her. "I've *never* been in a war." There was malice behind his words, judging the truth of the facts that Hermione had told everyone else.

"No." She looked down, her gaze thoughtful and sad. "It's not very different."

And it wasn't very different. The Grindelwald War, the Muggle War, the Voldemort War all had incredible and sad similarities.

"The soldiers were knocking from door to door in each orphanage, looking for young boys old enough to enlist" Tom admitted, drawing Hermione's gaze to him.

"And what did you do?" She asked curiously.

"I'm not old enough-" He didn't seem to care about her curiosity. "- yet." Tom finished the sentence.

"You don't want to enlist, do you?" Hermione deciphered.

"It's definitely something I have very little interest in."

They sat at the table after Hermione set the plates, sitting facing each other. Hermione silently keeps her eyes on her plate.

"I need the knife," Tom says suddenly. Hermione's gaze goes to the fork he holds. She hesitates, unsure that it would be wise to tell him where the knives were.

"Or you could lend me your wand for me to do a simple cutting spell," Tom suggests, raising one eyebrow, the upper corner of his mouth slightly raised with a mini smile.

Hermione stops, holding her cutlery, and she swallows hard.

"They're in the first drawer in the kitchen." She responds quickly.

Tom gets up from the table and she hears a little laugh from him, it doesn't take long for him to come back and sit in his place again. He cuts the meat off his plate, looking straight at her.

"You're afraid of me." Tom states.

Hermione debated internally what she should say.

"It's not fear; it's caution." She doesn't deny it but also gives a more appropriate name for her attitude. "We have a history of interactions that is, to say the least, interesting."

They eat in silence for a few more minutes before Tom asks:

"Where does the food come from?"

"Hm..." Hermione finished chewing before answering. "I apparate, buy what I need and come back."

"You know how to apparate," Tom says. "I thought we'd learn that skill this new year at Hogwarts."

Hermione has trouble swallowing and almost choked, and coughed a few times before drinking the glass of water offered by Tom. She makes a noise in her throat and takes a deep breath.

"I learned."

"Don't we need a License to Apparate? If not, isn't it breaking the law?" Tom raises an eyebrow, bringing a piece of meat to his mouth with the aid of his fork. "How curious." He smiled.

Hermione understood the intentions behind his words.

"I learned from someone in the -"

"war in France." He concluded the sentence for her. She looked at him, realizing then how much she had already used this excuse.

"Yeah, that's right." She held herself back. "This person told me that if I didn't have a means of escape that was fast enough if things got too hard, then I could die. That's why this person taught me." Hermione lied, the words flowing like water and she was impressed with herself.

"France, isn't it?" Tom put the cutlery on the plate. "You have no accent."

Hermione blinked, politely wiping the corner of her mouth with her napkin.

"Accent?" She questioned.

"Well, if you came from France, fought in the war in France and studied at Beauxbatons, your English should be - if only a little - affected." He concluded. "But you're very *English*, to be honest."

"That's because *I'm English*."

"Oh. So please clarify the events. I'm afraid that I'm a little confused." Tom leaned against the table, being drawn toward Hermione. "Where are your parents, Granger?"

Tom watches her gaze fall, the slight intake of air she takes and how she clasps her hands in her lap. He doesn't need an audible answer, he already knows what the answer is. *Death*.

"Far more than enough that I may never see them again." Her voice wavered at her mysterious words.

"If you're English, why did you go to Beauxbatons?" He asks.

"I didn't attend."

"No?"

"No." She replies. "That's why I don't have a French accent. I went to Ilvermorny. "

"The American school? " Tom frowned in confusion. Hermione watches into his eyes, trying to connect all the pieces of the story she was telling. "Why? Why not go to Hogwarts from the start? "

Oh, Merlin, this story is getting worse and worse, Hermione thinks.

"I don't know. I just choose one of the schools, I think." She shrugged. "I was born in England, just like my parents and I chose to go to Ilvermorny, I studied for a few years there, my parents moved to France, Grindelwald happened, I went to their aid, they left, I fought the war against Grindelwald, I asked Professor Dumbledore's help and here I am." Hermione lied, that was the most lies she said in a minute.

"Where does Dumbledore fit into all this?" Tom asked, tilting his head to the side, his piercing gaze still on Hermione.

"Dumbledore is a longtime friend. A kind of godfather, that would be a better way of describing it." She licks her lips.

Tom squinted, and the mention of Dumbledore's name lovingly coming out of her mouth leaves a small spark of anger in him.

"Does he know I'm here?" He asked. "With you?"

Why did he want to know about that? Hermione wondered. Would it be wise to tell him the truth? Say no one knows the location of the island? That nobody knows their whereabouts?

"I doubt that very much," Hermione replied, watching his reaction, noting how he relaxed - almost imperceptibly - at her words and how the scowl on his face melted away. "You really don't like him, do you?"

Tom paused for a moment, looking back at her.

"There's nothing to like."

"Why? He's a good man, a good teacher, a good person. "

Tom snorted at her comment.

"He's as bad as Azkaban's worst prisoner. Dumbledore is so afraid. A coward, that's what he is. The neutrality and impartiality he seeks so much will be his ruin. "

" That's not true." She contradicts Tom.

"It's true and you can't deny it. If you think he's so good, why didn't you tell him about our relationship at Hogwarts? I mean, before I put the curse on your tongue. Do you think he didn't know something was wrong? That he didn't notice? He may not know what it is, but he knows that

something is going on. In the Ministry, everyone gossips about what the Mighty Wizard will do, yet he hides. What a coward. "

"That's very Gryffindor *coming from you* ." Hermione narrows her eyes and hears a low, hoarse laugh from Tom.

"It's not me he's embarrassing. It's you and your House. "

She stared at him, only then noticing the mischievous glint in his eyes.

"You are teasing me" Hermione muttered, earning a sideways smile and a raised eyebrow from Tom "If this was a provocation, then tell the truth: Why you don't like Dumbledore?"

"More than half of what I said it's true. He is an old fool and coward and I don't think he deserves the title he has. That's why. "

"You hate him because you disregard him? There has to be more." She frowned in confusion. If there's one thing she learned about Riddle is that he was a complex person.

"If is true, why don't you find out then?" Tom challenged her, his green eyes sparkling.

Hermione stared at him, her gaze didn't waver, and she sat up straighter.

"I-I think ... I think you hate him because he knows about the orphanage and the things that happen there, but he did nothing to change that." Hermione looked down after seeing the expression on a white tone.

Some seconds passed, but it seemed like hours, when she looked up at him, Hermione found him staring at her, the shadow of a smile wanting to appear and a mischievous look staring at her.

"Um... what do we have here? A smart girl." Tom's long, pale index finger lightly tapped Hermione's nose. The action made Hermione freeze in shock and surprise. Tom didn't deny it, yet he didn't claim that what she said was correct.

Before they could continue, Nix made a noise, demanding that Hermione allow him to hunt.

"What is it?" Tom asked.

"It's Nix. He wants to hunt." She replied, going to Nix's cage and freeing him to fly.

Tom watched Hermione's owl fly out into the night sky.

"Did you name him 'Nix?'"

"Yes, because Nyx was—" Hermione couldn't finish speaking because Tom already knew the answer.

"The protector of wizards and witches. Yeah, I already know." He answered. "But is this serious, Granger? Nix? For a male owl?" Tom raised an eyebrow in disbelief. "You have a bad taste for names."

That night Hermione showed Tom where the bathroom was and handed him a new change of clothes that belonged to Harry, to make him more comfortable when he went to sleep. She waited for him patiently, avoiding thinking about what she was doing all the time. When not confronting him, it was much easier to question her actions.

When he came out of the bathroom through the steam, Tom was shirtless, wearing only his pants and holding the towel around his neck. She was there, waiting for him, ready and with her wand, the bandages, and ointment in hand. She looked him up and down and then gestured for him to sit in front of her. Tom walked slowly to her and sat on the stool she indicated. She repeated the procedures she had done this morning, adjusting his bandages well. As soon as she was done she got up with a sigh coming from her lips.

"You should dry your hair well. You just got out of a fever." Hermione scolded him gently. She didn't know why she was saying that. It's not like he could die.

Tom Riddle looked at her, putting on the shirt she had offered while still sitting. He is trying to figure out what she gets by doing all this and watches with interest as she goes from attack mode to defence mode and then to kindness in minutes. The meaning of the word strange is too little to describe what Granger is. However, he thinks this is only part of her personality. Curiously, she was afraid of him and yet here she was worried about his health. *I can almost laugh.*

She stops for a moment, the wand in her hand, she whispers a spell and he feels his hair dry. *Magic is amazing.*

Granger smiles softly at him, a polite and restrained smile.

"While you were in the bathroom, I prepared a dorm for you." Hermione said, Tom got up and followed her closely. She opened the door to a small but decent room with a bed with blankets and pillows. Beside the bed, a small table with a lamp. It wasn't much, but it was cosy and enough. It didn't look like she was expecting company on her stay on this island.

He nodded, entered the room, looking around. Tom turned to her, she was standing in the doorway.

"Well, I think it's a good night then." Hermione turned and closed the door.

After doing her nightly routine, Hermione was lying on her bed in her room with her wand under the pillow. She was lying on her back, staring at the ceiling, her hands on the blankets with her thumbs repeatedly tapping against each other. She was nervous and would probably have trouble sleeping tonight. Yeah, it would really be hard to have a peaceful sleep, especially when the Dark Lord was a few feet from her, conscious and regaining his strength. Hermione was really trying not to think about their conversation, but it was inevitable. Talking to Tom Riddle is one of the things she never thought would do. She tried to take her compassion out of the game and focus on the logical part. Maybe if she lived with him, and analyzed him well, she could understand him. Decipher it. And maybe when she returned to the time she belonged, she could foresee his actions and then help everyone.

She was asleep after a few hours awake. It was the relaxing first part of sleep, her chest rising and falling with each breath she took, and at that moment, the locket that was in her neck began to pop out from under her t-shirt. Even though still trapped around Hermione's neck, the locket levitated, and the Parseltongue whispers began again. The green details - very similar to the colour of the Slytherin House - of the medallion seemed to glow.

Hermione woke up, sleepily blinked a few times to adjust her view and was startled to see the locket levitating, the only thing keeping the locket from going was the cord that held it around her neck. In one swift motion, she held the locket in one hand and lifted her chest to look around. Everything, exactly everything, was levitating.

Hermione got up, took her wand and left the room. The other environments also had the objects levitating. Not even Nix, inside his cage, could escape. She went straight to Riddle's room, as she

opened the door, she found the blankets, lamp and everything else floating, just the bed and Riddle that remained where they should be.

Magic.

She looked at him, noticing that he was still unconscious, asleep. Hermione slowly approached him, not realizing that her presence made the floating objects return to the place they should never have left.

She raised a hand toward Riddle, and when he spoke a few words in Parseltongue, she stopped instantly. Hermione didn't understand what he was saying, but judging by the scowl he was making, Riddle might very well be having a nightmare. She waited for a moment, their breathing the only sound in the room, trying to figure out what might disturb the Dark Lord's sleep. The answer was simple: **many things**.

Who knows what Riddle saw or did? Maybe this was a form of punishment, never having a peaceful sleep.

When he scowled and whispered something else, she decided it was time to wake him up.

"Riddle?" She called him quietly.

Before Hermione could touch him, Riddle's hand caught Hermione's wrist and his green eyes widened in shock, which soon turned to anger and caution.

"What are you doing?" He asked accusingly.

Surprised, Hermione tried to pull her arm from his grip, but Riddle wouldn't allow it. She sighed.

"You were having a nightmare, I think ..." She said passively. Someone had to be the logical person in this situation. He stared at her for a few seconds, looking her up and down warily, before letting her arm go. He sat up, leaning his upper body against the wood of the bed and Hermione sat on the edge of the bed.

"Are you okay? Feeling a fever?" She asked and before he could answer, she put her hand on his forehead, brushing his hair back to measure the temperature. "Um ... no."

He swallowed.

"I'm fine, Granger," Tom answered quickly and remove her hand from his forehead. The constant contact with her, made him feel weird with feelings he didn't recognize, so, he avoided it.

Hermione didn't force him.

"You don't always have to be defensive," She said.

"Look who's talking." Tom snorted.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him.

"I am trying to raise the white flag. If we're living together, I think the least is that we don't always have to keep an eye on our backs. What I mean is that I've had countless opportunities to hurt you, and yet I chose not to. You don't see? I don't want to create enmity with you. I don't want to be your enemy." She said. At least not in this time.

To her surprise, he said:

"Very well. I won't pretend to you, I haven't done it before, let alone do it now. You saw what you saw, you know what I am and what I am capable of. Maybe your unwillingness to be my enemy is the best thing you ever did. "

She growled at him.

"No threats."

He gave a little laugh.

"And what fun would it be?"

A minute of silence passed longer than it should. Hermione hesitantly looked at Riddle and found him staring at her intently, as if he'd never stopped staring at her. He folded his arms in front of his body.

"Tell me what you want to tell me." Tom rolled his eyes.

"Do you want to talk about it?" She tried, speaking softly for fear of his reaction. It was understood that she was referring to his dream.

"No." He didn't even seem to think about Hermione's proposal. *Who would say? Granger as my private psychologist.*

Tom watched her slight tremor with the raw tone of his voice. For some reason unknown to him - which he was unwilling to give meaning - Tom made a sound in his throat before redeeming himself for his brutality.

"No. Because I don't remember." He tried to make his voice softer. *No one bites the hand that feeds it.*

Hermione nodded and didn't try anymore, but a minute of awkward silence came and she was more than willing to get out of that awkward situation when Riddle said:

"My magic reacts to you. Why?" He asked.

"What?" She turned her face toward him in one swift movement, her expression a slight confusion.

"Do you think I didn't notice? Now? Tonight? Just like the time I touch you at Hogwarts? My magic reacts to something in you and I want to know why."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Hermione quickly denied even to her own credibility.

In one swift motion, Riddle advances on her, his pale long-fingered hand reaching behind Hermione's neck, his fingers circling perfectly. Treacherously, the Time-Turner betrays Hermione when the skin of Riddle's fingers touches the steel of the cord. The Time-Turner seems to heat, and a charge of energy goes through both. It's not Hermione specifically that Tom's magic reacts to, it's the Time-Turner, just as she reacts. And apparently when she, him and the Time-Turner get in touch ... *Boom!* It happens.

They gasped, letting out their breath. Riddle was very close to Hermione, his face only inches from her face. She could feel his breath caressing her skin, both caught in each other's eyes. Tom smiled. It wasn't a smile of happiness, not a polite smile, it was a smile that showed his confidence or the sense of power he was feeling, and it made Hermione's eyes widen wildly at that realization.

"That's what I'm talking about." He told her, his eyebrows lowered, matching his piercing gaze. "What's this?" His gaze went from Hermione's face to her neck, where he saw a part of the steel cord.

Hermione turned away from him at once, removing his hand from her neck.

"What's this?" He demanded.

"It's a necklace." She answered and Tom narrowed his eyes.

"It's not an ordinary necklace."

"It's a magic necklace."

"Tell me what the necklace does and why my magic reacts to it." He ordered.

Hermione frowned, outraged at his demand.

"It's a magic necklace that's what it is."

"Granger." His tone was a warning.

"I don't have to tell you anything! If you want to know about the necklace, then why not tell me about your ring?" Hermione said, playing with the one thing she knew would make the young Dark Lord back off, and she wasn't wrong. As soon as Tom heard the word 'ring', he backed away, hugging his hand to his chest. "Do you think I didn't feel the magic?" She continued.

Hermione watched as Riddle clenched his right hand into a fist and his left hand covered his right hand, denying her the sight of the ring.

He looked at her and licked his lips to moisten.

"Very well, we'll keep our secrets for now."

Hermione jumped to her feet.

"I don't care about your secrets, so I don't think you will know about mine. I didn't even care what you did. It was you who dragged me into the Room of Requirement! "

" What? What did you say? " He asked.

"That I don't want to know about your secrets?" She wondered at the sudden change in his tone.

"No. In the end. You said 'Room of Requirement. How do you know the name of this room, Granger?" He rose from the bed slowly, Hermione's gaze widening as she realized her mistake and even more as she watched Riddle get up from the bed.

"Never mind." She turned and started walking toward her room. Tom followed her closely, the sound of their heavy footsteps echoing.

"Granger, get back here!" He ordered, pointing to the floor like she was a pet.

They were on opposite sides, Hermione entered her room and turned to face Tom.

"Good night!" She slammed the door in his face. She heard him practically growl on the other side of the door, his footsteps and how he slammed his bedroom door too. Hermione let out a sigh of

relief.

oOo

Tom awakens after a turbulent night with thoughts of Granger. After that heated discussion, of course, the *little witch* would stay in his system, taking away his peace.

He gets out of bed and as much as he tries to ignore it, he makes his bed. It is a custom that was learned at the orphanage. All children must make their beds.

Tom opens the bedroom door, he was prepared for the confrontation. *All weapons raised*. But all he finds is silence. He goes to the kitchen and is surprised to find breakfast for him. Tom is tempted to refuse the food, his pride is speaking louder, however, he knows that food is a source of energy and if she decides to kick him out of the island, this will be the last decent meal he will have when he returns to the orphanage.

He sits at the table and waits for her for five minutes, hoping she will join him, but the answer is obvious. After he finishes eating and cleaning what has to be cleaned, he does his morning routine. There are clothes waiting for him in the bathroom. Tom narrows his eyes, but he finds himself unable to refuse. When he came out of the bathroom, she is waiting for him in the living room.

"Good morning." Hermione is polite.

"Good morning." He replies.

She gestures for him to sit on the stool in front of her, Tom does what she asked. He looks at nothing, much more focused on the soft touch she makes on his back. It's very different from the burning side of her personality that confronted him every time.

"You're bipolar," Tom said suddenly.

"What?" She paused for a moment.

"You're probably bipolar," He explained. "Your changes in emotions and actions are constant."

She snorted.

"I'm not bipolar." She denied. "But my 'constant changes of emotions' are greatly influenced by your attitudes."

"My bad," Tom replied, not really apologizing. He could hear her little laugh as if she knew he would never apologize and he found himself joining her.

Hermione was silent, she concluded that her work was done. Riddle's back was smooth and uninjured, except for a small line that resembled the whiplash injuries Riddle received. These small lines looked old and healed and were at the base of Riddle's back, she probably didn't notice them because she was so focused on his larger wounds.

She found herself tracing the path of the wounds with her fingers and felt Riddle stiffen in her hand.

He sighed, forcing himself to relax.

"I hadn't seen these." She murmured, very kind and soft.

"Once for never again," Tom said.

"Hm?" She looked over his shoulder, trying to see his face, but he was staring at the rug.

"Once for never again" he repeated. "Once caught never again," he explained.

Hermione knew that there was more. She wondered if he would react brutally if she asked, but she didn't hold back.

"What happened?"

He mused, took a while for him to respond, probably wondering if he would give her another part of the story of his miserable life. - The life he will change. Because one thing is he sure: One day he will be on top.

"I was a kid," Tom replied. "I wanted candy. I went into the hidden pantry, grabbed some candy and went to my dorm, Billy Stubbs busted me, Mrs. Cole came along with Mr. Wool and I was punished. First was my hand, so that I would learn never to steal. I healed my hand because it was unacceptable to have such a visible reminder. But, I leave the mark on my back for me to remember that it was once for never again."

It was then that little Tom Riddle rebellion began. After a few more events, little Tom began to become cold and calculating. He took the other children's things for the simple pleasure of doing and not getting caught, of seeing their frightened expressions. *Definitely once for never again.*

Hermione listened attentively and silently, with her wand and ointment, she did magic. A few seconds later she got up and took a mirror with both hands.

"Well, why don't you see for yourself?" She suggested.

Tom got up slowly, he took his full height and looked over his shoulder at his reflection in the mirror. His back was smooth as it always should have been. His ivory skin was perfect and as healthy as it could be in its hue.

All the wounds were gone, all the wounds had healed. **She had healed everything.**

Tom's eyes go from his reflection to her. He looks at her intensely and sees her in a new light, one that he may have denied at first. She is valuable. He will give her the benefit of the doubt, and more patience and he will listen to what she has to say. She is smart and talented. He will give her two favours. Rewards for what she did for him. She gave him a place to be, and protection and took care of his health, even after all. She also took him out of the miserable boring orphanage. Much more than others have given him.

Tom completely turned his body toward her.

"When we get back to Hogwarts, I'll take the curse I put on you." He speaks suddenly, never saying this is a form of thanks.

Hermione blinked, surprised that this subject had come up. She opens and closes her mouth like a fish, not knowing what to say.

"That would be really nice," she replies, almost wanting to smile.

Tom walks slowly towards her, Hermione tries to look anywhere but at him, he's still shirtless and she has to admit to herself that Riddle makes her disconcerted and embarrassed. She can't stop the slight flush that starts on her cheeks. Without realizing it, she holds the mirror, trying to put a barrier between him and her. She can tell that he seems to be at least amused by her attitude.

Tom's confidence returns as he looks at her flushed cheeks. Somehow she is not immune to him.

"So...?" He makes his voice sound purposefully low. "Do you want to tell me about this necklace you wear?"

"Do you want to tell me what this ring is?" Hermione arched an eyebrow. Riddle snorted and retracts a step, Hermione smiled inwardly at herself.

She walks away, putting the mirror in place, watching Tom put on his men's tank top and then put on his shirt. When he is done, Tom looks at her, tilting his head to the side, his gaze intense. Suddenly he closes his eyes and smiles without showing his teeth. Hermione swallows, watching his expression. Whatever thought he was having, she only knows one thing:

It all started from now.

Chapter End Notes

Micrurus corallinus is one of the species of the coral snake, the true coral. The tenth most poisonous snake.

Dispholidus.

Chapter Notes

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Thank you very much, from the bottom of my heart I thank you guys.

English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if there is an error in the text. Let me know so I can fix it.

I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

Por Koryander

Chapter 11. Dispholidus - The cabin from hell.

Tom was looking at her a few times. Looking at her from under his lashes, the green iris seemed to shine in the light that came from the entrance to the tent and touched his face. He looked at her again, this time taking longer, taking every detail he could.

Her figure was against the light, the edge of her shape shining in the sun, her hair turning a strange shade of brown and honey, her cheeks pink from the sun and the few freckles on the tip of her nose. Her lips were also pink and not makeup, Granger looked like a girl who really wore little makeup and only dared when necessary. It was the sun that gave her a healthy look and color. She had considerably long straight lashes and deep, almost, feline eyes with the color that could turn caramel when the light reflected off them or as dark as the brown of a tree trunk in the absence.

Why did he notice all this? Because he thought she was beautiful and he didn't know how much or if it affected him. Tom is not taking it too seriously, he can consider what he thinks is beautiful or ugly, which appeals to him, however, he is good to ignore if it does not benefit him. He just thinks that she has a beauty that can be considered very common and quite different from the sophisticated standard of beauty that frequents House Slytherin.

Granger was in an armchair, her legs were tucked aside, while she rested her chin against her fisted hand with her elbow resting on the armrest. A Muggle book was on her lap and she was concentrating on reading. Her hair was tied up in a side ponytail with a few loose strands. *Such uncontrollable hair*, he thought.

Tom put the book he was reading aside and got up from the couch, putting his hands in his pants pocket.

"We need to go back to the Orphanage to get my things. We will be returning to Hogwarts soon." He spoke, his face expressionless.

Hermione paid attention to what he was saying. His tone of voice was demanded, a kind of order and his face was a stoic mask, without showing whether or not he had expectations. It was only then that Hermione understood a little more about him. He needs his bag for when he goes to Hogwarts, that bag is in the Orphanage - obviously - andy he *doesn't know how to Apparate*. That is, he needs her help. The way he spoke was nothing more than him trying to corner her in a way that he didn't need to ask for something. It's like he doesn't know how to ask or if he knows how to do it, it's not something he does with people who know what his real 'self' is like.

It definitely looks like a spoiled child, something very petulant indeed. The situation would be comical if it were not tragic. However, Hermione expects nothing less from him.

"Okay." She replies, watching his expression become serene.

She didn't know if that was a good thing or a bad thing, because it is never decisive when it comes to him. However, she considers them to be on "good terms". *No, no, good terms are too much*. Perhaps the right words are 'living together peacefully for now'. *This is more appropriate*.

She doesn't know how far this peace between them will go and she is 100% sure that they will conflict again, she just hopes that this time of peace will be long enough for her and Harry to leave without causing much confusion. Hermione also asks herself several times whether young Riddle will meet Harry and, if so, how he will act. She already has a sense of how Harry will behave, but as Riddle, he can be a box of surprises - many of them are unpleasant. She also wonders if this possible encounter between the two will fuel the Young Dark Lord's obsession.

"I'll get ready so I can take you." She continued, walking past him and heading towards her room. Hermione saw the slight wrinkle on his forehead with her last words. He is certainly proud.

Tom waited very little for her, when she returned, she was wearing a khaki goddess skirt and white

shirt with sleeves that ended at the wrist, her hair was loose and with a considerable patterned style in the only way she could, with a few strands to the right side is held by a hairpin.

"Should we go?" Granger asked, extending his hand to him.

He rolled his eyes and took her hand.

"Hold on tight," she ordered.

"More than that?" Tom frowned. He really wasn't holding her hand tightly, it felt weird to do something like that.

"You don't want to be apart from me while we're Apparating. I can say with one hundred percent certainty." Hermione explained and felt his grip on her hand. "There!" She let her lips escape. "It is not to break my fingers."

"You are the one who said to hold on tight."

"You did it on purpose."

He shrugged and loosened his grip a little. They disappeared in that alley that was known to Hermione and familiar to Tom, for different reasons, they knew that place so close to the Wool Orphanage. Tom knew because he always lived there and Hermione ... well, Hermione knew because she came here a few times, all these times with a clear intention of destroying Tom Riddle also known as the Dark Lord, Voldemort. This young boy that she was willingly bringing to pick up his things at the Orphanage. *Holy irony* .

When Tom felt that his feet were on the ground and the magic leaving him, he exhaled. Hermione looked at him out of the corner of her eye, watching what she considered an almost genuine smile from him. That almost smile was so little and almost nonexistent, that if she hadn't put together the puzzle that was his expression, she could have sworn that smile was never there. The pupils a little dilated, the eyebrows a little raised, the breathing a little fast and heavy and that strange flush on Tom Riddle's pale face. *Adrenaline*. He liked the feeling of adrenaline.

It was the first time Tom had Apparated, she mean - the first time he had Apparated *consciously*. He still didn't know how to do such magic by himself and if he had any idea how to do it - which she is sure he does - Tom was hesitant to practice. He didn't want to risk a splinching- something that Hermione very much doubts would happen to him. Let's face it, everyone knows that he was

good at doing any spell and she is sure that in the first Apparition class, he will get his License.

She was caught looking at him and he looked back, looking at her curiously.

"Shall we go?" He asked, removing the grip he had on her hand. Hermione nodded and followed the path beside him.

When they arrived at the Orphanage, Tom opened the iron gate and gestured for her to pass first. She didn't know if it was an act because they were in public or if he was really kind and that could be a cruel question. Then, he did the same thing with the big heavy wooden door, gesturing for her to walk ahead.

Hermione's shoes made a noise as she stepped on the wooden floor and looked around curiously, trying to find similarities with the Orphanage of her time. Although it was clean, this was a dark and depressing place. It had dark colored furniture and was not very cheerful, it didn't look like a place for children. Even the lamps didn't seem to light enough. It was a sad place, was in the aura of this Orphanage. Hermione did not imagine that places like an orphanage would be happy, only the name already incubated empathy and even pity in a person, places like that always have histories, but at Wool it was different. Very different.

She stopped and looked back, seeing Riddle standing at the door with his hands in his pocket, looking around like her. Hermione noticed the slight wrinkling of his nose, it was disgust and contempt in his expression. *He hates this place*, she realized. *And he is probably right*.

He walked over to her with a serious, hard expression. Mrs. Cole was coming from the main hall, her shoes making a constant noise, something that sounded like ' *tack, tack, tack, tack*'. She was wearing a burgundy dress that went a little below the knees and with long sleeves. There was a gold brooch pinned to the silk ruffled collar of her dress. The pale blond hair was tied in a perfect bun style of the time.

Hermione improved her posture and looked at Mrs. Cole calmly when she finally stopped in front of them.

"Riddle." Her voice was stern when she addressed Tom and Hermione swallowed, remaining still. "Where have you been all these days?" She continued.

"You gave me permission to spend the vacation with my schoolmate." Tom replied calmly, this time gesturing to Hermione, as if introducing her.

It was the first time that Mrs. Cole looked at Hermione, frowning.

"Don't you remember?" Tom spoke, approaching Mrs. Cole. Hermione felt the environment around her cool with magic that didn't come from her. She looked at Tom, who approached Mrs. Cole, looking intently at her. "Allow me to make you remember."

Mrs. Cole was caught in Tom Riddle's gaze like a deer blinded by light, her eyes widening, her eyebrows fluttering as she tried futilely to fight mental invasion and her mouth hanging down a little. Hermione tried to understand what he was doing.

Legilimens? Was he reading her mind and infiltrating false memories? *Confundus?* Was he creating confusion in her mind?

Or was it a strange mixture of the two spells?

"You remember." Tom said in a tone of voice that it was not a question, it was a statement.

"Of course, Riddle. I remember." She smiled. Mrs. Cole's expression softened in strange happiness and calm.

"Great." Tom Riddle smiled with satisfaction. "Now walk back to the office and stay there." He gestured like a nobleman, shooing Mrs. Cole away as if she were a chicken and she obeyed.

That was *Imperius* ... The realization shocked Hermione and she looked at him in astonishment. He had just done the curse *Imperius* without a wand in front of her and without any effort.

When Tom looked back at her, he smiled arrogantly and purposefully slowly, made the sign of silence to her. This was another little secret between them. The first of many.

Tom approached Hermione, she took his arm, looking alarmed.

"Did you just put her under a curse?" Hermione whispered, scolding him.

He looked at the hand holding his arm and raised an eyebrow suggestively at her, when Hermione noticed, she quickly removed her hand. Tom sighed and with an index finger, undid the light wrinkle on her forehead, forcing Hermione's expression to relax.

"Keep calm." He rolled his eyes. "At least she'll be happy for the rest of the day or until I decide to end the spell. Telling her to stay in the office is better than doing what I always wanted to do with her and Mr. Wool. Trust me." He advised her.

Hermione retracts when she hears his words, they are a warning, an advice. He could do something worse and she understood it so much that it filled her with fear. Reluctantly, she agreed.

"Very well." Hermione took a deep breath, trying to control her tone. She needs to look like she still has control of the situation. Tom nodded.

"Let's go." Tom nodded for Hermione to follow him upstairs.

"She can't go up to the boys' dorm, Riddle. Rules."

The boy's voice caught Hermione and Tom's attention. Tom's expression darkened when he took his gaze to the boy leaning against the hall wall. Hermione looked closely at the boy.

He had dark blond hair, pale blue eyes, with a lot of freckles on his 'potato' nose and cheeks, he was Riddle's height, with broad shoulders and could be considered muscular for his age. He wore a white dress shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbow and pants with suspenders.

That was Billy Stubbs.

"Don't get involved." Riddle almost growled.

"Billy, what's going on?" The girl who was accompanying Billy asked. Her curly hair was tied by a ribbon, the girl's brown eyes looked at Tom, before she looked down quickly.

"The girl with Riddle is a weirdo just like him. She attends the same school. "

Amy Benson looked at Hermione and wrinkled her forehead. Hermione watched Riddle's hand fist clench.

"We are not weird." Tom snarled at Billy.

"Ah, yeah, what is the term that Mrs. Cole uses? A school for the 'gifted'. Hm ... I know ... It's just a fancy word to say that you are mad." Billy laughed.

This time it was Hermione who spoke, irritated by Billy Stubbs' offense. As a child, Hermione was already called similar things.

"Forgive us if you don't have the necessary skills to attend the same school as us."

Billy narrowed his eyes in anger at Hermione. Tom stepped forward and Billy retracted. Whatever expression Billy saw in Tom, it stopped him. He went pale with fear. Amy held Billy's suspenders, also in fear.

"Come on, Billy." She murmured to him. He locked his jaw, looking scared and angry, but unable to face Tom. He just nodded to Amy and they both passed Tom and Hermione.

"Aberration." He murmured very quietly as he passed Tom, who followed him with an cold gaze.

Tom and Hermione stood in the hall of the orphanage in silence. Tom was the first to move, he stopped momentarily, looking at Hermione over his shoulder.

"What are you waiting for?" He asked.

Great, he was already pissed. There is nothing better than the angry Young Dark Lord. Hermione wondered if it really was a good idea to bring Tom here. She followed him, gathering all the patience she could, because apparently this place managed to expose the worst of Tom Riddle's personality.

They were walking down the hall to the dorms, when in the distance Hermione saw a woman cradling something in her arms. A small unmistakable noise came from the pile of fabrics. It was a baby. The woman was lulling a baby, absently singing to him. As soon as she saw Tom and Hermione, she got scared and brought the baby against her chest, hugging him protectively.

Martha was frightened by Tom Riddle's presence. She was a nurse at the Orphanage, she helped deliver the boy she now feared and remembers to this day how he was a baby and a strange child. He never cried, not even when he came into the world. He never got sick, not even when everyone had chicken pox . She doesn't remember seeing Riddle have a cold.

"R-Riddle." She spoke, her voice breaking for a moment.

Tom passed without even trying to recognize her, but Hermione stopped for a moment, looking at the newborn baby in the woman's arms.

"What happened?" Hermione asked, looking at the baby with a skin tone very similar to the color of caramel, with pink cheeks and a small heart-shaped mouth. Hermione's expression soon softened.

The woman, Martha, looked at Hermione for a moment, not recognizing her from anywhere.

"He was abandoned at our door two days ago." Martha explained. "Poor thing, he was very hungry."

"Does he have a name?" Hermione asked, gently touching the baby's small tuft of curly hair.

"They haven't given him a name yet. But I call him George. "

It was at that moment that Tom came into Martha's field of vision again, she fought the urge to protect the baby, she did not trust that boy and thought that Riddle's punishment was valid. How much contradiction in one person.

However, Riddle made no move to approach her or the baby, he was just curious about the child's appearance. Hermione watched Tom's expression with interest, but he looked stoic and just raised an eyebrow at the baby in Martha's arms.

"Come on, Granger." He called her and turned to the 27th dorm again. Hermione looked at the child once more before following Tom.

Martha wanted to get Riddle's attention about having a girl in his dorm, however, she fell silent and was content with the distance between her and him. That boy could give her the creeps if he wanted to.

Tom made no chivalry ceremony for Hermione when he entered his room. Hermione gathered her hands against her chest, looking around and shivering with cold. How was it possible that in the middle of the summer, the room could be so cold?

The room, like the whole Orphanage, did not convey any joy. Gray-painted walls, an iron bed, a wooden wardrobe and a small table with a chair. That was all that Tom Riddle had and that still didn't belong to him. There was a lonely window that overlooked the street, the only distraction for an extremely intelligent and skilled child. That was a part of the boy's childhood that was in front of her.

Hermione sat up, the spring of the bed creaked under her weight, as if it was already very worn. She was silent, watching Tom open the wardrobe to grab the trunk.

"Don't worry about the baby, Granger." Tom said. "He is going to be adopted. Babies are always adopted."

Whether he was trying to reassure her or mock the situation, she couldn't say.

"You were not adopted." She stated.

Tom stopped the second he heard Granger's words. The room was quiet, the Orphanage looked dead, the only thing that seemed to move was the dust particles through the light coming from the window. Hermione wished to take her words back at once. You didn't have to be smart to understand that she *'threw shit at the fan'*. The suspense in the room got worse when she noticed Tom locking his jaw. The only sound in the room was the sound of the fabric of his clothing as he moved slowly. He snorted in disbelief and looked at her.

"No, I was not adopted." Tom confirmed.

Hermione didn't know if it was safe to look at him, but the sound of his shoes as he walked towards her, aroused her curiosity and she was unable to avoid looking at him. Her eyebrows fluttered, trying to form an expression.

"I am the *antichrist*, according to Mr.Wool, remember?" He laughed grudgingly, making her remember the words the lame old man said to Tom as he whipped him.

"Are you trying to tell me that he prevented you from being adopted?" Hermione asked, trying to digest the information.

" *I'm saving families*, that's what I grew up listening to." He shrugged, indifferent.

Hermione looked down in a thoughtful and emotional way. Is the whole future obscure because Tom Riddle was never adopted? All because of a man who didn't understand the differences? Because was Tom denied the chance to know what a family is? Are these the factors that contributed to the formation of the Dark Lord? Muggle hatred?

"I-I ... I'm sorry." Hermione said in a choked voice.

It seemed to be the wrong words. Tom's expression darkened, his mouth turned into a line, while he locked his jaw and looked angrily.

"I don't want your pity."

"I ... I ..." She didn't know what to say. Hermione stood up, undecided.

"Get out." He ordered. "I changed my mind. Go away."

She retracted, looked at him for a second and turned away, leaving room 27, leaving Tom Riddle alone in his room at the orphanage. Tom heard the sound of her shoes as she left. He rested his hands on the small wooden table and looked out the window at the busy street.

"Shit." Tom exhaled and turned sharply, taking the trunk from the closet and going after Hermione.

Hermione stopped in the entrance hall, taking a deep breath, looking up the stairs.

"Are you okay, miss?"

Hermione started in surprise when she heard the male voice, a boy was coming to her aid.

"I'm Eric Whalley, miss." He held out his hand to her. "Nice to meet you."

"Hermione. Hermione Granger." She shook his hand in greeting.

Eric Whalley had brown hair hidden by the male beret he wore. The white dress shirt and gray trousers with suspenders appeared to be the men's uniform for the young boys at the Orphanage.

"I'm sorry for the intrusion, but aren't you too young to adopt a child?" He asked. Hermione paused for a moment, confused by his question, but understanding soon came to her.

"Oh, no, no, no. I'm not here to adopt ..." She raised both hands in a negative gesture. "I'm here ..."

"She's with me, Whalley." Tom Riddle's voice overlapped Hermione Granger's. He was walking down the stairs calmly, holding the trunk with one hand, as if he hadn't run. He would never tell her that he ran to go with her.

Eric took a step back and swallowed.

"You changed your mind very quickly." Hermione murmured when Riddle was close to her.

"We talk about this later." He explained to her.

"Is that true, miss?" Whalley asked. Although he was afraid of Riddle, Whalley was cordial and could never leave a lady he thinks is helpless.

Tom narrowed his eyes at Eric's insinuation,. Irritated, Tom addressed Hermione.

"Let's go, Granger. He's not like us. "

Hermione was about to refute when more people came and stood behind Eric Whalley. Amy Benson, Billy Stubbs, a few other orphans and even Martha. Amy Benson whispered something in Eric's ear, which brought an accomplishment to him that was transmitted in his eyes.

The gaze of each of these people was the same, it was strange. It was like being judged. They were curious looks and yet they conveyed a kind of fear and disgust, a strange kind of discrimination.

Tom took Hermione's arm and shot everyone a look of anger and contempt.

They are not like me. They are not like us.

With that thought he took Hermione outside, holding his trunk with the other hand.

oOo

"Well, can you tell me what was that about?" Hermione questioned him, crossing her arms under her breasts.

They were sharing a table near the window, away from the other tables, in a sort of cafeteria.

"Muggles are strangers." He shrugged, gesturing for her to give him the newspaper that had on the first page: *Soviet forces conquer Kursk* . He didn't want to talk about what happened at the Orphanage, dealing with it as if it were nothing. Deliberately ignoring Granger's questions.

"I am not talking about them, although we will talk about them at a time that I consider to be very close, I am talking about **you**."

It is at that moment that they are served with tea, cookies and bread rolls, something that was considered a luxury, due to the rationing of food, but mainly because in the eyes of others, they were a young couple who could afford that expense.

Tom smiles at the waitress who deliberately takes time to serve just so she can admire him timidly. When she walks away, she is so dazzled by his smile that the poor thing stumbles. Unfortunately she didn't see that as soon as she walked away, Tom rolled his eyes and his expression became serious.

He pretends to be reading the newspaper just to ignore Hermione. She narrows her eyes at him.

"Hello! I'm talking to you."

Tom exhaled, lowering the newspaper and placing it on the table. He stopped for a moment and then looked at her.

“I hate that look of pity you gave me. You told me that compassion and pity are different things and I tell you that if you give me that look of pity again, I'm going to shove that newspaper down your throat. ”

Hermione looked at him indignantly. *See? This is what happens when you help the Dark Lord. You discover what his personality is like and as soon as he knows that you know, he puts his wings out. Great.*

She knew that he was not really threatening her ,because she already knows what it's like to be threatened by him and is sure that is not a threat. He is just irritated, exasperated by the situation. However, she reproaches his action by slapping the table.

Taking a deep breath, she says:

“Okay, I understand. I just thought it was wrong that he deprived you of being adopted. ”

"Get over it." He said, picking up the newspaper again. Tom didn't want to care, he preferred not to think about these things too much.

"Weren't you angry?" She asked quietly. It was an extremely stupid question, because who wouldn't be angry with a situation like this.

Tom looked up at her. He didn't understand what she was getting at and what she wanted him to admit. He could not see what she or he would gain from talking about his past, he is only sure that he will not tell everything, he doesn't know how reliable she is and what she will do with the information she receives. But the truth is that he doesn't mind giving her that information, because he no longer considers it to be valuable and it's not like he matters anymore.

"At first, when I started to understand, yes, I was angry, but now ..." He shrugged, reading the newspaper again. “Don't you realize that an Orphanage is like going to a pet store? Just a sign saying 'for sale' is missing. I stopped caring and you should do the same thing. ”

His words, the tone of his voice, the way he behaved, everything was cold and insensitive. There was no trace of regret, nothing that Hermione knew as a feeling of sadness. He was detached, Tom Riddle didn't really care anymore about not being adopted.

"It is almost a rule in an Orphanage: Babies are always adopted. As you get older, the chances are less. When the twelve-year mark is reached, the chances are over." He explained, still reading the newspaper, talking to her as if they were talking about the weather. "Honestly, I'm sorry for the adoptees. They barely know what to expect when *Mommy*—" He scoffed. "Has a biological child."

"Besides, Granger, we are not like them. They look at us as if we were freaks, *aberration* - " Tom continued, remembering the words Billy Stubbs used, laughing without joy. "But the truth is that we are the best. Muggles are nothing. "

"This is not true." She contradicts him. There was hatred for Muggles. Hermione wondered how long it would take him to show his disgust for Muggles. Unfortunately it didn't take long.

"It is obvious that it is." He looked at her like she was crazy. "Granger, we are better than them. The things that we are able to do are incomparable. They are bad and the fact that we have to hide our existence from them makes me extremely angry. "

"There are good and bad people on both sides, Tom."

"You have got to be kidding." Tom rolled his eyes. "Don't tell me you're a muggle lover, Granger?" He looked her up and down.

"We are not going to argue about that. I'm sure we have different opinions."

She didn't want to talk about bloodlines, Muggles and Muggle-borns with Tom Riddle. Not with him. That opened the door to a very dangerous debate, and judging by his gaze, she could see the gears in his brain working, which is not a good thing. On the way back to the known alley, they walked side by side. Tom Riddle did not make any aggressive moves or questions before she ended the debate abruptly, in fact, both preferred to walk in comfortable silence, entertained with their own thoughts. Of course, Hermione knows that now Tom Riddle is thinking and analyzing everything she said, the danger of the situation is there. However, he had a calm and serious expression, looking ahead, beside her, closer than she ever thought he would be. It was as if he was escorting her, marking territory, the strange part of the masculine behavior of the forties.

Something caught Hermione's attention, causing her to stop and Tom stopped at once. She was looking across the street, with a thoughtful look and a small frown of concern between her eyebrows. Tom followed her gaze and raised an eyebrow.

"I would like to change this whole situation." She murmured, looking at a mother with three children lying on a London sidewalk.

The mother who was holding a baby in her arms was in the mood to cry when she saw her two other children complaining about being hungry. A mother's desperation, Hermione supposed, is not being able to feed her children.

It was strange how many other people passed by and had the capacity to ignore. Hermione looked at the bag she was holding, it was what was left of what she and Tom ate.

Should I intervene? She wondered. It didn't seem right to do nothing, yet, Hermione knew she shouldn't have had any attitudes in the past. Doing nothing, being impartial, was so difficult, it was not human. And against everything she knew, against all advice, there was that impulse that told her it was right.

"Do you mind?" She asked Tom, showing him the cafeteria bag.

Tom shrugged, watching as she took a deep breath and crossed the street. If this was her act to have a peaceful night with her head on the pillow, he wouldn't stop her. At first, Tom thought that kindness, compassion, pity - whatever you want to call it - was extended to him out of interest. That she hides something? This he is sure of. That she acts differently? No. She was the same as before, in that way sometimes rough, sometimes kind, intelligent and too emotional.

He didn't quite understand why she did that, it's not like she was going to feed everyone in poverty. She would give this family something, but there would be others in worse shape. That is the world, it is not easy, just or gentle. However, one day, he will have control of everything, so he will be the order and the law. The judge and the executioner.

It was the sunny afternoon of the next day, Tom Riddle had already settled in and was treating the tent as if it were his home, which surprised Hermione. He actually let all the masks go, or so it seemed.

Nix made a noise when he entered the tent, carrying a letter stuck in his beak.

Tom watched with interest when Hermione took the letter, Nix flew towards him, waiting for some snack for the good work. Tom tried to calm the owl on the perch by smoothing his feathers. Incredibly, Tom got along better with animals than with humans.

When Hermione saw whose letter it was, she glanced over her shoulder at Riddle, noting how her

owl seemed to get along so well with him in such a short time. She felt a little jealous, but her concern was greater. Opening the letter quickly, Hermione read the words that buried her hope once again. Her friend was still not good and was saying nonsense.

She wondered again how much this affected Harry Potter.

Hermione looked again at Tom Riddle who was unchanged in the face of everything, she left the letter in her hand catch fire through magic and burn to ashes, while that strange feeling of bitterness grew. She pulled away, needing to stay away from him.

What did not go unnoticed by Tom.

Whatever she read in the letter, it stirred her emotions. He thought, watching her go out of the tent. Tom put Nix in the cage and closed it, then walked over to find Hermione on the beach.

She was sitting on a rock, hugging her legs, while the waves calmly licked part of the sand. Her hair flew against the breeze as if it had a life of its own, she looked at the sea with longing and devotion and Tom wondered who was the person who could give her that kind of look.

He walked over to her, rolling the sleeves of his shirt up to his elbows. When he approached her, he noticed her embracing her legs tighter.

"What upset you?" He asked, sitting next to her.

Tom heard a small snort coming from her and she shook her head, as if she found something funny in his question.

She lifted her face slightly, her brown eyes very much like mahogany, looking under her long lashes. Her gaze hit him and Tom found himself swallowing heavily, as if to dissipate a lump in his throat.

"Nothing to worry about." She answered.

Tom looked down, looking at her hands.

"You know and ask about my past. I don't think it's fair." He looked at her face again, raising an

eyebrow.

"A friend." Hermione spoke in a strong voice. "It's at St.Mungo's. The news was not promising. "

Understanding showed on Riddle's face. *Too emotional* , he thought. Or maybe it was he who was very unemotional, or else, no one managed to activate that side of him. *Thanks to Merlin* , he thanked.

He looked around, not knowing what to say.

"I want to ask you something." Tom took her hand, he heard the air leave her lips in surprise, it was her right hand, the one holding the wand. She never walked without her wand. Hermione watched with curiosity as he traced her hand, there was no strength or brutality, only softness, but she ingested the air a little distressed by the situation when he touched the wood of the wand. The same curiosity that was in her eyes reflected in Tom Riddle's eyes. Admiring the wand with almost childlike interest, Tom asked:

"What was that? What happened in the Room of Requirement? " He looked at her, his hand still in hers and her wand.

The questions, the curiosity, she knew they were going to come. Hermione thinks it took too long, but maybe he was testing the waters with her, to see how far he could go. It is not surprising, however, that he remembers everything and every detail; Riddle is like that, she supposed.

She then wonders what she can say that doesn't provide him with valuable information and what he doesn't already know. *Was it safe?* She wondered.

"Priori Incantatem." Hermione murmured to him.

Tom stopped for a moment, looked at her and then at her wand.

"Sister wands." He concluded. He had read about it when he was a newbie at Hogwarts, he learn about wands and about the school, trying to gather as much information as he could not to be a layman, yet it was never enough.

He traced the wand's wood with his fingers, ignoring Hermione's tight grip, she was still afraid to let the wand go and he admired her for being so smart. The wand, even with Hermione, reacted to Riddle, perhaps because of Riddle's wand that was the sister. Tom then remembered the incredible

connection between the two in the Room of Requirement.

Yes, a connection . He looked at Hermione again. One more thing that made her connected to him.

"Is that why you didn't want to duel?" He asked and she snorted.

"Yes. Among other reasons as well. " Hermione scolded him with a look. "You wanted to harm me."

"Is it possible to duel?" Tom asked, ignoring Hermione's last sentence. He's not thinking of dueling with her, it's just a curiosity, a possibility that he wants to be prepared for.

"I believe so, but if both spells are cast at the same time -"

"The connection occurs." He finished the sentence for her. "How do you know about the Room of Requirement?"

He sees the hesitation in her, she licks her lips and looks down. He's still holding her hand.

"I read in a book about Hogwarts and some of the mysteries in the castle. Given what happened, I just concluded that that was the Room of Requirement. " She lied. "And how did you find out?" She asked.

Tom looked out to sea, the sun is starting to set between the clouds and the sea, and the sky has become a strange mixture of colors like orange, red and purple.

"In a book too. A book that talks about the castle. " He answered in his mysterious voice.

This book he was referring to was inside the Chamber of Secrets, created by Salazar Slytherin himself, one of the founders of Hogwarts, explaining the entire construction of the castle.

Hermione stared at him for a few seconds, seeing Riddle's profile and how his hair flew against the wind and returned to the same perfect position. They fell in silence, watching the sunset, listening

to the sound of the waves and smelling the sea air. Riddle was still moving his fingers against Hermione's skin, it didn't look like he was aware of what he was doing. However, when he moved to her left hand, going up the wrist, he stopped. Tom blinked a few times trying to focus, he looked down at her wrist, his thumb gently pressing the delicate flesh. He turns her arm over and over again, and Hermione tries to understand what he is doing with curious expectation. Tom stops again, exposing her wrist to him, his index finger traces all the way to the fold of her arm, this is where Hermione knows.

"I feel magic here. It's a charm to hide something. " He says, frowning.

Hermione swallowed and she put her hand with her wand over her arm to hide from Riddle's view. Tom looked at her, watching as she bites her bottom lip and pulls her arm towards her body.

"What's it?" He asked.

He notices her looking to the right side, then to the left side, running her tongue over her lips. *Undecided and stressful behavior* , he deduces.

"A scar." She whispered almost inaudibly. Tom narrows his eyes at her when he catches her looking at his ring. "I... I need to think, excuse me." Hermione gets up from the rock where she was sitting and walks away from him, walking along the beach, lost in her own thoughts.

He watches her from afar, watching her walk on the beach in her sundress, her hair loose and unruly against the breeze. Tom looks at the iron cord around her neck and asks himself a question.

Unconsciously he plays with the ring on his middle finger, while still looking at her. *It's possible?* He wonders, thinking about the protective behavior that Hermione has with that necklace that he never had a chance to see completely.

No, of course not. He denies it to himself. *Granger doesn't seem like the type of person who would do such a thing.* Tom looks at the ring that doesn't shine in the light. *Or am I mistaken?* He turns his head in the direction she's gone.

It is dawn and Riddle was in his dreamless sleep, resting in what was his room now, after a silent dinner between him and Granger. Both retired early to their proper rooms after doing the night routine.

He's snoring softly in the darkness of his room when a scream echoes. At first he doesn't move, he just grumbles as he turns to the other side of the bed, but when more screams of terror echo, Riddle wakes up instantly. He listens carefully and turns to the other side again, willing to ignore, but she screams and cries. Tom lifts his chest from the bed, looking around, listening to the screams that came from Granger's room. Throwing the blankets away, he gets up, opening the door quickly and walking with heavy steps to her room, ready to act if necessary.

He has his hand on the doorknob when he pauses for a moment, not knowing how she is dressed inside the room, but when he hears her moan 'no' in whimpering, he opens the door.

Tom swallows his breath when he sees her like that. She has her lower body hidden by the covers, her hair is loose and spread over the pillow, some strands of her hair are stuck to her forehead, a drop of sweat runs down her forehead, down her cheek, going towards the chin, her eyebrows flutter and he thinks she can cry in her sleep, her breathing is fast, giving him the view of her chest rising and falling.

Riddle's eyes appear to glow green in the partial darkness of the room; he walks slowly and silently to the edge of the bed, looking at her from above. There is a crease between his eyebrows when he frowned.

His gaze takes a long way over her body structure, passing over her face, stopping on her lips for a moment, then on her chin to her slender neck, where he perceives the main vein; the jugular, descending into the small space between her collarbones, to where her breasts are hidden by the strange shirt she wears. The necklace, which he is so curious to know, is hidden in the valley between her breasts, under her shirt. Her skin is flushed and with little beads of sweat. Unconsciously he licks his lips and fists his hands, it was his body trying to control his impulses. He takes a deep breath and seems to get dizzy when he smells her fragrance.

Tom looks again at the iron cord, the desire to touch and pull the necklace from valley hidden by her shirt is great, but there is something that goes beyond that. It is the strange feeling at the base of his stomach, a kind of tug, spasm or as if there are birds flying in there. His blood is running in all directions, but the one he can feel most is there and in his ears.

However, the cry from her, makes him wake up and shudder with his ears aching. He locks his jaw, shakes his head to concentrate.

"Granger." He moves her shoulder, trying to get her to wake up. "Granger." Tom calls her again, but it is only the third time that she wakes up.

Hermione raises her chest, breathing quickly, she blinks a few times and puts her hand against her forehead, trying to calm herself. She looks to the side, finding Riddle standing.

"Riddle?" She murmurs in a broken voice. He's wearing a set of gray pajamas, the top four buttons

on his shirt are undone, giving her a partial view of his collarbone and chest.

"You were screaming like a pig being taken for slaughter." He says, confirming to Hermione that she was having a nightmare. A nightmare that left her shaken, after all, dreaming about Bellatrix Lestrange and the torture she suffered, always makes Hermione look like this. She thinks it was worse this time because she quoted the Dark Lord himself about her scar.

"Sorry." She murmured, resting both hands on the bed.

"Hm." Riddle shifted his weight to the other leg. Hermione moved restlessly, stroking her wrist. "It's about the scar." Tom doesn't ask, he just knows what her nightmare is about, she demonstrates in her behavior.

Hermione watches him sit on the bed next to her and then lie down, looking up at the starry ceiling created by magic in a spell that was very similar to Hogwarts. Not knowing what to do, Hermione looks at him for a few seconds, before finally lying in bed again. Riddle has the decency to lie on top of the blankets.

"Can I see?" He asks, of course he is referring to a scar.

"No." She replies and swears she can hear a small laugh coming from him, she is probably wondering too much.

A few more seconds pass, both of them were silent watching the magical starry sky that Hermione created, until he asked again:

"Was it an accident?"

"No." Hermione replied. "It wasn't an accident."

"Hm." Tom murmured. "You were tortured."

Hermione's silence was all the confirmation he needed, now the puzzle pieces were starting to make sense to him.

"Was it a muggle?" He asked.

"No."

"Oh, a wizard."

"A witch." She corrected him.

How strange and ironic, he thought. While he had been tortured by Muggles, she had been tortured by Wizards.

"Was it in the war?" He continued, looking at the sky that was now showing the constellation Ophiuchus - or in other words: Serpentarium.

"Yes." She murmured in a distant voice.

"Is the witch alive?"

"Yes."

"Hm." He exhaled, waited a moment and asked again. "Would you take revenge on her? Would you kill her if you had the chance? "

Tom waited for her answer, at first all he received was silence. He even thought she was back to sleep, but then she replied,

"Yes."

He thought for a few seconds about her answer.

"Good."

oOo

"I can't believe we're almost late to catch the Train." Hermione grunted, being followed by Riddle, as she walked to choose one of the Hogwarts Express cabins.

"You were the one who was late with your things, remember?"

She didn't even realize that all this moment he was guiding her, even though she was walking ahead.

"Ah, yeah, is it my fault now?"

"Whatever, Granger." He didn't want to argue with her. "It's that cabin."

She rolled her eyes at his behavior, pulled the cabin door aside, when she looked inside, she gasped at her breath and opened her eyes wide. It was only a matter of hundredths for her to turn around, however she collided with Riddle, who was at all times behind her.

"Have you gone crazy?" She whispered to him.

"Get in the cabin, Granger." He ordered, a side smile appearing on his expression.

Stiffly and slowly, Hermione turned to face the cabin. It lay inside: Black, Lestrangle, Malfoy, Mulciber, Rosier and Avery. Everyone was looking at her.

She had just entered the cabin from hell.

Chapter End Notes

-Dispholidus typus also known as Boomslang, the eleventh most poisonous snake in the world.

Author's note: Well, I wasn't entirely happy with this chapter, I don't know why, but I hope you like it. Tell me what you think.

Bothriechis.

Chapter Notes

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I would also like to thank the 833 kudos and 162 bookmarks. Thank you so much.

English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if I have any errors in the text. Let me know so I can correct it.

Thank you, I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 12. Bothriechis - An agreement with the Devil.

Hermione looked at him for a long time, her breath coming out of her mouth a little faster than normal, his expression declaring that they would not argue about this. She was going to stay in that cabin.

Feeling the looks on her back, she takes one or two deep breath and straightens her posture, lifting her chin a little and swallowing hard. Hermione turns around slowly, looking at the members inside the cabin. On the right were Malfoy, Rosier and Lestrangle, on the left were Alphard, Avery and Mulciber. There were two empty seats, both near the window, only on opposite sides. Either she sat on the M, R, L side or she sat on the A, M, A side and she didn't even have to think too much, she preferred to stay on the known side a thousand times, with Alphard. However, before she even moved towards Alphard's side, Riddle sat in the empty seat, leaving her to sit next to Malfoy, Rosier and Lestrangle.

Hermione wonders again if her sins are too much that she would not only be trapped in this cabin, but she would also sit beside the most loyal and cruel Death Eaters.

She settles stiffly beside Malfoy, feeling him look at her out of the corner of his eye, but Hermione ignores, maintaining the posture of her body with her hands together in her lap. Her face is expressionless, as she looks at the culprit of her being in this situation. The cabin is as silent as a graveyard and the only one who seems to be enjoying is Riddle, although he does not have a smile on his face, she is already beginning to recognize the small twitch in the muscles around his eyes and the glow in those irises. The small lateral tilt of his head is an indication that he knows that she knows that he is enjoying. In any case, she prefers to lower her gaze for a moment, just to control her emotions, when she raised her head, Alphard is looking at her.

There is a clear question in his expression: *What the hell are you doing here?* And the only way she can respond is with a shrug, keeping their conversation silent and hiding the strange rapport they had.

She lets her eyes roam around the cabin, there is a sociopath project sitting in front of her, a future manipulator beside her, a cruel boy sitting in the same direction, a sadist sitting at the end, a diabolical alchemist with no morals on the opposite side, a malicious boy and everything revolves around a question: *How did she come to sit next to them?*

This only adds to the personal terror she feels. All in all, they were teenage boys, young adults at most, yet they were able to do what even adults didn't dare to do. The thought froze her inside and Hermione knows that if there is a plan between them, if they act, she will have to fight right here. They were in greater numbers, it was five against one - she is excluding Alphard from her calculation, because she doesn't know how he will behave if something happens - and they were considered powerful, and with each of them would be hard work. But, she is sure of one thing: she will not fall without taking at least one of them.

That's when she looks at Riddle again, feeling betrayed, used. Was that his retribution? It's not like when she helped him, she was thinking of some sort of retribution or payment, but after all, she figured he would at least be happy to make his intentions clear, that at least he would say 'I still want to kill you' and that would make it all clear to her. *He can still be a box of negligible surprises.*

The Hogwarts Express makes the first move, catching Hermione off guard, due to the movement of the train, Hermione has her body being thrown forward and she is forced to rest one hand on one of Riddle's knees so that she can steady herself.

It was a quick moment for the others, but for the two involved, time passed a little more slowly when their eyes met. Hermione recoiled as if Riddle's body was on fire, quickly putting herself in the correct, rigid position. Her mind started to think of escape plans, she looked out the window, watching as the landscape moved quickly because of the train. She wondered what the chances of survival were if she preferred to jump off the moving train. She could always use magic to help.

If nothing happened, then it would be a long and stressful trip to Hogwarts.

At first, Riddle found the awkward silence amusing, the exchanging looks asking what he was up to, the fear and submission of everyone inside. But then she leans on one of his knees to try to steady herself, looking at him, and in those brown eyes, he sees fear, dread, betrayal, accusation everything directed to him. She retracts, looking at the landscape, the hands on her lap in the shape of a fist, he watches her move her fingers as if she misses taking the wand from her holster and holding it and she probably has a thought that she discards, because a small sound comes.

He prefers to ignore it, taking a book from his male cross bag. It was one of her books, which she didn't mind that he picked up to read. Riddle would not give in to her and would not explain to the Knights what he wanted, at least for now.

It was more than half the trip, the silence was harsh and unbearable, everyone seemed to be minding their own business. When he looks at her from under his lashes, he is surprised that she has maintained her posture until now. The Knights stopped talking since Granger arrived, they don't know how much they can talk or be themselves and mainly, they don't know the role that Granger has here, among them. They are too curious, they want to know if they can finally relax, but none of them dares to say anything so far.

It was at that moment that Lestranger made a sound with his throat.

"Riddle ...? ' There is a secret question in Lestrage's tone of voice, Riddle exchanges a look with him and Hermione wonders what is going on, if this is when things will start to get worse, however, against everything she thinks, Tom replies:

"She is with us."

The Knights of Walpurgis exchange glances, wrinkling their foreheads a little, wondering how Granger went from being an enemy to ' with us' and why Riddle and she arrived together. The need to feed the Knights' curiosity and animosity, Riddle know he will have to do, however, **how** , **when** and **if** he will explain, it is his decision. And one thing he doesn't accept is being questioned. But for now, this short statement seems to be enough. They exhale and automatically relax. Lestrage stretches his legs on the upholstery on the opposite side, Mulciber loosens his tie, Avery yawns as if bored, Alphard makes a movement with the neck

and Rosier with his fingers, Malfoy crosses his legs and talks to Mulciber about the summer vacation.

The amusement gave way to ignorance and then to the boredom, he did not want to be moved by Granger's behaviour, but if she gave him another cautious look, he knew he would care.

"For Merlin's sake, relax, Granger." Riddle practically screamed, demanding that she relax her posture and muscles.

She swallows, finding the inner fire to debate with him.

"You can't blame me. If I remember well, the last time I was with you, it was not pleasant. "

Riddle snorts and the small superior smile he gives, along with the sounds of laughter from others, show that at least they find what happened funny. Alphard silently watches the scene.

Annoyed, Hermione tries to kick Riddle's shin, an act that none of the future Death Eaters would think of doing. Alphard looked at Hermione as if a second head had grown or as if she was having a death wish. However, to everyone's surprise, Riddle dodges Hermione's foot, looking more amused than annoyed. Alphard couldn't say how Hermione was from the girl Riddle wanted to torture and kill for the girl who had the audacity to try to kick Tom Riddle. If this situation is not strange, he doesn't know what else it would be.

"How much negative emotion, Granger." There are fun, irony and arrogance in Riddle's tone of voice. "Look on the bright side. There is always a way to get something beneficial out of a bad situation. See where you are now. "

"I really don't know if I'm in a good position," Hermione responds with sincerity and a slight intonation of anger. "Your advice? Is it for you? "

He stops for a moment.

"Let's say I'm an expert at that." There is a slight inclination towards the upper corner of the right side of his lips, indicating that such an expression can be considered a smile. She doesn't doubt his statement for even a second, Riddle must surely be a master when it comes to getting the best out of the worst situations.

"Let's be realistic," Hermione says, leaning her upper body slightly towards him, in response to her approach, Riddle also leans in, anxious for the Gryffindor girl's smart thoughts. "S-Should I trust?"

Tom raises his eyebrows a little and looks her expression up and down out of the corner of his eyes.

He thinks about her question for a moment, at most three seconds.

"Could I trust you that day and every other day?" He answers with a question, even if it was a trick question willing to catch a lie, there is truth there, in those words.

Even surrounded by his most loyal followers, there is no desire in Riddle to expose the details to them. What Granger saw, participated in and offered to him, belongs to him. There is a degree of intimacy with her that puts her on a different level than others, a different way of relating. For all intents and purposes, she saw more about his life than he ever allowed others to see, and even though the two hated each other in the beginning, he assumes they are fine now. However, she will also have to give a vote of confidence in him. He finds her fear interesting, even funny. As she is ready for anything, ready to put her claws out and fight if she feels threatened, but now, this is unnecessary behaviour. He has no intention of harming her. She will just have to believe this as he also believed that she would not harm him.

Riddle holds her gaze with his for a moment, before exhaling and putting himself in the ideal position again.

"Just relax, okay." He nods at her.

Hermione holds his gaze a little longer, before nodding and also correcting her posture. She makes a slight movement with her shoulders, forcing the trapezius muscle and all other muscles to relax. Against all rational instincts and facts, she trusts him for now. She wants to believe what he said here and in the tent and wants to believe that now she is out of the way of the future Death Eaters, because the only one who can keep them away is Riddle. It is Riddle who maintains the leash of the Death Eaters and, apparently, what he says is the law between them.

That's what it is for today, she thinks.

For Riddle, they have more similar situations than he likes to admit and for his realization, it doesn't bother him as much as he did at the beginning. After all, strangely they seem to have a complement, but as far as it goes, it has yet to be seen. Granger's behaviour is nothing more than her leaving her comfort zone. They "*played*" when he was in her territory, now it was her turn to come and play in his.

Riddle picks up the book again and the others take it as a cue to return to acting normally. Hermione looks at the horizon through the window, watching the sun in the landscape before water droplets appear one by one until it starts to rain. She frowned a little, confused. *Summer rains*. More as the Express advances, the rain seems to intensify, the sun stopped shining, hidden by the thick rain-laden clouds that left the sky dark.

"It looks like the weather has changed." She heard Lestrangle comment and looked in his direction.

Hermione exhaled and for her realization and everyone else, in her breaths the strange *smoke* that indicated the change in temperature to colder occurred. Riddle stopped reading, raised his head in Hermione's direction and everyone looked at each other, stagnating in their seats when the temperature seemed to drop to 273.15 ° Kelvin (32° Fahrenheit). Hermione shivered with cold and instinct, she looked at the window and watched in horror as the window began to have the freezing texture of frost. Riddle also looked on with fascination and suspicion, until from the bottom corner of the side where Hermione was, long, skeletal fingers moving appeared, the hand dragged itself across the surface of the window feeling the presence of those in that cabin. The humanoid creature covered in torn dark robes with a hood showed slowly, the noises it made - very similar as when a person is short of breath or who wants to suck more air than is able - could be heard through the window.

The cabin occupants were standing with their eyes fixed on that horror show, seeing that creature that could only have come from the most terrible of nightmares.

"Dementors ..." Hermione whispered. Dementors were not Hermione's dread, but it would be foolish to say that she would not fear being near a Dementor.

The Dementor placed his mouth - which looked more like a small bottomless hole - against the window and as if in anger spread his skeletal hands on the window in a sudden, loud movement, which startled Hermione. She threw herself back against Malfoy, pushing him so she could get away from the window. Malfoy pushed Rosier who pushed Lestrangle.

Riddle stood up and stared at the creature, dazzled as if it were a new scientific discovery for him. He had never seen a Dementor so close.

Hermione was about to pull the wand out of the holster and do the Patronum spell when the Express started moving again. The light inside the cabin came back, but it still didn't seem strong enough. She sighed and leaned her head against the seat, for all she knows this didn't seem like a good sign.

"Wow, did you see that?" Mulciber spoke, more excited than afraid. "It was a *fucking* Dementor!"

"That was awesome!" Rosier agreed.

"You had to see your face." Avery pointed at Rosier, laughing. "It looked like you were going to pee your pants."

"Fuck, my dad said the Ministry was going to put the Dementors as guards at the Hogwarts and Hogsmeade perimeter after the attack happened, but ... shit, I never thought I'd see a Dementor." It was so much joy that it could be heard in Lestrangle's voice that any Dementor would be pleased.

Hermione looks at them with shock and disbelief. *What's wrong with them?* she wonders. She agrees, on a certain level, that seeing a Dementor is a vision of life, it is certainly incredible for anyone, but their reactions were not normal.

Riddle interprets Hermione's shocked expression by the verbiage that the other cabin occupants use. Somehow, despite everything he knows about her, he considers her a 'lady' to maintain appearances of politeness and sophistication.

"We have a lady in our company, boys." He nods towards Hermione, a clear order that they must compose themselves.

"Our apologies, Miss Granger," Mulciber says. "Forgive us for our inappropriate behaviour."

Hermione lets out a small, low sound of disbelief that only she could hear. She doesn't believe that. She doesn't care about the words they choose to express themselves, but about how easy they obey Riddle. It was clear that they were much more afraid of his reaction than anything else.

Alphard is silent, feeling Riddle settle down beside him and continue to read the book. He looks at Hermione, analyzing her expression, seeing how shaken she looks after the meeting with the Dementor. He doesn't know if it was really the Dementor who left her like this, but he can't help when he realizes that the window remains with the frost, meaning that someone in that environment is still sad, which is why he gets up, picking up a small bag with treats he had bought. She looks at him, watching the movements he makes when he gestures for Malfoy to give him space to sit.

Alphard sits down, his face turned towards Hermione. He knows he's probably drawing attention to both of them.

"What are you doing?" She asks in a soft, low voice.

Touching the small bag of sweets and taking chocolate from there, he opens the chocolate bar and offers her a piece. She looks at him suspiciously but takes the chocolate.

"You probably know that, but Dementors feed on people's happiness," Alphard explains, fiddling with the chocolate packaging.

Hermione smiles, Alphard looks at the frost on the window, lessened but it was not enough.

"Endorphins." She says, with scientific knowledge superior to his.

"Yeah, something like that ." He smiled. "Here, choose one."

"Bertie Botts?" Hermione raised an eyebrow, looking at him and noticing a defiant expression on Alphard's face. She reached into the package and took out a red bean. *Usually red is a good thing.*

Alphard also takes one, the beans are also red, perhaps more for the colour of wine.

She puts her bean in her mouth first, chewing as she imagines a worse taste and is surprised to find the taste of cinnamon. Soon after Alphard puts in his mouth, he chews more confidently.

"Shit." He murmured, wincing at the taste of the worm, shivering with disgust.

Hermione laughs. The laughter is shy, cheerful and inviting. The frost on the window thaws and the light in the cabin seems stronger. The expression on Hermione's face is brilliant and she looks at him with a sparkle in her eyes that looks like happiness, but for some reason, he thinks there's more there as if she's seeing someone else instead of him. Especially when she, still with a smile - this time more restrained - looks at him, taking all the details that she can see and suddenly there is a small crease between her eyebrows. She tilts her head to the right side and brings her face and hand a little closer, with her fingers, she puts the strands of his hair behind his ear, and her touch goes down behind his ear to the earring he's wearing on his left ear.

Alphard feels his face heat up with her approach, which is unusual for him. His bold behaviour gave him enough charisma to make people blush, but with him, it rarely happened.

Hermione runs her fingers over the earring. It is an earring dangling with the shape of a small prickly ball that looked like a sea urchin. She raises her eyebrow and he sees the small twitch in the left corner of her mouth - a small smile - and shakes her head in a very maternal way like a mother watching her son play.

A kind of look he never saw in the eyes of his mother, Irma Black neé Crabbe. At best she is cold, at worst she is the complete winter and to his displeasure, his sister Walburga 'Wally' is too similar to her.

He looks at Hermione and sees her sighing, she crosses her arms under her breasts and leans her head against the window and he understands that she needs personal space, he gets up and when he turns around, he finds Riddle looking at him intensely. Alphard swallows his saliva in a 'glup'.

The intensity of the gaze gives chills down his spine. It is not a normal look, there is no heat there or shine or emotion, it is cold and fearful. Alphard is unable to maintain eye contact and finds himself looking down to avoid confrontation.

Riddle takes a deep breath, feeling his heartbeat furiously against his chest as an unknown emotion begins to rise with bubbling anger in his stomach. An emotion that he could only compare with selfishness and possession.

What caught his attention was the sound of her laughter that he never heard, at least not directed at him, but then he realized that she was laughing at Alphard with pink cheeks and sparkles in her eyes, the light of the sunset lighting up her face and the strands of her hair.

He locked his jaw and looked under his lashes and when Alphard laughed too, his eyes narrowed.

What does that mean? He asked himself. Their rapport raised the deepest confusion and suspicion, but that was momentarily put aside when he saw Granger touch Alphard's hair and trace a path through his ear to the earring Black wore.

It was an act with no ulterior motives, but in Riddle's view it was intimate and very close and he found himself squeezing the cover of the book until his knuckles turned white.

If her kindness is given to everyone in such a banal way, then for her the actions she took in the tent didn't mean as much as for him and Tom doesn't know if he is annoyed by the closeness between her and Black or if he is admitting to himself that it has special meaning for him.

He grits his teeth, not liking what he was feeling. Tom doesn't like to be taken by surprise, he usually needs time to sort and analyze, otherwise, he can be unpredictable and his unpredictability can be dangerous.

Tom watches Alphard sit next to him out of the corner of his eye, *maybe I'll have a conversation with him later.*

He looks at Granger, who now has his head against the window, absently watching the sunset, this time he isn't even trying to hide it; he is studying her. Tom wonders if there is any relationship between her and Alphard, Alphard is attractive and charismatic enough to attract other girls but does Granger fit into the 'other girls' type? Tom has a hard time believing this, but it seems that way. The problem with the question is how they got to that level. So, he remembers that it was Alphard who lent her the Slytherin robe, he was the one who arrived with her in Defense Against the Dark Arts classes, he was the one who accompanied Tom in the bathroom of Moaning Myrtle. *How curious.* For now, he will be more of a spectator, however, that does not mean he will not take action, he just needs to connect everything. Having a thought, he closes the book in a 'paf'.

"Granger." He gets her attention.

"Yes?" Hermione leaned her head against the window.

"I made a promise to you and I keep my promises," Tom spoke and Hermione looked more suspicious. "I will do you a favour, anything as long as what you ask for me does not make me expelled from Hogwarts, or make me go to Azkaban or doesn't kill me and doesn't expose me in a degrading way." He maintained his posture as if he were talking about business. "In other words, I'm offering you a vow."

Hermione adjusts as she hears his words, she blinks repeatedly trying to adapt to what she heard.

"An Unbreakable Vow?" She asked, incredulous.

"Of course not, silly." Tom shook his head. "But don't take my words in vain. I don't say those words to anyone." He stood up and held out his hand. "All you have to say is: What I want is... And that's it. In return, whatever you saw, knew and heard, you won't be able to tell anyone about

it. What do you say? "

Lestrangle and Malfoy looked at each other and a small smile appeared between them.

A Vow with the Young Dark Lord? This was crazy, but then the proposal to have Riddle grant a favour was too tempting to be rejected. She could save Harry Potter when they both returned to their original time, she could stop the battle if he made the connection between this Hermione that he met and the Hermione that he wants to kill in the future. It was too tempting and yet inaccurate.

She gets up, about to make a decision, it is at that moment that Enid opens the cabin door, dressed in the Gryffindor uniform and with the Head Girl badge pinned to her robe, her hair was loose and in a beautiful pin-up style.

"Riddle, finally, I was looking for you. We have to meet with the other prefects, go get ready. " Enid spoke. She was early because Riddle is never late, it was probably the nervousness of being the new Head Girl.

Her eyes roamed the cabin occupants until they reached Hermione.

"Hermione!" She smiled. "What are you doing here? We were all waiting for you in the other cabin. "

Hermione opened her mouth, but it was Riddle who spoke first.

"Miss Granger and I met at the station, she was having some difficulties with her trunk and I helped her. We talked and I invited her to join us. We did become friends, didn't we, Miss Granger? "

"Of course ... I suppose so." Hermione had no choice but to agree, Riddle was pressing for her to confirm what he had just said.

"Oh! Really? Well, that's great." Enid tried to be kind. "I will call the others, we will be waiting for you, Riddle. Algie is already with the Ravenclaw prefects. "

"Right."

When she was gone, Hermione sat down, Riddle picked up his things and walked to the sliding door of the cabin. He turned and said,

"Boys -" Everyone looked at him "- take care of Miss Granger." And closed the cabin door, leaving Hermione there.

Spent just a second with them looking at the door until they turned their attention to her. Hermione leaned her back against the window feeling cornered and for a moment imagined the hissing snakes in the cabin. Malfoy looked her up and down and she heard a small laugh from Mulciber. She took a deep breath, making herself more courageous because they seemed to enjoy the fear.

"What is your relationship with Riddle?" Avery asked.

"Why don't you ask him?" Hermione suggested, watching a nerve in Avery's jaw bounce. "Don't tell me you are afraid to ask such a simple question?"

Oh, no. Talking to them would be like stepping on thin ice. She didn't know what to say to them, but she knew she shouldn't say much. She played with him and they seemed to notice. Avery narrowed her eyes and stood up quickly.

"Avery." Malfoy scolded him. "Sit down. Now."

Malfoy and Avery exchanged a long look and Avery sat like a sulky child. *Oh, right, Abraxas Malfoy is second in command.*

Lestranger laughed, happy to be watching that scene. "Why do things look more fun when Miss Granger is with us?"

"Don't be so happy," Rosier said. "She's a problem," Rosier spoke as if Hermione wasn't even there. "By the way, Alphard -"

"What?" Alphard grunted.

"- If your brother hurts my sister, I will finish him."

Alphard sighed and rolled his eyes. "For Merlin, he's only eleven! What do you think Cygnus is going to do with Druella? "

What? Wait! Were they talking about Cygnus and Druella? That Cygnus and that Druella?

Malfoy made a noise in his throat.

"It's time. We have to go get ready. " He got up. "Miss Granger." He opened the door in a gentlemanly gesture.

Hermione took her things, gave a half-ironic smile and went to put on her uniform.

oOo

"Hermione!" She heard Ectur and Bilius call her. She stepped away from the Riddle gang and walked briskly to them, a smile on her face.

"How are you?" Hermione hugged them.

"We are fine. I wanted to write to you, but you never gave me your address. " Ectur spoke, his cheeks turning pink.

"It is true. It broke our heart. " Bilius crossed his arm over Hermione's shoulders. It was much more a friendly gesture than something like 'she's my girl'. Meanwhile, Ectur grimaced and elbowed Bilius in the ribs, forcing him to release Hermione. Hermione smiled and shook her head.

"How was your vacation, Hermione?" Ectur observed the details on her face, her sun-coloured cheeks and her wild hair.

"It was a little complicated." She seemed a little lost in thought. Ectur interpreted her response as loneliness and concern for trying to start life after she participated in the War.

"It must be difficult for you. I mean, after the war. "

"We are not going to talk about sad things, are we? Hermione is here with us and now we are definitely veterans! " Bilius tried to change the subject, attracting more of Hermione's smile. She thanked him mentally, however, Ectur grunted at Bilius' interruption.

They sat at the Gryffindor table, waiting for the new students. It didn't take long for the new students to arrive, this time they were following Professor Slughorn, while they queue for the Sorting Ceremony. Headmaster Dippet announced about the new school year with Dumbledore

beside him, holding the Sorting Hat, the famous stool empty and waiting for the new students.

Slughorn joined Silvanus Kettleburn, Galatea Merrythought and Dumbledore, who were standing to greet students who would be classified in their Houses.

When the first name was called, Hermione almost got up from the seat she was in. *Alastor Moody?* She lifted her neck, trying to see as the young boy walked over to the stool. *It was Alastor 'Mad-Eye' Moody.* There was nothing unusual about that boy who was sitting with the Sorting Hat on his head. There were no scars, nor the electrifying blue eye that moves on its own, he had both legs and mainly; the nose was complete. In fact, he was cute with big brown eyes that were childlike features, plump and pink cheeks, strawberry blond hair and a look that showed his insecurity for being in front of so many people.

" Gryffindor!" The Hat announced.

The Gryffindor table burst into applause, she put her hand over her mouth trying to hold back the smile and tears of happiness when she saw Moody sit at the Gryffindor table. Harry had to have seen this, he would be so happy.

The next to be called was Cygnus Black. Hermione didn't understand the fear Walburga had when she looked at Cygnus. The boy clearly had magic and he acted like a noble, but somehow was different from Draco - who was immature. Cygnus was slender for his age and had a more physical resemblance to Alphard than to Walburga, combed black hair and grey eyes with long lashes with a slightly upturned nose. He had a serene, confident, calm and certainly lonely expression.

" Slytherin! " The Hat didn't even seem to think.

Slughorn shook Cygnus's hand with a smile on his face and gestured for him to sit at the Slytherin table, which now applauded his presence.

Damocles Belby, the creator of the Wolfsbane Potion was classified for Ravenclaw House.

Druella Rosier. It was Druella Rosier's turn. Pretty, with blue eyes, long blond hair and pale skin. Narcissa Malfoy had inherited all of her mother's genetics. The girl had a curious look and tilted her head when she seemed to hear something coming from the Hat, she wrinkled her forehead in disagreeing with anything that the Hat seemed to be saying.

" Slytherin! "

She nodded confidently and proudly of whatever she said to Hat. It was certainly a threat to burn him until he put her in the House she preferred.

Erica Stainwright, Everklenna's future creator, was classified for Ravenclaw.

Ethel Selwyn. A member of the Selwyn Family, possibly related to that man who threatened Xenophilius Lovegood.

" Slytherin! "

Evelyn Thomas had brown eyes, a channel haircut and front upper teeth slightly separated. However, despite her teeth, she would become a beautiful girl when she grew up. When the Hat was placed on her head, she seemed to smile at the voice that was in her mind.

" Slytherin! "

Gethsemane Prickle, the future Head of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures was classified for the Hufflepuff House

Pomona Sprout. *Pomona Sprout? Professor Pomona!* Hermione smiled when she saw Professor Pomona's happiness at having the Hat on her head. She was short, with a big smile despite having one of her front teeth missing - it was probably a milk tooth. - Her hair was dark brown with endless curls. Big shiny eyes and the appearance of being an adventurous child and without afraid of getting dirty.

" Hufflepuff!"

Selina Sapworthy. *That Selina who's going to have a painting here at Hogwarts?*

" Gryffindor!"

Hermione was seeing historical facts happening, but even with the happiness of seeing Moody, Pomona and others, Hermione was more concerned that she was seeing Voldemort's allies. It was his army gathering right before her eyes, one by one.

"Two! Just two? What's happening?" Bilius grunted. "I mean, I understand that it is a classification, but only two have entered Gryffindor so far?"

"Most entered the Slytherin House." Ectur glanced over his shoulder at the Slytherin table.

"Whatever." Ignatius shrugged. "In today's times, most are cowards."

Hermione did not dare to debate the matter, watching the rest of the new students being classified. Slytherins are not nice, cheerful or easy to get along with, but she also doesn't believe they are cowards - in the meaning of the word which is the opposite of brave. In her view, those who belong to Slytherin House are courageous, because it must not be easy to live there.

After the Initiation Ceremony, with the students already in their proper Houses and the end of the teachers' meeting, Dumbledore and Dippet are in the Deputy Headmaster's room.

"Many students joined Slytherin House this year," Dumbledore commented.

"Say what you mean, my great old friend." Dippet looked at the fire in the fireplace.

"I am clearly against judging a House by the values it carries and I believe that each one has a good and a bad side -"

"But ...?" Dippet waited.

"-These children don't learn these values alone. They are largely influenced by their experiences or their parents. "

"I know what you mean." Dippet needed no further explanation. "You fear for young Miss Evelyn Thomas. A Muggle-born classified for Slytherin. "

"For a moment I questioned the choice of the Sorting Hat, but the Hat never makes a mistake."

Dippet and Dumbledore looked at each other.

"She is not going to adapt. Not in that House. "

Dippet sighed.

"Perhaps, my great friend, this new generation could be the reason for a change in mentality."

Dumbledore looked at his teacup, very sceptical of the possibility that Dippet suggested.

"I hope so, my friend, I hope so."

At that moment there is a knock on the door. Dumbledore makes a gesture with his hand and the door opens by itself, who was standing waiting to enter was none other than Tom Riddle. Tom was not going to be able to go another day without his wand, he needed to feel the weight, feel the wand lead his fierce magic.

If Dumbledore was surprised, he didn't show it.

"Tom! My golden boy, come in, please. " Dippet invited him in. With a low gaze and perfect posture, Tom Riddle entered the room.

"What brings you here at this hour, Tom?" Dippet asked.

Smiling, Riddle replied. "I came to get my wand from Professor Dumbledore."

"I expected you to come and pick it up tomorrow".

"I know, but tomorrow will be my first day in the sixth year and I would like to not be late for classes. I think I'm a little anxious. " He gave a half-smile, wanting to indicate shame and nervousness.

Dumbledore got up, went to his desk and took Tom Riddle's wand out of the drawer. Tom's hand itched with the eagerness to pick up the wand, he almost took a step forward in anticipation but remained in control with a lot of effort.

"Here it is, Tom." Dumbledore handed him the wand.

As soon as his hand closed on his wand, Tom breathed a little easier, a little more relieved and with a strange feeling that mixed euphoria and pleasure, Tom felt the wand responding to his magic.

He raised his head, this time he was no longer smiling and gave a slight nod.

"Thank you."

He was about to turn away when Dumbledore asked:

"How was your vacation, Tom?" He looked over the half-moon glasses.

"It was actually surprisingly good. You were right. I think I should have enjoyed it more. " He gave a restrained smile with his eyes closed. "Well, if you'll excuse me. Good night Headmaster Dippet, and Professor Dumbledore. "

He turned, closing the door behind him.

"He's a brilliant young man, Dumbledore. Probably one of the best students this school has ever seen and he is capable of becoming even the best of all. Maybe he will become better than you, my old friend. " Dippet laughed as he took another sip of tea.

Outside, Tom's friendly expression was gone in less than a second. He rolled his eyes, the left corner of his upper lip rising in a clear expression of disgust and arrogance. He took a deep breath, not having the patience to deal with Dumbledore and Dippet at the same time. However he was

happy, he had his wand now. He could use magic. He was at home.

"My Lord." Mulciber greeted him when he entered the Slytherin Common Room. "Walburga, Lucretia and Araminta are *representing* how the Slytherin House works to the new girls. Dolohov and Nott are with the boys. "

"Hm." Tom took off his Slytherin robe and held it. He looked down at the floor below him, where the sixth and seventh graders gathered. It was the veterans' party. "Malfoy." He called.

"Yes, my Lord?"

"Bring Granger to me."

Chapter End Notes

- *Bothriechis schlegeli*, also known as the Eyelash Snake, the twelfth most poisonous snake in the world.

-Author's note: This chapter was extremely long, reaching the 15,000 word mark. It was too long, so I had to divide the chapter in two. Unfortunately, the part where we went back to Hermione and Tom and Tom Riddle's point of view is in the next chapter.

Well, I hope you like it. Tell me what you think.

Aipysurus.

Chapter Notes

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I would also like to thank the 918 kudos and 174 bookmarks. English is not my mother tongue, so I hope you understand if I have any errors in the text. Let me know so I can correct it.

Thank you, I love you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 13. Aipysurus - The snake pit.

"A party?" Being pulled by Enid into the Gryffindor Common Room to meet with her Housemates, Hermione raised an eyebrow.

"Yes, it's the veterans' party."

A party right after the Initiation Ceremony? If it is a custom, then this custom has been lost over time, because it did not happen in her original time. Looking around, Hermione realized that the participating students were in the sixth and seventh grades, however, Moody and Selina were present.

"This is a party where the housemates celebrate the arrival of the new students, but since tomorrow is their first day, they will go to bed earlier. Only the sixth and seventh-year members remain. Last year was my first participation. " Enid explained. "Although the intention is to introduce the House to new students, the party turned out to be special for older students. For us, we celebrate the passage of being more experienced. We are almost adults, Hermione. The sixth and seventh year is where the most experienced students at Hogwarts are, we should be respected by our Housemates. "

Enid liked the image of being a reference. Of course, she liked to be seen as a young girl who had already gone through the Debutante rite, who was fully ready for adulthood and who was already engaged.

Hermione was taken out of her thoughts when she saw Moody being carried by the boys, while the rest shouted his name and clapped rhythmically. Moody was laughing as he was bounced around in the boys' arms.

"Moody! Moody! Moody!"

She smiled and found herself unable to not join the group of Gryffindors who were shouting at his name. As soon as the boys arrived at the centre of the Common Room, they lowered Moody - who had pink cheeks of euphoria. Suddenly everyone was silent when Enid stepped forward.

"Alastor Moody." Enid's voice was confident and explanatory. "Welcome to Gryffindor House. Everyone here is very happy to welcome you. Our colour is red, we are governed by the element of Fire, we are brave and determined. Each year new students arrive and others leave. But there is something that is passed on to each new student. Something to remember where your loyalty should be. "

"You can choose one of them. Just get it. " Algie held out a red cloth bag, much like a medieval coin bag with the Gryffindor Lion symbol, to Moody. "Put your hand there and take just one."

Moody hesitantly looked at the bag and Hermione held both eyebrows up. Cautiously not knowing what was in there, Moody put her hand in the bag and his eyes widened, he blinked a few times and from the bag took out a small male pin in the shape of a lion's head.

"Look at what is written on the back," Algie instructed. "And you'll see whose it is."

Moody took the brooch close to his face and read it aloud.

"Percival Pratt. Do you mean I took the pin from Percival Pratt?"

Alastor Moody taking off a poet's brooch? If there is no irony in this situation, then Hermione does not know what is there. The Moody from her original time is a good person, but is rude and doesn't hide what he thinks. She has not yet spoken to the inexperienced young man who is the newest member of Gryffindor, however, something tells her that the arduous years of battles have contributed to forming the brutish side of his personality. But for now, she is happy to witness his happiness and talent.

Algie confirmed with a smile, and then he looked up and looked at Selina.

"It's your turn, Selina."

Selina, who was distant and shy, looked startled when Ignatius approached her and lifted her in his bride-style arms. The twelve-year-old blushed, placing her hands on her cheeks, as she heard the new housemates shouting her name. Ignatius placed her on the floor next to Moody and bowed, playing with the girl who saw him as a prince charming. She looked at Algie and put her hand inside the bag without even thinking twice.

"Pony hair?" She asked, confused when she removed her hand.

"Well, they say it's Sir Cadogan's pony hair." Algie laughed.

Hermione was finding it all very funny, but when Algie, Enid and everyone else looked at her, she knew something was wrong.

"It's your turn, Hermione," Enid said.

"Wait. What? Me?" She pointed to herself.

"Well, we thought that since you arrived at the end of the school year, now would be a good time for you to do your initiation into Gryffindor." Explained Algie.

Not knowing what to do and what to do, Hermione took a step a little uncertainly. She realized that it would be very rude and even suspicious to deny anything that would confirm her loyalty to the House, however, she always felt that loyalty should be given to people, never to symbols, but Gryffindor is now the only home that remains so much at this time as in the original time, she has nowhere to go and she is loyal here and everything that this House means.

Hermione looked hesitantly at Algie, but he encouraged her with a nod. She sighed and put her hand inside the bag. For a fleeting moment, Hermione thought she was touching something, but the object slipped through her fingers and seemed to be lost in nothing. There didn't seem to be anything inside. When she withdrew her hand, she looked at her empty hand and frowned in disappointment.

Meeting Algie's gaze, Hermione murmured.

"I-I didn't get anything."

An awkward silence formed as she received glances.

"Um ..." Not knowing what to say, Algie looked at Ignatius for help. This had never happened before, a real Gryffindor can always take one of the treasures left by other Gryffindors.

"Wow, so now we see that Hermione is definitely not a freshman." Ectur said. He put a hand on Hermione's shoulder and shook his head as if he thought that awkward moment was unnecessary. Luckily, the Housemates found his comment funny.

Algie seemed to accept that answer after watching Hermione for a moment. This was indeed a rite that only happened to students who had just arrived in the first year, it might not work with older students. Turning his back with the lion's bag in his hand, Algie stopped and saw Enid taking Moody and Selina to the appropriate dorms. Even though he already had Hugh Biggs's Quidditch glove as Gryffindor treasure - which is not as cool as Sir Cadogan's pony hair - he put his hand inside his bag and was surprised to be able to get another Gryffindor treasure. This time he took Jason Charmer's sock, eww . He returned the treasure to the lions' bag and looked over his shoulder at Hermione, who was being consoled by Ectur.

Ectur still had a hand on Hermione's shoulder and turned her slowly to face him.

Hermione felt strange, disappointed, and sad. In part, it was better not to have caught anything, she was from the future, but that upset her. It was like she wasn't Gryffindor enough. Maybe she couldn't get something because of the time travel, maybe it was something else ... Hermione thoughtfully touched the locket that was hidden under her shirt. Even though she was suspicious about why she didn't take anything, it didn't make her feel any better.

"Hey, don't be like that." Ectur put both hands on her shoulders and lowered his face slightly to come face to face. " Don't be sad. This is childish, just to make new students less scared and to feel welcome." He explained. "We are not even 100% sure that the things in that bag are really real. That belonged to those people. And if, so what? Doesn't mean anything. It doesn't make you less Gryffindor. The Hat put you here. "

"Not before debating for a long time." She lowered her head. After all, has she changed so much to the point of raising doubts?

"But he made a decision. You are here, with us. Those things are other people's legacy. As long as each of us took a reminder of someone's legacy, you are free of that. When your turn comes, when you finish the seventh year, you will leave your legacy and anyone will be lucky to take what

Hermione Granger left. "

Looking up, Hermione found him smiling at her with a warm glow in his eyes.

"Are you sure?"

"I have no doubts," Ectur replied confidently. Hermione looked down, touching her ear, a little shy by the confidence that Ectur conveyed, but was startled when she heard music coming from an imitation of old Muggle radio. She saw the young people gathering to dance, smiling at each other, while some were already clapping to the rhythm of the music, however, her attention went back to Ectur as she watched him take off his Gryffindor robe and throw it to the side, rolling up his sleeves shirt and loosening his tie.

"Let's Dance?" Offering his hand, he asked.

"What? No, no, no! " She cannot help the smile of despair while gesturing with her hands. "I can not dance." Hermione justified while noting how the couples of students danced at a fast pace to the music.

"Come on, Hermione. It is nothing you cannot do. You shouldn't even be that bad." Ectur took her hand, pulling her into the middle of the Gryffindor circle.

She was definitely not bad, but she wasn't the best either, and she would probably be the worst of all if he imagined she could do the Swing dance.

"Ectur, I really don't know how to dance like that." She tried to pull him by the forearm, afraid of the likely humiliation that she could endure in public.

Ectur stopped when he felt her two hands on his arm, he looked at her and smiled. It was not a smile dispelling Hermione's fears, quite the contrary, if this smile could be compared to anything, it would be admiration. He thought she was beautiful, really cute, and he found it amazing how this girl who was normally confident and intelligent, still had her insecurities. It made her real and less perfect than he was used to seeing.

"The question is not about knowing how to dance, Hermione." He reassured her. "It's about having fun and I want to have fun with you."

Then he took her hand, took it to the centre and spun her around when Hermione stopped, she looked at him startled like a cat. Ectur moved, his feet sliding from right to left in a coordinated movement and she realized that he was demonstrating to her how to dance.

From what she saw of the other girls moving, she understood that in her part of the dance, she needed to keep her foot on the tip to be able to move more smoothly and lightly.

"Remember, Hermione, it's not about knowing. It's about having fun. " Ectur repeated.

She was a quick learner by nature, things didn't come easy for her in the wizarding world, she needed to dedicate herself to always be one step ahead of everyone else who were half-bloods or pure-blood wizards, it was the way she had to learn, defend herself, to protect herself. To say that she was also important. Hermione knew that if she was dedicated enough, she could probably master the dance as well as everything in life, only this time it wasn't about knowing, defending, or protecting herself. It was about having fun. And she allowed herself to have fun.

"And...?" Enid asked Bilius, watching Hermione and Ectur dance as they laughed at each other in the middle of the Gryffindor circle. "He likes her?"

"That soldier over there is in the middle of the crossfire and the bullets she is shooting are cannonballs," Bilius replied, scratching his chin. He had thought that a beard was growing, even though Enid couldn't even see a hair.

"What does that mean?" She wrinkled her forehead, losing reference to Muggle War.

"It means that he is one step away from being hit completely. That is, he is starting to like her too much. He wrote me some letters and in them, he always asked if I knew Hermione's address or if I had any contact with her. "

"This is bad. His parents ... "Enid murmured thoughtfully.

"Yes." Bilius agreed.

"Tomorrow Ignatius will announce his engagement to Lucretia Black." Enid and Bilius looked across the Common Room, where Algie and Ignatius were talking.

"Poor little thing." Bilius nodded and Enid elbowed him in the stomach. It was the second time that night that he had been elbowed.

"Not talk like that. He's not going to die and it's not going to be his wake. "

"You are very positive, eh?"

"Um ... Maybe they will learn to love each other?" She suggested and Bilius raised both eyebrows in disbelief as if to say: really?

Enid stopped the conversation when she noticed Algie coming towards her, inviting her to dance and she would not deny this opportunity to be with the one she loved again. She just felt lucky, she was getting everything she wanted and there was nothing better.

For his part, Bilius found himself walking towards Ignatius and sat down beside him. The so cheerful Ignatius Prewett was quieter than usual and much more thoughtful, silently watching his housemates having fun. Bilius, noticing the darker aura coming from Ignatius, tapped Ignatius on the shoulder in a companionship gesture, which did not move but acknowledged his friend's attempt at solidarity.

Breathing fast, Hermione found a place to rest after dancing three songs in a row and Ectur followed her. She put her hand on her chest trying to calm the rapid heartbeat, then she fanned herself when she felt hot. The two exchanged looks and laughed together. Hermione was not a very outgoing person, but it was really good to let the accumulated energy go out and finally de-stress. That didn't mean she wasn't worried, but for a moment, a brief moment, it felt good to be alive. She was still a seventeen-year-old girl, a girl who was often mature for her age, but she was still seventeen.

"I have to admit, that was fun. Even though I did it all wrong. " She commented, running her hand over her face to wipe the sweat off and to remove the strands of wild hair that were sticking to her neck.

"See? I told you."

They stood for a moment, side by side, watching Enid and Algie - like the exemplary couple they were - dancing. Enid could dance a thousand times better than Hermione, she moved subtly and let herself be guided by Algie in the dance.

Seeing it could be demotivating for anyone who was suffering from love, watching them dance while laughing and Enid's engagement ring sparkled in the light, brought joy but also aroused the insecurities of the heart. They were an example of a perfect couple, in fact.

The thought made Hermione remember Ignatius' situation, turning her head to the side, she murmured to Ectur:

"How is your brother's situation?"

On the eve of the departure of the Hogwarts Express at the end of last school year, Hermione had found the two brothers talking. Ectur was comforting his older brother, who had just received a letter from his parents saying that they had accepted the Black family's proposal to bring the two families together through the marriage of their children. It was that same night that Hermione found Tom Riddle in the hall, hidden in the darkness with green eyes shining at her.

On the day that Lucretia Black went to the Gryffindor table asking for Ignatius' attention and they talked, it was nothing more than she already knew that her parents were meeting with the Prewett family, demanding that Ignatius speak to the parents and deny the marriage. The point of the situation is that if the Prewett's denied it, Lucretia would be the one who would be disgraced for being denied, unless the Blacks managed to reverse the situation. However, Ignatius had no say in the matter, his parents were already determined.

"It was very strange, Hermione." Murmured Ectur. He put both arms above his knee and rested his head on his forearm, looking at the floor absently while talking to Hermione. "I have never been so uncomfortable in my life. My parents invited the Black primary family to dinner. Can you imagine how strange it was to have dinner with Mr and Mrs Black and Lucretia and Orion? The cutlery could be heard. "

Ectur commented.

"I heard that Mrs Black was kind during her years at Hogwarts, she was even chosen for Hufflepuff, like a good Macmillan. But I think the years of living with the Blacks have changed her a lot or all they said was great gossip. I've never seen anyone so arrogant in my life." He made a face. "Lucretia demanded an opal engagement ring and her parents agreed that their daughter deserved nothing less. Ignatius gave her the ring while listening to Orion's sarcasm. That guy can usually be quiet but think of a tongue that is worse than a knife. Tomorrow she will probably start wearing the ring." Ectur sighed. "The only thing they talked about was the 'prestige of the Black family, that dinner was the worst of my life and it was horrible for my brother."

Looking at Ignatius, there is a slight crease on his forehead in dismay.

"I don't want to be like him. I will not accept. "

What could Hermione say? What could she do? She was attached to the idea of not being nosy, of just being a spectator, of not taking action.

"By the way, thanks for what you did." He says and she frowns in confusion. "For having comforted him, embraced. You really are a good person, Hermione." Ectur smiles softly.

Hermione shook her head at the compliment. "It was nothing. I didn't do anything too much. "

He nodded toward the centre, taking her to dance again.

At that moment, while Ectur and Hermione were talking and dancing, Enid is called by one of her classmates who whispers in her ear, pointing to the entrance to the Gryffindor Tower Common

Room. Her eyebrows go up when she hears her colleague's comment, waving to her friend, Enid goes to check what was going on, while the rest of the students were distracted enjoying the party.

Going out into the corridors, Enid is surprised to find Malfoy waiting outside.

"Abraxas? What are you doing here?" She says, looking to the empty corridor.

Abraxas was dressed in the Slytherin uniform, but his robe was nowhere to be seen. He takes her arm and gently pulls her away from the Fat Lady painting.

"Shhh!" He has his eyes wide, while he looks at the Fat Lady painting, who was probably pretending to be asleep. Annoying, he thinks. "Keep your voice down."

When they are a little away from the Fat Lady, he lets go of her arm.

"I need you to bring Granger. I need to talk to her. "

"What? Do you know what time is it? Nobody can walk the corridors at this hour anymore, Abraxas."

"For Merlin's sake, just talk to Granger and bring her here."

"What do you want with her? What are you doing here? You know tonight is the veterans' party. You shouldn't even be here. "

"Oh really?" Abraxas stiffens his face. "You shouldn't be here too, if I remember correctly. According to the rules, you should be in Head Girl's dorm, but you're not there, are you? "

"Are you threatening me?"

"No way. I am doing the favour of reminding you."

Enid crosses her arms under her breasts and turns her head wildly.

"Right." She agrees. "But don't get caught, otherwise the consequences will remain for me."

Abraxas nods, agreeing with her.

"Wait here."

Out of curiosity, after he saw her go, Malfoy, who had seen the painting door ajar, he dares enter the Gryffindor Tower. As soon as he passed through the opening, he could hear the sound of the students. It was noisy and in his opinion, it was classless. The music was in the background, and he goes up the stairs a little bit, just enough to look and not be noticed and watched Granger and Prewett dancing together as well as the other students. Decency she didn't have, flirting with Alphard in the cabin of the Express and now with Prewett.

Seeing Enid speak in her ear, he knew it was time to retract, went down the stairs and waited outside.

Moments later Enid and Hermione went out into the corridors.

"What's happening?" Hermione was talking, but she noticed the boy waiting in the corridor. "Malfoy?" She asked with a confused expression. "What does that mean, Enid?"

Enid shrugged.

"Do you know each other?" Hermione asked. Her question was more about whether they had a friendship. Because if the answer was yes, she certainly didn't foresee it.

"We are childhood colleagues," Enid replied.

"I need to talk to you," Malfoy commented to Hermione and then made a noise in his throat. "Alone."

"I understood." Enid held up both hands. "Don't get caught, regardless of what you're doing." She looked at Malfoy and gave Hermione a much more suspicious look.

Hermione and Abraxas waited for Enid to enter the Gryffindor refuge, before turning their attention to each other.

"What you want?" Cautiously Hermione asked.

"**He** wants to talk to you," Malfoy replied. It was understood that '**He**' meant Tom Riddle.

"Now?" She narrowed her eyes. "I'm sorry, but the answer is no. It is late, I am tired and I seriously prefer to be in the company of my Housemates. Tell him that I will talk to him tomorrow. " She was ready to turn and head towards the painting that hid the entrance to the Tower.

"Wait." Taking her arm, Malfoy captured Hermione while his tone hardened. Hermione glanced at the hand on her arm and then at his face, her eyebrows lowered and her lips became a thin line. Noticing her expression, Malfoy let her arm go.

It was not typical for someone to refuse to speak to a member of the Malfoy family, it was not typical for someone to refuse his presence, but this girl was anything but typical. As a manipulator and observer, Abraxas realized that she was very evasive, strangely aggressive and seemed to be disgusted by his presence. However he cannot judge her, they saw very little and the last time, she was being tortured in a Crucio by Riddle, who shortly afterwards almost killed her in an unforgivable curse.

Hermione turned and narrowed her eyes, Malfoy locked his jaw. He looked down for a moment, swallowed, and looked back at her.

"We will cut with falsehood." Said Abraxas. "We both know what like **He** is and what **He** is capable of. You saw it, you felt it. He asked me to bring you to him, what he wants, I don't know. If you don't come, things are going to get very, very ugly. And I may not be referring to my situation. " Malfoy looked down the dark corridor from which he came, which had only night light - an indication that it might be the new Slytherin students. - and then looked back to the Gryffindor Tower entrance - maybe it was her housemates.

It was Hermione's turn to stiffen.

"Look, you somehow got on his good side. I doubt you want to go back to the bad side. So, please come with me. " He said in a very polite and purposefully courteous manner. False cordiality and serenity could be a cruel trap.

Hermione hoped she wouldn't regret that decision, but something was telling her that the night would still long. With doubt, she left the wand ready in the holster.

"All right."

Malfoy nodded and made his way down the dark corridor, hoping that Hermione would follow him

closely to the Slytherin Dungeons. They walked in silence, Abraxas made no effort to try to talk, while Hermione always kept a step back for caution. In his silence, Malfoy was trying to understand the girl. He doesn't know much about her, no one does, except - apparently - Riddle. He is not very surprised by this, somehow Riddle has always been one step ahead of everyone, always knowing what others don't know, always being very powerful. If he goes to admit to himself - which he doesn't - there is envy and a certain kind of admiration for his lord, Tom Riddle. He admires what Riddle is and envies his power.

In different circumstances, if he were more powerful, Malfoy would not hesitate to strip Riddle of the position he had, only he is not. One of the main characteristics of being a Slytherin is knowing how to recognize your weaknesses and strengths and how to use them to your advantage, as well as recognizing those who will achieve greatness. And Riddle would achieve greatness. And Malfoy knew that. The Slytherins interpreted the school years at Hogwarts as a preparation for adult life, that is, it is in the school period that you analyze the people with whom you want to make connections, and you nurture these relationships as a kind of sponsorship and exchange of favours when you finish school at Hogwarts and start adulthood, you'll have enough people and connections to start climbing the ladder of power.

Take into account that in this House, most of the students come from golden cradles and prestigious families, almost always the Sacred Twenty-Eight, so - practically - everyone has seen or been mentioned in some meeting or party of quality high society wizards and would probably get married in some arranged marriage or when the union of a couple was rarely approved by both families.

In any case, 'Riddle' was not a name for the Sacred Twenty-Eight and it was not a wizard name, but no one within the Slytherin House dared to confront the idea behind it. Besides, Tom Riddle was extremely reserved, but because he had so much power, everyone believed that some strong wizard was related to him. Like a good Slytherin, Malfoy and others noted that Riddle will achieve great things and chose to be with him rather than those who once questioned the purity of Riddle's blood.

Never again, Abraxas remember the day when Riddle had turned on them. **It was terrible.**

Over time, they saw the natural talent he had and with envy, they wanted to have the resourcefulness and ability to do what he did. Like how easy it could cast a spell or destroy someone's mind in dust. Then, greed appeared, they wanted to know how to do the same things. It all started on the day they attacked two Muggle-born Ravenclaw students, one of whom had given a response too intelligent to Lestrage's pleasure, and incredible as that may be, Lestrage can be more inflexible and cruel than can be shown and for sure, much more uncontrollable. An inquiry was made to find out the reason for the fight with Dumbledore as the one who was in the mood for the truth.

Dumbledore, the one who seems to have a suspicion or perhaps a veiled hatred for all Slytherins .

But to everyone's surprise, Riddle intervened, telling Headmaster Dippet one of the tastiest lies, which put an end to it before it all started. Riddle had saved them, even after the attack they had made on him.

They watched from afar as Riddle fell into favour with the teachers and the Headmaster Dippet, sometimes he even got a gift from a teacher and always managed to break a rule. Slughorn also presented members of the Ministry of Magic with what Riddle was like, always praising and people who read the letters quoting Riddle were interested in the infant prodigy, sometimes telling Riddle to look for them when he left school. Riddle hadn't even finished school and was already climbing the ladder of power. And neither Riddle nor they had started attending the Slughorn

Club.

So, they decided and showed the side of the connection and sponsorship and it seemed that the preteen who was Riddle, was just waiting for that moment. It was there, between the ages of twelve-thirteen, and almost fourteen, that everything started. However, Riddle also had the power of choice, he did not choose the weak and those he saw who had no future. These people had no right to be with him. Thus, those with whom he developed 'friendship' felt privileged. One of them was Malfoy.

Each of them became the prestigious students of Hogwarts, being practically the lords of the school for the students, considered the best by the teachers and the future leaders, thanks to the meetings that Slughorn offered in his club. While questionable acts took place right under the nose of each of these people who consecrate them. They were terrible acts, forbidden spells, and corrupt morals, but they gave a strange feeling of dominance and freedom. Things they only achieved through their lord, Tom Riddle.

"How do I know this is not a trap?" Hermione muttered under her breath, but due to Hogwarts' empty corridors and silences, Hermione's voice sounded loud enough for Malfoy to hear and take him out of his reverie.

Blinking a few times to adapt to her question, Malfoy looked slightly over his shoulder, realizing how cautious she was. If possible, Hermione swore that he almost smiled, his face partially lit by the night light that made his hair look white, only he didn't smile. If he did much, with that expression that always seemed cold, he raised an eyebrow.

It seems that time in the company of Riddle influenced him as well.

"It looks like you got us wrong, Miss Granger," Malfoy replied solemnly. "We are much more prudent than that." In other words, what he meant was that: Fool, I would not leave a witness like Enid.

When the two finally arrived in the Dungeons, the noise of the Bloody Baron's chains could be heard. That terrifying ghost. Hermione wasn't very happy to go to the Dungeons and enter the Slytherins' abode, but as Malfoy said between the lines, she had Enid as a favourable witness in case something happened.

Malfoy came near the bare stone wall and whispered the password. The wall slid, making way for them both. Malfoy passed through the opening without hesitation and waited for Hermione, who looked back over her shoulder at the dungeon corridors as if thinking one last time about what she was doing. He started to get impatient, she was already there. What would it cost to take two more steps and enter at once?

Taking a deep breath, Hermione went through the opening. She was more ready than she had ever been in her life, looking like a rabbit when heard a loud noise, ready to run if necessary.

Following Malfoy, she went downstairs to the real Slytherin Common Room. The flickering lights of green tones illuminated the meeting of the young students of the sixth and seventh years who were present. Their laughter and conversation could still be heard, but they were certainly quieter than the Gryffindors. And was there music too, something like Slow Blues?

When Hermione came here, in her desperation and haste, she could not appreciate or notice how effectively the Common Room was decorated. This time she stopped to get all the details. The Slytherin Common Room was divided into two floors, the second floor was where the dorms were, the first floor gave access to the second part of the tall bookshelves that went from floor to ceiling

and the ground floor was the rest of the Common Room. The windows were large and long, reaching all floors and literally overlooking the bottom of the Great Lake, the large support columns had snakes of the same size around them. Above the fireplace was the Snake symbol, aristocratic sofas and armchairs, study and wizard chess tables, green blankets and cushions, the prevailing colours were silver, green and black. Compared to other houses, the Slytherin House seemed to have the largest and most sophisticated common room.

At the end of the stairs that had access to both the entrance and the Common Room, a girl was standing.

"Abraxas ...?" The girl frowned when she noticed Granger beside Malfoy. When the two passed her, Hermione asked Abraxas.

"Who is she?"

"Araminta Meliflua Black. Daughter of Charis neé Black and Caspar Crouch, cousin of the Blacks. She has a brother named Bartemius. " Malfoy explained as if he were bored.

Oh, Ectur had mentioned the Crouch family before in explaining the lineage of Bilius and the Black family.

She had extremely straight black hair, and dark eyes that probably came from the Black genetic heritage. She was thin and considerably tall, with an inverted triangle shape, her nose was aquiline and she had thin but well-designed lips.

Araminta ... The one who will want to legalize Muggle hunting.

As she followed Malfoy, the Slytherins looked at her with curiosity and mild irritation, considering Hermione an intruder in their House.

Lestrangle was leaning against one of the columns talking to a girl while smoking a cigarette that probably came from one of the stores in Horizont Alley, which was close to Diagon Alley. Malfoy passed him and nodded, receiving a similar greeting, but when Hermione passed, he made a point of blowing smoke towards her face. Hermione coughed slightly, as she fanned the smoke away from her face, drawing a few laughs from Lestrangle and the girl who was in his company.

Realizing now, Hermione saw glasses of alcoholic drinks like Rum, some types of Whiskey and Wine, as well as seeing some students smoking. She narrowed her eyes at this inappropriate behaviour, sure that cigarettes and alcohol were not allowed inside the Houses.

Receiving glances for her presence, she wanted to turn around and go back to Gryffindor Tower, while there was still time, but Malfoy stopped, looked at her and said.

"Go up the stairs to the first floor. **He**'s waiting for you. "

Malfoy turned and left, joining Avery and Mulciber who were sitting on one of the sofas. The three looked at her through the group of Slytherins who were present and murmured among themselves. Hermione looked around, searching for a familiar face and found the person she was looking for partially hidden in the shadow that one of the columns offered, kissing a girl. Alphard Black was kissing someone. Seeming to sense that he was being watched, Alphard looked up and promptly met Hermione's gaze. His eyebrows went up and his expression was shocked.

What was she doing there? He asked himself.

Alphard was about to go to her when Hermione turned. She was not upset, if she was feeling

anything, it would be a surprise that Sirius Black had such a womanizing uncle. She looked at the stairs leading to the first floor, before going up to meet Tom Riddle.

She found him standing on his back, near the bookcase and with a book in his hand, he was not wearing his robe or grey sweater. There were two armchairs and a coffee table with a tray with glasses and two bottles of alcohol. The floor they were on was empty except for them. Whether it was an order from Riddle or if the Slytherins thought it was more fun down there, Hermione couldn't say, but she thinks it was the first option.

She made a noise in her throat to get his attention.

"Malfoy said you wanted to talk with me."

Tom turned around, closed the book he was reading and looked her up and down.

"What happened to you?" Asked Tom, raising an eyebrow.

"What do you mean?"

He gestured with his fingers to her hair. Feeling conscious, Hermione touched her hair, realizing that her hair was much more bristled and much more rebellious than normal and what caused this was the fact that she danced.

Quickly Hermione takes her hair and puts it over her left shoulder, to give the impression that they are at least in control. In general, she is not a girl who cares about her appearance, but sometimes even she is irritated by her own hair.

Tom Riddle noticed her appearance as soon as he saw her, certainly her hair was unruly, but this time it was really uncontrollable. He also noticed her clothes, the white feminine shirt of the uniform was over the dark grey skirt, with the first two buttons undone and also a little wrinkled and she did not have the tie.

"What have you been doing?" He asked curiously.

"I-I was ... dancing." Hermione justified herself.

Tom blinked, not expecting it. He could have imagined several things, but Granger's dancing was not one of the possibilities.

"Why am I here?" She looked out of the corner of her eye, uncertainly.

"You are my guest." He gestured to the armchair for her to sit, before sitting down in the armchair facing her. His eyes caught the modesty movement she made as she adjusted her skirt before sitting down. "Do you accept?" Asked Tom, offering to put a glass of Firewhiskey for her.

Hermione shook her hand.

"If I remember correctly, you managed to drink a glass of Firewhiskey very well."

"Desperate feelings, desperate measures." She mumbles. Hermione particularly likes sweeter drinks such as Butter Beer, but she was not an alcoholic person. However, that day, she wanted the numbness to relieve stress, but all she got was problems.

Looking to the right, specifically downstairs, she notices the difference in behaviour between Slytherins and Gryffindors.

"Your housemates don't look very happy that I'm here." She comments, this time looking around, particularly curious about the architectural details that differ from her own House. "I didn't think that was allowed; I mean, people who are outsiders. And that there was a party. We were having a party too ... kind of. "

"It is technically not allowed to have a party without something significantly commemorative that belongs to the school calendar. But, you know what? Teachers and Headmasters probably know this is the case. All houses do. " He explains. "What are you looking at so much?"

"Is different," Hermione says. "Your common room looks ... bigger."

"Didn't you come here once?" Tom remembers. Now he is looking at her with an intensity that catches her off guard and she lets out a breath she didn't know she was holding.

"I didn't have much time." She murmurs, caught in his gaze. It was as if his eyes were mesmerizing her, glowing in the purest green colour. Then she feels it, it was like a fog crawling slowly and smoothly so as not to be detected. If she weren't wise enough, she wouldn't even notice the act. "Stop what you're doing." Hermione orders.

Tom Riddle blinks a few times, the colour of his eyes remains green, but this time, less intense.

"Stop trying to read my mind."

"My mistake." He doesn't look guilty at all. "But I'm curious and much more surprised that you feel and have a barrier of Occlumency right there. What do you hide in your mind, Granger? " Tom tilts his head a little to the side.

Hermione locked her jaw and stood up, beginning to feel threatened. "If you brought me here for this, will I leave or will I -"

"What?" He questioned her before she finished the sentence. "Sit down, Granger."

Hermione was breathing faster, a little more upset and angry. They held their gaze for a while before Hermione settled in the armchair again.

The Gryffindor spirit, Tom thought. It's like poking a lion with a short stick. They don't know how to keep their composure.

"Don't do that again." She orders.

Tom narrowed his eyes. He doesn't like to be ordained and if she thinks she will start to have power over it, then he will have to set some limits. It doesn't work like that, Granger. And despite being challenged, Tom knows very well how to control his impulses.

"As I said, I was just curious."

It is half true. There is a curiosity in him, he wants to know what she hides, her deepest secrets, but there is also the feeling of security that he seeks. As a talented Legilimens and with a great aptitude for this skill, he usually - sometimes even unintentionally when he was younger - read people's minds. For safety, with people who knew a lot about him, Tom read his thoughts here and there, making sure to make it clear to his Knights that it was a bad idea to lie to him.

He was kind to her, gentle, it was meant to be just a caress, just to catch the 'loud' thoughts she might be conveyed, but she felt and promptly put the Occlumency barrier. Normally he was not like that, kindness and softness were not in Riddle's Legilimency dictionary, invasion and pain

were. He liked to cause pain and subdue, there was a pleasure in seeing another person submit to him; then Granger could consider herself fortunate that he chose kindness for her and that she was again the X of the issue that differs from any equation. He's really trying here not to ruin what she did for him because one thing is right, he won't go to her and say 'thanks', but she has to cooperate.

"Have you tried this with me before?"

If he ever tried to read her thoughts? Of course, just once as soon as she arrived at Hogwarts. If he tried again? No. Especially when he saw her relationship with Dumbledore. He wasn't about to invade Dumbledore's favourite student's mind and mess up the shit so they would come after a culprit, mainly because Myrtle Warren had died a few weeks earlier. It was going to be a mess and at that time he was not planning to be kind, wanting to invade Gryffindor Tower and finish her. But if there was always a desire to read her mind? Of course.

"No." He lied. She doesn't seem to believe it, but she doesn't question it either. "How do you know Occlumency?"

"How do you know Legilimency?" Hermione returns the question to him.

She is evasive, she always is. Which raises Tom's suspicions. How to answer her question? Is it natural for me? I was born this way? Am I talented at this? I like to be good at this.

He snorted.

"How do we know these things?" Yes, how do we know these things?

She does not answer.

"Anyway, I didn't call you here to talk about this. I called you to find out your answer to my proposal. "

"About the vow?"

Tom confirms.

"It could be anything? Anything I ask for? " Hermione tests the waters with him.

"If it's within my reach. Of course. Do you remember the conditions? "

"As long as it doesn't kill you, that you don't go to Azkaban or get kicked out of Hogwarts and that it doesn't expose you in a degrading way. In addition to not telling about what I saw, heard and knew. " She repeats each of the words that Riddle used, which seems to satisfy him.

"Very well." He praises her as if he were teaching a child something, it makes her a little irritated, but she lets his behaviour pass.

"What do you say?" Tom gets up and extends his hand for a handshake as if he's doing business with her. Hermione looks at the outstretched hand: Is this wise? Would it be smart to accept his hand? Agree to this agreement? She looks down at her hand, hesitating and Tom notices the emotion that prevails in her expression. "You are afraid." He almost smiles. "You are afraid of me."

She looks under her lashes when she hears Riddle's comment, realizing that she is like an open book to him.

"You have your wand," Hermione murmured, this time looking at the yew wood wand with the bone-shaped handle, it is sinister, that Riddle holds.

"Oh." Tom takes his wand but close to his eyes, the long, pale fingers of his left hand make their way through the wood of the wand like a caress and Hermione can see the attachment and zeal he has. He looked focused on his own wand, but his gaze meets hers and he smiles in that malicious way that he has done so many times before. "Come on, Granger, I won't wait forever." Tom extends his hand to her again.

He doesn't make promises to her but makes it clear that if he wanted to curse her, he could do it.

Hermione hopes she is making the best choice for everyone when she gets up and takes his hand. He inhales when he feels the touch of her hand, joyful, proud of himself. Then he moves his wand and a bluish light connects the part of their wrist, like a chain. Startled, Hermione tries to pull her hand back, but Riddle holds on tightly.

"It is symbolic." He explains, finding her behaviour amusing. Certainly, she has no fond memories of the last time he used the wand.

Hermione steps back as soon as she could, looking at her right hand for any unusual and suspicious look in Riddle's direction.

"Are you sure?" She asks, maybe a little harshly.

"Of course." Tom reaffirms, a little bored with her questions. This time he was being true, it was totally symbolic. If it wasn't, he was sure she would be on her knees in front of him. Well, some details are still missing here and there, but he is planning a spell that would not be just a symbol, a mark.

"I want the book you took from me." She asks.

"So is this the favour you want from me? The book?"

"I thought you could give it to me?" Hermione suggests and Tom raises an eyebrow.

"How do you have this book?"

"How do you know about the contents of this book?" She returns the question.

Touché.

"I believe that knowledge should have no limits; I assume you think the same thing. " *That is, if you want to take me down, I will take you with me.* But in a way, Tom Riddle likes to know there is a part of her that is free of certain chains.

Hermione is faced with a situation that she had not foreseen. Riddle would only return the book if she used the vow or maybe if she admitted what she was looking for. She found herself cornered, she couldn't use the vow. She had to save it for something more important and make him return the book spontaneously.

"Are we going to the second part?"

"What?" Hermione narrows her eyes, still holding her hand, being a little paranoid.

"The curse I put on you. I said I would take it out. Unless you liked it that much. " Tom teases.

"Are you ... are you really going to take it off?" She murmured after a while. "I tried to undo it, but I was just hurting myself ..." Hermione confesses.

"You could have really been hurt. The curse rejects anyone other than the person who cast the spell. " In a way, Tom boasts that his creation is so successful.

"What is?" She's curious about what that spell was and how to undo it.

"Is that the favour you are asking me for? That I explain to you? " He puts his hand in the front pockets of his pants.

"What? Not!" Hermione responds quickly and Tom shrugs, amused. "I thought we could have a conversation about it." She tries.

"Come, approach Granger, so I can undo the curse," Tom calls her in a gesture with his index and middle finger.

Releasing a sigh, Hermione walks towards Tom, her steps are slow from his perspective. Unconsciously Tom looks at her from the bottom to up, taking too long on every exposed part of her skin. She finally stops when she is so close to him and looks up - due to the difference in height - towards his face. Tom Riddle feels trapped in those brown eyes, where he can see the glow of fury that she hides so well, that she leaves asleep. It is precious and exciting. He takes a deep breath and with his thumb and forefinger, touches her chin. She looks down to try to see his touch on her skin, but he lifts her chin so that Hermione looks back at him.

"Your tongue," Tom murmurs and it's almost a whisper, if she didn't control herself, he would see the chill in her arms. Hermione's expression is one of surprise and confusion and she almost took a step back. She thinks I'm going to kiss her.

Swallowing, Hermione opens her mouth, showing only the tip of her pink tongue. Tom smiles almost imperceptibly. He points the wand towards her face, at an angle so that his hand is above her head. Instinctively, Hermione has a percentage of fear running through her blood. Intelligent is the one who fears Tom Riddle. He says something in a whisper, it's so low that Hermione can't quite hear and understand.

She thought she would feel different, but only a small amount of black smoke comes out of her mouth when the curse mark dissolves. It is over?

Tom takes a few steps back, looking at Hermione with a strange kind of look. It was intense, but different from when he was trying to read her mind.

Suddenly, Hermione feels a pang in the pit of her stomach as if she's been punched. She places both hands on her abdomen, in a gesture of peace for her pain, but she feels the sting again. Then, she is short of breath, trying to breathe as if she is choking on something. Hermione felt something move inside her and was moving up her oesophagus towards her throat. She coughs a few times, now breathing faster, while she gasps as if she wants to vomit. Her legs are shaking and she finds herself on her knees, spreading her hands on the floor, trying hard to vomit whatever was going up to her throat. She coughs a few more times and feels the scaly skin sliding at the beginning of her throat, going towards her mouth. In her peripheral vision, she realizes that the veins in her hands - which are usually greenish - were dark in colour.

A snake, it was a snake that was coming out of her mouth. Startled, Hermione vomits the rest of the snake on the floor. Alive! That thing was alive!

The little black snake hissed, before turning to black smoke. Hermione coughs, trying to clear her throat as she runs the back of her right hand through her mouth, she looks at Tom Riddle who was passive, with his hands in his pants pockets. There she was, on the floor in front of Riddle.

Taking deep breaths, Hermione looks at her hands, but her veins were back to normal colour.

"Here," Tom said. There is a glass of wine offered for her. "It will get better."

With shaking hands, she takes the glass and stands up slowly.

"You were going to kill me. This thing would kill me from the inside out. " Was that always inside me? The curse would not only necrotize her mouth, but it would also kill her.

"I took it out, didn't I?" There is no justification for it other than that. "I couldn't do anything about the rest." He said, referring to the moment she just passed. "The curse was not meant to be painless. On the contrary."

"Is there anything else I need to know?" She asks angrily.

"No," Tom speaks simply, sitting on the chair again. "You will feel better if you drink."

"How do I know it won't try to kill me too?" Hermione looks at the cup.

"My methods are ... Different. I like to catch my enemies off guard -" He raises his glass to his lips, drinking the sweet wine. How did he get there? To talk almost freely about methods and death with her? "- like when I kissed you."

Hermione stops drinking as soon as she hears his comment. "What? That was not a kiss! "

Tom frowned at her refusal. "Oh, please specify, because, by definition, a kiss is when two people touch their lips. Don't tell me it was your first kiss, Granger? " He disdained.

"It wasn't my first kiss!" She screamed and Tom's hand tightened on one arm of the chair. "And it was not a kiss. That was you putting a curse on me and a kiss is ... something else. " Hermione ended the sentence by mumbling, ashamed of the direction the conversation was taking.

"Oh." Tom tilts his head. "So what would it be?"

"It is not obvious? Sometimes it's love. " Hermione replied and Tom laughed at the idea, from his perspective, naive. Calling her a fool without having to say the words. "Or it happens when two people like each other." She runs a hand over her neck, a little embarrassed. "And you don't like me." This time she said it with the utmost certainty.

How could she be so sure?

"Who was the lucky guy?" It is understood that he is referring to who was her first kiss.

"Someone special." She responds cryptically, not giving him the pleasure of belittling the little experience she had, while looking at the glass of wine. And it had indeed been special. Viktor Krum was special to her and always would be. He had been the first boy to see femininity in her and that was special. Someone had seen her more than Know-it-All and noticed the physical changes that could be imperceptible, sometimes inconvenient even for her.

Could it be someone from here? Tom doubts this, she has very little time at Hogwarts. Probably someone from the past that she refuses to talk to. This bothers him more than he lets himself in,

ignoring mainly because he perceives her cheeks to be pink. She moves around, a little restless and bites her bottom lip, the more he looks at her, the more he feels strange. The sight of her a few moments ago, so close to him, suddenly appears in his mind and he feels a tug in the pubic area.

Uh-oh. This is not happening, he thinks as he crosses his legs and settles in the chair.

Their conversation is interrupted when a child's cry is heard by everyone. Hermione and Tom get up when a girl runs down the stairs while shaking her head to get worms and wasps out of her hair. On the bottom step, the girl stumbles and falls in front of the whole Slytherin House. They all laugh at her, without a hint of conscience or benevolence. The girl sucks in the air several times and starts to cry, feeling the worms stuck in her hair, while she is dressed in the new bunny pyjamas she got from her mother.

The girl was Evelyn Muggle-born Slytherin. Evelyn Thomas wept even more when she noticed the group of girls coming down the stairs, even Nott and Dolohov with the new Slytherin students.

Araminta joined Walburga and Lucretia Black who was accompanied by Virginia Flint and Wanda Yaxley. In front of them were the new Slytherin girls, one of whom was Druella Rosier.

"It's your turn, Druella. She's a mudblood. Show her her place. " Araminta murmured when the Common Room was silent.

Druella, who was dressed in her pyjamas, which was long dress with green ruffled sleeves, looked at her older brother. Seeking some help or maybe approval.

"Druella-

Rosier quoted her name, but his sentence was cut off when Walburga placed both hands on her shoulder.

"She belongs to the Black family now. In the future, it will only be official." Walburga said. "You know what to do, don't you, Druella? I chose you."

Druella looked at Cygnus who looked down and smiled a little, that's when Druella got all the approval she needed. She raises her wand and casts the wasp spell.

"A mudblood must not be in our House." It was a girl's voice. An even sweet and certainly childish voice that was saying those cruel words.

Hermione was horrified by what she was seeing. Children were torturing another child. She knew that she had to do something to help, so, she ran down the stairs, leaving Tom Riddle behind, who drank a sip of wine while watching the scene from above with morbid amusement. Knowing very well what Granger's reaction would be, after all, all these days, he was studying her.

Hermione passed Nott and Dolohov with the wand already in hand and placed herself in front of the girl.

"Depulso!" She shooed the wasps, throwing them away. The movement of her hand felt like she was manoeuvring a whip, but the spell had worked. She never made a mistake when she wanted to cast a spell.

Druella winced at the strength of Hermione's magic.

"What is your problem !?" She asked. Evelyn clung to Hermione's skirt.

"What is she doing here?" Dolohov growled, taking a step towards her and Hermione pointed her wand at him.

"Stay away."

The snakes hissed.

"Who do you think you are?" Walburga sawed her teeth and Hermione now pointed her wand at her.

She was disgusted by their behaviour.

"You disgust me." She said to Walburga, who was also pointing her wand at her. Araminta and Lucretia also had their wands in hand, as did Nott and Dolohov.

"Hermione, put your wand down." Alphard put his hand on Hermione's wrist.

"Do you agree with that? She is a child!"

"Put your wand down, Hermione! She is my sister! "

"Is that what you choose?" Hermione asked Alphard. How could he find that right? How could he choose his family even though they were wrong, that it was a child they were torturing?

"I always choose my family," Alphard replies, much more seriously than she has ever seen him. Her breath hitched when she heard his response. Walburga smiled at Alphard's reply, confident. "Put the wand down, you're not going to get out of here well."

Hermione grunted.

"Do you want to bet?"

She would fight with them. She had done this before when they were more experienced in dark magic, but now it was she who was the most experienced. She was going to do it, **she had to do it** and she did it. The tip of her wand flashed when the unspoken spell threw Walburga against the stairs, it was an Expulso. The girl shakes behind Hermione, Druella takes Cygnus's hand and grabs his arm, Araminta tries to hit Hermione, who protects herself with a Protego. Walburga was about to cast a spell, but Hermione casts a Stupefy. She stopped when Alphard pointed his wand at her, Malfoy and Rosier too.

It is at this point that Tom Riddle chooses to go down the stairs slowly, his hands in his pants pockets. He stops in the middle of the confusion, in front of Hermione.

"I think it's better if we all go to sleep. We are a little excited and the morning will be a long day. " He says calmly as if he's talking about the weather. Students understand that it is time to retire, walking quickly to the dorms. "Except you."

Whoever was involved in the situation knew that they should stay. There was no need to say names explicitly. Hermione feels Evelyn press her forehead against her, shaking. When only she, Evelyn, the gang of Riddle, Walburga, Araminta, Orion, Cygnus and Druella remains, Hermione knows that things will get worse. She would continue to fight, but her biggest concern was going against Riddle.

The music has stopped, the silence is hard and tense.

"Stop this." She asks.

Tom's expression is calm, he taps his index finger against his chin, pretending to be thinking, then he looks at her.

"Is that what you're asking me for?" Tom asks.

He was going to make her choose. He would not let it pass, after all, he had planned this moment. When the Muggle-born girl was classified for the Slytherin House, he knew what his housemates would do to her. What Walburga and the other girls are going to do. Slytherin House really works as a sponsorship, where older students choose new students. The system is very simple indeed, exchanging favours and covering up lies in return, the new student who is chosen is also under the protection of the one who chose it and thus, as adults, the possible union of families and privileges - often in the Ministry of Magic. - makes it a vicious circle.

Walburga had chosen Druella Rosier and Druella had gone through her initiation, nothing better than to judge the Muggle-born girl. And Tom knew that Hermione had a soft heart for those who could not defend themselves, just as he knew that Alphard would choose his family.

Blacks always protect themselves.

Hermione was divided, she couldn't lose that vow. She needed this to protect Harry, however, she felt the girl trembling with fear behind her and she found herself in that girl. Because if it were her, she would also be terrified of being there. Hermione looked at Alphard, still not understanding him. How could he?

She looked down and did what her heart asked, nodding.

"You can go," Tom said.

Suspicious, Hermione looked at him and took the girl's hand. She took a step, just testing the truth of his words. Was it that simple?

"You can't be serious, Riddle!" Walburga grunted in exasperation.

Riddle turned his head towards her.

"I don't remember asking for your opinion."

Now, that was cold. Hermione didn't need a second warning, she left the Slytherin Common Room with Evelyn Thomas in a hurry, leaving them to kill themselves.

As soon as Hermione was gone, Tom crossed his arms.

"Now, what am I supposed to do with you, Walburga?" He spoke, his voice cold and calculating.

"She started it! She shouldn't even be here! "

"Shut up, Walburga," Alphard grunted, very angry with his sister. He looked at the little brother who watched the whole scene, impassive. He didn't want his brother's first night at Hogwarts to be like this.

"Alphard, how about you fix your sister."

"What?" Alphard choked on his sentence and Walburga froze inside. Lestrangle smiled sadistically.

"Riddle." Orion Black stepped in, placing a hand on Walburga's shoulder. "She's a girl."

Tom frowned in confusion, not understanding what Orion was getting at. She was a girl, so what? He snorted.

"There is no gender privilege here, Orion," Tom replied. "When I get back, I hope to have results, Alphard." There was a 'Or' suspended in the air.

He stopped in front of Cygnus, who did not seem surprised, elated or touched by his siblings. Druella was clinging tightly to his arm, but Cygnus didn't care, after all, she would be his wife in the future. At least, that's what was announced at his big birthday party. Cygnus looked at Tom, there was no fear there, just curiosity and Tom found it interesting.

"Your siblings -" Tom was not going to console Cygnus, quite the contrary. But he was surprised by an unexpected response.

"I don't care," Cygnus said, Druella squeezed his arm even tighter. Tom smiled.

"You know ... I choose you," Tom said, to Alphard's terror.

Malfoy, Lestrage, Mulciber, Nott, Dolohov and Avery pass through Cygnus.

"Congratulations, Black." Lestrage taps a finger on Cygnus's forehead, making others laugh, as they walk into the boy's dorm.

"You know what you have to do, Alphard," Tom remembers. *You either do it or I do it.*

Unlike his gang, Tom goes after Hermione and they all leave Alphard, Araminta, Walburga, Orion, Cygnus and Druella there.

Because the Blacks protect themselves. They think, at the same time as Alphard, grudgingly cast the Silencio spell on his sister. So that no one could hear the screams.



Slytherin Common Room

Chapter End Notes

-*Aipysurus Duboisii*, also known as Dubois sea snake. The thirteenth most poisonous snake in the world.

Author Note:

0.1 - The image used in this chapter is non-profit and doesn't belong to me. It was found on Pinterest in order to be only illustrative and the copyright of it belongs to its creator.

1) Araminta Melifua Black. - The surname of Araminta, who is a c cited by Sirius Black, is Black. However, she does not appear in any family tree of the Black family, but Sirius claims that she was his mother's cousin; Walburga

There are only two ways that Araminta is a cousin of Walburga. Araminta is a descendant of Walburga's grandfather, Cygnus II Black. Walburga is the daughter of her eldest son, Pollux, who had three younger siblings: Cassiopeia, who never married, Marius, who was disowned for being an squib, and Dorea who married Charlus Potter and had a son. It is unlikely that the child of an squib will promote muggle hunting or be recognized by the Black family, so Araminta may be an illegitimate son of Cassiopeia or Dorea. In that case, she would have been left out of the auctioned family tree to avoid the illegitimacy scandal.

Or

She is the daughter of Charis Crouch, neé Black, who is the mother of Bartemius Crouch and two other girls. One of them may be Araminta, who prefers to use her mother's Black name, making her a cousin as Sirius said.

2)What about this chapter? I'm happy but I'm not. Bleh. I think the chapter needed something more. Tell me what you think, because I don't even know anymore.

Melanoleuca.

Chapter Notes

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-I would also like to thank the 1047 kudos, the 206 favourites.

My dedication to this chapter goes to Kcarmen. For those who don't know, she became not only the beta-reader of this story but also a friend. She is a very, very kind person, extremely patient, she gives me incredible writing tips. Thanks to her, the first chapters are better. So, I ask you to give her all the regards in this chapter. Thank you very much, Kcarmen. I am extremely grateful that you take time out of your routine to help me and venture with me into this story. I'm sure all readers are grateful for all the work you have done to improve their reading.

This chapter was edited on 24th August (2020) by my beta-reader Kcarmen. Please give her all the love and for all the work she is doing in helping to edit the text to improve your reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 14. Melanoleuca - Fire. Fear. Frenzy.

Hermione was comforting Evelyn, using magic to clean the little girl's hair. Evelyn was still sniffing, trying hard to stop crying and trembling, but little by little she was calming down. Both girls were sitting on the stairs that led to the Dungeons, with only a beam of light coming from a window to illuminate and cast shadows of their silhouettes on the medieval-style floor.

Afraid and with tears in her eyes, Evelyn Thomas dared to look into the face of her saviour, in the eyes of the girl, her saviour who was beautiful, gentle and powerful. She just didn't understand why she had been helped by someone else who didn't even belong to Slytherin House.

"You can tell me what happened," Hermione murmured, pulling out a few strands of hair that were on Evelyn's forehead.

The girl looked down, specifically at the small nails of her hand. Should she tell what happened? She had been warned that she shouldn't say anything about what happens at the Slytherin House,

because in addition to being a *mudblood* - something she didn't understand the meaning of - she would also become a traitor to the House itself, which meant things could get worse for her. Evelyn didn't think things could actually get far worse than how she was currently treated, but she thought she shouldn't be pushing her luck.

"You can tell me, I am not going to tell anyone. I promise." Hermione continued, noticing the girl's hesitation.

Two minutes had passed and the girl had said nothing, keeping her eyes on her nails to avoid looking at Hermione as a few drops of tears fell and wet her pyjama pants, which had bunnies designed onto them. Hermione was already giving up on finding out what had happened, whatever happened. Some invisible obligation seemed to guarantee the young girl's silence, but to her surprise, Evelyn started to speak.

"I was happy to come to a school of Magic, I felt I was somehow special." The sweet, childlike voice rang out into the emptiness of the Dungeons corridors. "Everything was fine until we went to the dorms. They said that new students had to follow an initiation, to prove that we were proud and worthy of being a Slytherin. But then, they looked at me strangely and called me mudblood. What is a mudblood? " Despite the sadness in the girl's voice, there was also curiosity.

What was a Mudblood? Hermione asked the same question when she was the same age, if not a little older than Evelyn. This word had plagued her for many years, she had it engraved on her skin, the term used by those who consider themselves Pure Blood wizards. Sometimes she dreamt of Bellatrix carving the slur on her skin, sometimes she still heard Draco Malfoy's arrogant voice. It wasn't easy, it never was, but over time she learned to deal with it. If today she hid the scar on her arm, it was not out of shame for her birth status - she would never be ashamed of her parents - but for the ugliness that was the scar and the bad memories that it awoke.

"Mudblood is a very ugly word used by those who consider themselves Pureblooded wizards and witches to denigrate those who were born to Muggle parents. A Muggle person is a non-magical person. A Pureblood person comes from a family that has never had a relationship with a Muggle, maintaining the bloodline with other wizards. Those who call you a Mudblood are offending you in the worst possible way. " Hermione explained and Evelyn's eyes got bigger as she listened.

Realizing that it might be much worse to hear that, Hermione continued to explain, but this time softened the words. No child deserved to be discriminated against at such a young age.

"Believe me, they only say that because they are unsure of how powerful you can become and feel threatened that you may steal their place in society if they pale in comparison to you. Don't let it affect you, you will only feel worse. " Hermione wiped away the last teardrop that threatened to fall on Evelyn's face. "Being Muggle-born doesn't make you worse or better than anyone, just as being a Pureblood doesn't make them better. What will make you different from everyone is your attitude. Some people have a hard time understanding this, but they have been proven that they were wrong. Be proud of who you are." She smiled at the young girl, who returned her smile.

Evelyn looked at Hermione from head to toe in a look that could be described as very Slytherin-ish.

"You're not a Slytherin, are you?"

"No, I'm not. I'm from Gryffindor. "

"Hm... your House seems to be... better." Those were the words of a child who did not want to return to the dorms of the House to which she belonged. Hermione couldn't blame the girl, if she were in the girl's shoes she wouldn't want to go back either. "I would like to know what it is like."

Evelyn blinked a few times, her brown eyes which were already big because of her round childish face now looked even more angelic and shiny from the tears she had cried. Hermione picked up that she was trying to manipulate her in the way that only a child could.

Oh, her Slytherin side. So young and already cunning.

"No House is better or worse than the other. Each one is good in some way, but to tell you the truth, it is very difficult to have the qualities to enter the Slytherin House. The founder, Salazar Slytherin was a little demanding."

Hermione understood what the girl wanted. She had to find a place where Evelyn could sleep and probably have a conversation with Dumbledore. Despite not foreseeing how much her actions were changing the timeline, Hermione found herself increasingly having difficulties in not taking action.

Looking at Evelyn's face, something caught her eye in the dark corridor of the Dungeons. A shadow was moving, coming towards them. She hoped it wasn't the Bloody Baron or one of the Slytherin students, but she usually was not very lucky, so she preferred to be safe than sorry.

The darkness that seemed to embrace the walls gradually fades away when the One who all will fear to say his name, comes to light. Evelyn's breathing stops the moment she realizes that Tom Riddle is there. Hermione stood up and Evelyn copied her movement. If Riddle had come here to fight, she didn't feel ready.

He stops in front of her, at a distance of around a hundred and fifty meters, and gives her a long look without saying anything, the sound of his breathing sounding loudly in that empty corridor. His gaze goes down to where the young girl is, just behind her and clinging to Hermione's skirt.

"Go to bed. Tomorrow will be a long day for new students." His voice was calm but demanding. This was not in dispute and the young girl had no choice. "As a prefect, I must put everything in order."

In different words, Tom Riddle had placed an order in the Slytherin House. He might not like the girl, and he might not be happy to deal with the situation, but for now, he made sure the night ended with everyone in their proper beds.

Evelyn flees Riddle's eyes, uncertain, afraid and hesitant. From everything the girl had learned, what was most prominent in her memory was that she should respect the older students and the hierarchy that existed inside the House.

"She is not going back there."

The young girl tightens her grip on Hermione's left hand when she hears the words that are, in Evelyn's perspective, bravely uttered in her defence.

"The Vow. I stopped that." Riddle says and to Evelyn's ears that has no meaning. But she understood that it was a private conversation between the two older students. "She needs to go back." Now, that was an order.

"Did you really stop that?" Hermione asked, suspicious. She couldn't let a child go back to that situation, but she also couldn't change what should happen... Could she?

Riddle nods. "For now."

He looks at Evelyn Thomas, who looks at Hermione, who against all her heart's wishes, confirms for Evelyn to go to the Slytherin dorm. Evelyn hugs Hermione.

"I will not forget what you did," Slytherins remember those who help them as much as they remember those who harm them. In a way, they have a good memory and are a little bit resentful to those who did them wrong. Her arms tried to exert maximum strength before she let go and turned away from Hermione. She still didn't want to go to the dorms of her House, but she didn't seem to have much of a choice and maybe that was terrifying.

She passes slowly by Riddle, who follows every movement she makes with his eyes, and as soon as she was out of his field of vision, she ran. Tom and Hermione watch the girl disappear into the shadows of the corridor that leads to the entrance to the Slytherin Common Room. Hermione is once again concerned, but she **has to** believe that Riddle is telling the truth, even though she is not satisfied with the situation.

And so, she is alone with Riddle. They look at each other in that quiet environment, so he reaches for her. Invading her personal space as fast as an arrow, holding the wrist with one hand where he knew the wand was in the holster - a detail he realized by watching her - his left-hand holds her slender neck and part of her jaw, not to strangle - even though he was in a favourable position for such an act - but only to immobilize and corner her against the wall. As close as he was, he could feel her warm breath against his skin and the sweet smell of the wine they had both drunk.

"You shouldn't have attacked the members of the Slytherin House." He chides her. For Tom, it is a complicated feeling. Even though he finds it exciting - similar to the adrenaline of a spell reaching its target - that she is powerful, and intelligent, and that he even admires her stubbornness a little, he cannot have her fighting against his Knights and the other members of the Slytherin House in such a rampant way, especially when it was he who had invited her to the snake's den. It is not that he cares about the health of his Housemates, far from it. Of course, few will dare to question him, but if this becomes common behaviour, the Knights' bloodlust would have to be fed and they will begin to question too much. That's why he needs to keep everyone under a tight leash, so no one will be comfortable enough to try to go against him.

He also could not disregard her actions forever, just as he could not disregard the Vow. Tom will not allow her to have an ace up her sleeve to use against him whenever and however she wanted. He has to retaliate in return so he wouldn't feel indebted to her, especially after what she saw and knew, but he also has to be in control. Otherwise, the lioness that she is could turn relentless. But he doesn't want to think of her as an enemy - even if he doesn't trust anyone blindly - yet she is so far proving to be safe, allowing him to be himself. Unassuming. But she has only seen a third of what he is capable of and yet, his head is starting to fill with thoughts of her being a formidable ally.

But above that, there is something about her that makes him have feelings and sensations that he is inexperienced in. Her fierce expression moves him, trailing goosebumps on his skin like a caress and he finds himself unable not to look all over her face and focus on her lips. *What is it?* He wonders, and somehow he knows what it is. He's not a fool. However, the **why** and **how** he is feeling is what disturbs him. He does not care about these things, as he is as detached from this idea as anything else that does not interest him - where there is no benefit, there is no interest. But Granger is starting to get him interested in it, making him try to see the benefits and he is a voracious hunter of emotions that make him feel alive and powerful.

There is a *fire in* her, a spark of determination in her eyes, within her pupils. *An inner fire.* She wasn't the type to be submissive if she didn't want to. However, that inner fire is coming towards him and it is certainly not friendly. Hermione grunts and squeezes Riddle's wrists so she can get him away from her. She pushes him, gaining a little personal space.

"So, are we back to this?" She asks, hurt by the order in his voice and the short time that peace

between them reigned. It hasn't lasted even a day at Hogwarts. Her words seem to affect him. He looks at her as angrily as the beginning of desire is forgotten for a moment, his jaw stiffens in disgust at the new clash they have. "Isn't there a day when we can return to Hogwarts and not hate each other again? And stop doing what? " She asks with a defiant expression. "Prevent them from hurting anyone?"

"She's a mudblood!" Tom snaps. In his thoughts, she also shouldn't be so attached to a mudblood.

"She is a child!" Hermione counters. "She is magical and that is what matters. You more than anyone know that what matters is magic!"

They face each other. Hermione couldn't say whether Tom Riddle hates Muggle-borns and half-blood because of what he considered to be his own impurity in his blood or if he really considers himself the purest of wizards because he is the last known descendant of Salazar Slytherin. But the truth is that Tom does not have hatred towards Muggle-borns - or so he thinks - just a great disdain for everything and everyone he considers inferior to him. Even a pure-blooded wizard from one of the most renowned families in the Sacred Twenty-Eight could be under the sole of his shoe, being just a disposable pawn in his great game of chess.

"I will not discuss this with you." She seems to be resentful. "Nothing I say can change your mind, can it?"

If he is surprised, he doesn't show it.

"Very well," Tom replies, lifting his chin slightly. "Nobody's going to want the *mudblood* girl." When Hermione makes a confused expression, Tom continues. "We have a sponsorship system inside the Slytherin House. You will have to protect her from a lot, I guarantee that. " He says, already turning his back on Hermione.

Irritated by his lack of empathy and for her having let Evelyn go back, she shouts at Tom Riddle, who is already walking towards the entrance to the Common Room.

"Okay, I will protect her! I'll take care of her -"Hermione doesn't care that anyone can hear her or that the Bloody Baron himself came after her "- just as I took care of you!"

He stops at once and turns to face her, but she is already gone.

Running up the stairs to go after her, Tom Riddle grabs her arm to prevent her from running away. She looks over her shoulder with a furious expression and tears in her eyes; tears that she would never allow herself to shed in front of him. Her breathing is fast as she was losing control of her emotions, aware that the impulsive part of her personality can manifest.

Tom lets her go, removing the grip he has on her arm as if she is hot as fire and he has attacked her in the worst way. But for Hermione, that's exactly how she felt. The attacks on Evelyn Thomas roused Hermione's defence system as if she were being attacked.

He wants to go after her when she leaves and he almost does, but his day and night have been long. He would deal with her eventually and by eventually he means tomorrow.

Already lying on her bed in the Gryffindor Tower, Hermione kept thinking about events. Her housemates were already asleep and everything was quiet, making her realize that she had spent too much time at the snake pit. One of the worst parts of that night was Alphard Black's betrayal. It was not quite a blunt betrayal, but a choice that showed how far Alphard could go for his family. That he could make horrible choices, even though he knew his family was wrong, that they were

all wrong. He was someone she trusted, kind, who until then had had no problem with her being a Muggle-born, but this was the second time he had done this to her.

And what was up with Tom Riddle? She had no words to describe her encounter with him.

oOo

Tom entered the common room, already calm and silent, the students in their dormitories. The flames from the fireplace were the largest source of lighting in the dark-greenish room. He narrowed his eyes when he noticed the small figure sitting on one of the sofas in front of the fireplace. Walking calmly towards the person, Tom Riddle approached, perhaps not too surprised to find her there.

"Shouldn't you be in your bed?" He asked, watching as she winced when she heard his voice, possibly not noticing his presence.

Oh, she has a lot to learn, Tom thought. If the girl was going to stay in Slytherin, she would have to learn to be alert. In fact, in her *little muggle world*, she could be considered a smart girl, attentive to everything that happened around her, but there, in Slytherin, everyone shared the same basic characteristics that made a student suited for that House. Some were more proficient than others. So, if she was there, she needed to improve those skills. Although he thought she wouldn't last long.

He walked around, his shoes making small noises with each step until he sat on his favourite chair. The one that was closest to the fire, where he has a privileged view of the flames and everything that happened around him. He noticed how she stiffened when she caught on to what he was thinking of. He stood right where he was and she tried to escape his gaze, but he doesn't even need to use Legilimency to know that she must be thinking about how to get out of there. He smiled, his left hand entered the flame of the fireplace and he played calmly with the fire, moving his fingers through it without burning himself.

She held her breath and he saw the impressed and covetous look she had, *she longed to do the same*.

"I asked a question." Tom removed his hand from the fire and blew the magic flames that dissolved into nothing, looking directly at her.

She looked down and the small hands grabbed her own pyjama pants, casting a look or two in his direction and she thought it prudent not to fail to answer his question.

"I am afraid." Evelyn's voice sounded soft, childish and low, submissive and feeling inferior.

"Afraid?" He questioned. "Fear is for the weak. Are you weak?" He had no empathy for her. To be honest, he had no empathy for almost anything. She was no exception. She trembled and shook her head, a pathetic attempt to deny the truth to his eyes. He laughed, a small, almost cheerful laugh.

Evelyn dared to look at him when she heard the sound of his laughter. There was something so strangely attractive about him and she referred to it as the synonym for power. Lying there, sitting in that armchair, with the light from the fireplace creating shadows and lights on his face, it made him look undeniably powerful.

"What did she say to you?" He asked, curious. His question caught her off guard and she noticed that she must have been looking at him for too long. He rested one arm on the chair, closed his hand in a fist and rested his head on it, his eyes never leaving hers. When she was slow to answer

for not knowing the right answer, he tilted his head and raised an eyebrow speculatively.

"I asked her what it meant to be a *mudblood*."

White teeth appeared when an unfriendly smile stretched over his face.

"She said it was a bad word used by wizards and witches who fear that I might become more powerful and steal their magic." Evelyn continued. She looked down when she finished speaking and shook her legs, trying not to be disturbed by the silence that had settled down and by his presence. "Is it true? What she said, is it true? "

Ah, ignorance of a Muggle-born in the Wizarding World. Reluctantly he compares her situation to his. He was also a layman, obviously, he is no longer.

"Lying, she is not. You are just a mudblood to everyone. "

"I will prove them wrong."

Tom Riddle gets up, a smile with eyes closed.

"Really?" He asked, approaching her, and stopping in front of her. "Then you will have to face a *lot*. Be careful not to make enemies that you can't beat. " He put his hand on top of Evelyn's head, her hair is soft to his touch. There was a strange urge to grab the girl's hair, but he just patted her on the head as if she were some kind of pet.

"I am going to bed." She got up, naively ignoring the danger. Tom let her go.

He was particularly uncomfortable with children. He spent too much time with them at the Orphanage to know that. For him, they were usually loud and inexplicably vile. Somehow, there would always be drool or mucus coming from somewhere from them.

On the first step of the stairs, she stopped and looked at him.

"Fear is for the weak, isn't it?"

"Yes." He confirmed. "Fear is for the weak."

He watched the girl finally go to the dorm and for a fleeting moment, his eyes shone red as vivid as the colour of blood. Tom made a movement with his neck from side to side, cracking the tension there. He walked, finally alone, the only sound coming from the fireplace - where the wood burned endlessly - and his breathing, stopped right in front of the flames.

His thoughts were full of the events of that night, especially of Granger. He was still absorbing what the little *muggle-born* had said about the conversation she had with her, but his mind was now and again replaying the moments he had been with her. Tom was trying very hard to control himself, but his mind was enveloped in a haze of thoughts that focused on the closeness between them, both when he had removed the spell he had cast on her, and the one just then in one of the corridors of the Dungeons. Awakening goosebumps that went up the skin of his arms up to his neck like a caress, things he couldn't control and didn't understand the feeling. He looked intently at the crackling fire, opening his mouth a little to exhale a little faster.

The flames that seemed to dance, licking the wood, burning endlessly in the fireplace, took shape and Granger's face appeared in the fire. The flames mimicked the smooth movement of Granger's uncontrollable hair and the vigour of her determined expression. But it was obvious that this was happening to his eyes only, that he was only seeing the image of Granger in the fire, because of

himself. It was his magic creating the image of the unconscious desire he had and with disbelief, he lowered his gaze, taking charge of the situation and not allowing himself to believe it. With that, the flames returned to normal, but the noise of the wood crackling would always be a constant future reminder from then on.

"My Lord."

Tom Riddle blinked, recognizing the voice.

"Malfoy."

Abraxas Malfoy came down the stairs dressed in a black satin men's pyjama set.

"I thought you were already resting, my Lord."

Malfoy's voice broke the music coming from the flames of the fireplace, for the quiet peace of the Common Room and for Tom Riddle, despite his thoughts being as incessant as possible. Riddle's temperament was like the phases of the moon, easily modified if he so let himself go, and Malfoy's voice, the inconvenience of his presence in the moment of intimate reflection seemed to attract Riddle's anger to the surface. Honestly admitting to himself, this side of him had always been on the prowl, with the potential to come to the surface in the blink of an eye and apparently it would grace Malfoy with it.

Abraxas Malfoy, in Tom Riddle's view, was the most loyal of his followers, along with Lestrage. He bestowed upon Malfoy a level of trust, yet it was not with blind confidence. He trusted Malfoy to make others follow the order of things when he was not present, and that false sense of power seemed to guarantee Abraxas' loyalty, yet it did not impune him from punishment . At that moment, the pupils of Tom's eyes involuntarily contracted as he advanced towards Malfoy. He grabbed him by the collar of his uniform and pushed him against one of the columns of the Common Room, it was so sudden that Abraxas had no time to react and with wide eyes Abraxas looked at Riddle's face, fearing what his Lord would do.

Riddle's proximity was unsettling and Abraxas faltered under the influence of it, and as if without a sense of personal space, Tom took advantage of the moment to get closer. So close, Abraxas could not look away as he knew he must not escape Riddle's gaze.

"M-my Lord ...?" He tried. Malfoy didn't understand what he did wrong. But before he even had the chance to apologize for anything he might have done, he felt it. It was like a grip, like digging nails into his head, into his brain, into his thoughts. Riddle was invading his head mercilessly, violating the privacy of his memories. Malfoy felt the sharp disorienting sound in his ears as if he was going deaf. He didn't know what his Lord was looking for in his thoughts, in his head and as much as he was reluctant, he did not resist and instead let Riddle see whatever he wanted to see rather than going through mental torture.

Malfoy didn't know what his lord was looking for, however little did Malfoy know that Riddle did not know either. There was no clear purpose there but to torture Malfoy out of a whim of irritation. He invaded like that, without even thinking twice, breaking the natural mental barriers that any human being had as if they were dust. Tom was not kind, he went through Malfoy's thoughts and emotions, dismissing them as if they were nothing, however, leaving a mark of pain. Within his reality, he could see Malfoy twitch involuntarily. He was not looking for something specific and for the time being, he had no interest in his conversations with his family or with the Knights, nor in Abraxas' intimate life, he just wanted to cause pain. This was the reason.

However, Riddle's subconscious seemed to have a purpose and he found himself pausing in

Malfoy's memories of Granger. In the memory, he sees through Abraxas' eyes, and Granger was dancing.

I was dancing ... Riddle remembers the explanation she had given about her hair being so rebellious. What she had said was true, she hadn't lied to him, but she forgot to mention that the younger brother Prewett was involved in that too. Laughing so blatantly cheerful for Prewett. This left him with a strange simmer in his stomach, which burnt inside him, similar to the sensation he had had in the Hogwarts Express cabin.

His anger seemed to be reflected in his mental attack as Malfoy gasped in pain.

Tom discarded the memory, focusing on the next, the warm clash between Malfoy and Granger in the corridor. In Malfoy's emotions, he didn't seem to hate Granger, he seemed to be relatively neutral to her presence, but there was curiosity and suspicion. Like any good Slytherin.

Thus, Riddle retracted the mental invasion and let Malfoy go. He looked at the state of Abraxas, who was visibly dejected, pale and shaking, eyes fraught. A trail of blood ran down one of his nostrils and he, with his right hand shaking, touches it when he felt the hot liquid, then looked at his hand and then back at his Lord. Mentally weak, Malfoy crumbled upon himself on his knees, breathing quickly and with an incessant headache which seemed it would last for days.

"I'm going to retire," Tom said politely, as if nothing had transpired, going up the stairs to the boys' dorm and leaving Malfoy there.

Tom let the hot water fall on his body. He was in one of the five showers in his dorm bathroom.

Now that they were in their sixth year, they were relocated to the boys' dormitory that corresponded to the school year they were in. As always, he preferred his bed to be the furthest away, this time he got a privileged view of one of the windows overlooking the lake bottom. Sometimes it was possible to see the tentacles or the whole of The Giant Squid itself.

He rested his arms against the tiles in the shower and let his head fall, water running through his dark hair, as he stared into the dark hole in the drain where the water was disappearing. Even though the hot water bathed his skin, his arms shivered.

I'm sick. That was the only answer for him. Which was, in fact, wrong and ironic. He never got sick, not once that he remembered, but he was starting to think that this was the case, because he was unable to stop thinking about Granger.

Tom opened his mouth to let his gasping breath out. He tried to erase her image from his mind, but he was unsuccessful, which left him so frustrated that he punched the tile. *Stop, fuck.* But his mind clenched at the remembrance of the closeness between them and what he did not want to happen, happened. His member started to harden into an erection.

No. He tried to deny it - *I'm not going to do that.* He did not want to 'stoop' to doing this act, it would be admitting that he desired her sexually, which would go against a part of him that he believed he managed to control. To be honest, the only time he had masturbated was at the age of thirteen and he didn't even remember the reason that made him want to do it. He attributed it to a phase of puberty, indicating physical changes. After that day, never again. Of course, he would consider some girl pretty or ugly, arrogant or shy, see the size of her breasts, rear and thighs, he harboured some scientific curiosity about the female's anatomy, but he largely ignored these things because there was no sexual interest on his part unless he would gain something out of it, other than that he always remained in control. And then, Granger came to test that side which never before awoke.

Fuck it. He was not a puritan at all and did not have strict obedience to anything, following only his own personal code.

He did what had to be done. He put his right hand around his member in a slightly tight grip and moved his hand back and forth, the friction, and the movement was good enough to overwhelm his mind's sensory receptors and pull a sigh from Tom's lips, causing him to close his eyes. He felt himself grow stiffer, pulsing, enlarging and quickly becoming fully erect. He tried not to imagine anything, tried to leave his mind blank while continuing with the repetitive movement of his hand, but that didn't seem to work and the pleasant relief seemed to elude him, which was frustrating and made him ache somehow. Then, reluctantly, he let her image infiltrate his most intimate thoughts.

Tom didn't know what her body looked like, not without clothes, the silhouette of her body that he knew of was the outline made by the uniform and he didn't know what she looked like under the fabric layers. What was the real size of her breasts, what were their shape, were they tear-shaped, or round, were they perfectly identical or were there small differences between them? What was her belly, waist and hips, the apex of her thighs and the intimacy between her legs like? Of course, he knew, biologically speaking, what the female body looked like, but he specifically wanted to know hers.

He didn't notice in the moments he was with her in detail. What he studied and interested him at first was her personality, behaviour, attitude, and intellectual and magical level and that in itself drew his attention to the point that he started to consider her a formidable ally. But now, here he was, touching himself and thinking about her.

The lack of detailed knowledge about her body left room for imagination and it was exactly what he did. He saw her body, within the proportions he could deduct, the valley between her breasts that he once had the curiosity to touch to get the necklace she hid between, the legs that were dressed in those strange pants that shaped her thighs and calves, Tom clung to the memories where he perceived her body and combined the two memories into one, this time imagining her naked. The image made him falter and the rhythm of the hand increased. He was close, but it is not enough. She never called him by his chosen name, she called him 'Riddle', but it seemed wrong to imagine her there, calling him 'Riddle' - his father's muggle name - didn't convey the intimacy necessary for him to come, so he imagined how it must be her calling him 'My Lord'.

Oh. In the right timbre, sighing in his ear, the auditory fantasy of her worshipping his power sent pleasure impulses through his body.

"Ah...!" He muffled the sound with a clenched fist. This felt *right*. At that moment he did not understand why he had deprived himself of this for so long. It didn't make sense. His cock twitched in excitement, the throbbing member still full in anticipation. .

What else did he need to do to come?

His vivid detail of her turned more audacious and formed into an image so contrasting to her demure demeanour which greatly appealed to him, imagining her touching her breasts, the tips of her nipples and the areola that were probably pink, squeezing and groaning his worship. Dangerous combination. One hand continued on the breasts, while the other went down a sinful path down her flat belly, going, further south. *The way of sin.* The hand hiding between her supple legs that were closed, and when he pictured her slowly parting her legs for him, he comes.

"...!" He clenched his teeth to keep out any sound while the orgasm encompassed his rationale. He came in his hand, while the rest fell on the shower floor, running down the drain along with the water. Tom found his mind to be blank for a fleeting moment as spasms of pleasure ran over his body.

He lifted his head upwards to let the water cascade down and wash over his face. His chest expanded and retracted to follow his heavy breathing.

Already lying on his bed after a long shower, dressed in grey second-rate cotton pyjamas - something very different than what Malfoy, Lestrangle and others had - Tom's body felt relaxed, his head heavy on the pillow, while he stared at the dark green - almost black - canopy of the bed.

He decided that he would not condemn himself for what he had done. He masturbated thinking about her, so what? How many people didn't fantasise and act on carnal needs? It was not like he was touching her against her will. **He would not condemn himself** and would do anything to make this act last before the next, but he was not so sure whether he could commit to it. He had enjoyed immensely the feeling, even if quick, euphoria exploded within his mind and almost as if a voracious hunter of emotions, he felt he would need more.

Nobody knew and neither did she need to ever know.

In the morning, Tom was already finishing wearing his uniform, while part of his dormmates was waking up. Nott was trying to tie his tie correctly, Malfoy was still in the shower, Rosier was waking up, and Lestrangle was coming out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist. Without any modesty, Lestrangle removed the towel from his waist and tossed it on his bed, picking up his uniform pants so he could put them on.

"*Fuck*, turn it over there," Nott said with an expression of disgust at Lestrangle's blatant nakedness.

"What is it, Nott? Never seen a *cock* in your life? " Lestrangle replied.

"I still need to have breakfast. That sight makes me sick. "

"If you continue to complain, I will think that you are a *little girl*." Lestrangle pulled the zipper and buttoned his pants.

Tom rolled his eyes. Malfoy came out of the bathroom, running a hand through his blond - almost white - hair.

"Malfoy." Tom attracted his attention. "You will inform me how the Blacks are doing. Lestrangle, make sure that no one from Slytherin House says anything about what happened yesterday. " Lestrangle smiled with joy and Malfoy nodded.

"And the *mudblood* girl? Nott questioned.

Did Tom care about the girl? No. He 'saved' her because of Hermione. He had done his part. There was nothing else to do. If the girl stayed, she would have to know how to manage, he would not babysit her. She didn't matter to him.

Tom shrugged at Nott's question.

o0o

She was sitting at the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall, resting her elbow on the table while massaging the left temple of her head. Hermione had woken up early, even earlier than Ectur, there were very few students in the Great Hall beside her. She had a huge headache and last night's events prevented her from sleeping well. Even the simple sound of the teaspoon she was stirring in her teacup felt like a cat scratching a blackboard for her.

Repeat the sixth year, who knew? She snorted, annoyed at anything.

The doors of the Great Hall opened and to Hermione's surprise, it was Evelyn Thomas who had entered. She still looked lost, but she would have preferred to follow her path alone than to be with the other girls in the Slytherin House. She looked around, there were few students and she thought that if she came earlier, she could have had breakfast in a more peaceful way.

Her eyes met Hermione's and she smiled and returned the smile. *The Gryffindor table*, Evelyn thought. She wanted to go there, but she knew that her path was the opposite way of where she was supposed to go. She was a Slytherin, after all.

With that, she took a deep breath and walked over to the Slytherin table. The five students at the table looked at her with disgust when she sat down. Evelyn looked down but thought of the words *Fear is for the weak*.

Hermione looked at Evelyn, a little concerned for the girl, who was alone at the Slytherin table. Hermione took a long drink of hot tea when someone dropped Divination books on the table in front of her.

"Are you going out with Malfoy?" Enid asked, leaning over on the books, too impatient to sit before spilling it out.

The moment she heard the question, Hermione spit out the tea while some of the liquid almost spilt out of her nose. Painful, certainly. But nothing was worse than the assumption that she was dating a Malfoy.

"What!?"

"I'm asking if you're seeing Malfoy." Enid asked again, finally sitting down opposite of Hermione.

"Where did you get that from?" Outraged, Hermione asked.

"Maybe it's because you guys met last night."

Not that it was Enid's business, but Hermione had nothing to hide. She was clearly not going out with Malfoy, nor did she intend to. Merlin, free her from this burden! But also, Hermione would not tell what happened at the Slytherin House, if she opened her mouth about it, the Riddle Gang would never leave her alone.

"Definitely not. I am not with Malfoy. He wanted to say that Riddle was waiting for me in the Dungeons to return the book he had borrowed from me, nothing more. " Hermione lied in the last part.

Enid looked at her for a moment and Hermione held her gaze, and she seemed to accept that answer.

Bilius and Ectur came moments later and sat at the table next to them. As Bilius devoured breakfast, Ectur took a strand of Hermione's unruly hair and curiously pulled it out, watching as the curl of her hair returned to the same position as a coiled spring. She smiled, before putting the stray hair behind her ear. Her hair didn't seem to cooperate with the fashionable pin-up style and she didn't insist on it, opting to leave her hair down.

Her hair was certainly more tame than when she was in her early years at Hogwarts, but was still rebellious.

The Great Hall soon became full of students with the noise of incessant conversation and cutlery. Algie sat next to Enid, talking to Ignatius. Ignatius Prewett became the new Quidditch captain. A

murmur that started at the end of the table passed from person to person - the first gossip of the day - *'Lucretia Black is wearing an opal engagement ring.'* *'Ignatius and Lucretia are engaged.'* *'Ignatius is going to marry a Black.'* *'Lucretia Black is going to marry Prewett.'*

When the conversation had reached Prewett's ears, he stopped chewing and threw a fork on his plate. His facial expression was sulky and he locked his jaw.

"Ig..." Enid murmured and Algie put a hand on his shoulder. Ectur looked at his brother complacently and Hermione smiled sympathetically.

The Slytherin table it didn't look any different from Gryffindor. Everyone was commenting, while from Hermione's vision, Lucretia looked like she was going to have an aneurysm.

It was at that moment that Riddle and his most loyal followers entered, Riddle at the front. They were boys, inexplicably handsome, and even Hermione couldn't deny it. They entered as if they were the owners of the school, walked and seemed to everyone to be in slow motion. It was clear as day that they were the most popular bunch and as always, anyone part of their social circle were 'privileged.'

They were at the head of the Slytherin table and it was only then that Hermione realized that there really was a hierarchy there. Her gaze passed over all the members until the end of the table, where Evelyn was sitting like a doormat, for the Slytherins, the lowest place. Hermione clenched her hand under the table.

When she looked back, Riddle was staring at her. She ignored him and focused on the jam toast that was on her plate.

In the background, Dumbledore as Deputy Headmaster was saying something about the best students in each year last year. She was largely ignoring what was being said, much more focused on eating toast. She was glad that such oddly public distinction was not practised during her time as it fueled animosity Intra and inter Houses. Jealousy festered rather quickly and Hermione was all too familiar with the antics of hormonal teens, having been part of the Golden Trio.

"- And to my surprise, to the Headmaster Dippet and also to that of all the other teachers, we got a tie for first place in the fifth year."

"Hey, Lovegood and Riddle tied?" Bilius commented to his friends, but Hermione was still oblivious to what was being said, and rather stubbornly preferred to ignore such announcements. Ectur shrugged and so did Algie, as if they didn't understand what was going on.

"Second in the ranking of the best fifth graders, Miss Lovegood. Pearl Lovegood." Dumbledore announced and the Ravenclaw table clapped for Pearl. "First place, Riddle. Tom Riddle." The Slytherin table did not fall short, they clapped and cheered their most distinguished student. "But in first place, there is also Miss Granger. Hermione Granger."

When the Gryffindor House table cheered as they clapped, Hermione was startled to reality.

"Hermione, it's you!" Ignatius said from across the table.

"Hm? What?" She asked without understanding.

"You managed to beat Riddle in the finals ranking. You drew with him!" Ectur spoke beside her.

From the far end, Riddle was looking at her again. Whether he was happy with it or not, he didn't show it.

In any case, she had attracted too much attention to her and it couldn't happen.

The first class they had was Transfiguration with Professor Dumbledore.

"Can you believe that?" Bilius complained, while he, Hermione and Ectur walked towards the Transfiguration classroom. "Most of our classes are with Slytherin."

"What classes did you sign up for, Hermione?" Ectur asked.

"All but Divination and Astronomy."

Tom Riddle was already seated, waiting for the Transfiguration class to start. The space beside him was empty because he believed that Granger would sit next to him in class as she had done in the past few weeks last year. But it was not like that, she had instead joined Bilius and Ectur, the three discussing Divination classes, which she seemed annoyed about. He could overhear her clearly claiming that Runes classes were better.

Granger hadn't even looked at him properly, preferring to sit next to Prewett, making his hand tighten into a fist. The image he got from Malfoy's memories was still fresh in his mind. He controlled himself, was impassive again, even though her laughter was bothering him.

He is still digesting the information that she managed to tie him in the ranking, Tom doesn't know how to feel about it, obviously, he doesn't like to share. The darkest and most suspicious part of his mind says he should keep an eye on her.

The class begins, Dumbledore is a teacher much more of practice than of theory, but sometimes he gives some long speeches mixed with sermons, today is one of those days. Explaining what it means to be a sixth-year student and how it changes the work they will have. *From now on, things would get more serious.* And none of the students doubted it.

"To move forward, it is necessary to regress. This is the theme that I and all the other teachers agreed to be for your first two months. We decided that before you move on to new lessons, we need your practicality. So, don't be alarmed if you are initially tested on subjects that belong to the fifth, fourth or even first year. " Dumbledore explained. "So, who remembers how to conjure a perfect bubble stream?"

What a childish thing. Tom rolled his eyes and without saying a word, made a non-verbal bubble-conjuring spell. His magic was so strong and he was so skilled that he filled the classroom with bubbles in a matter of seconds.

As much as Dumbledore might think there was something wrong with Tom Marvolo Riddle, the boy he once visited at the orphanage, he could not deny or fail to admire Tom's magical abilities.

"Very well, Mr Riddle." Dumbledore praised. "How about something more difficult and solid now? Something from the fourth year? "

Hermione, unable to stop herself from grasping the opportunity of being taught by Dumbledore - something she had only imagined - conjured a chair, practically a throne, fashioned in a true Gryffindor way for Dumbledore. He smiled at her.

"Very well, Miss Granger."

Thus followed the class, each student having the opportunity to prove their knowledge. When Dumbledore informed them that the end of the class was over, everyone started to pack to leave.

"Miss Granger, may I have a word with you?"

She stopped the path she was taking to leave the classroom, Bilius and Ectur as well, but she made a sign indicating that they could go.

"Of course," Hermione responded to Dumbledore's request. Riddle passed by her and their eyes met, for a moment she noticed distress, maybe even fear and reluctance for him to leave her there. But she turned and he had no other choice than to leave the room. " Professor Dumbledore?"

Dumbledore was sitting, looking at her. "How are you?"

Hermione gave a half-smile, tinged with some sadness. "Well, I think. Worried about Harry. I still haven't been able to find a solution."

" I may have been told that you always keep an eye on him."

"I am very worried about him." She replied sincerely, frowning. "I don't know what caused this, I have some ideas, that's for sure. But... He's not waking up and it scares me. "

"Maybe I can help if you tell me some of those ideas."

"Oh, I wish I could tell, I would like it so much. But if I tell... " Hermione looked at her nails. "I wonder if we are already changing history." She looked at Dumbledore. "I am afraid, Professor Dumbledore. A type of fear I never thought of feeling." Her voice became more choked in the end." There are things, things that I did, that I think I shouldn't have done. But I couldn't stop myself. There was something that told me it should be done and I couldn't resist, it didn't go according to what I believed. And maybe, I don't know, maybe... "

"How do you tie with Mr Riddle in the top ranking? " He suggested, drawing a smile from Hermione and smiling back to her.

"My fault." She smiled. "I can not avoid it. Sometimes it is a matter of necessity to answer correctly." Hermione looked under her lashes like a child who had been caught doing something wrong. "I didn't even think about the ranking." She defended herself.

That was when Dumbledore smiled the most she had seen him ever since meeting him during this time. "How was your vacation?"

Now, that question made Hermione stiffen. What should she say? Should she tell Dumbledore that Riddle had spent the vacation with her? That she saw the abuse at the orphanage? Should she say everything she knows about Tom Riddle?

"My vacation was good." She said simply. The tone of voice was devoid of emotion. It was not that she was suspicious of Dumbledore, far from it, but it reminded her that Dumbledore knew what was going on in the orphanage and had done nothing to change it, which affected Hermione's emotions on this subject. It was not like she was living in a field of flowers with Riddle, it was more like a field of thorns, and it was not like he was or made an effort to be a good person. But she would not say anything, otherwise, everything would go down the drain.

If Dumbledore noticed her vague response - which he obviously did - he decided not to comment.

"I spent most of it studying how to get home." Hermione continued. "The truth is, I don't know where to start. I'm lost."

"How about you start from the beginning?"

"Hm?" She wrinkled her forehead.

"Where do you think your necklace came from?"

It was then that Hermione knew that he was aware of the amulet having magic related to Slytherin. Of course, no one was a fool at that time - especially Dumbledore.

"You know, don't you, Professor Dumbledore?"

He shook his head. "Try to start there." He suggested. "Now, if you'll excuse me, Miss Granger, I think you'd better go to your next class before you're too late."

"Oh, right." She held her school bag and glanced over her shoulder at Dumbledore to say, "Thank you, professor." Thanking him for the advice he had given.

When she opened the door, the first-year students rushed in, looking forward to the first Transfiguration class. In the background, as she closed the door, she heard Dumbledore start the class, smiling at the new students.

In fact, she wasn't too surprised to find Tom Riddle waiting for her in the corridor with arms crossed in front of his chest and leaning slightly against one of the columns, dressed in full Slytherin uniform that was very suiting.

She passed him and he followed her.

"What are you doing here?" She asked. "Aren't you going to be late for your next class?"

"Waiting for you of course. You got lost on the way to your next class and I'm helping you find your way. "

"No one will believe this. I'm already familiar with the school, Riddle. "

They continued walking in the empty corridor.

"So, we lost time talking in the corridor," Riddle said. " Which is what we are clearly doing." He took her arm, preventing her from continuing. "Look at me when we're talking, don't ignore me."

Hermione turned to him and looked at him with a frown.

"What did you say to Dumbledore?" His jaw was locked, an expression of few friends, an angry gleam in his eyes and the tone of his voice that was able to give a shiver to her arms.

Oh, so is that it? She wondered. Of course, he wouldn't let her go without knowing what she had said to Dumbledore, not when she knew too much about him. He thought she would break the little trust he has placed in her. He felt threatened by Dumbledore, who was the only person who kept him in check.

"Nothing." She replied and he released her immediately. "I said nothing." Hermione shook her head to emphasize her point of view. Tom looked her over from head to toe, not knowing what to say for a moment.

"I didn't say anything, okay? This is between us." She continued.

"A secret? With me, Granger?" He wasn't complaining, but he imagined that as soon as she had gotten back to Hogwarts, she would open her mouth and tell Dumbledore everything. That was his biggest fear, that's why he made the Vow with her. But again she proved to him that she was not as

Dumbledore imagined her to be and it satisfied him more than he could put into words.

He comes closer to her.

"I don't know what you want from me anymore." She walks away, leaning her hand on the protective fence that prevents any student from falling from the second floor of the castle while looking at the horizon." Look, I don't care what you do to your '*friends*', nor about your darkest thoughts -" *Lie*, she knows she is telling lies. She cares more than she wants to show "- but leave me out of it. I don't want to get involved, I don't want to make contact with your friends. I don't want to have anything to do with it. "

It was a lie, she would care if he hurt someone, she would care about tortures and dark spells as he gradually built up his army of thousands of followers, but she didn't want to be his target. She didn't want him to pay attention to her.

"Make them stay away from me." She asked, still looking at the horizon. Riddle leaned back against one of the columns, looking curiously at her, trying to assemble her as he assembled a puzzle.

"Are you afraid of them?"

She snorts.

"I can protect myself." Hermione turns away, leaving Riddle alone in the hall. He looks at her as she walks away.

We are only at the beginning.

He had started walking to go to the next class when he suddenly stopped. He looked suspiciously over his shoulder at every corner of the empty corridor and swore that someone had been watching him and Granger talking.

oOo

That night, Tom had decided to go to the Chamber of Secrets to get the diary back. He needed to feed the diary with new memories and emotions, just as he needed to share his thoughts.

Hermione was reading the same page in the book for the fifth time, the fireplace fire in the Gryffindor Common Room no longer seemed to offer warmth. She needed fresh air, judging by the late hour - with her housemates already asleep and her being the only one in the common room - the monitors must have already eased the rounds. She decided to sneak out.

Tom arrived at Moaning Myrtle bathroom. He didn't find her there. Who knew where that weeping ghost was and he frankly didn't care. He turned to the sink and whispered in his ancestral language. Parseltongue.

Hermione was in the corridors, the moonlight between the clouds illuminated the path for her, but it also cast shadows of the columns on the floor. She breathed in the cool, cold air and sought some help and companionship in solitude.

Tom was in the Chamber of Secrets, looking at the statue of the famous Slytherin Salazar. The Basilisk was asleep, still obeying the master's last order. He walked towards the secret room inside the Chamber.

Clouds hid the moonlight and momentarily the corridor went dark, she took a deep breath and she

saw something in the darkness. Hermione narrowed her eyes, trying to identify whatever was standing in the dark. The clouds passed, and the moonlight returned and Hermione's expression turned to shock. She took a step back.

Tom picked up the diary with a smile on his face, feeling his own magic. His first Horcrux. One of his greatest creations. The magic was strong and dark, but it recognised who it belonged to. Tom opened the diary.

Hermione looked at the figure covered in a black cloak that crawled on the floor, with long sleeves that hid the hands, the hood covering the head and where the face should have been, there was only darkness looking at her. The culprit of her and Harry being arrested in the year 1943. How did he get here too? What did this person want from her and Harry? Who was that person? They faced each other, the person turned away from her, moving away, luring Hermione and Hermione ran after the person.

Tom wrote.

Hello.

Hello, Tom. How are we doing? The diary replies.

Hermione runs, she runs as fast as if her life depends on it. And in a way it depends. She follows the path that the Hooded does, running down the stairs, following him or her, without stopping.

A lot has happened. Tom writes.

What would be 'a lot'? I'm curious. The diary tries to play, with the same morbid and sombre sense of humour as Tom Marvolo Riddle.

When Tom hesitates, the diary demands the memories:

Give it to me.

Hermione cannot believe they are close to the Great Lake at Hogwarts

"Come back here!" She almost screams, demanding that they stop running. She stumbles over the gravel on the edge of the Great Lake, but quickly recovers and points her wand at her target. The Hooded person stops and turns, looking into the dark face was somehow scary.

Tom points his wand at his right temple, a bright white line comes out of Tom's head, he directs the memories to the diary and with a gesture, cuts the memory link with his wand.

The diary page lits up after receiving the memory and emotions of each event, and Tom waits until the diary absorbs everything that has happened. And then:

Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Granger. Granger. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione Granger.

Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Hermione. Granger. Granger. Hermione. Hermione Granger.

The diary has gone into a frenzy.

Chapter End Notes

Naja Melanoleuca, also known as Forest Snake. The fourteenth most poisonous snake in the world.

Author's note: This chapter was more focused on Tom Riddle, I think? Please tell me what you think of the chapter. I don't know if this was a good chapter, I'm in doubt.

I always thought that in canon, Tom Riddle / Lord Voldemort was asexual. If he had any interaction with the opposite sex, it would be with ulterior motives. But in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, we find that he had a daughter with Bellatrix, named Delphini and that J.K. Rowling approved. So...Yup, I give up!

Hydrophis.

Chapter Notes

Please don't kill me! I know, it took me a long time to post this chapter, it's all my fault. But the chapter is here.

I would like to thank everyone who commented, favored and gave me all support. I want to be able to improve and to be worthy of every compliment.

Thank you Azera, Darknessdawns13, celestia128, Ohmaaaaaa, Bea_Cakeee , Micherie, Anabella_Bell, Mayamelissa, MayRaid_0113 , blackheartdarkereye, Al3x_fa1r , Claudelin_79 , Lixi, Ina504, FreyaFallen, Timberli7 , aga1127 , Courtnashe, Aquarium985 , MHH19, vetech95, nina421, Hannipan , yaya06 , Lumin20, SU Gyoung , Celina, chldbwls, Mmn , Seoyoung Ryu, moon, yeondout, lead beautifully , sussus , MeggaDoodle, cupcakekrazy, Al3x_F41r , purrrkitty, omgitscarrie and LadyRiddl.

My special thanks go to Kcarmen. She helps me a lot with her advice and because of her, I am able to post a good chapter. She makes a big difference.

Thank you very much Kcarmen for being my beta reader, for your advice and also for being a friend.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 15. Hydrophis - A Mother's Love.

She pointed her wand, her breath coming out fast, her heart pounding like a horse's gallop. The moon served as a source of illumination for the serene night, the glow reflecting off the dark waters of the Great Lake at Hogwarts which always seemed to have a layer of fog around it, even in the Summer days.

"*Expelliarmus!*" Hermione cast the spell before The Hooded even had a chance to do anything against her. So serious and fierce, she glared at her enemy, her bravery overcoming her initial fear. She heard a sound of a wand falling on gravel.

"Tell me who you are." The words came out of her mouth slowly and strongly. An explicit order. "Now." The tip of Hermione's wand flashed, eager to comply with any command from its caster.

She was met with silence, the darkness stared at her before she heard the whispers in Parseltongue.

The locket attached to Hermione's neck opened automatically, shocking her as she witnessed Salazar Slytherin's medallion reacting. The writing on the rings adorning the hourglass glowed green and the time turner began to spin.

This person had activated the Time-Turner!

"Stop this!" She ordered. "Shut up! *Silencio!*" She cast the spell, hitting The Hooded in the chest, but it was too late. The ground below her feet opened up a vacuum and as she fell, she felt as if she was apparating in the wrong way.

Her body hit the wet, icy cobblestone. She sucked air in when she felt the impact and then turned slowly on her back. Hermione blinked a few times watching the night sky; snow falling slowly and clumping on the ground.

This cannot be happening, she feared. Her eyes stung with hot tears that threatened to fall. *Not again*, she wanted to scream and cry at the same time.

Rising, she shivered with the wind. The snow clinging to her hair, the warm breath she exhaled contrasted with the cold air. Hermione looked around, trying to recognize the place where she was, and surprisedly noticed that it was close to what she remembered being the Wool Orphanage.

What...? She didn't understand what was going on. Was someone trying to show her something? She wasn't sure. She just knew that all these events always lead to Riddle.

Hermione hugged herself, cautiously examining the empty street she walked on towards the iron gate of the orphanage. She looked at the structure of the mansion that housed the orphans and noticed some lights on, and she was about to push the iron gate when she heard a noise coming from that infamous alley. There were low whimpers, a kind of cry that very much resembled a wounded animal.

She took a step back away from the iron gate, walking hesitantly to the alley - *may as well be called the Alley of Wailing* she thought- hesitating at the beginning of the passage.

Further into the alley it was pitch-black dark, the crying sounds did not stop and a scene from a horror movie seemed to play before her. Hermione was about to investigate when she heard footsteps coming towards her. Observantly, she noticed they were not steps that were walked steadily, it sounded like someone was dragging their feet. She held her wand tighter and then a figure was revealed by the moonlight.

It was a woman. A woman so pale that her skin looked translucent, her dark hair was dull, long and extremely straight, the dress she wore was dark brown with a high collar and long sleeves, her coat too thin to protect her from freezing temperatures and even then, Hermione noticed that she was thin, too thin to be considered healthy. However, her stomach was swollen and round.

She is pregnant.

The woman dragged on, shivering with cold or fear, tripping over her own feet and using the bars of the orphanage's gate to stabilize herself, she ignored Hermione's existence, her hand going under her round belly as if to keep the baby inside of it. Among her cries and murmurs, there were grunts of pain.

Hermione was frozen in place, watching the scene, recognizing **where she was** and at what **time she was**.

Destabilized and weak, the woman fell against the gate of the orphanage, accidentally opening the iron gate and falling into the snow. Dark hair contrasted with white. The noise must have attracted attention, as the main door of the orphanage opened and a young Mrs Cole appeared holding an old lantern.

That night of dark cloudless sky where snow fell and the moon illuminated the dark streets with bluish light, that night was December 31st. In some of the busiest places, far away, people were probably celebrating because after all, it was New Year's Eve. And less known to many it was the day of Tom Riddle Jr.'s birth.

And that wailing woman was **Merope Gaunt**.

The young Mrs Cole and a practically adolescent Martha rushed to the help of Merope, who squirmed while feeling the pains of childbirth. Hermione, who was on the other side of the sidewalk, cast a spell of disillusionment on herself, watching the scene with stupor.

The young Mrs Cole and Martha managed to lift Merope with effort, placing her in the middle of the two, while each held one of Merope's arms to help her walk.

"Miss Cole, look ..." Martha observed, drawing Cole's attention to the state Merope was in, and at that very moment, Merope grunted in pain.

"She is in labour. We have to get her inside now! " Cole ordered.

Martha and Cole walked into the orphanage.

Behind them, an invisible Hermione followed them, unknowingly leaving footprints in the snow along with the lantern that had been forgotten.

Inside the Orphanage, it had become chaos between the three women. Hermione was close to them, but not close enough to interrupt the scene, perhaps in a quieter moment all three could have awakened their innate sixth sense of being watched, but this was far from it.

Martha ran to warm up the water and fetch towels, while Cole took Merope downstairs, specifically to the basement. While Hermione found Martha's desperation gentle and innocent, her curiosity and attention were on Merope.

With the help of Miss Cole, Merope the stairs to the basement, almost slipping twice because of the contractions of childbirth. Her baby was looking forward to coming into the world. Hermione wanted to help out of instinct and empathy but with all her effort she stilled herself just as a spectator, following like a shadow. Sometimes doing nothing was the worst job of all. She deducted that the choice of taking the basement over the infirmary was largely based on the idea that all the commotion for childbirth could wake the children who were asleep on the second floor.

Upon reaching the basement, Miss Cole placed Merope on a single iron bed - something Hermione didn't remember being there when she was in the basement with Riddle - and quickly turned on a light, meanwhile Merope grunted in pain, writhing from side to side, sweat making her damp hair stick to her forehead.

Martha came down the stairs quickly bringing the towels, then immediately went up and went down again, this time bringing candles and matches to increase the brightness in the basement. Poor thing, she was so nervous that her hand was shaking as she tried to light the candles. It was only her first month working at the orphanage. As a country girl who came to town to seek a better life, it had not been easy for her, but here she had a roof over her head, a place to sleep without hunger. She just dealt with babies and children, she never delivered a baby, this would be her first and by God, she hoped to do nothing wrong.

Hearing the kettle whistle, she went up again and it was Hermione's chance to get a little closer so she could better see. She walked smoothly, skirting Mrs Cole and approaching the headboard

where she could see Merope Gaunt's face. Mrs Cole was helping to remove Merope's coat, and as soon as she managed she made a little "Oh!" and Hermione opened her mouth in kind.

Merope was too thin, really thin. Looking at her face now that she was in the light, it was noticeable that her cheeks were '*sucked in*', her lips were purple and dry. The eyeballs looked too big for the thin face. It wasn't normal. She had probably never been healthy from what she recalled of Harry's stories, but this was extreme. Now she could understand why Merope would not survive childbirth.

She opened her eyes and looked directly at where Hermione was, and even though Hermione knew that the spell she cast on herself was still present, - otherwise, Miss Cole would have already screamed in fright - she shivered. Even though Merope wasn't seeing her, she could have felt her magic. Hermione was devastated that so much talent had been wasted by her mediocre life and the family that she had had.

Her eyes looked in opposite directions simultaneously and this she noted was strabismus most likely caused by inbreeding. Another devastating fact which had affected this woman's unfortunate destiny.

The magical ability of Merope was probably great, but untapped. Suppressed by years of physical and mental abuse, there were no great opportunities for her to explore such magic that she could have had. And what made Hermione think that? The simple fact that when she was given the chance, she had made the Amortentia potion perfectly to the point of making Tom Riddle Sr. fall in synthetic love with her without ever arousing suspicion, bar the moment she had stopped giving him the potion.

In a way, the choices that Merope Gaunt had made could not be judged so coldly. One thing was certain, it was impossible to force someone's love, the feeling more likely to become hatred, yet Merope Gaunt had reached her *rock bottom*. The lowest level anyone could reach for crumbs of affection. This is what had happened to her, so desperate for love and attention, she resorted to the only method she thought was the one that would fulfil her deepest desires.

oOo

Watching Tom Riddle Sr. riding from the window of the Gaunt small and deteriorated house was her moment of peace. Sometimes Merope imagined herself to be Cecilia - the young muggle who was often with Tom - riding through the gardens and walking through the streets of Little Hangleton, arm in arm with Tom. Other times, she felt pure jealousy to the point that when observing the two together, Merope was scratching the wood of the window until her finger bleed.

Cecilia meant to Merope everything she wanted to be and what she should hate too. She wished so blindly to be Cecilia, to look like the young lady of Little Hangleton, to have expensive dresses and to ride a horse, to be courted by young men, to live in a good house that Cecilia lived in, to have the family that Cecilia had and especially to have the attention ***Tom Riddle***.

But these thoughts were punished in the worst possible way: by magic.

Her brother and her father hated her for thinking that way. How could Princess Gaunt, whose ancestor was Salazar Slytherin, wish to be a muggle? Live like a muggle?

Squib! Squib! Squib! Squib! Squib!

Her memories were mixed up, mixed, for the countless times her father tortured her with her brother watching and laughing in the background. Even though she sometimes felt the urge to run

away, she had not found enough strength to commit the act and she too had a love, an affection for her father, she just hoped that deep down her father might have had some similar feeling - however small it was. And despite everything, in the end her father had been right: Tom Riddle had not returned her love. She was a fool, a fool in love, who couldn't get angry enough to hate Tom. Even if it was through magic, the few times she had spent with Tom Riddle were s the happiest Merope had ever lived.

However, everything that is good has to end. Or so it was with The Gaunts. Although her family could be considered a kind of 'royalty' of wizards, due to their greatest ancestor, nothing that was happy and good survived in the hands of the people who belonged to her family. At that moment, she just hopes that the child she carries can be different. If it is a girl, she wants to name her Cecilia, but if it is a boy, there is no doubt: It will be Tom Riddle.

She doesn't want the child to be like her or her family, she wants it to be detached from magic and everything that connects to this magical and terrible world that she belongs to. She wants the child to be normal, have a normal life, and be happy. More than anything, she wants the *child to be happy*. And let the child know that she loves it even if no one else wants the child, just as no one ever wanted her, she does. She loves it very much and has survived until here for this little thing that grew inside her, the only reminder that at one point in her life she had been happy.

"Spread your legs, dear." Young Mrs Cole ordered.

Merope had no way of refusing and resisting, although at some point if she was more lucid she would have been ashamed, yet now she was too weak and the pain she was experiencing prevented her from fighting. Besides, there was an instinct in her already tired body that made her comply with the request and push.

Hermione watched the scene with distress while young Mrs Cole lifted Merope's dress and took off her underwear. At that moment, Merope threw herself against the pillows, her hair making a halo around her, her skin looked damp with beads of sweat, her breath fast. Her hands grabbed the sheet and she grunted in pain, her eyes closing in pain.

Martha cameomes down the stairs bringing hot water and placing it next to Cole, then ranruns to Merope, wiping the sweat from her forehead with a towel.

"The baby is coming, she has to push," Cole tells Martha.

"Come on miss, you have to push, the baby is already coming." Martha, in a soft voice, tries to convince Merope. Merope tries to move but quickly returned to the pillows, too weak to make the necessary force. "She's not making it."

"If she doesn't make it, both the baby and possibly her will die," Cole said. It was such a fatalist statement that even though Hermione already knew the outcome, her stomach clenched at the statement.

Martha took the initiative, even though she had never delivered a baby, she had only once delivered her father's cow. She hoped it would be similar, as she was just a young woman who had just become a nurse, barely had any experience.

Martha pushed Cole a little, holding Merope's legs, and said seriously,

"Come on, miss. Count with me and when I say, you must push. You have to do this for the love you surely have for your unborn baby! "

That must have done the job or else it was the pain that Merope felt because then she took her body forward and pushed, the blood flowed, staining the sheet and she threw herself against the pillows again, her breathing even faster.

"The head, I can see!" Martha exclaimed. "A little more, miss! Just a little more! "

At the very moment that Tom Riddle Jr was about to come into the world, while Merope was making the effort, all the lights including that of the candles went out simultaneously, leaving everyone in the dark, scaring Martha and Cole, including Hermione. And when Merope screamed, making the last effort to bring her baby into the world, the lights came back on, illuminating the basement, with the central lamp shattering. Cole crossed herself while looking at Merope and the baby.

The baby was there, in Martha's arms. It didn't cry or do anything. With bloody hands, Martha looked at the baby, a little surprised, distressed, afraid. The baby was not crying and announcing its arriving to the world as it was supposed to, nor was it moving.

Was it dead? Martha wondered, her eyes already filled with tears. Martha looked at the baby's mother, whose breathing was slowing.

Coming out of her stupor, she took the towel and rolled the baby up, while trying to clear the nasal passages so it could breathe. It was then that the baby moved, moving its small legs and shrinking its arms, feeling for the first time on the sensitive skin the temperature change.

Martha looked down and noticed, *a boy!*

She let a smile grow on her face, happy that she didn't have someone's life on her conscience.

"It's a boy!" She announced it to both Merope and Cole.

She approached Merope with the baby in her arms, Hermione took a step back in shock as she saw it all happening.

"See your son, miss," Martha murmured to Merope, and with the lack of response, Martha got scared and shook one of the lady's arms a little. Merope opened her eyes and Martha put the baby next to Merope where she could see and grab her son, then she retracted, making room for mother and newborn.

When Merope saw the baby's face, she cried hot tears streaming down her face. She tried to hold her son with shaking arms and hands. Her son blinked a few times and opened his eyes and more tears came down her face. *He was perfect*, so different from her.

It was Tom. She knew from the start. She had felt it.

She traced her son's face, who had the shadow of dark hair, and smiled through her tears.

My dear, Tom.

You have your father's nose. Yes, that perfect little nose he has is nothing compared to her ugly nose.

You have your father's lips. Those perfectly bowed lips, so different from her thin, shapless lips.

You have your father's hair. That dark hair, which she could identify that would be silky like her father's.

You have your father's essence. Yes, that essence, that aura, she could feel it came only from the Riddle family.

You have your father's eyes. These eyes were unmistakable. So green, greener than the father's.

You are just like your father. He was just like his father.

Please, Tom, grow up like him. She asked, begged the baby to be like his father, in every way. That he did not have the features of her family, that he was not like her - that was what she asked for most - **that he was nothing like her**. That he was a muggle, an *ordinary human being* because nothing good came from magic.

But let him know that she loved him, loved him so strongly and that he was for her *the only and precious one, Tom*.

"You are different, Tom. You are special. *You are my only and precious one, Tom.* " She whispered in the baby's ear.

She closed her eyes, tired, and enjoyed the moment. Her baby was real and she loved him so much and for a moment, everything was peaceful, even though she felt the blood running down her legs. However, Merope's fears took over her mind.

She did love that baby, but what could she offer to little Tom? She had nothing; no house, no cosy home with food, clothes, or toys that she had seen other children have, not even his father was present. Her love would not be enough for him. And most of all, she didn't want to see the look of shame that he could grow up knowing that she was his mother; *this horrendous woman* she was, with the strange magic she had. She was the hindrance to the happy life he could have.

Oh, God. She cried harder. *I can't even be good for my baby?* She asked herself. In her mind, hearing the voice of her father, Marvolo, calling her useless and her brother agreeing. The voices were there.

Ever since she had been alone, the voices became constant. Sometimes it was memories, sometimes it was all the people around her talking at the same time in her mind. It hurt and she covered her ears to try to block it, but it didn't work.

But now, at that very moment, she heard her father, her brother, Tom and all the people who judged her when she walked the streets like a sewer rat.

She was useless even for her baby. Merope shivered. Martha intervened, taking the baby.

Cole approached when she saw that look on the young mother's face, she knew it well enough to know that the end was near.

"So, miss, what's his name?" Cole asked, taking Merope's hand in both hands. Feeling Merope's cold skin.

"**Tom...**!" She responded immediately and without hesitation. It seemed like she wanted to say more when she murmured, which brought Cole closer.

Suddenly Merope leaned forward and grabbed the strands of her hair, as if trying to pull it out, her eyes looking in opposite directions when she opened them. The shock caused Cole to still her for a moment.

Dad! Please, Dad! Please! Dad! Dad! Marvolo !

Merope covered her ears and shook her head from side to side repeatedly.

"Marvolo!" She shouted.

In Merope's mind, the voices of her brother and father were mocking her, harassing her, cursing her every time she begged for her father. They were punishing her.

You are a Gaunt ... Gaunt ... Gaunt ... Gaunt ...

A muggle? Are you in love with a muggle ?!

Squib! Squib! Squib!

She's in love with that man, Riddle ... Riddle ... Riddle ...

I'm Cecilia, I wanted to be Cecilia ... Cecilia ... Cecilia ...

Do you really think that muggle will look at you, little sister? The lady who is always with him is going to marry him. You are a Gaunt. You will never be a Riddle ... Riddle ...

I married Tom, I am a Riddle. I married Tom, I am a Riddle. I married Tom, I'm a ...

"Riddle!" She finished, shouting to make the voices stop. She held out her hand for a fleeting moment, as she remembered Tom Riddle abandoning her once again, and just as before, she let go and lay against the pillows. The voices continued whispering in her ears, she cried shrinking into herself, sadness overtaking her at last. Her heart was broken.

At the last moment of lucidity, she wished someone was good enough for her little Tom. That someone would give him a happy home and embrace him and, above all, that someone would have the capacity to love Tom. *Please, that someone would love him.*

She wanted love for him. The love she had never had.

Eyes open, with one last tear, Merope Gaunt took a last breath on a bloody bed where she gave birth to Tom Marvolo Riddle.

And everything went silent, be it for Martha, Cole or Hermione herself who could not believe that this was how Merope had died and that Tom had been born.

A little in shock, Hermione placed a hand to her mouth in a gesture to stifle the tension and sadness she was feeling.

Martha held the baby while looking in shock while Mrs Cole made the sign of the cross and approached Merope's body, and with a strange gentleness closed Merope's eyes and placed a white sheet over her. Cole was shaken but tried to hold on.

"Go take care of the baby, Martha." She ordered. "We will call the gravedigger in the morning."

"But, we don't even know who she is. How will we notify the family?" Martha asked in a tearful voice.

"We will put an ad in the newspaper, if she has a family, the baby will be lucky. Otherwise, he is already where he should be." She turned to Martha. "And may God have mercy on that woman's soul, because the things I saw today were not normal."

Cole went up the stairs as if she wanted to get out of the basement as fast as possible, leaving

Martha and the baby behind.

Martha stood there, the nightdress she wore was bloody, just as the blood on her hands reached up to her forearm, she held Tom, who made the first noise, waking her from the shock. She looked at the baby and then at Merope's body and with youthful purity, she murmured.

"Sorry." And she went up the stairs quickly.

Hermione stayed there, walked a few steps and stopped in the centre of the room while looking at the body of Merope Gaunt. She would be buried tomorrow, without fanfare or glory, without someone to mourn and would be forgotten. Or maybe she would be cremated, her ashes scattered in the wind. In both cases, she would probably be freer than she ever was.

"Rest in peace." Hermione whispered, placing the rest of the sheet over Merope's face. How many more deaths would she have to see?

The candle wax burned, the light went out slowly until everything was in darkness.

oOo

When Hermione went up the basement stairs, everything was dark except for the light coming from the kitchen. Hermione walked slowly, as the wooden floor was making noise and overheard the conversation.

"Poor thing, she was not pretty." Cole watched while Martha heated the water for her bath, which will be shared between the two of them with her taking the first turn as the oldest..

"Mrs Cole!" Martha was startled by such sincerity from Cole.

"Nor was she healthy." Cole didn't stop criticizing. "What a strange name she wanted to put on the baby. *Marvolo*? Maybe she came from the circus."

"She was young, she shouldn't have been more than my age," Martha suggested.

"Young ladies today. Foolish and vile men can charm and steal their purity and then abandon them as if they were nothing and then, they end up like this, like her." Cole murmured, her voice charged with what could be considered bitterness, as her eyes looked at nothing, a memory taking place in her mind.

"These men don't want to take over their children and so we, women, have to take drastic measures." Cole looked back at Martha. "Watch out for wolves in sheep's clothing, Martha."

Martha looked down, specifically at hands. Her nails were still a little reddish with blood, even though she had washed her hands and forearms repeatedly. Not knowing what to say, she went into another matter.

"The baby, Tom, is okay. I gave him a bottle and he drank it. I put him in the nursery. He doesn't make a lot of noise, nor does he cry. He ... He just keeps looking at us."

Cole tilted her head to the side. "Well, be thankful. We don't want a cry at dawn. For this very reason, when the gravedigger arrives tomorrow make sure the children stay in their proper rooms. In the meantime, I'll talk to Mr Wool and I will explain what happened."

"I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight, Miss Cole."

"In fact, I can't even do it myself."

Stopping listening to the two ladies talking, Hermione went up the stairs. The steps were smooth and slow, the path she was taking was in the direction of the nursery. Hermione opened the door very sparingly, trying to avoid any noise that might wake the babies, however there weren't many, surprisingly just one. The one who had just been born.

There was an attraction, specifically a curiosity that made her approach the cradle and support both hands on the protective bars, her brown gaze falling on the little being that lay there.

The baby was clean, Martha had probably given him the first bath and put on the cloth diaper, but there was still the usual rest of the vernix caseosa. Baby Tom was very well wrapped in a blanket, not even the little ears were visible, only his little face was showing. The little mouth was making a sucking motion common among babies.

Hermione tilted her head to the side, trying to understand. Her mind was still unable to register the idea of seeing the Dark Lord in the most helpless state that a human being could be.

Her eyebrows tried to form an expression. It was at that time, then, that the greatest moral test was imposed on her. There, right in front of her, is the chance to end everything that will happen. She can make it painless for him and prevent future families from suffering the loss of their loved ones. She can do that. Maybe she should want to do this and a dark part of her logic says that it is cruel but necessary, but she cannot find the strength to do the act. The idea fills her with shame and she hides her face in her hands.

As if sensing danger or maybe just from her presence, Tom opens his eyes. He blinks a few times and looks around, looking for what was bothering him and Hermione freezes when she realizes this, afraid it will make him cry. As much as she knows that the spell is still present and that she is also aware that newborn babies can barely see, it scares Hermione the fact that Tom is looking at her as if he can see her.

It's as strange as the situation appears. Hermione looks back at him. He is a healthy and pink baby, the irises in his eyes are brightgreen - when he grows older, the colour will fade to a less obvious green.

In any case, Tom is a beautiful baby, but he interacts strangely. Martha is right, he doesn't cry or complain, he just looks and blinks solemnly. But even so, watching him brings up Hermione's kind instinct. Hermione strokes the small crease on his forehead with her thumb to soothe the expression he is making.

He's cute, she thinks.

Even though he doesn't see or understand what is going on, she knew Tom still feels the heat coming from their contact, it is something new and strange for him, but it seems he enjoys the feeling.

When the baby gives a half-smile, Hermione finds herself copying the expression. However, her smile soon disappears when she remembers the circumstances that made her come here and that Tom was born, especially the fact that his mother is deceased on the floor below.

She retracts. The voices coming from the corridor seem louder and she barely realizes that the sand from the Time-Turner is oozing, counting the time for the end of the trip, making 'click' sounds as the sand reaches the end of the hourglass.

Strangely, something created from nothing arises, increasing in size, like a passage. The image in front of her is a little blurry, like a mirage. The edges of this phenomenon are flickering green like the colour of sand in the hourglass of the Time-Turner and suddenly, this passage is sucking her in, only her. Leaving no chance for her to escape.

Hermione found herself passing through that portal, being transported to another time. She breathed heavily and frightened, looked at her hands trying to understand what kind of magic was being triggered by the Time-Turner. She looked back, noting that in the image of the portal was the nursery where baby Tom was, the edges of the portal were closing like a seam. Hermione only hears Martha's voice trying to prevent someone from entering the nursery, before the portal disappears.

She swallowed and looked around, still scared, realizing then, that she was still at the Wool Orphanage. She was in the hallway of the dorms and could hear the children playing outside, there was conversation too, someone was walking up the stairs with other people. Hermione ran to get away, entering one of the bedrooms. She closed the door and waited, feeling her heart beat like a hammer.

When people passed by the room she froze in the position she was in, the Disillusionment charm that she cast was fading and she needed to concentrate to put the charm back in place, however, it was becoming difficult to maintain concentration.

She sighed in relief when she heard people walk away. Moving away from the wooden door, she looked at the room which she was in. The bed, the wooden wardrobe and a table with a chair, Hermione already knew the furniture in the bedrooms, only this time, on the wooden table, there was a rabbit in a cage. The cage scrawled under the name Billy Stubbs.

Oh! I'm in Billy's room.

She remembered very well the boy who called her and Tom weird.

The children's voices catch her eye. She looked out the window watching the children play. There was snow and they were running from side to side, playing snowball war. But while most were playing, there was a boy who was sitting on a bench, reading a children's book and largely ignoring everyone around him.

Tom, she recognized. He must have been six or seven at the most. He was dressed in grey pants, which in Hermione's view did little to protect from the cold, a grey sweater with a coat over it, a brown scarf was wrapped around his neck, a pair of fingerless gloves on his hands that Hermione couldn't tell if they were black or brown, and he was also wearing a beret.

Not surprisingly to her, he seemed to feel that he was being watched and looked up from the book to scan the structure of the Orphanage. At that very moment, he was hit very close to his ear by a snowball, he quickly wiped his face, trying to remove the cold contact of snow from his skin.

He glanced at Billy, before turning his attention to the book, but he was hit again.

"Billy, stop!" He asked.

"What will you do? Gonna cry?" Billy teased Tom as he approached.

In the background, the remaining children laughed happily. Tom narrowed his eyes, anger started to rise, but he preferred to ignore it, trying to read his book again, but it stopped when Billy hit the book, causing it to fall in the snow. Tom got up to face Billy, who pushed him back onto the bench,

Tom pushed Billy back and Billy pushed him again, this time making Tom fall on the snow. Hermione can imagine the cold wetness seeping through his threadbare clothes.

She watched as Billy kicked the snow towards Tom's face, then suddenly the two were grappling, fighting.

Billy Stubbs was very burly for his age, making him look relatively bigger than Tom. The two only stopped when Mrs Cole intervened, pushing them away from each other and threatening with more drastic punishment while hitting Tom's and Billy's hand with a stick. Hermione watched as Mrs Cole sent everyone back inside the Orphanage. The playtime was over.

She left Billy's room and entered Room 27, Tom's room. Anxious to understand what he was like in childhood, Hermione checks to see if the Disillusionment charm is still on her, focusing on keeping the magic in place. She heard footsteps approaching and stood in the corner of the room, watching as little Tom opened the door, entered and closed the door.

He walked over to the table and placed the book on top of it, then he took off his beret, scarf and finally his gloves, things that he deposited neatly and carefully on the bed. Tom stopped for a moment, looking at his hand, closing and opening his hand a few times for the blood to circulate. His hand was sore and the glove did nothing to prevent the burning of the blow from Mrs Cole's stick. He sighed, walked over to the table again and looked at the cover of the book. It was a used book, donated to the orphanage. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Hermione tilted her head, trying to get a better look at him. Tom inherited no physical resemblance to his mother, except for his paleness. Even as a child, Tom was pale - perhaps something that was intensified by the creation of the Horcruxes - however, the cheeks and the tip of the nose were childishly pink. His black hair, long eyelashes and green eyes, along with the orphanage's clothing, made him look like a Gothic doll. The fact that he looked like a child with perfect physical structure did little for him to escape an eerie description.

Again, even within this time Hermione witnessed that he felt watched as he looked around. This strange intensified sixth sense that he had was denouncing Hermione's position. Tom looked directly at the corner of the room she was in. He frowned and narrowed his eyes, hesitantly walked towards her with one hand outstretched. Hermione, knowing that if he walked any further he would touch her, she had to do something to change his attention so she magically made the book cross the room and crash into the wall. It scared him, made him withdraw and he walked over to the book and picked it up off the floor.

"It's happening again." She heard him grumble.

Tom put the book back on the table, this time he stared very intently at it. She could see the determination in his gaze and the small crease between his eyebrows and then, it happened, the book was levitating.

Hermione, impossibly, smiled. It was magic. His magic.

He looked amazed, the book levitated for a few seconds before falling into both of his hands. Tom held the book within his tight grip and looked at his reflection in the window. Realization fs on him then, Hermione realized. It was the first time he had intentionally done magic, with all the other times probably having been accidental.

Still looking at his reflection, Tom smiled to himself. However, something caught his eye. Putting the book down, he moved closer to the window, placing both hands against the window. He looked at the street intently, specifically at a couple with a son walking the streets. The mother was

holding the father's arm, while the son ran and played in the snow, a little ahead of the two.

He looked down for a moment, his finger moving against the glass, forming a pattern. When he was satisfied, he stopped, looked at the drawing and then laid down on the bed turning to face the wall. Hermione only moved when she heard him snoring, fast into a deep sleep.

She looked at the drawing he made on the window. With a pang she sees it was a birthday cake.

It's his birthday.

Hermione looked at him, her eyebrows coming together as she felt sorry for him. Because he was a child, because of what he was going through. She still couldn't digest that a few moments ago she saw him being born and saw his mother die. Leaving him in that condition...

Merope Gaunt had not wanted that for him, she had cried then when she had seen his face. She had loved Tom instantly.

Unable to ignore it, Hermione bent down and whispered the words that his mother had said at his birth. She was doing this as a way of comforting and reminding a child not to be afraid.

"You are different, Tom. You are special."

At that moment, the portal opened and Hermione was sucked in to where the starting point had initially begun. The Great Lake of Hogwarts at dawn. She fell to her knees hitting against the gravel, a little dizzy and breathing fast. Her gaze lifted from the ground, The Hooded was there looking at her. Hermione looked back, watching the passage close with the image of little Tom sleeping.

"W-what is that?" She whispered, teeth chattering without realising it was not from the cold.

She passed out on the shore of the Great Lake, the water partially licking her body.

The Hooded approached Hermione's unmoving body, crouched down and whispered to the locket, which opened revealing the Time-Turner. The hourglass locked, preventing Hermione from travelling any further.



A Mother's Love.

Chapter End Notes

Hydrophis platurus also known as Yellow-Bellied Sea Snake. The fifteenth most poisonous snake in the world

0.0 - This chapter was focused on Hermione, please let me know what you think. As much as it looks like a fill-in chapter, it is very important. I look forward to reading your theories!

0.1 - The image used in this chapter is non-profit and does not belong to me. It was found on Pinterest with the intention of being only illustrative and the copyright of it belongs to its creator.

Austrelaps.

Chapter Notes

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I appreciate the 1546 Kudos and the 322 bookmars. I am so happy <3 ! You have no idea what this means to me.

I apologise for delaying in posting this new chapter, however I was moving and the fact that my city was in Lockdown, I was working and studying, kind of made things a bit difficult, but hopefully everything is ok now. So, I ask for your understanding.

And to Kcarmen, my beta reader, I thank you profusely for helping me with another chapter! I'm sure the readers feel grateful too for improving their reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 16. Austrelaps - I heard you.

Tom Riddle never felt fear, hesitation perhaps, but never fear, because few things in both the wizarding and muggle worlds could threaten his existence, especially now with the creation of his Horcruxes. However, as he watched the diary, his Horcrux going into a kind of frenzy startled him, watching the diary absorb his memories and the writing repeat Granger's name, to the point where the ink ran down the pages like blood. He closed the diary abruptly, his hands and breathing trembling.

It took him a while to steady his breathing and to control his own thoughts, staring at the diary in his hands. Tom opened the diary again, hoping it had calmed down, as after all the diary's sentence was improving as he added new memories.

Are you feeling better? He asked.

I'm sorry. Tom could imagine the tone of his own voice the diary would use as it pulled itself together from the spectacle it had caused. *I think I had an overload of information and feelings for a moment. We think about her a lot, don't we?* Diary asked. *The things you did...Tsc...Tsc...Tsc...Tsc... You liked it. You want to do it again. I know. I feel it.*

Tom raised an eyebrow at the words written on the page. His own Horcrux was studying him, not

in an aggressive way - because they both had the same goal, always, and he was the creator - but it was not like Tom was hating it, after all the Horcrux was a part of himself, so it would behave the way he would behave, which actually pleased him. For a fleeting moment he thought the Horcrux was getting defective, but knowing that everything was in its proper place cheered him up.

She sounds very interesting. Could she be an ally? Perhaps - the diary answered itself - *She's seen a lot of things about us. Oh, I'd like to feel her.* The diary got excited. The diary's sentence worked from touch, so the diary wanting her touch was a simple fact that it would like to read her.

Talking to the diary was like talking to himself, they both had the same line of reasoning - something Tom really liked because few people around him could follow his thoughts - besides, it was a debate without rules and without judgements about assumptions, ideas and paths to run down.

She could be a formidable ally, yes, he thought.

Tom lifted his gaze and stared at the ceiling of the hiding place in the Secret Chamber, leaning back on his arms on the bed with the diary in his lap. A sigh escaped him, his thoughts racing in an attempt to understand Granger.

Of course, the memory of their time together was coming back to mind as well as all other things. There was something about her that disturbed him. The constant hesitation, how she always managed to deflect focus off of her to divert it on something else, even her conviction with which she defended Dumbledore, as much as he loathed it. But the fact that she didn't say anything to Dumbledore about everything that happened to them made Tom think that she was probably rethinking her judgment of the illustrious professor of transfiguration, which Tom really welcomed.

And then there was more: the book she so desperately wanted back. What did she want with it?

What are you after, Granger? he thought. *What do you want? What can I offer you?*

He must offer her something to tempt her. The Knights wanted power, some special place in the world he intended to build. They were influential, but too slow to realise they were following just another young man the same age as them, but this man was smart enough to know he was destined for great things and that those who would not join him the first time he offered, would not get a second chance to do so. Tom was not usually merciful, not without an interest behind the act. Everyone had a price and he wanted to know what Granger's price was.

There was the small annoyance that she was tied with him in academic rank, but his annoyance was not something s, for sure. It was her intelligence and power, he liked that, he coveted that. *She'd better be an ally... Otherwise, oh, what a waste.* Of course, those who were not on his side, were against him.

But then, again, he didn't like to share anything, yet he would make an exception for her, just so he could study her better.

Something told him that she was hiding something, a secret, as simple as it was, but it was there. His intuition had never been wrong about these things, and Tom found it hard to believe that it was something simple, after all, a person as emotional as she was could not hide when she felt she was in danger.

His gaze returned to the diary. Perhaps this was the moment to test other abilities of the diary.

If she came into contact with the diary, it could certainly influence her mind. What worried him

was Dumbledore's annoying ability to stick his nose where it did not belong, and Granger's perception of him. Moreso, her being in the Gryffindor House placed her practically on the other side of the castle, and this did little to further his plans, and their casual encounters in classrooms were insufficient. But, Tom paused, if there was one thing he was sure of, it was Slughorn.

If he was correct, which he was, Slughorn will invite her to the Club and most likely to some of the separate classes he gave to favourite students.

That will give him time with Granger. Tom didn't want to use the diary aggressively on her. During the short time he spent with her throughout the holidays, the reactions she showed him made her gain some credibility in his eyes, but if he was to consider her as one of the Knights then he needed to understand her as a whole.

He closed the diary after writing goodbye on it.

On his way back to the dungeons, he stopped for a moment to observe the rain that was falling. If he concentrated well, he could hear the Grey Lady's chant. Her voice sounded like a murmur rich in rhythm, but one that conveyed loneliness and sadness. She was a ghost who, unlike Myrtle, should be feared. While she could be a shy and taciturn ghost, hiding in the Ravenclaw Tower, and gentle when necessary, it was said that she sometimes frightened - even if unintentionally - students when she floated around.

Tom looked at the expanse outside the Castle, a strange feeling was alerting him, however he was unable to interpret that feeling before Algie Longbottom appeared in the corridor.

"Riddle...? What are you doing? Rounds are over."

Tom scanned Longbottom from the top to bottom quickly before replying.

"I know, but I was trying to convince Peeves not to set a trap for the new students in the morning."

Algie didn't seem to realise that it was a lie, quite the opposite, since it was something Peeves was sure to do.

"Thank you, then, Riddle."

Algie thanked him for his diligence and Tom watched as he made his way to the Head Boy's dormitory, or so it seemed, but Tom's keen eye suspected his path was on the way to the Head Girl's dormitory, which was not so coincidentally in the same direction.

Tom, of course, had noted Longbottom's rosy cheeks and the fact that he seemed overly surprised by Tom's presence there, almost as if he had been caught doing or planning something inappropriate. *It seems the Head Girl will have a private visit tonight.*

That night, when he lay down and finally relaxed his body he dreamt of her. Either because in his subconscious his thoughts were filled with her or for unknown reasons.

When he woke up, he felt that he dreamt about her, but he did not remember much details. In any case, it was strange for him, as his sleep was usually dreamless.

oOo

Ectur Prewett stood on the second floor of the Castle and stared at the rain without seeing anything. His mind was too far away to register that today was going to be a rainy, uninviting weather day, Summer was really saying goodbye and Autumn was making its presence felt every

day, the foliage was falling faster and faster. Still, none of this was picked up by his mind, not with much interest.

"What's wrong?" Ignatius -Ig- asked.

"Nothing." He muttered to his older brother, in a clear voice for him to leave him alone.

Ig raised one of his red-headed eyebrows at his brother's behaviour. He looked at Ectur's expression in detail, recognizing that dreamy look and sigh.

"Oh, no. I know that look."

That sentence causes Ectur to look at his brother. Ig was relatively taller than him and it was not that Ectur was short, but in general they shared the same traits, apart from height, Ig's lighter eyes and hair that was less red than his own.

His brother crossed his arms in front of his chest, making the arm muscles stand out. His brother was losing his youthful features to become more masculine, this Summer holiday was a precursor to such changes that were also extending to him and all the sixth and seventh-year boys.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Ectur blurted out of the conversation.

"You don't fool me, little brother. I'm your big brother, I know you well." Ignatius pointed out the obvious. "That look there- " he pointed to his brother's face " -is of someone in love. Who is the girl?"

Ectur sat up, letting one of his legs stretch out as he bent the other and propped his forearm on his knee.

His relationship with his brother was very good, they rarely fought. Their fights had remained in their childhood years, but even in such times, they were more friends - playing and having fun together more than arguing. The two knew they could count on each other in any situation, so much so that Ectur felt the pain for his brother's arranged marriage alongside him, and as the good friends they were in addition to being brothers, they often shared the concerns they had.

So when Ignatius observed the look on his brother's face, he knew then that what he had said earlier - as a joke - was actually very serious. His brother really liked someone and that made his smile drop and the look of worry came to the fore. He squinted his eyes, putting together the puzzle that was Ectur's behaviour, finally realising.

"Oh, is it that Hermione?"

Ectur cringed the moment he heard Miss Granger's name. Not for nothing, but he really wasn't in the mood to have his brother mocking him.

"Ectur, you know very well about that." Ig scolded him.

Both brothers had already talked about the idea of nurturing a feeling about another person, especially when their parents seemed to have a strict idea about who their children could relate to. The Prewett family was still a member of the Sacred Twenty-Eight and they didn't want to hurt someone they possibly liked.

"I know, right," Ectur replied. "But, I could talk to mum and dad. They might like her. Dad would probably like Hermione." He justified himself.

"What? You're going too fast!"

"Look, I'm not saying I'm going to...I don't know...propose to her. It's not that. I'm just liking her and I didn't want to feel like it's wrong somehow."

"You know that- " Ignatius could not even finish speaking because Ectur interrupted him.

"I don't want it to be like it is for you!"

As soon as the words came out, Ectur regretted it and they both knew that it should not have been said. Embarrassed by his sudden outburst, Ectur lowered his gaze and muttered an apology. Ig, at first surprised, relaxed seconds later and placed a hand on his brother's head, ruffling his hair as a sad but brotherly smile broke out on his face.

The condescending look Ignatius gave made Ectur feel even more ashamed, and forced out from him a vocal apology.

"I'm sorry."

"It's okay. It's not like I want to be in this situation too." Ig tried to smile.

"You're never going to talk to her again, are you?" Ectur asked.

They had talked over the Summer about this. Ig had met a girl, a muggle girl, at Christmas last year. Ever since then he had kept her in his head - how she smiled, how her voice sounded, and how good she was at ice skating. That was until their parents found out about it.

"It'll be better for her, I think." Ig sat down next to Ectur. "I don't know if she would understand how we are." He looked down at his wand.

"I'm sorry," Ectur asked once more, but Ig just shook his head.

"You know that...you can count on me, right?"

Ectur looked at him and confirmed with a nod. That was all he needed from Ig.

Ignatius made a sound with his throat. "Okay. Good." He stood up and took a deep breath, put his hands on his waist and looked in any direction other than his younger brother's face.

"Okay, um... I support you, okay? But if you miss Quidditch practice, I'm done with you, understand? I'm the captain now, my name is on the line."

Ectur smiled at the abrupt change in conversation, his brother wasn't a big fan of melodramatic moments, so he always took the conversation to a lighter tone in the end.

"Okay, okay. I get it." He stood and raised both hands to declare innocence.

"Why don't you... I don't know, woo Hermione? Don't tell me you need some advice?"

"Okay. Enough." Ectur stopped him, he knew Ig was already starting to mock him. "I have to go."

"Don't forget the practice!" Ectur heard Ignatius shout, as they both went their opposite ways.

As he made his way, Ectur thought about meeting Bilius and the possibility of seeing Hermione as well created a spark within him. She hadn't shown up for breakfast and neither the first or second class, if perhaps she wasn't there for lunch, he would ask Enid or one of the girls to check if she

was all right in hiding in the girl's dormitory.

As he was turning in the hallway, he collided with Mary Runcorn.

Mary Runcorn had light and slightly curly hair, her eyes were brown and her nose was slightly snubbed with a few freckles spreading to her cheeks, which were slightly pink when she noticed against whom she had collided.

The alchemy and potions books she was carrying scattered on the floor. Mary bent down to collect them with the help of Ectur, who kindly held out most of the books to her.

"Thank you." She murmured, shyly. Putting the books in her bag. Embarrassed, she fiddled with one of the locks of her hair, avoiding looking at Ectur, otherwise, she was liable to stare at him. Nevertheless, she couldn't resist especially when she noticed that he was smiling at her.

"You're welcome." He replied cheerfully and that made her legs go wobbly. "I hope you have a good day, Miss Runcorn. See you later!"

Her twin brother would probably laugh at the whole situation and blame her for not being able to start a proper conversation, especially since she kept staring at his back like a lovesick fool as he walked away .

It's true, she had liked him since the third year and in a few ways, she had already tried to declare her love for him, all of course fruitless. Still, Mary couldn't eliminate that feeling.

While in the Great Hall, Ectur found Bilius talking to Lyall Lupin, they greeted each other and chatted for a while before Ectur asked Bilius.

"Have you seen Hermione?"

Bilius and Lyall promptly denied.

"I haven't seen her since last night to tell you the truth."

In the distance they saw Enid coming towards them, but with hurried steps and looking worried.

"Enid!" He stopped her. "What is it? What's wrong?" Ectur intercepted her and asked, beside him Bilius formed a barrier so Enid couldn't bypass the.

Enid was a little startled, avoiding making eye contact, she bit her lower lip to try to hold back her words and looked around, waiting for the rest of the students to move away.

"Enid...?" It was Bilius' turn to inquire and put pressure for a reply.

"There's a problem happening." Her gaze was tense.

"What problem?"

Sighing, she replied.

"Look, don't tell anyone. Please." She pleaded. "Don't spread the news."

"We're your friends, Enid. We would never do that."

Enid held the gaze of the two in a way to ensure the truthfulness of the words.

"Hermione is missing."

"What?!" Bilius and Ectur said in unison.

"Shhhh! Keep it down!" She caught the attention of the two, who stopped for a moment.

"The Hogwarts beast is back? So is it true that it really exists?" Bilius asked.

The idea that the Hogwarts monster was really real and that in the end it hadn't been expelled as was said and was now taking new victims, chilled Ectur inside.

"We don't know. For all that it could be, Hermione could be anywhere." Enid replied.
"Dumbledore asked me to gather the prefects, so we can do some searching, I'm going to meet everyone in the Deputy Headmaster room now."

She barely finished speaking and started walking.

"Wait, we're coming with you!" Ectur spoke up.

"No way! No one must know about this yet, Ectur. You promised."

Enid didn't even wait for a response before walking towards the Deputy Headmaster's room, leaving Bilius and Ectur behind, who watched her walk away.

Bilius and Ectur exchanged glances, before running towards Dumbledore's personal office.



That morning when he woke up, Tom did his entire morning routine. He felt truly good, even in the face of recent events. Tom was ready for anything, putting his good boy mask into practice very well again, keeping his emotions in check so that no one had a clue about his thoughts, about his opinions.

It was a strangely rainy day, which was practically turned dark by the grey clouds that hid the sky, the sun was very weak and didn't even appear properly, it was a bit windy too.

While eating breakfast at the Slytherin table with his housemates, he cast well-disguised glances at the Gryffindor table, not finding the reason for his search, which made him look more brazenly and detailed, squinting his eyes when he didn't see Granger at the table.

Tom wondered if she would miss breakfast, from what he witnessed, she was an early riser and very well-organised. It didn't seem to be typical of her.

But the realisation of her absence in class was unsettling, to say the least. The absence increased from their last conversation. She was not in Herbology class, nor was she in Arithmancy class.

During Herbology class, he questioned what she could possibly be doing, spending most of the class distracted on speculations. It was not as if the lecture in Herbology class was very interesting, but Tom was not one to dismiss such a subject entirely. Plants had the power to kill, plants had the power to save, and a good portion of potions used some sort of plant, whether dark magic or not.

In the Arithmancy class, he felt uneasy, a feeling which carried over and grew in Transfigurations. Only being soothed by the thought that she might possibly be preferring to keep Dumbledore away from her...

Tom kept his eye on Dumbledore, trying to pick up any sign that he knew anything, he did the

same thing with the other Gryffindors, but especially with Weasley and Prewett, two people with whom she seemed to have a greater bond of friendship. But most of the time it was disappointing because they were - in Tom's view - boring and poorly intelligent. Just thinking a little deeper about them, Tom felt the beginnings of an inconvenient headache. He was still trying to understand what benefit Granger could see from their presence. It must be exhausting and irritating to have them close.

Between breaks, he chatted with the Knights about the next meeting they would have.

Nevertheless, he watched, of course, Alphard Black slipping away here and there. Since the event involving Alphard and Walburga, caused precisely by Tom, Alphard had been avoiding direct confrontation. Every time he was in his presence, Alphard lowered his eyes and Walburga learned to keep her mouth shut. And of course, the situation didn't get any better for the muggle girl - *whatever*.

But it was at another point that Algie interrupted his reading about Magical Relics.

"Riddle."

He lifted his gaze from the book. "Yes?" Inwardly, he rolled his eyes at the interruption from his reading.

"Dumbledore is summoning all of us prefects to his room," Algie explained.

Now that did get his attention, leaving him on alert. What could Dumbledore possibly want?

Tom walked alongside Algie to Dumbledore's room, frankly surprised to find the other prefects, including the Head Girl there. Such a situation made him wary, because this was unusual, which meant something was up. He took the time to observe the confused looks of the other prefects as well as to analyse the attitude of Dumbledore, whose body seemed tense. With his hands behind his back, Dumbledore walked around.

"Headmaster Dumbledore...?" Enid's voice sounded, hinting at the start of the conversation.

"I thank you for your presence." Dumbledore began. Tom kept his posture upright, trying to predict where this conversation would go. "For answering my call."

Who in their right mind, being a prefect, would deny a request from Dumbledore?

"I must ask for your help, as responsible students, for a mission that brings me sorrow if what I fear is correct." Dumbledore continued. "Miss Granger is missing."

Tom Riddle blinked repeatedly, trying to adjust to what he had heard. "What?" he inquired vehemently, for a moment surprised and probably showing more of that emotion than the other prefects. "When?"

The fact that Enid and Algie Longbottom expressed nothing made him realise that Dumbledore had spoken to them earlier.

It didn't make much sense to Tom that she was gone, gone like that when he saw her yesterday when she made it explicit to him that she didn't intend to say anything about what happened to Dumbledore, but it also explained her disappearance this morning. For all he understood, Dumbledore must have already looked to see if she was in the Gryffindor dormitory and someone must have alerted him to her absence in class, which meant that Dumbledore was possibly keeping a close eye on her.

Tom's attitude must have caught the attention of Dumbledore, who looked directly at him.

"All indications are that from last night."

"Has the Hogwarts monster returned?" Eugene Runcorn asked.

That made Tom shudder inside. *The Basilisk had attacked Granger? Impossible.*

"I want to believe it hasn't," Dumbledore replied to Eugene but kept his gaze on Tom, who remained unmoved by the direction of the conversation.

"I would like you to assist in the search for Miss Granger's whereabouts, Mr Pringle is already doing his bit for the areas forbidden to you in the Castle. Your help will be of great importance."

"The other students, do they know that?"

"I must say the answer is no, Mr Abbot" Dumbledore explained. "Our intention is not to create an unnecessary fuss, at first we will keep this matter between us. If nothing is resolved..."

"We will do what we can to help, Headmaster Dumbledore." Algie Longbottom spoke up, getting a nod from Dumbledore in response.

The prefects were dismissed to begin their search, however, when Runcorn opened the door to Dumbledore's room, everyone was amazed to find Prewett and Weasley there.

While Weasley stayed behind, Prewett moved forward, bumping into some perfect to get closer to Dumbledore.

"Is it true?" He asked Dumbledore. "Hermione is missing?"

This surprised everyone slightly, the news had barely reached the prefect' ears and it had already leaked out.

"Mr Weasley, Mr Prewett."

While Bilius Weasley swallowed dryly and approached Dumbledore, Prewett didn't seem bothered by the others' presence there, forgetting even the correct etiquette.

"Where did you get this information from?" Tom questioned Prewett in a firm voice, which got his attention momentarily. And it did not go unnoticed that Enid grimaced upon hearing the words.

"It doesn't matter." Ectur replied, which almost earned a retort coming from Tom, if not for Dumbledore stopping him with a gesture of his hand.

As always, in Tom's view, Dumbledore seemed malleable, biased and partial when it came to his beloved Gryffindor students.

"Is that true, Headmaster Dumbledore?" Ectur continued. "If it is true, we can help. We can help look for her."

Dumbledore placed his hand on Ectur's shoulder, looking proud of the member of the Gryffindor House. Of course, Ectur Prewett seemed to be synonymous with what it was like to be a Gryffindor with his chivalry, impulsiveness and courage.

"I'm afraid that's true and I'm sure Miss Granger would appreciate your concern, but the right thing to do now is to prevent more students from being hurt if it's something serious. Therefore, we are

warning the Headmasters of the Houses to order the students back to their Communal Hall."

"But, Headmaster... She's our friend." It was Bilius Weasley who spoke up.

"I understand, Mr Weasley. Your loyalty is commendable, but we value everyone's safety." Dumbledore concluded. "Mr Longbottom, please escort Mr Prewett and Mr Wesley to their proper dormitory."

"Yes, Headmaster Dumbledore."

With that, they all headed towards the door, leaving to go about their business, but before Tom could leave, Dumbledore called out to him.

"Mr Riddle, may I have a word with you?"

With polite words and forced courtesy, Dumbledore, to Tom, was a Snake disguised as a Lion. Good thing he knew how to handle snakes very well.

"Yes, Headmaster Dumbledore?" Tom turned, walking back to the centre of the room as the door closed.

Whenever he was in Dumbledore's presence, Tom was conscious to remain alert, mindful of everything he spoke and did. He could not afford to leave a gap for Dumbledore to investigate him further, he could not relax, not in his presence, not with him. After Myrtle Warren's death, Dumbledore remained far more perceptive of what he was doing. It was very clear to Tom then that Dumbledore had always known or suspected his bloodline. He could still remember Dumbledore's expression when he first met him and had said that the unique ability he had to be able to talk to snakes was dark, of course now it all made much more sense and there was no Salazar Sonserina descendant besides him.

"Tom." Dumbledore's voice sounded a little more serious. "This is a conversation that will remain between us. Last year, you *encountered* the monster that was terrorising the students - Aragog."

Tom's jaw locked as he stared at Dumbledore, he was sure of where this conversation was going.

"If there is another incident like that, Hogwarts will have to be closed. Are you aware of that?"

"I know, Headmaster Dumbledore. It would be a horrible thing to happen." Tom controlled his tone of voice, his words, his emotions. Dumbledore was surrounding him, giving him a warning and putting him against the wall in the hope that he would slip up and give some information.

Was Dumbledore thinking he had something to do with Granger's disappearance? Why?

"Miss Granger is a friend. I intend to do what is necessary to find her." Tom continued.

Something in his words must have surprised Dumbledore.

"I was not aware of your friendship with Miss Granger."

"We discovered, while talking, that we have some things in common." Tom imposed a limit on Dumbledore's probing. He wouldn't let him stick his nose where it didn't belong.

He couldn't wait for the time to leave that room, and his unease should have shown through, hence why Dumbledore released him a moment later.

As he left the room, he took a deep breath. The fresh scent of rain entering his nose, calming him

temporarily.

Damn it, Granger. Where are you?

Tom stepped out in search of her.

oOo

"Come on, Algie," Bilius grumbled.

"No." Algie promptly denied. They had been doing this for a good two minutes.

"Come on, we want to help." This time it was Ectur.

"You heard Dumbledore," Algie explained. "By the way, how did this news reach you?" He asked, frowning. Bilius raised one of his eyebrows as if to say 'really?'

The realization soon fell on Algie. "Shit. Enid..." He sighed. "Look, I know you guys want to help, but I can't break a rule."

"You're not going to break a rule," Ectur said.

"Not if you say we ran and you didn't want to jinx your friends."

"That's the dumbest excuse I could give." Algie rebutted with reasoning.

"It's so dumb, it seems true. After all, you do have a good heart, don't you?" Bilius raised both hands in a gesture that meant *'it's very simple'*.

"Imagine if it were Enid? Or Fred? Or one of the two of us?" Ectur pointed to himself and to Bilius. "I know you would."

Algie closed his eyes and put his hand to his forehead, then pressed with his thumb and index finger the tip of his nose.

"Go, now." He spoke, much like a father giving his children a loophole to escape some maternal punishment.

Bilius and Ectur smiled at him and ran off, leaving Algie in the corridor that led to the Gryffindor Tower. He turned his back to the Tower entrance.

Meanwhile, Tom Riddle found Enid on the first floor, searching just as he did. The corridors of the Castle were empty, the Headmasters had already placed the students in the Common Rooms. The rain didn't seem to let up and the sky looked increasingly grey and dark as the afternoon wore on.

"Enid." Tom intercepted her path.

"Tom?"

"I understand it was you who communicated the news to and."

"Tom..." She tried to clarify, but Tom stopped her.

"It's fine. I don't care about that and I don't even intend to tell Dumbledore." He smiled, reassuring her momentarily so he could inquire further. The fact that he said he didn't intend to tell Dumbledore what she did made her relax a little. Perfect, he thought. "I know you two are friends."

"Thank you, Tom." She murmured.

"Oh, come on, Enid. We're a team, aren't we?" His slight smile was fake, but it was unnoticeable to her eyes. "I'd just like to ask you, how did Dumbledore know about Granger's situation? I mean... Well, someone must have told him, right? Someone must have figured it out."

"I know, right?" She agreed, not realising that slowly Tom was taking away information that she, as Head Girl, was privileged to receive. "To tell you the truth, Dumbledore initially called me to have me ascertain whether Hermione was in the Common Room or the Dormitory. In fact, I had not seen her get up for breakfast. When I replied no, he had all the other prefects assembled."

"If we knew who had communicated to Dumbledore, we could ask that person what she or he had seen."

"I believe Dumbledore has already done that."

"That puts me at ease then." Tom replied though he felt unsatisfied with the conversation. "We have to go, time is running out."

As Enid walked away, Tom thought about what he would do. He thought about casting *Appare Vestigium*, but it would be of little or no use in a magic school, *obviously*. And Dumbledore probably already used some variation to find Granger, which he couldn't.

He looked to the side, seeing that he was alone, he cast the spell. It was a spell that could very well be mistaken for *Serpensortia* due to the summoning of the snakes, however, it was much darker and more obscure, difficult to perform and few were aware of its use - if not, only Salazar Slytherin himself. It was convenient to have access to Salazar Slytherin's personal office within the Chamber of Secrets, where Tom expanded his magical knowledge with the books and notes about spells and potions. Some hadn't even been divulged, perhaps for fear of reprisal, perhaps not, he did not care. Dark Magic or not, Tom did not see much purpose in separating spells that should or shouldn't be used as the Ministry dictated, magic was magic and to him that was all that mattered.

From the tip of his wand a blacklight emerged, from the shadows came ringed serpents in red and black unfurling from each other, hissing as their tongues moved. This spell was like for tracking, the intention of the witch or wizard had to be clear and whatever was asked for had to be physical, touchable and possess magic. It was much easier to control snakes on what they had to look for when the caster understood what they were saying. But of course, even that spell had a limit to its range.

"*I am your master.*" Tom spoke in parseltongue. The snakes turned instantly upon hearing the hissing.

"*Parselmouth*" They hissed.

"*I want you to find someone for me.*" He ordered. The snakes knew who it was, the intention was clear. Their tongues swayed in the wind as they picked up heat and essences, mostly magic.

They took their time, there were many magical beings around, many smells to be picked up, but something caught their attention. Normal snakes tended to like rainy and humid environments since amphibians and rodents were their food, but snakes like these - the base of this spell - did not feel these needs nor were influenced by the weather, their only weakness was the counterpart of who created them.

Following the orders of the sorcerer who summoned them, the snakes crawled towards the rain,

beyond the Castle, into the green area. Tom was feeling strange for a moment, his brow furrowed. For all he knew, Granger was at the Castle, but apparently everyone was wrong, he thought about what he might find if he followed the snakes he summoned and in the end, decided to see what awaited him.

"Is that true, Ectur?" Bilius asked, incredulous.

"It's a possibility." Ectur cringed at the thought, but if he stopped to think about it, it made sense. "Well, last year Myrtle was killed there..." He swallowed dryly. "If it's someone who did something to Hermione, maybe there could be some symbolism behind it?"

"It's Myrtle's bathroom, Ectur. No one goes there for any reason." Bilius pointed out the obvious.

And it was true, nobody went in the bathroom where Myrtle Warren died, firstly because it became forbidden, secondly because nobody wanted to come face to face with her ghost and thirdly, who in their right mind would want to enter a place where a murder took place? All right, apparently everything had been solved, but come on? It did not make much sense to Bilius.

He may not be first in his class, but he was not an idiot to that point.

"Maybe Mr Pringle hasn't looked there already?" Bilius suggested.

"We won't know, because until then, we weren't even supposed to be outside the Common Room." Ectur kept walking. "Come on, Bilius." He gestured with his head for Bilius to follow him.

Taking that back, Bilius considered himself an idiot up to that point, because he was accompanying Ectur to Myrtle's bathroom.

They were on the second floor of the Castle, and every so often stopped to hide when they found a prefect in the same path as them. They tried some classrooms, some bathrooms - which were not forbidden - but there was no trace of Hermione's presence. Frankly, none of them wanted to believe that anything that happened to Myrtle was similar to what could have happened to Hermione, they had too much faith and credibility in her to think she couldn't defend herself, but if she couldn't, then it was because it was really serious.

Bilius was taken out of his thoughts when Ectur stopped and he bumped into him. Ectur took a step back, unintentionally stepping on Bilius' foot, who muttered an '*Ouch!*'

"Shh, look!" Ectur pointed to the horizon, barely paying attention to Bilius' complaint. Bilius stopped for a moment, looking intently at what Ectur was pointing at. It was Riddle, running in the rain.

"He found her." He muttered. His words seemed to rouse Ectur from his trance, who soon started running towards the stairs to the first floor.

On the way they bumped into Eugene Runcorn, Mary Runcorn's twin brother.

"W...What are you guys doing?!" Eugene shouted.

"Tell Dumbledore we're going to the lake." Bilius replied. "I think Riddle found Hermione!"

Bilius and Ectur left Eugene behind.

Tom ran, the rain getting him all wet. His clothes were sticking to his skin and his Slytherin robe was becoming heavy from soaking the water - nothing that was horrible, but annoying. The snakes

he summoned were leading him into the Great Lake, the water droplets were preventing him from seeing clearly, but he noticed the body on the banks of the lake. With a gesture, he made the snakes dissipate like ashes from a blue fire as he neared the area.

His breathing was quickening, the adrenaline in his body rising. She was lying on the banks of the Lake, her face staring at the rain and the cloudy sky, her eyes closed, her body partially in the waters of the Lake. Tom ran to her, pulling her body out of the water, he knelt down, at first surprised to find her like this. Her wand was in her hand.

He lowered his face so he could hear if she was breathing. Her breathing was shallow, but still. *What had happened?*

Tom touched the skin of her face, brushing away the strands of hair that stuck to her face, then ran it over her cheekbones feeling how cold she was, her lips were turning purple, she was probably starting to get hypothermia. On the tips of her eyelashes, drops were accumulating and dripping down the side of her face, making it look as if she was crying.

He held her body, partially lifting her chest, while supporting her head so it wouldn't hang down. He shook her gently to make her wake up.

"Granger! Granger!" Tom called out her name a few times. He heard her mutter and watched as her eyes worked behind her eyelids in an attempt to wake up. *Whatever had happened had exhausted her.*

From the movement of her body being shook, the locket attached to her neck hung a few inches off the ground, drawing Tom's gaze. He felt the weight of the locket, feeling the metal - initially cold - against his palm. Did his magic react to the locket or was it the locket that reacted to his magic? He could not tell, all he knew was that the energy was warm and inviting to him. But he also felt it was protective and dark. Something based on Dark Magic.

Playing with Dark Magic, Granger? Hm...

Tom was ready to carry her in his arms, when in the distance he heard Prewett's shout calling her name. He was running towards them, Weasley right behind.

Prewett skid over, stopping opposite of him and pulling Hermione out of his arms, almost pushing him in the process. At first he looked at Prewett, indignant at his attitude, then he wondered, *what the hell are they doing here?* And then came a bit of anger, especially when he saw Prewett smoothing her hair over and calling her name like a fool. Tom curbed his desire to grab Granger, even though it would seem childish to the point of the two of them fighting over her like she was a doll.

Prewett practically ignored him as he put one of his arms behind her back and another under her legs, carrying her like a bride as he stood up.

Tom stood up as well, tilting his head down a little as he stared at the scene, his dark hair sticking to his forehead, obscuring half of his face. More sensitive and attentive people would notice the change and the feeling that something was starting to go wrong. Tom's dark magic was starting to rise, like tentacles of temptation, the urge to hurt something or someone ominously emerging.

He definitely did not like Prewett's nor Weasley's interference and he was about to make a move when he saw Granger's eyes open. She blinked a few times, looking at Prewett, and Tom could tell for sure that she mumbled something, before closing her eyes again.

Her wand slipped from her hand, falling into the gravel, but Prewett and Weasley did not notice, as Prewett carried her back to the Castle with Weasley's help, but Tom did. He knew, she would never be without her wand, ever. So he bent down and picked up the wand, placing it in his robes before following Prewett and Weasley, watching.

When they arrived near the entrance to the first floor of the Castle, Dumbledore and Dippet were accompanied by Matron Derwent, with the prefects and Mr. Pringle. Tom noticed the sigh of relief Dippet released, just as Dumbledore seemed to relax. Matron Derwent soon arrived near Prewett so that she could check on Hermione.

"Let's get her to the Hospital Wing." Derwent, with the help of Mr. Pringle took Hermione and Tom's gaze followed the last of her.

He, Prewett and Wesley took shelter from the rain.

"I must say I'm rather proud of you, prefects." Dippet began. "Excellent work."

It was noticeable that Dippet was very anxious for things to turn out favourably. No one wanted to be the Headmaster whose school closed during his ruling.

"Mr Prewett and Mr Weasley- " Dumbledore called out "how about we talk in my office?" It hadn't been a suggestion, though it was worded gently as a question.

There seemed to be a clear understanding between Dippet and Dumbledore, that Dumbledore would now act as the Headmaster of Gryffindor House, while Dippet would release the prefects back to their Houses.

Prewett and Weasley stiffened their posture the same instant they heard Dumbledore's words, following him after Dumbledore had cast the Hot Air charm on them so he could dry them off.

"Tom."

Dippet turned to him after releasing all the other prefects to return to their Common Rooms, which also meant that classes were over.

Tom turned to face Dippet, he was still wet from the rain, the water pooling at his feet and forming a small puddle, water droplets falling from his raven hair. Tom ran his hand through his hair, pushing back the dark strands away from his forehead.

Tom *really* did not esteem Dippet, even if it did not appear so to outsiders as a result of his public personage, he was only able to endure his presence. However, based on the fact that Dippet was chosen as Headmaster of Hogwarts, he did not underestimate Dippet's power. No one who was in such a high place was weak, Dippet was quite suspicious by nature, however when he trusted someone he became influenced and manipulatable, even a bit naive and that seemed to be his defective personality trait. He valued order, discipline and wizard culture highly. His loyalty was to Hogwarts. He also favoured status, be it blood or position.

One of Tom's greatest triumphs was that he had gained Dippet's trust.

Dippet had him in such high regard that he often didn't question him at all, absorbing every word Tom had to say, because before asking Dumbledore to stay at the school for the Summer holidays, Tom had turned to Dippet who seemed to really consider it, even stating to him that he would give special permission if school was 'safe' - *Hmm, that's my luck.*

It was then that he had asked Dumbledore, because Tom had known that the only person who had

any other great influence over Dippet was Dumbledore. But what was the point of looking back now? His holiday had been even relatively good, because of a certain girl. *Granger*.

At the end of it all, despite Tom not respecting Dippet, the Headmaster had fallen for his mask and controlled behaviour as the 'Golden Boy'.

In response to Dippet, Tom gestured with his head, thanking him for the acknowledgement, this seemed to satisfy Dippet who copied the movement back to him.

"Get some rest, Tom."

"Thank you, Headmaster Dippet."

Going opposite ways, Tom headed towards the Dungeons, drying himself off on the way, using the same charm Dumbledore had used moments ago. Arriving in the Slytherin Common Room, a good portion of the older students were on the ground floor while the younger ones were on the first floor.

His Knights, noticing his presence, exchanged glances between each other. Malfoy had a look that asked what had happened and why the students were told to remain in their Common Rooms. And of course, they thought they could get that information from him, because although it was a tiring type of job, being a prefect had its advantages.

Tom did not deign to take a second look at his companions, however, it did not go unnoticed that Alphard was standing aloof, sitting on the bay window, staring intensely at the Lake as if intently avoiding his gaze. *Let him have his dramas*, Tom rolled his eyes, but smiled internally in contentment at Alphard's behaviour. *It was somewhat funny*.

Alphard looked at the reflection of the window showing Tom Riddle walking up the stairs to the dormitory. He thought of Hermione, hoping she was alright. If Riddle was back from his prefect duties then it was likely that she was fine. He had noticed her absence in class and had been worried and had wondered at that time if he should notify Dumbledore, as the professor had asked him a while back to keep him informed about her and due to recent events, he had seen no other way out than to bring her absence to his attention.

Things were getting intense very quickly and it was getting hard to keep control, because no matter how guarded he was by the Head of Gryffindor House, Tom Riddle was always present and it was almost impossible to fool him.

Alphard didn't quite understand what was going on between Riddle and Hermione, all he knew was that they were dancing in a precarious harmony of dominance.

He was startled to see a fin swiftly pass by on the other side of the window, snapping him out of his thoughts. A mermaid was swimming near the surface of the Lake.

Tom made his way to the dormitory and when inside the room, he began to take off his clothes, starting with his green tie. Even though he had dried his uniform, he left the clothes there for the elves to pick up and clean, his mind strongly conveying that no matter how dry they were, they weren't really clean. He put on his bathrobe and headed to the bathroom, taking a hot shower to remove the chill from his skin, after that he put on his grey uniform trousers and white shirt, running a hand through his hair to shake off excess water and finally sat down on the bed. His wand lay next to him while in his hands was Hermione Granger's wand. He ran his fingers over the wand, turning it from side to side, curious at how the energy of the wand seemed the same as his own and yet still managed to be different.

Tom thought about the pros and cons of having her wand in his possession. As he had it in his hands now, it was a curious bauble, to say the least. Maybe he would play with her, maybe he would make a trade. But seeing her wand, having it in his hands, reminded him of the reason for her having been near the Lake. *What had happened?* It had clearly looked like she had been attacked by someone.

Who had dared to hurt Granger? So many questions were running through his mind.

As a manifestation of his unease, he was fiddling with her wand, passing it from finger to finger in a rapid manner. Something was wrong, that was for sure. He just didn't know what it was. He still couldn't grasp it.



The following night, he watched her lying on the bed in the Hospital Wing, asleep or nearly so.

Tom had spent the entire day with the desire to see her and questioning what had happened, but he waited, writing down the important things said in class, doing his job as a monitor, denying any information he deemed important to his Knights and making it clear for them not to pester him.

At night, after his rounds and feeling that the excitement in the Castle was finally over, with everyone probably asleep, he left the Dungeons with a clear goal. Now, he found himself here, looking at her.

He bent his body, bringing his face closer to hers. Even in the darkness with only the night blue light entering the windows of the Wing, Tom could see that she was already feeling better. The colour of her skin had returned to a peachy shade with a slight pinkish tinge. Her hair was spread out on the pillow in a leonine manner, rebellious as it always was.

Suddenly she opened her brown eyes, wide with surprise. The action had slightly startled him as unexpected as it was, however it did not affect him outwardly.

"*Boo!*" He whispered, with a mischievous smile at her frightened and fearful expression.

Hermione froze, startled by his proximity and at him being there. Tom turned away from her, and she noticed his chest shaking as he laughed genuinely. She looked up at him, confused as she tried to take in his presence. Obviously, when she had woken up earlier that morning, she had felt overwhelmed by the new information she had from witnessing his birth and a part of his childhood, and followed by visits from her and Tom's Housemates, topped off by Dumbledore's enquiry.

While on one part she was happy and grateful for the visits she had received, she - very, very vaguely - reported what had happened, filtering out information depending on her target audience. The most allowed disclosures were made to Dumbledore, however the actual story was heavily censored, not because she didn't trust him, but she needed time to collect and interpret the events and her own thoughts. But in the end, she also knew that she wanted to face Riddle.

Hermione watched him walk away with his hands behind his back, turning around to settle in an armchair near the bed she lay on.

"You're an anxious person, you know that?" One of his eyebrows was raised in a mocking manner.

She puffed her chest, straightening herself on the bed so she could face him, her hands gripping the blanket as she stared at him, her mouth sealed as she still didn't know what to say. So engrossed in trying to understand him.

Something in her expression seemed to bother him to the point that he was compelled to continue speaking, as short of words Tom was.

"I brought flowers for you." Tom said. "As well-wishes for your swift recovery." He cast a glance at the table beside her bed, noting the vase with a rather extravagant bouquet, which was surely from Prewett. "But it no longer seems necessary." He looked down at the flowers in his hands.

"Give it to me." She asked, reaching with her hands to take the bouquet, much to his surprise. She took the plain bouquet. "Thank you." She murmured, looking at the petals.

His eyebrows drew together. "Did you hit your head?" He asked.

"No." Hermione replied, not quite understanding why he would ask such a thing. However, a little fascinated by his strange chivalrous behaviour. That certainly was not something she would expect coming from Tom Riddle.

"What happened, Granger?" Riddle asked and she stopped fiddling with the petals immediately.

"I don't know." She replied genuinely.

"Preposterous!" He complained. "I know you're lying. I'll ask you one more time. What happened?"

"I don't know!" Hermione raised her tone as well. "I don't even know why you care." She rolled her eyes.

Tom avoided her question with another question. *So frustrating.*

"Did someone attack you?" Tom asked. She stopped, remaining silent. *Touché*, Tom thought. "What happened?"

She had to admit that he was being very nice to her, *by Voldemort's standard* and this was not the way he would react normally. Usually, he wouldn't object to getting her to talk in any way possible, even if the method made her scream.

"I don't know."

Hermione knew Tom could see that she was starting to get nervous and uneasy at his presence and enquiry. Her hands opened and closed involuntarily as if she missed her wand.

"Look, I don't know what happened." Hermione replied frankly. "I have no idea, I can't even explain it." She shook her head. "I don't know how to explain. I don't know..."

In her mind, she still couldn't absorb everything that had happened. Things were getting more and more crazy, out of logic, dangerous... Her mind could barely interpret the image of him as a baby, as a child, nor the death of his mother.. It was not something she woke up to feel good about, no matter to who the person was. And now, face to face with him, her eyes tried to find the similarities to the child she saw him being in those memories that were not hers. She could see that he had matured and grown, but she could not find the purity she saw in the baby and the hopeful longing she saw in the child. She saw the *Voldemort* in the young adult standing in front of her.

He had changed. Life had changed him. People made him change. And while that terrified her, elsewhere she cries out of grief.

Hermione lowered her gaze and unconsciously hugged the flowers.

"I know you're lying." She heard his voice, attractive, tempting, an accusing low pitch. "I know. I could look for the answer, you know. Right there in your mind."

"Why do you care?" She braced herself like a lioness.

He got up from the armchair, moving closer to the bed, moving closer to her again. And this was one of the differences between *Tom* and *Voldemort*. Tom was physical and used bodily intimidation, while Voldemort would focus on psychological terror.

Tom propped one of his arms on the headboard of the bed and leaned towards her.

"Do you think you can fool me? You think I don't know there's something weird going on? Hm, Granger, I expected more from you. You think... that I don't feel the dark magic?"

He raised his hand and with his magic, he was calling out the necklace she hid under her flannel pyjama shirt, but before he could touch the locket, she stopped it with her hand, keeping it away from him and causing the locket to hover between the two of them, still attached to her neck.

Tom smiled at her. The locket's magical energy was reacting.

"Reacts to mine and your magic, why?" he asked, far too interested in the mystery and why Hermione was so protective of it. He was already cornering her.

"Secrets, Riddle. We talked in the tent that we would keep our secrets." She made sure to remind him.

His green eyes grew intense, but to Hermione's relief he sighed and turned away. But not before he ran his hand through her hair, feeling how silky it was despite the volume, and made it fall across her face, which Hermione pulled away quickly so she wouldn't lose sight of where Riddle was.

He sat in the armchair again, giving her a look she couldn't interpret. Hermione knew he wouldn't let it go, he would try to pester her about it.

Tom propped his arm on the arm of the armchair and closed his fisted hand so he could rest his chin up and watched her. She was putting the medallion under her pyjamas, which made him look in that direction; Hermione understood that he was noticing that she wasn't wearing an undergarment, because more or less he probably could see the outline of her breasts. This made her feel self-conscious very quickly, and she tried to discreetly puff her top so it would not rest so close to her skin, but she knew Tom was further aware of her state from the way he stared at her.

"When will you be discharged?" he asked, which caused her to squint at him.

Really, Tom? She frowned, noticing that he had changed his approach. Going back to acting like a normal person, which was odd. "In the morning." Hermione replied.

"Hm. That's good." He muttered and she narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

"Alright, what do you want?"

Hermione saw the side corner of his mouth go up a little bit, so when he moved and his hand went towards the inside of his robes, it left her alarmed. From there, he pulled out a wand and she readily recognised it.

"My wand." She lifted one of her hands in its direction.

"*Tsk-tsk*." Tom made a negative movement with his index finger.

"Give me back my wand." She ordered.

"What's the rush, Granger. I'll give it back- " He replied, much to her frustration " -in the morning."

"You'll just have to pick it up." Tom continued.

"I'm not going back to the Dungeons." Hermione quickly replied which made him roll his eyes.

"You don't have to go there. Just meet with me." He replied so simply.

"And what's in it for you?" She doubted the simplicity of his words.

"Nothing." Tom looked at her. "Absolutely nothing."

"Doesn't sound much like you."

"We're partners, aren't we Hermione? We have a secret." Tom stood up. "By the way, congratulations on the tie."

That almost seemed genuine, almost. He didn't look happy, she realised.

"Thank you." She played along with him. " I still want my wand." She continued.

Tom laughed, in that way that only he could. Like he thought she was a bit silly and naive. Hermione had not noticed when he had managed to get back close to her. He touched the flowers that Ectur had given her.

"He's your hero, eh." He changed the conversation. "Prewett."

Hermione didn't know what to reply when he turned to her.

"Who attacked you, Granger?" He asked, his expression changing so quickly she wasn't prepared, his voice soft and serious.

She lowered her gaze, her mouth making an expression that looked like a smile, but certainly wasn't. Hermione wouldn't tell, obviously, not because she doesn't know who it had been and even if she did, she wouldn't tell. She felt his presence even closer.

It was intense just him being in the same room as her, his presence would in any case be noticed for miles, but he still managed to be sneaky when he wanted. *What makes you so different*, she asked herself. *What is going on in your mind?*

She took his hand, which drew Tom's gaze into her touch. Her fingers touched his, her brighter skin against his paler tone.

"Thank you" She whispered, as she could not say it louder, but her voice was clear. "Tom." She tried his first name. "I know it was you who found me first." She says. "I heard you then."

They stared at each other, their breathing the only sound.

How funny, he thought. He felt strange.

Chapter End Notes

Austrelaps Superbus, also known as Lowland Copperhead. The sixteenth most venomous snake in the world.

0.1 - So, what did you think about this chapter?

Azemiops.

Chapter Notes

I would like to thank each of you for your messages. Thank you very, very much. It meant a lot to me. I really needed to calm my heart. My heart feels heavy and my emotions are still a bit mixed up. I am trying to get better and think about myself a little more. I am going through a difficult time and it is affecting my health. Unfortunately, I have never been able to pass the 54kg(119 lbs) mark, and every time a situation affects me, I tend to lose weight. I went to weigh myself recently, and I am at 49kg (108 lbs). I have to change this, because my height is 1.75 (5.74). I was thinking of adopting a dog, because I like animals a lot, and I believe it would keep me company, but seeing everything, I still don't think it's a good idea. I'm not spending much time at home and I think it's wrong to adopt an animal if I can't give it my full attention. I am changing my routine a bit and starting to exercise more, or trying to find the time for it. Things are going better, I am very hopeful.

My special thanks go to Micherie, shinnerslight, biomecaria, Niabiaxmoi, Abav , Msscrittrice , omgitscarrie , WinterDream22, danceegirl92, TheBadW0lf blackmoth765, aga1127, TRHG, nuri_chanka, January_June, Blondentexan, Nubiajwkskkamksmsksnsnsnsns, purrrkitty, Leoparrdik, JuliaLestranger, ijessica290, Councilshivers13, Nannali_chan, DaisyCopper, Timberli7, Yoitsme213, Ambre T., luvafair, Np, Mayamelissa, miya, MiriamWho, amelianott, Sandaie, Darknessdawns, TallDarkAndHandsome, Liv Abebyyy, kinnkyy_k, Winternox13, every message has reached my heart and reading your words has brightened my day, which has been very hard to deal with. I confess that the stress of everyday life is killing me, but I always wanted to have a positive outlook for the future. The famous 'Light at the end of the tunnel'. In the hope of better days, not only for me, but for everyone out there in the world who needs it. For now, let's fight, the important thing, I think, is to never give up...

Of all, I want to say, that each of the messages, eased the weight on my soul in a way that I knew I was in need of. Sometimes all we want to hear or read is a simple "What's up?" or a "Go for it!" and this was and is very important to me.

Thank you very, very much. I am extremely grateful for what you have done. I am writing this with tears in my eyes.

This is the new chapter. It has not yet gone through beta and second reading. I apologize in advance for any errors in the text and for the delay in uploading the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Harry, which piece were we in chess?

Dear Harry, you are probably finding it strange to have to answer this question. Well, I enchanted the letter with a question that only we would know, it is a security question, where the letter will only open to reveal its contents if the answer is correct.

It is very difficult to explain what happened, but I ask, first of all, that you take it easy.

One primary piece of information you should have is that it is the year 1943. It sounds impossible, I know, but it is the truth. During the battle at Hogwarts, we were transported back in time by a Time Turning that is quite 'special'. It is of such urgency that you do not reveal your real name, the name that people recognize you by is Harry Evans. I'm sure you wouldn't mind having your mother's last name for the moment. You are at St. Mungo's. Keep all the information to yourself, Harry. All that's been said is that we were attacked by one of Grindelwald's followers and that you got hurt. Can you imagine? I will explain everything to you. Dumbledore is covering for us, he more or less knows the truth. I'll be waiting for you anxiously at Hogwarts.

From your best friend,

Hermione.

This was the sixth letter Hermione had written, all the others didn't seem very good, but this one was reasonably well written and explanatory, within all the events. After all, how do you write to your best friend that you have travelled back in time? It was complicated and at the very least, Harry would have doubts about the veracity of the events described. She couldn't blame him, if she were in his place, waking up in a 's' bed, she would also doubt everything and everyone. And let's face it, Harry had become a suspicious person, and unfortunately, with good reason.

Being true to herself, this is the best-case scenario of what could happen. The worst, for all she knows, is that Harry might wake up with no memory of what happened, of who she is or who he is, and then, she would be sure that they are screwed.

Hermione banged her forehead lightly against the wood of the table, praying that the universe wouldn't be so cruel. *That would be unfair. Haven't we been through enough already?*

She hopes to be there for Harry when he wakes up, like a friend, like a sister. Someone he would recognize and know he is safe.

Hermione stood up from the table, placing the quill pen in the inkwell. The women's Gryffindor uniform was impeccable, she felt the cool metal of the locket against the skin of her neck, her hair in a braid.

Calmly, she was making her way to the Owlery, one of the highest towers at Hogwarts. It was there that she would meet Riddle - Tom.

What had gotten into her? Calling him 'Tom'? Hermione's mind went over all the events. *Merlin, that's a lot.* She couldn't resist, it felt right, she had seen too much of him, knew too much about him to be so cold to him. He had saved her, how could she? It seemed to have been genuine, even if her interactions with him were awkward and strained in a way she couldn't explain.

And besides everything, what could she say to Dumbledore? Tell him everything? Tell him that there is someone out there who is throwing her back and forth in space-time?

Hermione snorted in derision. When her life had become a sick joke?

The wind was a bit strong and cold, she climbed the stairs that led to the top of the owl tower, her stomach having strange sensations because of the height as she avoided looking down. Her fear of heights was not over, only overcome in emergencies.

The higher she climbed, the more determined her thoughts were. She was going to put a stop to everything that happened to her and Riddle, it was too risky and she was sure that he would no longer settle for half-truths. Tom was already investigating her, hinting, searching for what she was hiding. And, to tell the truth, her empathy for him was growing, and it was frightening. Because now she understood a little more about his situation in the face of everything he had been through since he was a baby.

Remembering all that she had seen brought tears to her eyes that she blinked away.

Was there still something good inside him?

Hermione stopped as she reached the top of the tower, specifically the entrance. All thoughts determined to stop any kind of interaction with him silenced, thrown out the window as if they were nothing as soon as she spotted him. She found herself holding her breath, watching him in all his glory with his height and perfect position.

He was standing with his back to her, his hands together behind his back, looking out at the scenery that one of the tower windows provided. The Slytherinrobe he was wearing, swayed gently against the wind, which was almost always present in the Owlery.

The sight of him aroused in her an interest in understanding. Now, more than ever, she sought, fought to have the power to interpret him. One or two things about his behaviour, she could already understand, know the meaning behind the act, after all, she had lived directly with him during her time in the tent. But, his reactions should never be underestimated, he is unpredictable most of the time.

Sensing her presence, Tom looks over his shoulder, turning slowly so he can receive her. He scans her from top to bottom, his face slightly tilted diagonally downwards as he looks at her out of the corner of his eyes and under his lashes. Hermione realises then, that he is kind of copying her movements, as just like him, she is also hesitant and wary, testing whether or not she can approach. Both treating each other as if they were dealing with a wild animal and needed to be handled with care.

Tom stops right in the middle, straightening his posture in the process, waiting for her to approach him.

Hermione walked up to him, not knowing what to expect, dodging the bones and carcasses of mice and other small animals brought in by the owls. She stopped in front of him and held out her hand, asking for her wand. Feathers of various types of owls fell lightly around them. Tom raised one of his eyebrows and looked at her hand for a moment, before returning his gaze to her face.

He noticed at the very beginning that her hair was tied up in a braid, which made her face free of anything that might prevent him from noticing the expressions she was making and would make. Her cheeks were slightly flushed with a shy blush, but as much as her shyness was, she didn't look away.

"That fast? Good morning to you too ... Hermione."

Tom audibly tested her name for the first time to her.

He remembered clearly that when he left the Hospital Wing, he kept her voice in his head, opening and closing his hand by reflex as the sensation of the touch was persistent. She made him feel strange, very strange. She was a constant unknown in his head, always leaving him puzzled.

"G-good morning." She replied softly. Perhaps, a little embarrassed by her rash attitudes.

"You look fine." Tom continued, walking around her, a few owls that were present, standing at the highest point of the tower, watching the two of them with interest.

Hermione followed every move Tom made with her gaze, the situation is strangely familiar, she can't help but fear he will do something to her as this is the perfect opportunity, but she can't pick up any aggression coming from him, just this way of him that always seems to be peeking out at her.

"I feel good."

She felt it when he stopped behind her, his breath making the hairs on the back of her neck twitch, her eyes widen and her mouth open to exhale a sigh. She was unable to manage to move away, taken aback by his proximity.

His touch travelled down her arm, stopping just short of the sleeve bar of the robe, in his hand was her wand - Harry's wand - being offered to be taken back.

Slowly, she touches the wand, feeling the wood and putting her fingers around it completely. Without reluctance, he lets her have her wand back. Finally having the wand in hand, she feels safer, feels the flow of magic and how the wand responds to that flow. Nothing is different.

Hermione steps back, putting a little space in so she could watch Tom's face. She frowns a little, wary of how this was too easy, but she can tell by Tom's body language that he doesn't look aggressive, if much he was, he was wearing a slightly confused and amused expression at her behaviour.

Is there still something good about him?

Fascinated, she takes a step forward towards him, her left hand raised in the process. He follows the movement of her hand with his gaze, trying to understand what she was doing. Hesitantly, she reached out her fingers and touched his cheek, his gaze dropping to where he felt the touch. Where once he had pushed her away, now he allowed her to touch him. His gaze returned to her face expectantly as he raised one of his eyebrows.

Hermione placed her hand on his cheek, his skin seemed to be a little cooler than hers to the touch, which was a slight indication that something was wrong for more perceptive people, but there was still warmth there offered by the blood circulating in his body.

Hermione could finally conclude that his paleness was indeed a genetic trait that he inherited from his mother and that was aggravated in the future, making him as white as chalk. The slight dark circles under his eyes didn't make him ugly at first, but it indicated something was wrong for more perceptive people. She looked at the green irises in his eyes, such colour did not belong to his mother, that came from his father. Those eyes, one day they will have blood-red sclerae with slit pupils like a cat's. Her fingers stopped near the base of his nose, where she felt his breath come out softly, this trait would become something striking in the future, where it would become reptilian.

Hermione understood that what she was doing was somehow intimate, but her curiosity was getting

the better of her. Her mind raced to process all the mental images she had of Tom: As a baby, as a child, as a teenager and as Voldemort. Even knowing everything, it was hard to believe that all those versions were just one young man.

He was a handsome young man, incredibly handsome and even though this is not the first trait she would look for in a person, she had to give in and admit that somehow, he managed to charm.

Hermione awakens from her musings when she feels his hand grip her wrist, stopping her from continuing her curiosity.

"What are you doing?" He asks.

Yeah, what am I doing? Hermione wonders, blinking as if coming to her senses. She takes a step back, but he holds her wrist, not in a way that hurts her, but not allowing her to go that easy. Tom seems to watch her just as intently, allowing his eyes to travel to her ajar lips.

The tension of the moment seems to fall between the two of them, both caught in the silence, the owl feathers floating until they fall to the floor.

The exact moment is broken when the black owl appears, swooping around until it settles at a good enough height for either of them to gain access.

"Nix." Hermione acknowledges, feeling Tom's grip soften until she can no longer feel his hand.

Despite being an extremely twilight and nocturnal owl, there was nothing to stop Nix from going out during the day if need be. The choice of time of preference was more out of instinct and camouflage than anything else.

Nix readily recognised the two. He spread one of his wings and with his beak, straightened his feathers after the flight. Tom walked over to Nix and stroked the feathers on his head that looked like horns, which drew a sort of happy sound from Nix.

Hermione also reached over and pulled a snack and a letter out of one of her pockets, which drew his gaze to the envelope. He let her have a moment with her owl but didn't pull away.

She stroked Nix's feathers, murmured endearments to the animal, as well as offering a treat, which had probably returned to the Owl's refuge after having spent the night feeding.

"I know you must be tired, Nix. But would you please deliver this letter for me?" She asked, offering the letter to the owl, who somehow understood what was being asked.

With his claw, Nix took the envelope and then bent down to pick it up with his beak. Hermione glanced out of the corner of her eye at Tom, before quickly turning away. If he had known that letter was being sent to his arch-enemy, what would he have done?

Hermione and Tom took a step back as Nix spread his wings and quickly launched himself towards the tower balcony, flying, gliding before flapping his wings towards the horizon.

They both made their way to the balcony, watching the owl fly away. The wind was a tiny bit colder and stronger, making their clothes sway gently. Curious and a little hesitant, Hermione looks at him, analysing, noting that in that distant look he's making, the 'gears' of his brain are working.

He is questioning something.

She would pay a good amount just to be able to know, to understand, what made Tom Riddle want

to be Voldemort.

"It's pretty, isn't it?" Tom asks.

"W-what?" she blinked, trying to adjust to the question that had been asked.

"The scenery." He tilted his chin towards the horizon. "It's pretty, isn't it?"

So, can he appreciate such things?

Hermione looks at the view that the tower afforded them. Even with the wind and clouds, a few rays of sunlight were touching the trees and mountains of the valley.

"It is, it is very beautiful."

"To think that something or someone created all this."

His reflection piqued her curiosity and she finds herself asking before she can stop herself:

"Do you believe in any God or Gods, Tom?"

Hermione wants to slap herself mentally. Where did she get that question from? It is more than clear to her that he will mock her question, so she expects the sound he makes whenever he finds something silly. But she is surprised when he replies:

"Yes, I do." This time Tom looks at her and she is unable to look away because in those green eyes there is nothing, no emotion or expression that can be interpreted. "What is a god but one who has the power to create and destroy? The one who has the power of all things? One who controls life and death? Immortal? I believe in *that god*, Hermione."

It's a very vague description, many gods and goddesses from various cultures had such abilities mentioned. By logic and the orphanage, Tom probably attended the Christian church, but...

Hermione stopped, her eyes getting bigger and bigger from the moment the realisation fell on her, realising between the lines of what he said. Tom Riddle didn't just want to be remembered as the best and most powerful wizard that had ever existed, he wanted to be some kind of god.

"Well, I am going. See you in class, Hermione."

He said, ever so simply, returning to 'normal', leaving Hermione standing there, dumbfounded and unresponsive. She turns around in time to see him coming down the dangerous Owlery stairs, the hood of the Slytherin's robe gown over his head.

oOo

Hermione spent the morning classes with a headache that would make a crusher envious and as much as she understood what was going on in the classes she shared with the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students, she couldn't concentrate enough to care.

Her mind was racing fast with all the information she received, there was too much of it, she was going to go crazy with it all. And even though the headache eased now with the help of a potion, there was still that feeling of distress that was stuck in the pit of her stomach and she couldn't get rid of the feeling.

She walks alone through the corridors so lost about what she would do next, feeling in the dark, with someone who can send her "back and forth" in the timeline as it pleases, only as of the power

of words. The limit to that is unknown. And the worst part? The "person" apparently can be around Hogwarts.

Hermione feels like a bird trapped in a cage, "protected", "at the mercy" and with nowhere to run. A target too easy.

"Hermione." The voice wakes her from her reverie. She turns towards the owner of the voice. Leaning against one of the pilasters, there stood the young man with the earring that looked like a sea urchin.

"Alphard." She recognized him. Ignoring him would be rude and also not the best idea, after all, he was still keeping the secret about her.

"Are you alright?" He asks and she frowns. "I heard you were in the Hospital Wing."

"I'm fine." Hermione answers as briefly as possible. A little annoyed, perhaps.

His presence rekindles her memory about Evelyn's situation. Very likely Alphard noticed it; if the prolonged silence that followed wasn't any indication.

He sits on the ledge, feeling his legs weak, his hands open and close, clenching the fabric of his school uniform trousers. He's not very good at these things, but he had mentally gone over a thousand times what he was going to say, yet his mind went blank, just like it did sometimes when he was taking some test.

"Are you still mad at me?" Alphard tried, grimacing - as if he had a stomach ache. Hermione tilted her head to the side, a serious expression on her face. "Okay. I guess that's a yes." His broad shoulders wilted. "Look, I'm sorry."

The line between Hermione's eyebrows became more prominent.

"I had no choice. I have nothing against the muggle-born." Alphard swallowed dryly. "-Evelyn." He corrected himself. "-but I had no choice. Wally is my *sister*. What was I supposed to do? She's part of my family. How could I let someone hurt my sister and brother? What kind of brother would I be if I let that happen?" Alphard explained.

She understood. Hermione really understood what he meant. Understanding made the features of her face soften. It was his family and she couldn't judge, everyone does whatever it takes to protect their families. She has done it, Ron has done it and many other friends have had to do it. Hermione realises that she may have judged Alphard too harshly, which doesn't soften the anger, but keeps it in check, because, at the end of it all, Evelyn Thomas is a living being, with a beating heart and with feelings, she is a child.

But it is irrefutable that between Walburga and her and Evelyn, that Alphard's choice was obvious.

Hermione closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, trying to get used to this idea. When she opens her eyes, she looks straight at him. Alphard is not a bad person, on the contrary, he shows to be kind and this may be one of the reasons that in the future, he helps his nephew, Sirius. It may even be that he can see himself in Sirius' behaviour. It seems then, that the only Black who took the phrase "The Blacks protect themselves" seriously was Alphard and Andromeda, that regardless of magic or not choices, Alphard protected his family.

"Don't think Wally got away with what happened." Alphard preferred to say so that Hermione would understand that in a way there was justice to what happened specifically that day. **He** made

me punish Wally."

Hermione looked away, knowing that in a way she is to blame for what Alphard had to do to his sister, it was the vow she had made with Riddle, she certainly doesn't want the details but she knows that some magical torture was applied.

"I'm sorry." She murmured, turning back to face him. Hermione noted that there were stress lines on his face. "I don't want you to change what you are, Alphard. Nor what you think is right to do." She craned her head. "It's your family. You're right. I just hope you extend that feeling to all members of your family, regardless." She remembered Sirius.

Alphard opened his mouth as if to reply, but the childish voice made them both turn in the direction it came from.

"Brother?"

Alphard softened his expression at the sight of Cygnus.

"Hermione." He turned to her. "This is my brother, Cygnus."

Cygnus looked like an adult trapped in a child's body if you can understand that expression. He looked very serious, as his facial expression always seemed to be the same and the way he bowed his head in a gesture of recognition, made Hermione think he was trying to look more mature than he really was because she was sure he was still capable of throwing tantrums.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Cygnus."

"The pleasure is mine, miss."

"Well, I have to go." She told Alphard, bidding Cygnus farewell with a gesture and turning her back on the Black brothers.

"Wait here," Alphard asked his brother, as he went after Hermione. "Hermione!" He called out to her, stopping in front of her so he could speak. "Are... we friends?"

Hermione didn't know how to answer such a direct question, so she just shrugged, went around Alphard and made her way to Potions class. She knew she would probably meet him in class, but for now, she preferred to leave him in her brother's company.

oOo

The Grey Lady floated by holding a book in her hands, concentrating on what she was reading, being taken aback when she noticed the young man in the corridor.

"Oh!" she let slip and Tom smiled gently.

"Miss Ravenclaw." He greeted.

She lowered her gaze, a little embarrassed. It had been many years since anyone had called her by that name, her name being replaced by 'Grey Lady'. In fact, as much as she missed just being referred to as Helena, she preferred to hide her real identity, letting herself be recognised by the name that students over the years had given her. She couldn't bear the thought of using her mother's surname, the surname which reigned over one of the Houses of Hogwarts, after her vile betrayal.

Thinking about it made her sad and melancholy, the evil she did always returns to her thoughts, the karma she carries, the weight of the then ghostly life that is hers. If there is one sure thing to know, it is that ghosts are executioners of their own happiness. As intelligent as she claimed to be, she should have been wise enough to know that she was meant to have moved on, there was nothing left for her on the earthly plane, but then, her regret, guilt and fear were so deep that they served as a heavy anchor to leave her here, trapped. She couldn't get there fast enough to ask forgiveness of her mother who was on her deathbed, nor could she find her in the afterlife.

The name "Grey Lady" suited her just fine, she concluded. For she was always crying around silently, grieving for many reasons.

"Call me by the name 'Grey Lady'" She commanded, lifting her chin, daring the young man to contradict her. Few knew her real name and those who did had done their research.

"As you wish." He tilted his head to the side, the gentle smile never leaving his face. "I fear it is impolite not to have introduced myself. Tom Riddle, at your service."

"I know who you are." And she did. She had watched him grow with each new school year, as had many other students. Yet she had never come into direct contact with him. However much she had heard the portraits and paintings talking about how kind, intelligent and skilled he was. In the Ravenclaw tower, she had heard his name often being mentioned. At celebrations, she had seen him, as well as in the Student Rankings. So yes, she knew who he was.

She just avoided socialising, often preferring to stay in the Ravenclaw Tower wing. She wandered around sometimes though, but one thing was for sure, she would never, ever go to the Dungeons if she could help it. Not when the Baron was circulating there.

Uncertain and caught off guard by the silence, she looked around searching for a way out of the situation. Her translucent fingers tightened around the book as she thought about making her way through the walls until she walked away.

"I've always had a curiosity for Ravenclaw." He spoke suddenly, unexpectedly getting her attention. She looked at him out of the corner of her eyes, tilting her head, considering what he was talking about. "I never understood why I wasn't selected for that House. Not to brag, but many say I'm intelligent, I wonder if my other personality traits influenced the Hat so much."

"Nasty traits, I suppose" The Lady replied boldly, nodding at the Slytherin emblem on Tom's uniform. Proud of her comment, for a moment she wondered if she offended him deeply, but to her surprise, the young man laughed. A little embarrassed, she apologised for the rude and mean comment.

"Maybe." He shrugs. "I heard you were the best student in your school days."

"Yes, the best." She doesn't deny it, proud to be acknowledged. Her intellect, perhaps, is only below her mother's.

"I'd like us to be friends if it's not disrespectful." He suggested.

It wasn't, but she wondered why. It was unusual to prolong unnecessary contact with the living ones.

"Why?" she asked, floating around him.

"It may sound presumptuous of me, but I would like to talk to someone with wisdom and intelligence. Sometimes it's frustrating not having someone who can understand me."

The Lady, Helena, smiled. Presumptuous, but he managed to get her attention. Finally, she understood why his name was on the lips of many girls. She would have yielded to his charm if he had attended Hogwarts at the same time as her.

The Lady never experienced romantic love, not for lack of wooing. Many young men followed her around and tried to gain her attention, and many times she was proposed. All of which she fervently denied, her standards were too high for those men to fit, she would accept nothing less.

She wondered if this young man was born at the same time as her, would she have considered him. *She probably would have.* Perhaps her life would have taken a different path.

The Lady shook her head, clearing her mind of such thoughts. *No use thinking*, she thought.

She sat down on one of the stone seats, straightening her puffy dress as she would have done if she were alive. It was just a polite, ingrained custom she hadn't lost. The weak sunlight seemed to touch, but it was actually passing through her person, making her image almost seem invisible for good. The long hair floated a little around her.

The appearance and the ghostly effect might frighten some people, but she meant no harm.

With a brief smile, she said:

"Talk then. Entertain me." That was what she used to say to the gentlemen of her time.

It had been a good, long time since she had talked to anyone. Well, *a proper conversation*.

Am I needy? She wondered. No, it wasn't very logical. She'd never been very emotional or so she'd always thought.

So wrong about herself.

Tom sat down next to her, not too afraid or impressed by her ghostly appearance, and smiled. His eyes closed and a smile on his lips. *She's just another one.*

Hermione looked hesitantly out of the corner of her eye at Tom as she stopped writing on the parchment. She was in potions class, with Ectur sitting on her right side and Bilius sitting in the back next to Arabella McLaggen.

The class was silent, if not for the rustling of writing quills as everyone made small notes.

"All right, ladies and gentlemen. It's time for the little demonstrations." Slughorn interrupted the students.

Hermione paid attention to what Professor Slughorn was saying. It was interesting and a little scary to watch him teach, and not in a bad way. In general, Slughorn was the same way she had known him in her real-time.

Slughorn pulled out of his hard briefcase, five prepared potions. Of the five, Hermione recognised four, Felix Felicis, Laughter Potion, Hate Potion and Amortentia...

Resting her chin on the part of her fingers, she watched with renewed interest. Her mind racing to interpret this class would go.

"Would anyone care to tell me what emotions can be considered opposite and can be felt at the same time?" He asked, looking cheerfully at the students. "Hm? Anyone?"

"Love and hate?" Hermione heard someone speaking from the back of the classroom.

"A good answer, indeed. But is it possible for a person to love and hate someone at the same time? Of course, emotions are much more complex than a simple question like that, nothing is 'black and white'."

Hermione thought and looked at the bottles of potions presented by Slughorn. Slughorn's question could be answered just by observing, the answer was there, right in front of everyone. At that very moment, she and Tom both raised their hands to answer the question.

She looked at him and he returned her gaze, both slowly lowering their hands. Her thirst for learning had gotten the better of her again and without realising, there she was trying to answer the questions as if she was attending sixth grade normally. She mentally scolded herself.

But more controlled than she was when it came to hiding her expressions, Tom gestured for her to speak first. Again, she couldn't tell if he was actually being solicitous or if it was just one of his public interpretations.

Slughorn watched the exchange with a smile on his face, as if the interaction of the two was something pleasurable to watch, looking like a sort of 'Father' as he watched his favourite student interact.

Ectur looked at her expectantly, having cast a glance towards Tom. Making noise with her throat, Hermione explained her theory.

"Love and Sorrow." She muttered. "The answer is Love and Sorrow." She continued.

"And why is that, Miss Granger?" Slughorn pressed her to explain herself.

"We can love and still feel sad."

"Excellent, Miss Granger."

Hermione gave a sideways smile, half embarrassed. Ectur beside her gave her arm a little squeeze, congratulating her.

"Allow me to introduce you to the potions we will be studying in the next few classes. The first is Felix Felicis, also known as Liquid Luck. The second is the Laughter Potion, the third is the Hate Potion, the fourth is Amortentia and the fifth is the Longing Potion."

Hermione knew the Felix Felicis potion well, only she knows how frustrating it was trying to make the Death in Life potion, competing with Harry and the Half-Blood Prince's diary, so she could have the chance to have the Felix Felicis. She can't deny that losing left a bitter taste in her ego until she understood the situation.

"You guys may be wondering why I asked you that question. You see, each of these potions directly messes with our emotions. They are dangerous and should be used with great care and caution. They can be described as a kind of addiction and are poisonous in a very particular way. Today, my students, we will study the Potion of Longing, also known as the Potion of Sorrow."

Slughorn took the small flask that looked like a crystal chalice with a lid, which contained the dark, black liquid, the surface of which glowed like ink and handed it to the left side of the class. Tom was the first to pick up the chalice, he frowned as he touched the flask. The interest could be seen in his expression as he wondered at the steam rising from the trapped liquid.

Tom turned and handed the chalice to Malfoy, who shared it with Mulciber, both of whom found the sensation odd and so on it was passed to Avery and Rosier, Lestranger and Nott, Alphard and Virginia Flint until all the sixth year Slytherin students had interacted with the potion, soon after which it was passed to the Gryffindor students. Hermione waited patiently for her and Ectur's turn after Bilius and Arabella handed it to them.

She and Ectur watched the liquid and with the tip of her finger, Hermione tapped against the glass of the chalice, noticing that the potion was barely moving.

"What is it?" Ectur asked.

"It's not just an impression, the potion has a thick texture." She explained. "That means if we have to reproduce it, the right point to deliver is with that texture."

He looked at her, a little befuddled to say the least. "Wow."

She smiled at his expression and then handed Slughorn the chalice.

"Does anyone know anything about this potion?" Slughorn asked.

Hermione refrained from answering, she really didn't know anything about this potion. However, she was not surprised when by a glance she saw Tom raise his hand.

"The Potion of Longing is a potion that is forbidden and controlled by the Ministry of Magic. Quotations about this potion are found only in the oldest tomes from the 15th century. Some believe that Zygmunt Budge is the creator, but it has never been confirmed. The Longing potion is considered poisonous for its hallucinogenic effects and it can be ingested or its vapour can be breathed. Consuming it makes the effect longer and more effective, but both ways are extremely efficient and risky if used in excess. Its biggest effect is to create perfect illusions about something we miss, not necessarily about a person, but that is where the biggest reason for its existence. The illusion is so powerful, it makes a person believe that perhaps, a loved one is present and alive. It is said to be so perfect that many go mad and prefer to live in the fantasy reality created by this potion."

She wasn't surprised that he knew the answer, but maybe a little bit angry at herself for not knowing anything about this potion. She couldn't even remember Snape or Slughorn mentioning it in her time. She didn't doubt that Snape knew the potion, but the lack of lecturing on the subject made her think that the Ministry of Magic really wanted to prevent witches and wizards from knowing about this potion.

"Excellent answer, Mr Riddle. Ten points for Slytherin!" Slughorn congratulated Tom, who gave a sideways smile.

Okay... She bit her lower lip and turned her face in the other direction so she wouldn't have to face him, *this is clearly turning into a competition.*

"An excellent answer, indeed." Slughorn continued. "But I would add that so potent is this potion, that even those around will be able to catch a glimpse of something."

Slughorn removed the lid of the chalice and the greyish vapour of the potion began to rise. Strangely it looked like a kind of smoke, but it didn't smell bad, quite the opposite, it was attractive in some peculiar way. But such was most potions that try to trick the mind, a lure.

The Potions Professor, tilted the chalice so that a generous drop fell onto the floor, the students leaned to watch, curious for the reaction the potion would have. The thick liquid fell, making

contact with the floor and much like ink, it had stayed consistent until it was magically absorbed.

"What happens now, Professor Slughorn?" Mulciber asked.

"Each of you will see something, that doesn't mean it will be something specific to you. It could be your classmate's next to you."

"I don't see anything," Ectur muttered beside her and Hermione was about to reply that she couldn't see anything either, but was silenced by the clear image that came to her.

Without realising it, she found herself affected by the smell of the potion which was already messing with her head, creating a small illusion. A glimpse to which she succumbed. The image that emerged, ached her heart, catching her off guard as if a supernatural force was squeezing her heart for the way she missed what she saw.

"Ron."

She saw Ron, tall and with the flaming hair that belonged to the genetics of the Weasley family.

"Mione." He called out to her, extending his hand for her to take and join him. Beside Ron stood her parents, smiling so warmly it was impossible to resist.

She almost raised her hand to take Ron's hand.

"Hermione." Ectur brought her back to reality, his voice serving as an anchor. She blinked, adjusting to her surroundings again and looked at Ectur, a little confused and pale from feeling so exposed and easily caught in the effects of the potion.

"I-I saw something..." She muttered.

"I know," Ectur replied seriously. "I'm not sure what it was, but I saw you interacting as if you were here. Who's Ron?"

Hermione stammered at the question but was relieved of the question when her and Ectur's attention went to Bilius and Arabella, who seemed to be enjoying themselves. Wow.

For a moment she laughed at the reaction of the two, but that didn't erase what she saw and felt, even more so when she looked away, finding Tom's gaze so intense and questioning. A crease between his eyebrows showed.

She looked away, not daring to look at him or Ectur, preferring to concentrate on Slughorn. As the rest of the students came to their senses. Some are affected, others not.

From the back of the room, Alphard Black watched the interactions. *Well, well...Could it be?* He wondered as the thought came to him.

When class was over, all the students were putting away their belongings, Slughorn stopped her, asking her to stay for a moment. Bilius left for lunch, while Ectur signalled that he would wait for her in the hallway.

Tom walked past her, glancing from under his lashes at her, a small, sideways smile wanting to appear on his face. Convinced that Slughorn would invite her to the private club, he was not surprised. It had been just as he'd predicted.

Closing the door to the Potions classroom, Hermione found Ectur standing in the corridor as he had said he would.

"Hermione?" He asked, finding the expression on her face a little strange. "What is it?"

"Hm...Slughorn invited me to the Club." She said, holding the strap of the cross-body bag she wore, with both hands.

Ectur blinked at her answer and then cracked a bright smile. "Hermione, that's great!" He congratulated her. "Do you know what that means? It means that he considers you to be one of the best students!"

Yes, Hermione knows what The Slug Club means and all the members of it who are handpicked. The reason behind the creation of the Club could be genuine, a way for Slughorn to benefit his favourite students in the wizarding world, but surely there were also the benefits Slughorn received.

"You accepted, didn't you?" Ectur asked as they walked towards the Great Hall.

"I said I would think about it." She replied. "Professor Slughorn just said that the Club would have a meeting and would let me know when and that if I wanted to, just turn up at dinner time."

"Hermione, you have to go! It's the chance of a lifetime!" Ectur encouraged her. "Not for nothing, Hermione, but Slughorn has many contacts that could pave a path for you into adulthood."

Hermione had no way to answer that, so she kept quiet as she thought. In her mind it was clear, nothing was going the way it should.

They walked in silence for a moment, until Ectur spoke:

"About the question, I asked in Potions class... I didn't mean to upset you."

"No, no. It's okay." She muttered.

"It's just...I just asked because you had said that name before." Ectur kept his tone of voice low. He didn't know if he was being inconvenient or not and he didn't want the conversation to reach the ears of others, as it seemed like something very private to her. "To me." He added.

"What?" Hermione inquired. There was no way she could remember mentioning anything about Ron to Ectur.

"Well, yes. When I found you at the lake. You opened your eyes and mumbled the name: Ron." He ran his hand over the back of his neck. "What happened, Hermione?" Ectur gently asked.

Hermione stopped, recognizing the memory of when he had helped her in the lake area. Looking at him, she could see the little details that made Ron and Ectur alike. For a moment, while she was being rescued, she saw Ectur and thought it was Ron who came for her.

She didn't want to mention something about Ron, not for some dark reason, but Ectur's pleading eyes for an explanation broke her.

"Ron..." She murmured his name softly, wistfully. The tone of her voice attracted Ectur's attention even more. "He's special to me." She continued. "You remind me a lot of him." Hermione gave a brief smile. "I've known him since I was eleven to twelve and grew up with him and met his family. He's awkward, a little bit grumpy, with a unique comic sense. He always tries to stand up

for his friends. He's...Ron." She sniffled and with the heel of her hand, tweaked her nose as she looked down at her shoes. How to describe Ron? "You look just like him." Hermione looked at Ectur.

Ectur understood. He couldn't be jealous, not of that.

"Is he okay?" Ectur asked. Maybe it wasn't the right question to ask, not when he noticed the white part of her eyes start to redden as she bravely fought not to shed tears.

"I don't know," Hermione replied softly, her voice numb. "I want to believe so." She sniffled again, swallowing all her tears. "I have to hope."

Ectur hugged her. It wasn't right, it could be considered inappropriate, but if for one second she was surprised, the next she returned the embrace, hiding her face in his grey sweater.

If anyone had seen them standing in the hallway hugging, they would probably get the wrong idea, but he couldn't care less.

When they parted, Ectur put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed lightly, she smiled at the gesture and was reciprocated equally.

They heard a noise coming from someone's throat and quickly separated to face the person.

"Hm...Huh...Professor, I mean Headmaster Dumbledore...!" Ectur stammered. "It's not at all what you're thinking, sir! We just...I was..."

Dumbledore, whose hands were interlocked in front of him, looked at Hermione and Ectur and raised one of his eyebrows at the young boy, who was turning red with embarrassment.

It was hard to keep the expression on his face, as he found the Prewett boy's behaviour a little comical and to tease him, Dumbledore spoke:

"The act of hugging a friend is commendable, Mr Prewett, but I ask that exaggerated affections be for another time."

"What? No, no, no, Headmaster Dumbledore! I wasn't going to...I mean...I wasn't going to do anything."

"I understand, Mr Prewett." Dumbledore smiled. "By the way, aren't you late for lunch, Mr Prewett?"

"Yes, yes. We were just going."

"I'm afraid I'll have to ask for Miss Granger's attention."

"Huh, all right. See you later, Hermione." Ectur waved goodbye to Hermione, who confirmed with a nod.

As they watched Ectur walk away, Hermione let a soft chuckle escape.

"We weren't doing anything." She explained. "He was consoling me. We were talking about Ron." She continued, walking alongside Dumbledore. "I didn't say much, but the subject came up. I guess I needed a friendly shoulder, I miss that... It's just... He looks like Ron."

"I'm sure he does, Miss Granger."

"No, Professor Dumbledore. **He looks a bit like Ron.**" Hermione emphasised and realisation appeared on Dumbledore's face.

"Oh, I understand now."

"It's hard because I know who he is and what he's going to be." She tried to smile to soften the words.

They were silent for a second, absorbing the weight of the words.

"I would like, Miss Granger, for us to talk in my sitting room about recent events."

"Of course, Headmaster Dumbledore. I would like that."

Taking a seat in the armchair in Dumbledore's living room, she looked around and then deposited her satchel beside the armchair. On the tray in front of her on the coffee table were some natural sandwiches and a glass of juice. A courtesy from Dumbledore for getting her attention during her lunch hour. Fawkes was nowhere to be seen.

"I believe we can talk freely now." Dumbledore sat down in the armchair opposite her.

"Yes." Hermione agreed. She looked at the never-ending flames of the fireplace, the memories of what had happened to flash through her mind as she watched the flames dance. "The Time-Turner activated." She muttered. "I travelled back in time again. I went to the past and back." She continued. "It's not normal. -" She shook her head. " - No Time-Turner has the power to make in that way. It's not normal enough to have travelled fifty-five years in the past, to go back further into the past and then go back to where I left off, makes me think that this - " She held up the iron cord attached to her neck. " - doesn't follow the same patterns."

Hermione lowered her head to look at the locket, the important part of which she now held in her hands.

"I've witnessed things... things that until then I didn't understand and judged without knowing. That doesn't change anything, I think... But it makes me think. I don't want to justify what I know with what I saw, but I have a hard time understanding. I thought I understood...I don't know ..."

"What did you see, Miss Granger?" Dumbledore, very cautiously, asked.

She raised her gaze, it was possible to see the watery gleam in her eyes because of the emotions she felt.

"I saw... A part of the dark wizard's childhood I told you about." She swallowed, trying to placate the lump forming in her throat at the words. "It wasn't pretty and it wasn't fair. It wasn't right. It was... sad. Lonely. It won't justify what he's going to do. But I feel strange... because he was naive once... I think... I don't even know anymore. The weight of all the things...Of everything I've seen, everything I've been through, everything I thought I knew...It's starting to weigh on me. I worry about Harry, I worry about what I'm doing, I worry about whether or not I'll make it back, I worry about Ronnie, I worry about my parents - if I'll ever see them again." She wiped away the tears that were trickling down to her chin. "I'm scared."

Hermione showed the part of the closed locket, which held the Time-Turner, to Dumbledore. "That's not normal. It's like it opens some kind of portal. A passage? There is -"

Hermione was interrupted when the fireplace in Dumbledore's Office spat out a letter. The letter glided softly until Dumbledore picked it up with one hand.

He opened the letter and read it carefully, Hermione noticing how downcast he seemed by the words that must have been written and how hard he tried to control his expressions.

"Professor?" She tried.

"I'm afraid, Miss Granger, that we will have to postpone this conversation." He said suddenly, rising from the armchair at the same second. Placing his hands behind his back as he was wont to do. "There are certain things that need my attention urgently, but don't think in any way that I'm not interested in your position. I say only to you, have faith - " Looking at her over the half-moon glasses, he continued. "- and be careful. Your journey was felt. It may have been softer than the other, but it was not missed by attentive people. Magic speaks for itself."

Hermione found Dumbledore's behaviour strange, for whatever was written in the letter he had received had completely caught his attention. She glanced over her shoulder at the wood of the doorway to Dumbledore's Office before heading off to her next class.

As soon as Hermione left, Dumbledore opened the letter again, he propped his hands on the table and bowed his head, a little embarrassed and a little disappointed. On the letter was written:

For the Greater Good.

It didn't have handwriting, but those words would haunt him for the rest of his life.

The person who wrote the letter was standing still, feeling that the letter had been delivered at just the right moment for everything to happen as it should.

The cloak covered the entire body, the hood preventing the light of a cloudy temple from touching the skin, the charm on the face allowed no one to know the identity or gender.

The words written had an important meaning, the person knew. It was For the Greater Good, a greater good for itself and for all it knew. Now it understood the important role it had. The person will not be the cause and motivator of everything, it is only a little push here and there for the route that is destiny to be paved.

The One looked with an interest at the scene it was seeing, after all, watching Gellert Grindelwald getting information from Leeza Zabini, who was on a mission and then clearing her mind, was interesting, to say the least. Of course, that was only one step towards chaos and then peace.

With a simple *whoosh* it apparated.

oOo

"Some Aurors have been attacked," Lestrage commented one evening.

"How do you know that?" Dolohov, who was sitting on the sofa asked. All the members who were The Walpurgis Knights, including Tom, were in the Common Room after classes and dinner.

Lestrage showed the letter that was in his hand. "My father wrote it."

"And what does that mean?" Rosier asked.

"It means danger." Abraxas Malfoy cleared Rosier's mind.

"It's sending a message to the Ministry," Tom said.

"Tom -" Lestrangle, very carefully, spoke Tom's name. They spoke the name as 'Tom' or 'Riddle' to keep up appearances, as it would be very odd to say 'My Lord' to a young man the same age as them, however, that was how they referred to it when they were in Tom's presence. Lestrangle had nothing against that, after all, 'Riddle', 'Tom' or whatever the reference was, nurtured and showed the paths to the sense of freedom he sought." - It's right." He continued.

"How so?" Mulciber raised one of his eyebrows.

"The Ministry of Magic will summon Dumbledore." Nott exchanged glances with Lestrangle, Malfoy and Tom. "They're saying that the only thing that's stopping Grindelwald from taking over Great Britain, is him."

"My father says they might ask for Dumbledore's help, after all, many members of the Ministry hold Dumbledore in high esteem and consider him a powerful wizard. Especially if he is an ally."

"Dumbledore will not fight. This is the third time the Ministry has requested his presence." Malfoy observed.

"Well, the difference between Spencer-Moon and Fawley, is that one of them is taking it very seriously."

As they spoke, Tom absorbed every comment made, his mind processing the information. *Why?* He wondered. It's not typical of Dumbledore to deny help, especially if it's something that's not against his ideals, but him vehemently denying any kind of confrontation...

Why doesn't Dumbledore want to fight?

Tom paused, the light of an idea arising, like when you manage to solve the mystery of a potion or a spell. Maybe the right question wasn't that but rather: can Dumbledore fight against Grindelwald?

Unlikely he couldn't, but...

A few short days passed, Hermione began to focus more on herself and the situation she found herself in. The focus of her studies went to the Portkey, Time - Turner and Salazar Slytherin.

From everything she understood, the Time-turner attached to her neck really wasn't ordinary and the fact that she had travelled back in time to a specific place reminded her of how a Portkey worked. At night, in the women's dormitories, she would spend her time reading, thinking, and sometimes trying to draw the Time-Turner to get a better idea of its handling. As much as she could open the locket, she couldn't activate it, the sand of the hourglass standing in place without moving.

How had someone managed to combine time magic with transport magic?

Come to think about it, both spells had an equal base. But that discovery didn't do much to clear Hermione's train of thought, making her more frustrated than pleased.

For the Slytherin part, Hermione was concentrating on the book about the Founders of Hogwarts, paying close attention to everything that quoted the famous Parselmouth wizard. She doubted there would be information about anything so unusual in a book like this, but she couldn't rule out either hypothesis, after all, there are often riddles hidden in the words.

Her attention was taken away momentarily when she saw Evelyn smiling and waving at her from across the courtyard, Hermione reciprocated the kindness like a loving older sister, watching Evelyn rush off to her next class.

It was fresh in Hermione's mind how she still had to defend Evelyn from some Slytherin girls in the same class as her, but not that Evelyn was weak she was doing very well with the spells and potions, so much so that as a thank you, Evelyn gave Hermione a whole jar of Moonstone Powder that she won for being the first student to perform the potion in class.

Hermione had smiled at her but said that she was the one who had to stay, as she had won a class prize for the first time, yet Evelyn insisted. She hugged Hermione's waist and ran to the Dungeons.

Hermione had stashed vial in her bag, but a thought occurred and she found herself looking where Evelyn had left. It could be thanks, yes, but the words Tom had said to her about how the relationship worked between the Slytherin students, made more sense now. *It's like a two-way street.*

Hermione closed the book on the Founders of Hogwarts and picked up another from her cross-body bag, a book written specifically about one Founder: Salazar Slytherin.

She ran her fingers across the leather cover, the name of the Parselmouth wizard in large, silver letters. It brought back to her bitter memories of one of the days when passing by the hallway of the Ravenclaw Wing.

Hermione saw him, Tom, talking to the Grey Lady. She was smiling at him, her ghostly voice sounding more lyrical than Hermione had ever heard. The Grey Lady, Helena, seemed content if it were possible...*alive*. This left Hermione terrified.

Not because of the presence of the ghost of Ravenclaw House, nor because of Helena's cheerful simplicity, but because of the possessor of such contentment. Because at that moment, Hermione realised what he was doing and how everyone, ghosts included, can fall for the charm he has. Because there, he was making his way to get the Ravenclaw Diadem.

She didn't know how many times they had met, because yes, that seemed like a secret meeting, nor how many times they had spoken, nor if Helena had told all about the Diadem yet. She only knew that at that moment she had understood that Tom Riddle wanted to be Lord Voldemort, **Who Must Not Be Named**.

Hermione had turned away so quickly from the scene she had witnessed and while her mind said she had to interfere, she couldn't stop herself as she had been... disappointed. The same young man who saved her is still the same wizard who wants to exterminate her existence. *Ironic, isn't it?*

"What are you reading?"

She was startled at the voice that pulled her mind away from the memory.

Speaking of the devil...

He sat next to her on the stone picnic table, while her body was facing in the right direction, with her legs under the table, Tom sat the opposite way, his back facing the table where he propped his elbows in a significantly relaxed position.

She squinted at him, who particularly didn't shy away from meeting her gaze. Hermione turned her face away, turning to her book, reading the first page. Tom frowned and raised one of his dark eyebrows at her behaviour.

He looked at the books on the table, curious.

"Well...?" Tom tried to bring some response from her.

"I want to be alone, Tom." She said, without even looking at him.

The tone of her voice was like a knife - ouch - she sounded hurt and, frankly, offended.

What had he done now? Tom wondered. He clenched his jaw and looked around. Honestly, he was getting tired and his patience was running out, she had avoided him throughout these days, the estrangement from her was disturbing, to say the least. But on the other hand, he saw her smiling at Prewett.

He was aware of the friendship she had with the Prewett brothers, with Weasley and the Longbottom's, but he knew how to recognise when there was something more involved; and he was referring to Ectur Prewett.

The Prewett boy was indicating that he wanted more than her friendship, whether she realised it or not... He looked at her again, down at her, bothered by the thought.

She was largely ignoring him, not acknowledging his presence and it made him angry. Tom tugged at one of the strands of her unruly hair, not hard enough to hurt, but just to get her attention. *How childish*, he thinks, but he delights in the frown she offers, particularly proud of himself for managing to snap her out of her cold behaviour. She's not very good at that.

He can see her taking a deep breath, closing her eyes, gathering all the patience she could. *Delightfully sensitive*, he wants to laugh.

"I'm reading Tom, that's what I'm doing." She replies, her eyes going back to the book, but she didn't seem to read it.

"Fair enough. But that's not what I asked."

Hermione blinks, her eyes still on the book, her fingers caressing the page, where it said about Salazar's genetic heritage, that it came from Herpo, the Foul, who everyone believes to be the first Parseltongue.

This reminds Hermione of what she had promised herself after she recovered from everything that happened, but especially seeing Tom with Helena Ravenclaw.

"I was curious about a topic-" She begins, still not looking at him. "-I mean, about the Founders of Hogwarts. So, I started reading about them and the legacy they left. And can you believe that at this very moment, I'm reading about Salazar Slytherin?" Hermione turned towards him, face to face, this close, both of them staring at each other.

She had promised herself that she would make Tom Riddle reveal himself to her.

Chapter End Notes

Azemiops Feae, also known as Fea's Vibora, the seventeenth most venomous snake in the world.

Hemachatus.

Chapter Notes

Ok, my lovely readers. It's been 1 year since I posted Venenum. Well, I gave myself this 1 year as a gift. I know it may be annoying to you guys that long without an update, but I needed it because I had planned a life change. Some of you have followed some turbulence in my life, and I had promised myself that I would turn this game. And I did, although it wasn't easy, I studied and worked so hard that I got a job abroad, and well, it was very difficult, funny and complicated to adapt to live in another country, but it's also the chance of a lifetime to start again, not to forget the past, but to learn from it. I'm living alone Sometimes it's crazy, and I wonder how mad I was to make that decision. But there is a sense of freedom so different from what I was feeling.

What I went through taught me a lot about having to look at myself more without fear. The important thing about saying no.

I can say that romance - and I write a lot of them - is very important, it's good, it makes you feel good, but don't be afraid to be alone because the one who learns to live with itself is the hardest person in the game of life.

With that 1 year, I dedicated it to myself and promised myself that as soon as I completed 1 year, I would get back to my hobby of writing. Here I am.

We still be standing strong and proud.

The chapter has not yet been edited and has not gone through beta reading. I confess that I will start my search for a beta reader again.

I apologize in advance for any grotesque errors in the text.

You can find Venenum content here: <https://mykory.wordpress.com/>

Where there are images created through ArtBreeder by me, how I more or less imagine the characters, there are also other fan-created content I intend to post.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander

Chapter 18. Hemachatus - What do you fear?

Part I

Once she asked him if he loved her, it was one of the times she asked that question and one of the

few times he saw insecurity in her. It was a sincere question, where she laid her feelings bare to him. Her eyebrows drew together in a gentle questioning, but one that demanded an answer.

He said "yes I do", though it wasn't entirely true, empty words weren't, he just doesn't know how to define it and he knows she knows it because he doesn't believe in love or maybe he loves her differently. His own way. To him, 'love' is too vague to define what he feels for her. She was a strange obsession he couldn't get rid of, something that circulates in his bloodstream, an irresistible motivation, an irrational act.

oOo

"Is that so?"

"Yes." Hermione reaffirmed. "Do you know -" She continued "- there is a myth -" Hermione remembered Professor McGonagall speaking to her, Ron and Harry. "That Salazar Slytherin created something magnificent, monstrous and secret during his time at Hogwarts?"

"And what would that be?" In Hermione's vision, Tom presented a kind of veiled interest.

She gave a small smile at his curiosity and moved closer, whispering, like a secret or gossip that had to be shared. Attracted by her closeness, Tom also came closer.

"A monster, Tom. Something only an ophioglot can control."

At her words, Tom retracted, the mischievous grin on his face faltering and crumbling.

"What do you mean, Hermione? What are you getting at?"

She lowered her gaze suddenly, rethinking what she was doing. *Is it wise? Is doing that, having Riddle's attention turned to me, being wise?* Probably not, she's sure. But in those few seconds, she thinks about all that he means and how necessary he is for her and Harry to get out of here, why the only one who speaks the snakes' language is him, and why the key to it all is a necklace that is attached to her.

"The Basilisk," Hermione replied. "It's a snake. The king or queen of all snakes. Some say Salazar Slytherin hid the monster here, in the Castle and left it so his descendants could continue the work

he didn't finish."

"And what led you to this investigation?" Tom arches one of his eyebrows at her. Hermione reckons Tom can disguise it very well when he's bothered by a subject because if she didn't know how the story would end, she might believe him.

"Hm..." Pretending to think, Hermione made a sound with her mouth. "Curiosity?" She tried, playing the fool.

"Do you really think that all Headmasters and Professors wouldn't know if a monster like that was in the Castle? Hermione, it would have come to light by now. It's probably just a myth to scare the students ."

"How do you know?" She wanted to prod him with a challenge. Hermione was aware that Tom liked a challenge and especially if it was a challenge that he could show superiority. "Salazar Slytherin was considered a brilliant wizard, surely he could hide something like that."

Tom snorted at her, "Let me see the book you're reading." He took the book from her hands without blinking.

"Hey!" Complained Hermione, but she was ignored by Tom, who flipped through the book quickly, his green eyes going through the contents of the book.

"Not much content, believe me." He closed the book and handed it to her.

Hermione frowned, a little offended by his criticism. "What do you mean?"

Tom made a sound like *'humph'*. "If there's one thing in House Slytherin, it's books about its founder. Believe me."

Staring at the leather cloak, lost in her thoughts, Hermione felt small like an ant that could easily be crushed by him with her attempts to find a way out being insufficient. *What am I doing wrong?* she asked herself.

Tom squirmed, watching her reaction as she ran her fingernail across the letters of the book's title, thoughtful.

"I understand Professor Slughorn has invited you to the Club dinner."

Hermione looked at him, the mane that was her hair swayed with the movement of her head, she blinked a few times.

"Are you going?" Tom asked.

"I don't know." She swallowed dryly and silence settled, the only noise was the swaying of the foliage in the wind.

Tom looked at the profile of her face, the freckles that decorated her cheeks and the bridge of her nose, how her lower lip was fuller than her upper lip, his gaze lowered to her neck, where he watched the movement when she swallowed, then to her shoulders that rose and fell as she breathed, and finally to the swell of her breasts beneath the layers of her school uniform. Despite catching his gaze, he forced himself to return his eyes to her face. Before he could formulate anything, she suddenly stood up.

"I need to go."

Hermione was stopped abruptly when a hand closed around her wrist. She looked over her shoulder, Tom was holding her down. He lifted, his height overlapping hers.

"Come to the Club, Hermione. Accept Slughorn's invitation. You'll finally be with people who might be on your level."

She didn't know what to make of his request, nor why he seemed so interested in the invitation Slughorn extended to her. Hermione just stared at him for a few seconds, blinking solemnly.

"I'll think about it." She replied, before turning and making her way back to the Griffingory Tower, her hand slipping from Tom's grip.

Tom reflexively wiggled his fingers with the loss of touch with Hermione's hand. It was his turn to watch her go. In his mind, it was clear as moonlight on a dark night. *She knows.*

As he lowered his gaze, he changed the angle of his hand, the ring stone on his middle finger, The Horcrux, did not glow in any light source.

I wish it were simple to gain Hermione Granger's trust.

-

"Hermione, are you okay?" Ectur asked, watching Hermione for a good two minutes before he began to think her behaviour was odd. After all, she was spending those two minutes staring into the fire in the fireplace of the Common Room, making various expressions that ranged from wrinkling her brow, to a smile that he considered oddly megalomaniacal, like when someone comes up with yet another theory that will one day be applied to make new generations of students lose their minds.

"Hm? What?" Hermione awoke from her reveries, being lured back to reality by Ectur's voice.

"Well, you were looking at the fire for quite a while."

"Ah, yes. Don't worry." She smiled. "I think I found the solution to something I was thinking about."

"Is that so?"

"You know, I think you were right. Maybe I should go to the Club, just to see what it's like. I don't know if I'd fit into the situation, but why not?"

"Really? That's really good, Hermione." He came to sit beside her in front of the fireplace. While Hermione was sitting on her legs, much like the seiza position, Ectur sat with one of his legs bent, his arm resting on his knee and his other arm serving as a support on the floor.

Hermione looked at the fire again, she lifted her chin a little finally feeling a little superior. A way to get to Riddle was always in front of her, Slughorn was her chance. It would be a rather risky game of cat and mouse, but it was the best way to cultivate Tom in her favour. If it was all an indication, he wanted her presence at the Club dinner too, his motive was an ulterior motive and that was bound to worry her, but Hermione had already made up her mind that it was all or nothing.

"You're doing it again." Ectur pointed out.

"Sorry, sometimes I get lost in my thoughts."

Ectur didn't really understand, but he could tell that Hermione was often lost in her thoughts, she had a sad look about her and there were a few times he saw her smile happily.

"Hermione."

"What?" she asked when Ectur spoke her name. She turned her face towards him, and felt his hand go to her hair, behind her ear, Hermione heard the soft fluttering noise of a wing flapping and Ectur retracted his hand, on his index finger was a butterfly origami, whose wings were slowly flapping. With magic, he snapped his fingers, bringing the origami to life and transforming it into a real butterfly, which flew around Hermione before landing on her nose. She giggled at the tickle and moved her nose to one side and the other, startling the butterfly which seconds later shattered into a glow.

Ectur laughed at the grimace she made, Bilius came up behind him, a packet of goodies in his hand.

"Um...If you guys weren't at school, I'd think you were on a date." He went to Hermione's other side and lay on the floor against the light of the fire in the fireplace.

"Shut up." Ectur frowned at Bilius, almost narrowing his eyes, which made Bilius smile bigger. Hermione's cheeks turned slightly pink, to disguise it she took one of the sweets offered by Bilius.

"We'll have Quidditch 1 training tomorrow. Will you be coming, Hermione?"

"Blimey! That's right, I had forgotten!" Ectur grumbled.

"That's because you're the captain's brother."

"Ig would kill me if I missed it."

"What are the positions you guys play?" Hermione tried to mingle. The truth was that she wasn't much of a sports fan, she preferred to be in the company of a good book, but she had spent so much time hanging out with Harry and Ronnie that it seemed easy to follow and cheer for them and the team in general.

With his thumb, Bilius pointed to himself and gave a wink. "The best Gryffindor beater that ever lived is right in front of you, Hermione."

"He's a bit cocky." Ectur raised one of his eyebrows but soon scrapped the expression to smile at Hermione. "Seeker, right here, at your service."

"Come on, Hermione. It'll be nice to go and watch them train. Algie will be there too and at least it will be a moment without having to deal with subjects." Enid arrived, bringing with her a tray of sandwiches. She sat down as Hermione and gave each of the boys a sandwich and then offered it to Hermione, who thanked her as she took it. "Gilmey prepared it for us at my request," Enid explained. "She's a very lovely elf. Who knows, maybe I'll ask her to be my house elf when Algie and I get married."

"You're already preparing the event? That's quick."

"Yes! Mum and I spent the whole summer looking at wedding dresses. Oh, Bilius, I'm so happy. Now, Hermione, when I go to try on the dresses, why don't you come along? Some of my friends will also be there, it will be wonderful to have you there. Mum would also like to meet you."

Hermione remained silent, but Enid didn't seem to mind as she considered Hermione's silence by the fact that she had the sandwich in her mouth.

"Have you picked a date yet?" Ectur asked, wrinkling his nose a little.

"Just as soon as we finish the school year. At the height of the summer in July. We're still deciding on the location, but we'd like it to be in a field, specifically camellias."

"Why camellias?" Bilius put the question to Hermione.

"They were the first flowers Algie ever gave me. Red camellias, do you know how sweet that is?" Enid gave an emotional sigh. "Surely you agree with me, don't you Hermione?"

"Hm...Yes?"

"Ah, don't you know the meaning of Red Camellias, Hermione? *My heart burns for you.* Isn't that romantic?"

Bilius and Ectur fell into a laugh, to the point where they put their arms around their stomach area to appease their laughter.

"I'll never leave Algie alone with that." Bilius, with his index finger, dried the tears from his eyes.

"It's not funny, okay? Only a mature gentleman of responsibility has the decency to show his feelings. Something that by the looks of it, neither of you two have." Enid lectured, hitting both of them on the head with her napkin, before turning to Hermione and showing her teeth in a perfect smile as if nothing had happened. "Oh, Hermione, it's the language of flowers. A silent poetry."

Hermione understood only a little about the language of flowers, her knowledge was not vast in that branch, even if she found beauty and peace in nature, but only by her own choice. However, the meanings - in general - never went unnoticed if she felt the urge to research.

"Maybe I can talk to my Aunt Muriel, she has a house near Ottery St Catchpole, she has open fields there, if we do some spell to grow camellias it might help."

Enid's eyebrows rose to almost touching the root of her hair.

"Oh, Ectur! Yes, yes. Please!"

"What's all the commotion?" Algie asked, moving closer, sitting down next to Enid and leaning his back against the sofa.

"Oh, wonderful news. Maybe we'll find the place for our wedding." Enid replied, pouring a cup of black tea.

"To think you guys still have a year for that," Bilius commented, emphasising how Enid seemed to be thinking ahead of time on the matter.

"It may not seem like it, but weddings are complicated. There are so many preparations. It's never too early and I also want everything to be perfect on the day. Oh, I can imagine..." She continued, closing her eyes and resting her head on Algie's shoulder.

" *She won't stop talking about it* " Ectur whispered, no sound came out of his mouth, only his lips moved.

Bilius propped himself up on one elbow and with his other hand, he signalled as if Enid was going a little bit crazy.

Hermione placed her fingertips against her lips to stop herself from laughing over Bilius and Ectur's comments, even Algie held back, though genuine happiness was present in his facial expression.

"Hm? What's that?" Enid lifted her head, opening her eyes again.

"Nothing, dear."

"Nothing."

"Humhum, *nothing* "

All three responded at the same time.

"I know you guys are messing with me." She replied. "Including you, honey." She slapped lightly against Algie's chest, with a false grimace of anger.

"Well, to the bride and groom?" Bilius suspended a cup of tea as if to make a toast.

"Certainly, to the bride and groom." Ectur reached for a cup and Hermione did the same.

"To the bride and groom." Hermione smiled, lifting her teacup.

Both Enid and Algie took their respective cups in thanks. They toasted and each took a sip, Bilius was the quickest to finish.

"Bleh, I hate black tea." He muttered, visibly shuddering and drawing laughter from everyone.

How strange , Hermione thinks, *this feeling...* It was easier to explain it as something warm, like when you snuggle in cold weather. It would be so easy to forget, moments like these make her feel that way. But she knows, it can't be something true, she has no intention of staying here, during this period. She wants to go back, to see her parents and her friends again, however, she was confused about what she would witness when she returned - *if she and Harry did* . The '*if*' is unpleasant, with the imposition of a condition and an uncertain future, Hermione doesn't like, the unpredictability.

oOo

Tom learned over time to appreciate watching her as she got ready, there were many processes he frankly didn't fully understand, but the final effect was stunning in his eyes and every move she made seemed strangely sensual. The waves her hair made to be pinned into a bun near the nape of her neck, with a few strands - always rebellious - to decorate her oval face, had sparkle, the gesture of so slowly painting her lips the colour red was inviting and as she lifted her gaze to look at him through the reflection of the mirror, it drew him to her.

He stood up from the armchair he was sitting in as he watched her like a VIP spectator and walked over to her, placing his hands on her shoulders, before offering his hand for her to take so she could get up from the dressing table, Tom led her over to the standing mirror so she could see herself completely. She looked perfect in the long straight black dress with long sleeves, the fabric of which shimmered depending on her movement, but there was still something missing. Yes, he took the velvet box that held the gift he had bought for her, he fastened the necklace around her neck, the emerald colour matched.

Ah, she certainly looked more than perfect.

Placing his hands on her, letting them roam down her arms in a slow caress, the tip of his nose rubbing against the skin of her neck as he let out a chaste kiss or two. His fingers caressed the outline of her chin, watching in reflection as she touched the necklace he had given her.

He loved it when she was like this because she was one of the many ways in which he displayed the power he had, through her, he displayed the economic power he had gained.

She didn't ask for many things, in fact almost nothing, although he saw her genuine expression of surprise and graced him with the jewellery she received.

"Am I not enough?" She once asked. He wanted to say yes, but why does everything have to be a choice? Why can't he have everything? So he did.

Tom turned her towards him, looking into her deep brown eyes, he placed one hand against her face, his thumb resting against her cheek, while his other hand rested on her waist. He kissed her. She would probably have to retouch up her lipstick and he would have to wipe his own lips.

That night, when they returned from the party, he would make love to her.

oOo

"Isn't there anything I can do to change your mind?" Ectur asked, offering his right hand to her as he stood mounted on his Quidditch broom and wearing the clothes of the colours of House Gryffindor. The sun between the dark clouds formed a golden halo when the light touched his hair, quite unlike Bilius whose light made his hair resemble fire.

Hermione gestured in denial with a simple polite smile. Strands of her brown hair flew against the wind as they detached themselves from their braid.

"So you are afraid of heights?" It was a rhetorical question, the conversation in the Common Room was long and pleasant and at some point, Hermione cited why she didn't ride broomsticks, not if she could help it. "That's something I'd find hard to believe."

"You can go, Ectur, I'll be fine." She meant it. They had already been on the Quidditch field for a good fifty minutes, while she was sitting in the stands reading a book of translations for Magical Languages, Ectur, as well as the others, were training. The thought of denying the invitation to

come and watch the training occurred to her, thinking that being in the presence of others while she tried to read and make notes might irritate her, but the opposite happened, the open air, the wind and even the sound of the sticks as they hit the balls were a background sound to her concentration. Well, apart from Ectur who would come up to her, again and again, to ask if she was feeling well or comfortable.

While on the one hand it made her feel good or cared for, on the other, Hermione realised that Ectur Prewett had been much more aware of her presence since the *incident at the lake*.

Ectur levitated, reaching more altitude and moving away from the stands while keeping control of the broom. Bilius stops next to him as he fixes his gloves, Ig passes quickly above Bilius and Ectur's heads, and Algie followed close behind, such had been the speed with which they passed that they made a gust of wind strong enough to catch everyone off guard. It was clear to see the sips in their hands, Ig was the first to raise his arm, with the right angle and a somewhat surprising force, the quaffle was thrown towards the centre ring, drawn like a magnet towards the goal, though the explanation of such movement was practically simple physics. But what appeared to be an inevitable goal, even if the keeper was present in the ring, was not. The Quaffle was largely rejected from the goal when the bat hit the centre of the ball, reversing direction to Ig - who deflected in time before the ball hit against the centre of his chest.

"What the fuck?!" Hermione heard Bilius exclaim, as superb laughter was the sound of glory. Lestrangle proudly juggled the bat, before keeping a firm grip on the object. He raised his eyebrows and then lowered them, completing the expression with a cynical smile. Lestrangle knew how to tease someone.

"Uh-oh," Enid muttered.

Dolohov caught Bilius off guard, kicking the base of the broom and pushing Bilius towards Ectur, causing them both to almost fall, then joined the rest of the team, who were slowly taking over the field. The *green cloaks* had arrived.

Before she could scream or say anything, *he* stopped the broom in front of her. With the agility of a feline, he dismounted from the broom and balanced himself on the protection of the bleachers, letting the broom float as he held it in one hand. Alphard Black was dressed in the full uniform of the Slytherin Quidditch team, he had half his hair tied up in a short, masculine ponytail, a small lock of hair falling in front of his face. Alphard smiled at her. Hermione narrowed her eyes.

Although she was going to question him about what he was doing, her attention was stolen as she looked over his shoulder at the field. Now the team from Gryffindor was gathered against the team from Slytherin.

"I wanted to talk to you." Alphard crouched down, still balancing on the protective bars.

"About?" She frowned, in the background, she heard Ig growling against Lestrangle and Algie trying to separate the two as the voice of reason.

"I rephrased it. I improved what I had to say."

"Hm? What?" she didn't understand.

"What I had said before." Alphard explained "I still want us to be friends. We are friends, right? I mean, not that we ever go out together or drink together or anything like that. It's never been our kind of friendship. Can that be considered friendship? I like you -" He pointed at her and Hermione automatically made an expression, rejecting. "Not in that way, it's obvious." - He shrugs. "But... you understand."

"Why?" She shook her head, the question seeming to catch him off guard. Alphard blinked, the long eyelashes looked like a hereditary Black family trait. His forehead wrinkled.

"Actually, that's a good question." He glanced over his shoulder, sighed, rolled his eyes and then turned his attention back to her. "Do you want to take a walk?"

"W-what-" Before she could finish formulating her sentence, Alphard climbed onto his broom and slipped his arm around Hermione's waist. As soon as she felt her feet were no longer on something solid, she dropped the book she was holding, watching it fall open, the pages wetting, only for her to hold on to Alphard's grip. She screamed, alarmed.

Turning as far as she could, she braced herself against him. Alphard laughed out loud, as if this was a comedy and increased speed as he climbed, Hermione's eyes opened wildly and her stomach churned as she noticed the height she was at and the speed of her descent to the ground, as he made a *parabola* turn, at the same instant her hands became like claws to prevent her from breaking free of him. Looking for a safer place than Alphard's arm, Hermione quickly groped for his shoulders and pulled as hard as she could, unconsciously tugging at the good part of his shirt, including the collar.

Alphard's neck resisted the squeeze as he tried to straighten his position on the broom.

"Hermione, you're choking me." He tried to warn her, but she didn't seem to be listening, especially when she was screaming.

And what Alphard means by 'screamed' is that it was loud, like a banshee, rivalling even a

mandrake. He felt her squeeze against his ribs and how she lowered her head to avoid having to see the sight that height affords.

"Put her down" Bilius ordered, stopping in front of him. " She's scared, you idiot."

Well, in Alphard's view, Bilius Weasley didn't need to state the obvious, he had already noticed it himself, after all, she was kneading his ribs with an iron grip.

Alphard gradually lowered his height while still trying to breathe through Hermione's grip and when he was close to the ground and she was still standing in the same position, he made a sound with his throat to get her attention.

"Hm...Hermione, you can let go of me now. We're already on the ground."

Hermione lifted her head so fast that she almost hit her forehead against the back of Alphard's head. She was standing still in the same position as if the muscles in her body couldn't respond to her mind's commands. The colour of her skin was probably green with nausea.

Hermione pulled away from him, her legs wobbly, barely able to support her weight and her throat dry.

In the background, she heard a small audience laughing at her state and even though she felt momentarily weak, she wanted to launch balls into the centre of their foreheads just to get them to shut up. Falling onto her ass, feeling the icy grass through the fabric of her skirt, her hands served as support and she took a deep breath to get back to normal and eliminate the momentary feeling of panic she felt.

Ectur, Ig, Algie, Bilius and Alphard surrounded her, their bodies blocking any air passage that might help her. Hermione could hear their questions about how she was feeling if she had been hurt, but her mind could barely reason.

Veronica Grimm, from Gryffindor, pushed each of them away, ordering them to stand back. She lightly slammed her fist dressed in the protection of her sportswear into the centre of Ig's chest to make herself understood. Thanks to her, the feeling of being choked left Hermione and she soon recovered.

Standing up slowly, her legs still looking weak, Hermione stood and slowly raised her hand towards Alphard, who understood as if she needed help. In one swift movement, she grabbed his collar and pulled his body towards her, even though Alphard was taller and probably had more physical strength than her, he found himself following the movement involuntarily, caught off guard by her.

Alphard found himself face to face with her and widened his eyes at the fierce expression on her face, his hand immediately releasing his broom.

"If you do that again, you'll regret it." She warned and he fell silent. "Do you understand me?" She asked and he shook his head like a child. "Good!"

Suddenly, he found himself sitting up, legs stretched out and wide-eyed. He hadn't even noticed when she picked up her wand, let alone when she cast the spell. He only felt the electricity run through his skin, up his body until it reached his hair. The straight, black strands of his hair shivered with the static.

Hermione cast a glance at the others, who broadly moved away from her. Bilius raised both hands.

"I didn't do anything, I swear."

Alphard laughed, his laughter was loud. He threw his head back, the spiky earring sparkled with movement. He understood then, she never really hurt him, and the spell wasn't even aggressive. It was something childish, a joke, something he even did when he was smaller to get the rare chuckles out of his brother Cygnus. At most, it made him look funny.

Alphard stood up quickly and ran to catch up with Hermione, as soon as she realised he was coming towards her she quickened her steps to get away from him, however, she felt his hands on her waist as he whirled her around and reversed the direction she was going.

"Put me down, you *brute* ," Hermione said, for lack of a better adjective. It wasn't her intention to offend him and apparently, he understood that, as his laughter increased. As she was lighter and smaller in stature, Alphard swung her around like a doll, though he placed her gently on her feet afterwards. It was obvious he was just teasing her, joking around and something made Hermione think that Sirius' personality when young must have been similar to his uncle's.

Their friendship seemed strange and disconnected from reality, they had never been seen together and didn't even seem to talk, no more than the polite *good morning, good afternoon and good night*, however watching the teasing made those around, strange. Alphard was not known for being haughty, but he came from one of the richest families in Hogwarts and lived in groups of equal class, not that the Prewett were poor, but it was clear that they did not have the same kind of bank value in the family account, however, the name has value. If it wasn't for that, the Blacks would never give Lucretia's hand to Ignatius. For Hermione's colleagues, it was unbelievable to see him interact with anyone outside his circle of close friends, even though he was generally charismatic to the point of being quite popular.

Alphard put his hand on Hermione's head and messed up her hair a little more to get more reactions, though he should be worried about his own appearance, as his hair was still returning to

normal.

"Hey-" Ectur stopped him. "Enough, *okay?*" With a serious face, he kept a grip on Alphard's arm.

Alphard frowned and then raised one of his eyebrows. He wasn't much for confrontation, he preferred to avoid it if he could. Casting a glance up and down at Ectur, he read the facial expression and realisation came to him. *Ah, so that's really it then.* Alphard knew that look, he'd received too many of them in his short life, God knows how many boyfriends and fiancés he'd pissed off to recognise the jealous look he saw on Ectur.

"Relax, Prewett." He spoke, yet Ectur did not loosen his grip. "Hermione and I are friends, aren't we Hermione?" Alphard looked at her for confirmation. "Hm? Hermione?" He looked around for her, raising his arms and looking around as if she had disappeared into his clothes.

She wasn't even there anymore, pulling away before she got more involved. Hermione didn't have the patience, will or charisma to deal with teenage drama, not anymore. She strongly believed that her time for such situations had passed, even without her realising it. The reality of the situation she found herself in her true time had robbed her of most of those types of experiences and now, she believed she was '*adult*' enough - too mature even - for that.

She was making her way to the stands to collect her belongings when she stopped suddenly, realising who was present, she couldn't even contain her expression as her mouth opened into a small 'O'.

It was clear that *He* would be there, with the rest of the sixth and seventh-year Slytherin students. His gaze went through all the commotion, stopping at Alphard and Ectur and then focusing on her for a moment before his gaze drifted to his feet. Tom picked up the book she had dropped. Wiping the cover of the book with the sleeve of his robe, Tom quickly read the title of the book, before raising his gaze to her.

There goes another book, Hermione thought.

He closed his eyes and smiled at her and all Hermione did was swallow the lump stuck in her throat in an almost audible 'glup'.

oOo

He touched, kneaded, felt in his fingers, in his grip, the soft flesh that was her body. His breathing was hot, panting, and he couldn't control himself. His movements were irregular, yet strong. He

was at the peak of arousal, the wet sounds coming from the collision of their coupling, skin on skin, as he held her from behind. He spread his hand against one of her small breasts, kneading it, feeling how well it fit against his palm. With the force of the relentless movements he was making, she leans herself with one hand and with the other, she holds the wrist of the hand he was teasing the flesh of her breast. With her plea, he pulls her towards him, her back against his chest, one of his hands squeezing her hips, to try and keep her as close as a fuck could allow, the other hand on, making a trail down to her jaw, turning her face, calling her mercilessly for a kiss. A tongue kiss so erotic it would make the most puritanical blush with debauchery.

Ah, the spoils of war.

Victory did that to him. He gets so high, the adrenaline running free in his blood like a drug, the feeling of winning was addictive to the point that he felt restless inside his own skin, with the immense desire to do...more. To take more, to have more, to consume more, to destroy more...more and more. Destroy every single enemy he made throughout his life until there are none left.

And when the battle is won and he has nothing else on which to discount the cumulative energy, he goes to her. Because if not her, then some or many will pay far worse until he is sated of something. It is either the pleasure or it is the sadism of his 'reign'.

It's in most people's best interest that he ends up here until the orgasm hits him and his reasoning gets back on track. Getting back to thinking with intentional coolness instead of volatile emotions and bloodlust.

But now he doesn't think about it much, he can't even say he's thinking coherently. All that's happening at that moment is an instinctive knowledge rooted in his brain about how he knows how his and her bodies work together and how they achieve that pleasure that seems to last for such a short time, but is too good to be left out a lifetime.

Today they celebrate.

That night he wants nothing more than to celebrate beside her, or rather inside her, his - their - victory in a good fuck that would make her twist her toes and grab him for her life.

Then, he promises, he will make love to her, to placate her desires, just as she placates his.

He just wants her to feel the same pleasure and euphoria that he's feeling, and if the juices that are making his cock wetter every time he enters and exits her pussy were any indication, then he's doing a good job.

He feels the half-moon marks of her nails in the strong grip she keeps on his wrist; he stops, gasping, and rests his forehead against her back, stroking her slowly. The non-movement is almost unbearable, but it's no worse than pulling away from her completely; the air is cold compared to

the tantalising warmth of the interior between her legs and he wheezes. He takes a step back and she turns towards him, her hands go to his pecs and his remains on her hips, pulling her towards him and this time, he is the one lying on the bed, bringing her over so she can mount him.

He moves further back, more towards the middle of the bed, with her on his lap. Her hands are on either side of his face as she kisses him. He holds her hips and lifts her just to get into position, before lowering her to be buried in her warmth again. There is the intake of air as she feels him inside her, she stops the kiss to focus, to adjust to the position and he smiles mischievously, he has his grip on each of her thighs and urges her hips to move. She rests her forehead against his, her lips separated from his by only a few inches and undulate her hips, causing him to close his eyes.

It's sensual and erotic at first, such smooth and controlled movement. It's something of hers and he loves it, really, but he wants more than that now, he wants her to fuck him.

He lays down fully and rests his heels on the bed, his hands keeping a grip on her thighs, and starts fucking. She leans on him, spreading her hands on his chest.

He is proud then, as his muscles are fully developed. Although in his school years, his body was very good for his age, he realises that he had by no means reached full manhood, he was just a green boy.

And so did she. Her breasts grew just a little more, the soft curves of her body became more prominent, and there was simply that indicated that in those years ago she had not reached the apice of womanhood.

"Harder." He asks, taking his hands off her thighs and holding her wrist, bringing her hands to his neck. She knows what he is asking and she squeezes to give him the suffocating sensation. She never squeezes hard, never completes the act, she just squeezes so he can feel her hands around his neck.

He closes his eyes in euphoria, pleasure forming at the base of his spine, in reward, his thumb makes circular motions on her clit, feeling her movements become erratic.

[...]

The sound of the movement they make, the moans and the pleasure, is too much. Soon he will come.

He turns and is on top of her, she doesn't even have time to be surprised when he starts to move. He gets on his knees, holding her legs wide open for him, getting the spectacular view of his cock being sheathed by her pussy several times, her hands are on his abdomen, looking for something to hold onto when she closes her eyes and throws her head back.

Her hair is long and full, spread across the bed.

She comes, stopping breathing for a moment, the tightness around his cock enough to make him cum. He props his hands on the bed to avoid putting his weight on it, as the ripples of orgasm rush through his body and out in spurts.

Her thighs press against him and she wriggles incessantly, seeking friction.

Pulling out of her, he collapses beside her on the bed, their rapid breathing matching. He puts an arm against his eyes, his left hand searching hers until he finds and squeezes, though her grip is weaker than his, she curls her fingers into his.

After a good moment of recovering from the act, he gets up from the bed. She is still lying there with her eyes closed, still coming back from the waves of pleasure. He envies her a little, that she feels this pleasure for longer, but he is also proud in equal measure to be the man who does this to her.

He unceremoniously steps on the clothes thrown on the floor and goes to the drinks trolley, where he pours himself a glass of whisky and drinks, for her, he pours a glass of sweet wine.

When he returns, she is getting up on the bed, staying on her knees. He hands her the cup and lies down, one arm behind his head for support, his fingers caressing her leg.

She drinks and looks at him. They exchange glances.

"Ours is the victory."

-

"Hermione, what was that?" Enid was following her down the corridors.

"That what?"

Enid turned around, to interrupt Hermione's path, who almost collided with her.

"You and Alphard." She shook her head as if the topic of the subject was clear. "Are you two...I

don't know...together?" She tried. "Look, don't take this the wrong way, but are you going to have to deal with a large...amount of *fans*?" Enid blinked repeatedly, her big eyes glittering as if she couldn't find the right word to convey her thoughts.

"No!" Hermione promptly denied it, walking back.

"No?" Enid ran to keep up with her steps.

"No!"

"So-" Enid interrupted Hermione's path again. "First Abraxas, now Alphard?"

"Malfoy would be the last person in the world I would look at. Alphard is a friend and nothing more. I'm not interested in either of them." Hermione clarified, to put a stop to the matter.

"Is that so?!" The mirth in Enid's voice made Hermione frown.

They make the curve of the corridor and Hermione stops immediately as soon as she realises that He is standing there, leaning against the wall, looking at the shoes that were not new, but were immaculate just the same.

When he notices their presence, he raises his gaze and pulls himself away from the wall. Tom goes to meet them, his gaze moving from Enid to Hermione.

"Hello, Enid. How are you?" he asks.

"Very well, Riddle. Kind of you to ask." She replies, smiling. "What brings you to the Gryffindor wing?"

With their exchange, Hermione watches intently, undecided between staying or not. To bury the nervousness she feels, she clasps both hands behind her back.

"I would like to speak to Hermione, if possible," Tom answers Enid, but his gaze is on Hermione.

Enid also looks at Hermione, waiting for her response.

"Sure. Feel free to express yourself, Riddle." Hermione finds herself saying, though she doesn't rule out Enid's presence.

Whether he knows what she is doing or not is hard to say, but as always, he finds a way around it.

"That's what it's about." He pulls out of his cross-body bag, the book she left on the bleachers. "There's something else too. I wonder if we could talk in private. Sorry, Enid."

Hermione won't let that happen, she holds the book before it's too late to be in her possession.

"I'm sorry, Riddle, but there's something I need to do. But I thank you for retrieving the book I left. I will not forget your favour." She denies being left alone with him. "Shall we go, Enid?" Hermione entwines her arms with Enid's, as girls normally do, and they walk into the Gryffindor Common Room, leaving him behind. Here, Riddle has no dominance.

-

There is a clear hierarchy among those who serve the Dark Lord and order of mission importance depending on which types of servants can visit.

On the lowest rung was a mass of support, loyal but not significantly important for the Dark Lord to deal with personally, the Death Eaters passing on their master's order. Non-humans, with varying degrees of sentience or humans under the imperium curse, were on this rung.

Snatchers are the second lowest rung, yet with greed, they aim to reach higher in the ranks of the Dark Lord, Fenrir Greyback is a notable member.

Above the snatchers are the Death Eaters, but they were unmarked. Because their loyalty is fragile, they were useful enough in the Lord's eyes.

The real Deathly Eaters, are the ones who are marked. The Dark Lord's inner circle, the ones who heard of the planning and had far more freedoms than everyone else. Loyal, highly useful. The markeds had high status in the Dark Lord's twisted social order.

For the person who was receiving a 'visit' there was a degree of probability of coming out alive depending on which rank was coming for you. Your chances dropped rapidly the higher the rank,

but then, when the Lord, in the flesh, came...

It was a black mass, dark as pitch, a shadow that moved with tentacles, making the air icy, a clear warning that what was bad could and would get worse. Out of the darkness, he stepped, walking slowly, the black mass behind him coalescing into the very shadow his body emitted. The Deathly Eaters were stunned at the Dark Lord's arrival, as the whimpers of despair grew louder.

His footsteps made a wet sound as the blood was fresh and he was leaving footprints.

"My lord, please..." He heard someone pleading. "Have mercy."

But already? He hadn't even done anything.

*He stops, turning part of his body and his face, as he senses her arrival. With a *pop* too audible for the terrifying silence, apart of course from the clamouring and crying, she appears.*

She walks over to him, her eyes glued to the ground. She has no desire or courage to look at the corpses, but it doesn't feel good to look at the blood trails either.

Lift your fucking gaze. He wants to tell her.

She lifts her gaze and stares at him, soon after standing next to him. Her gaze falls on the people cowering on the floor, some are under the tables and she swears she smells urine somewhere, but the smell of blood stands out.

-

It is the night of the Slughorn Club meeting. Tom and his Housemates are already present, they drink punch while waiting for Lovegood, Black, Runcorn and Granger.

There is a soft knock on the door before the handle turns and Granger enters. She is wearing a large red jumper that seems to swallow her whole and doesn't look her size, let alone feminine, her skirt coming halfway down her calf in a tedious beige, finishing with jack Purcell.

By etiquette, all the young men rose from their chairs in the presence of a lady.

"Miss Granger!" Slughorn exclaimed upon seeing her. "I am so glad you decided to grace us with your presence." He walked over to her, placing one hand on her shoulder and bringing her to the

table.

"Thank you so much for inviting me, Professor Slughorn. It's an honour."

To Hermione, this was as strange as the feeling of déjà vu.

She was placed facing Riddle and Lestrangle.

"Miss Granger." Lestrangle is the first to greet, there is something behind the smile as if he is constantly bragging.

"Lestrangle." She acknowledges his presence.

"Hermione." Tom is second.

"Tom." She gestures with her head.

Chapter End Notes

Hemachatus haemachatus, also known as the Ringhals, is the eighteenth most venomous snake in the world

Boulengerina.

Chapter Summary

Remembering that English is not my mother tongue. I apologize in advance for any mistakes in the text, I am trying to do my best, but with your help, the chapter can become even more readable. Please, let me know if there are any mistakes. I thank you.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Venenum

By Koryander.

Chapter 19. Boulengerina - What do you fear?

Part II.

Loving him was like a losing game, she thought. He would never change, he adapted, it's the truth, but he never changed. Still... She closes her eyes, her breathing comes out shaky, and he is panting to the point she watches the movement.

He turns to her, the expression he makes is one of hatred, anger, and agony. His gaze shoots over the magical map he created together with her, the map of the entire wizarding world. He is losing the battle in a very important place, his secret is at stake.

He strides towards it, crossing the map, the spectre of the map shattering before gathering and forming into one again.

His hands held her face, he rested his forehead against hers and looked deep into her eyes. His green gaze is beautiful, but it is wild and desperate.

"Go." He asks, and he commands. "But know that I will avenge you. That is a promise and you, more than anyone, know that I do not make promises lightly. I swear, I will avenge you. I will have you back."

He knows what he is doing, what Dumbledore and Harry Evans - Potter, are making him do. Like in a chess move, he is sacrificing the strongest piece he has, the most skilled and the most feared. His Queen. His Dark Lady. It is a risky move, but he swears, he will get her back.

She tries to smile, to appease the decision he is making and his heart fills with resentment and hatred for his enemies.

The flames of the fireplace were the main source of light in the place and illuminated as much as cast shadows on their faces.

She kisses one of the hands that hold her face, and he sighs. She goes and he stays, staring into the void, before breaking everything he finds in front of him.

oOo

Hermione listens more than she participates. Slughorn talks to his students, asking questions about whether they keep the same dreams and goals they had last year.

When Alphard's voice sounds, it causes Hermione to raise her eyes in his direction. He is diagonal to her left, sitting next to his second cousin, Orion Black.

"I still have the same goals, Professor Slughorn. I will be the best seeker the world has ever seen."

Hermione frowned at hearing his words. Sirius had never even commented on his uncle's wishes about Quidditch and she, for one, could not recall any mention of any Alphard Black being remembered and cheered in the national or international Quidditch world, though she could not say she was a sports aficionado. *Does he give up those dreams?* It would not be unusual, for how many children or young people to change their minds over the years. She had a different idea of what she would be before she received her letter to Hogwarts.

Slughorn chuckles at Alphard. "Of course you do, my boy. The way you played last year, I'm sure a bright future awaits you. Those hands -" Slughorn pointed to Alphard's hands, who holds them up proudly. "-are gold. House Slytherin will surely be remembered for having housed one of the greatest Quidditch players that could have ever existed. And what about you, my young Orion? Do your tastes resemble those of your cousin?"

Orion straightens his glasses with his index finger.

"I'm afraid we're opposites." He says, with seriousness and a surprisingly thick, low voice. "I intend to reach higher levels."

Alphard rolls his eyes and throws an olive lump at Orion's head, who casts a deadly glare at him, but quickly ignores the situation to continue what he was saying.

"The Department of International Cooperation of Magic catches my eye. Recent behaviour shows incompetence in dealing with certain situations."

Diplomat. Orion brings more serious matters to the table. Hermione, like a keen observer, notices that the students spruce up more and look at Slughorn intently, searching for some political position he might have.

"Perhaps we can leave that subject for later, my students? An after-dinner debate? Our minds will be sharper and give you time to think about it."

Hermione raises her gaze and is surprised that the whole time she is being watched by Pearl Lovegood. Hermione cannot say how closely Pearl is related to Xenophilius Lovegood or Luna, she can tell that blood runs thick in the Lovegood family, that or the Lovegood genes are expressive in each generation.

Pearl can be considered beautiful. She has big light blue eyes, almost grey, a platinum hair decorated with a blue ribbon. Her nose was snubbed and she had small ears. Overall, Pearl was thin and small in stature, smaller even than Hermione. Her legs and arms were long, but her torso was small. She had little or no expression at all when looking at Hermione, she blinked infrequently and made low humming sounds. The truth was that Hermione found it strangely intimidating to meet her gaze, though Pearl smiled.

Hermione soon realises that she wasn't just being watched by Pearl, Riddle is also looking at her. Not as strangely brazen as Pearl, but he makes it clear that he was paying attention to her wiles. He is leaning slightly to the left, one arm straight across the table, his index finger making circular motions at the base of the punch glass.

She looks over to Slughorn's side and there was Eugene Runcorn. He was standing with his arms crossed, looking at her as if trying to see through her or silently judging her. He was not aggressive, but somewhat studious. Hermione lowered her gaze quickly.

What's that? She thinks. Hermione feels intimidated, much more so than before.

Then she realises, that, unlike the Slughorn Club participants of her time, these students of now are, in part, more observant, attentive to behaviour and especially to questions of social circles.

"What about you, Miss Granger?" Slughorn's question turns to her and she gets more attention than she wants. Her confidence is fading like dust.

"I...Well, I'm not sure yet." Hermione tells the truth. "I'd like to make a difference, but being the centre of attention is certainly not my ultimate goal."

"You? I find that hard to believe." Tom speaks before Slughorn can speak up.

"I confess I share Tom's thoughts, Mrs Granger. You certainly surprised everyone with your rankings from the last school year."

She smiles softly at Slughorn's words, ignoring Tom's arched eyebrow and questioning look.

"I've always liked Arithmancy, History of Magic, Spells, Potions and Magical Creatures. Several branches, I suppose my indecision lies there."

"Will I perhaps have a historian, researcher or expert sitting here today?" Slughorn laughed. "I have acquaintances who might be interested in whatever direction you might decide, Miss Granger. I see a splendid future and will certainly hear from you."

Little did she know those words would be true. Slughorn would hear a lot about her.

As much as the dinner was particularly interesting and calm, from Hermione's point of view - taking away the nervousness and unease of the feeling of intimidation - she discovered much more about the dreams and promises of each person sitting at that table. Many of them, she realises, will not come true or escape her knowledge and others, well, are just hints of things to come.

However, it is Tom's words that make her shudder.

"I would like to be a teacher. A Master's in my speciality. Maybe even a Minister of Magic." He speaks with ambition and desire and Hermione cannot say with one hundred per cent certainty whether he is lying or not. He seems to feel that his words are selfishly ambitious and to maintain the appearance of humility, Tom softens with the next sentence. *"It doesn't hurt to dream big, does it, Professor Slughorn?"*

However, no one seemed shocked or merely surprised, on the contrary, perhaps they expected it.

That this was his fate. Except, of course, for Hermione herself.

Tom's speech sounds like music to Slughorn's ears, Hermione notices, especially from the smile that opens on the professor's face. She understands then, that Slughorn did hold Tom in high esteem and that he considered him The Golden Boy if it wasn't himself who passed this fame on to the other teachers. She could have sworn that Slughorn, despite having the trait of expecting favours from former pupils in adult life, had a fatherly affection for Tom and wanted the best for him.

It must have been a disappointment for Slughorn, she thinks. The path Tom decided to follow.

To chase away the lump stuck in her throat, she drinks some punch. The fruity drink goes down deliciously cool and she sips it covertly, taking a deep breath, she closes her eyes for a moment, and when her eyes open, her thoughts are determined.

It is at dessert time that the conversation becomes more a debate to the point of discussion than anything else. She crosses her hands politely and watches with keen eyes and a quick mind.

"Magic is magic, Radalpus."

"No, it's not." He replies confidently. "It's not just magic that makes us different from the muggle and the ... -" Lestrangle stops, thinking better of the following words he would use. " - muggle-borns."

He says the words as an insult, it makes Hermione's blood fever because it attacks her in a personal way. Because precisely the person who wrote and tortured her skin with a swear word is, not by birth, a Lestrangle.

"And what is magic?" She asks, drawing Lestrangle's gaze to her. His gaze is heavy and analytical, like an eagle, and he looks frankly surprised, given the fact that this is the first time she has spoken up in this debate. "Define magic and what makes us different?"

"We are different, magic runs in our blood, Miss Granger. Our blood purity has kept us alive, kept our society alive, to let outsiders in would be to exterminate what is left of it. I apologise, Professor Slughorn, but I have never hidden the fact that there are certain Grindelwald raises that I agree with."

With his reply, Lestrangle gained 'hm.' of approval from most of those at the table, though Tom himself remained reclusive.

"Strangely enough Grindelwald himself agrees that all magical beings can and should have the right to access that world that belongs to us." She retorted.

"I didn't say I agreed with everything." Lestrangle squinted. " Though I do agree with the sovereignty of our species."

"We're not a different species from the muggle-borns, Lestrangle."

At her correction, Radalpus locked his jaw.

"Allow me to rephrase: The sovereignty of our category."

Hermione smiles.

"If I cut off your hand, what will I see, Lestrangle?"

Radalpus snorts in derision, yet still answers.

"Blood, skin, muscle tissue, veins, bone."

"What colour is the blood?" She asks.

"Is that serious?" He raises an eyebrow. "I thought we were having an adult debate here."

Hermione just inhales, waiting for his response. "Red," Lestrangle replies.

"If I cut off the hand of a muggle or a muggleborn, what will I see?" The question is rhetorical. "Isn't it the same colour as our blood? What I mean is that biologically we are the same, we originate from the same ancestors. What I believe separates us is our brains. Although, anatomically, we are the same in that part too. What I am getting at is that our worldview differentiates us. No one knows what Magic is, only that, like the human race, it originated in Africa. My theory is that magic is nothing more than our ability to control matter in a way that is specifically different from that of the muggles, well... scientifically speaking -..."

"Atoms," Tom concluded for her. He was paying attention to what she was saying, a little fascinated.

Hermione looked at him, noting how he seemed to be following her reasoning. "Correct."

"Still, your explanation did not remove my assertion, Miss Granger. On the contrary, it seemed to enhance my words." Lestrangle punctuated his words with his index and middle finger against the table.

"Isn't it obvious?" She raised one of her eyebrows. "Every time the wizarding world has decided to go against the muggle world, there have been significant losses, Lestrangle, and it hasn't been on their side." Hermione's speech left the table silent. "Every time we've fought against the muggles, we've lost. The Witch Hunt is, perhaps, the pinnacle of defeat. We are, by and large, a small population that seems to get smaller every decade." Her gaze went from Lestrangle to Professor Slughorn. "To win in a, supposed, war, we have to be all of us for one goal. This is difficult, because politics is complicated and there will always be opposition, and opposition can be equivalent to or mean division. And division is separation, which results in fewer numbers of witches and wizards behind one goal, Lestrangle." She looked at him again.

His jaw was hard with a locked smile that was a not-so-happy expression.

"I never asked, *Miss*, but you are a descendant of Hector-Granger, correct?"

Hermione's mind briefly surged at the questioning of her descent, it wasn't the first time someone had asked that question, but she never looked deeply into whether or not she was related to Hector Dagworth-Granger, because to her, it didn't matter. Not knowing how to answer, she was saved by the curfew on Professor Slughorn's watch, though everyone at the table seemed to have expected an answer from her, except Alphard of course, who grimaced, knowing just where this conversation was going.

At the sound of the third chime of the clock, all the students stood up at the same time, looking at Slughorn, asking for silent permission to leave.

Saying goodbye, Eugene was the first to the door, opening it and gesturing so that she and Pearl could get through first. Pearl smoothed out the navy blue skirt she was wearing, before walking over. Hermione, even though she wasn't friends with Pearl or Eugene, hoped to make her way with them, given the fact that they will be taking almost the same route to their respective Common

Rooms.

"Miss Granger?" Slughorn called out to her and caused everyone to pause for a moment. "Tomorrow, before the first class, I would like a moment of attention."

She paused for a moment. "Hm... Of course, professor." Hermione tried to smile. It was something unexpected. The Slytherin boys looked at each other, Eugene arched one of his eyebrows, but Tom looked from her to Slughorn and lowered his gaze, his fingers working incessantly on the ring, a mania he acquired whenever he was thoughtful.

In the corridor, the group of students were going to go opposite ways. The Slytherins, who were in greater numbers, were heading back to the Common Room, Lestrangle paused for a moment, watching Hermione and narrowed his eyes. His jaw locked and a restrained smile indicated some mischievous thought circulating in his little head, which sent a shiver down Hermione's spine.

She shifted her gaze from Lestrangle, who had just turned his back on her, to Tom. His body position was half-turned in her direction. Tom met her gaze and although he was particularly expressive, his eyes were green pools of indecipherable emotion. Hermione, for once, wished she was a Legilimens.

"Good night, Tom." She tried. He delighted in making her uneasy with silence, especially when he scanned her up and down. He huffed, put his hands in his trouser pockets and turned away, joining the others. She had come to this dinner to get closer to Tom, laden with ulterior motives, but it seemed that what she did was sink deeper.

Pearl and Eugene were waiting for her at the top of the stairs, though silent, Pearl cracked a smile.

"I appreciate you waiting for me." Hermione sighs.

"It's not a problem, is it, Eugene?" Pearl's fingers intertwined, her hands in front of her.

"Hm," Eugene confirmed but didn't seem too amused to continue the conversation.

"You know -" Pearl continued. "I am happy for your presence at the Club. I hope you intend to continue with us." Eugene was walking further ahead, letting Hermione and Pearl have their conversation without interrupting. "It was quite enlightening your theories, although I'm not

familiar with muggle science."

Eugene cast a glance over his shoulder.

"And I am largely in agreement about your idea that magic is magic. And that all beings deserve respect. Me and Eugene, we sometimes have a tough time at the Club when we try to make a point, don't we, Eugene? All beings are alive in some way, Miss Granger. Even the rocks. I listen, you know? They talk to me."

"Pearl, please don't start." Eugene stopped, catching her attention so she wouldn't continue with the strange reverie.

Their path split here, Eugene and Pearl would go one way and Hermione would go the other. Pearl looked down at being scolded, a little embarrassed. Eugene just sighed and shook his head, solving the puzzle that was the entrance to the Ravenclaw Common Room.

"I know what they say about me, that I'm weird and mad-." She tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. "But I'm not." Pearl declared vehemently.

Hermione, who finds her strange, felt a little guilty right after Pearl's speech. Even though she had not been an active participant in the conversation, she was listening to what Pearl had to say.

"I saw it, you know? You and Alphard. He carried you the whole way from Myrtle Warren's Bathroom to the Gryffindor Tower." Pearl's big blue eyes met Hermione's as she gestured with her fingers as if they were walking. "I told him that people can die from a broken heart, but he didn't believe me. I have an intuition for certain things. Professor Najla thinks I'm good at riddles and intuition." She said, staring into nothingness. She put her index finger under her chin, thoughtfully. "Hm... but I think it's okay!" The change in the tone of her voice and the cheerful expression it assumed on Pearl's face was sudden and left Hermione even more confused. "So is your ancestry, I suppose."

"O- what do you mean?"

"You are a muggle-born, Hermione." She smiled. "Good night!" Pearl turned and held up her skirt so she could up the stairs more quickly to the Common Room.

"Wait! Pearl!" Hermione tried, but Pearl didn't give a second glance.

Hermione's heart dropped to her stomach in one beat. Pearl knew. While Hermione was not ashamed of what and who she was, her parents' was information that should remain secretive.

-

"Hermione?" Ectur rose from his armchair at the exact moment Hermione entered the Commons Room. The Hall was empty, the students practiced in their proper dormitories. The fireplace light was the major source of illumination, although the other lights were also on, but dimly lit for the night. Hermione was still a little bewildered. "Are you okay, did everything go okay?"

"I think so, I don't know..." Hermione sits down on the carpet, a little numb.

"Aren't you supposed to... I don't know... be happy?" Ectur approaches, hiding something behind him, Hermione notices.

Hermione snorts. "It feels like everything I'm doing isn't working out. Everything is falling apart right in front of me." She blurts out but knows he won't understand the weight of her words. Looking at him moving from one leg to the other, she asks. "What is it? What are you hiding?"

She can see the colour appear immediately on his cheeks up to the tip of his ears.

"Heh...Promise you won't laugh?"

She stood silently, waiting for him. The hand he was hiding carried a book. Hermione doesn't quite understand why he would think she would laugh at him because he was reading a book when she had already let it be known that her passion was reading and studying.

"I am not an avid reader - ." Ectur sat down beside her. "I don't spend my hours reading or studying. Nor do I get the best grades; Well, that's not sounding good, I guess - " He scratched the back of his head. "I just have trouble sleeping and sometimes, reading manages to make me sleepy."

Hermione smiled softly. Ectur showed her the cover of the book. The light blue cover made Hermione's eyebrows go up, now she understood why he had asked her not to laugh. After all, it was Swan Lake he was reading.

"It's from Ig."

"Ig?"

"Sort of," Ectur said. He showed the first page of the book, which contained a dedication. "She gave that book to me as a gift. I kind of helped them find each other." Ectur explained. "Mom and Dad were always strict about some situations, so Ig would ask me for help so he could meet Margot. My parents didn't seem to mind seeing me and my brother out together, until... They found out." His voice got sadder at the end.

Take care of Ig for me.

A gift from your friend and sister-in-law,

Margot.

"Margot is the girl Ig is in love with, Hermione. She's a muggle." Ectur tried to analyze Hermione's expression. "Ig was going to burn the book that summer past, but I stopped him. I knew that was not what he wanted to do. He hides it now like some kind of precious possession, he'd kill me if he knew I had the book again."

Hermione ran her finger through the pretty handwriting of the girl she had never met.

"Keep reading, Ectur, I don't want to disturb you."

Ectur smiled serenely and Hermione reciprocated. They read the book together, silently, by the fire.

However, after a good moment, Ig came down the stairs of the men's dormitory with his hair tousled and his sleeping dressing gown open. Ectur, as soon as he realised it was his brother, hid the book under the pillows.

"Ig?" He asked, concerned about his brother's nervous state. "What is it?"

"I-I don't know, brother." Ig squeezed the fabric of his pyjamas, in the centre of his chest, as if he was hot, at the same time, sore. "I don't feel right. It feels like something's wrong."

Hermione and Ectur got up immediately. They had spent much of the night trying to calm Ignatius down, not knowing what made him like this. He had said that he woke up from a nightmare with flashes, not understanding what it was, but that it made him like this. Hermione gave him a cup of tea and said that it would be all right, that it was just a bad dream.

Margot fled the city of London with her parents and younger brother to a small coastal village. Margot's story is just one among many similar ones, where families fled the big cities out of fear.

Margot, her mother and her father died that night in a bombing. Her brother was found three days later in the rubble. Orphaned and hard of hearing. Ig would never know what happened.

oOo

Death has been with him since birth. It never leaves him alone and from a young age it robs him of chances, opportunities, and paths he could have followed. A different life.

So he uses it as a shield and directs it towards others. He bends the rules and does the unthinkable, the unforgivable. The dance with Death will be eternal. The game of cat and mouse will never end. Ah, love, however, is the opposite. Avoids it with ardour. For many years he could not say he loved or was loved, nor that his path was crossed many times with the fallacies of what that 'feeling' is.

There is nothing for him about it. She told him there was still goodness in him, he laughed at her and now what he wants most is to say it to her face:

See? Didn't I tell you?

Because there is nothing left. Because it was stolen from him once more. Because the remnant of goodness, of something good, is in a coffin seven feet from the earth, on this cliff, on this island. Nowhere.

He guards her final resting place like a guardian, dressed in black in mourning. Dressed in black like Death. The sea breeze, the sound of water lapping against rocks, the sun between the clouds; he closes his eyes and inhales the sea air, saline, freedom. He gives it to her. The weed beneath his shoe is green, beneath him she rests, as in a peaceful sleep, in the glass coffin, the magic placed keeping her perfect lest the rot consumes her cold, morbid flesh, lest it steals the beauty she possesses. Even now, he circumvents Death's rules. There is no end to that. But if he will be eternal, so will she.

He didn't quite know what he was thinking when he did that spell, or maybe he doesn't want to admit it out loud, but one day, maybe, he'll dig down and pull her out of the darkness of the earth, climb up the coffin and admire her beauty once more. Maybe he'll lie down on the grass beside her and talk, make plans, and speak what's on his mind like they did when lying down. She'd be still, eyes closed, he'd imagine she's just caught up on sleep, he'd reach out to her hair and feel the coldness of the glass and that would wake him from the illusion.

She doesn't sing loudly. She doesn't have an extremely good voice for it, but she makes sweet soft, low sounds that are good to his ears. Sounds that remain in his ears, that suit that place.

He smiles at the memory.

It's the good smile, is what she would say.

It's the last good smile he gives.

He partially turns his face to acknowledge the person who came for him.

-

Her fingers rattled against the wood of Professor Slughorn's office door. The door opens and Hermione sees a contented Slughorn chatting with Tom Riddle, equally entranced in conversation. *What the hell is that?* She wonders. They both turn to greet her.

"Miss Granger, come, come. Come in, please." Slughorn gestures for her to come forward.

She takes a few steps, closing the door as she enters. Tom makes a small gesture with his head to greet her, stepping back a little and looking at the books on Slughorn's bookshelf with disguised interest.

"Good morning, Professor Slughorn," Hermione replied. Tom's presence made her curious as much as suspicious. "Have I done something, Professor? Something that has displeased you?" She asked, trying to find answers to Slughorn's invitation and Tom's presence, casting a glance over her shoulder just to find out the position Tom was in. He was now standing still, his hands behind his back and looking down.

"Of course not!" Slughorn quickly shrugs off her suspicions. "You have been extremely brilliant. I must express that I am proud to teach for you." Slughorn places his hand on her shoulder. "The reason I called you, was extremely academic. You see, Miss Granger, I know how to recognise the good, great and best students and I see in you as one of the best, there is a glow for knowledge that I admire."

While it was good for her ego to be recognised as one of the top students, *again* , Hermione wasn't quite sure where this conversation was heading.

"I was certainly impressed with your willingness to debate yesterday. I must say that your theories caught my attention and from all that I have seen of you in potions class, with your experiments, I extend an invitation -" Slughorn continued.

"Ahn... What do you mean?" She cast another glance over her shoulder at Tom, then refocused on Slughorn.

"A study group, Hermione," Tom explained, intervening momentarily, but managed to make Slughorn smile at the interruption.

"Yes, a slightly more selective group than yesterday. Our dear Tom, had the brilliant idea of inviting you and I must say, I agree with him completely."

"This is a group to enhance our studies." Tom's steps were becoming closer. "Professor Slughorn helps us, he even permits us to use his personal office and potions bench. By the way, thank you for your kindness again, Professor Slughorn." Tom stopped beside her, her eyes instantly going to him, meeting his gaze in equal measure. He blinks, expectantly and invitingly.

So that's how the Deathly Hallows started, Hermione thinks. Right under Slughorn's nose. Tom had the professor, The Potions Master, Headmaster of House Sonserina, right in his hand.

Right in front of her, as if something or someone is listening to her prayers, there is the chance to get close to Tom, to get what she so desperately wants. However, it doesn't make her any calmer, on the contrary, more than ever she will have to be cautious, skilful and be able to use all the tricks she knows.

"I-I appreciate the invitation." She replies and for a fleeting moment, she can see Tom narrowing his eyes thinking she will decline. "I'm glad I could be a part of it and make the most of our school interests. It's wonderful to know that I've been well-noticed for my abilities."

"It's wonderful to welcome you too, Miss Granger." Tom crosses his arms. "Didn't I say, Professor Slughorn? It's a shame she's been selected for Gryffindor. I still think the Sorting Hat got it wrong for the first time."

Tom's words make Slughorn laugh, both of them having a private joke about Gryffindor House,

something that makes Hermione's hair stand up like a scarry cat, but when they both turn to her, she smiles.

"Perhaps, my dear student. Although, I believe the Hat would not put three brilliant minds in one place at the same time." Slughorn says, self-involved.

The chimes of the clock cut off the subject.

"Well, Professor, I think we have to go, don't we, Miss Granger?" Tom speaks and Hermione confirms. " We have to get to our first class of the day and Professor Merrythought doesn't like delays very much." Tom straightens the satchel he wears. "Shall we go, Hermione?"

Leaving the room, Hermione walks up the Dungeon stairs, heading for the North Tower. She had promised herself that she would never set foot in the Dungeons again, but it seems it was a promise in vain, these days she comes here more than her views in the library.

"Well, what was that?" She asks for an explanation. Tom laughs at her.

"That what?" He stops and arches one of his eyebrows at her, Hermione gestures her gaze and arms around as if exemplifying the situation. "It's an invitation."

She looks sceptical.

"You're quite suspicious, aren't you?" He places his hand on her shoulder, his thumb accidentally touching the metal of the necklace. Static passes through the two of them, both of them jumping and pulling away more out of surprise than any kind of pain.

They face each other, Tom's hand still extended in the air. He takes a few steps to the side, their eyes never leaving her form, studying her for every inch.

"It's an energy. A kind of magnetic field that's attractive and reactionary. Not painful, it's like something's missing..." His hand goes up, his index and middle finger intertwining with a rebellious lock of her leonine hair. Just like in the Tower of Owls, they stop and look at each other, the morning light seeping through the window panes, touching her face, giving the hue of a pinkish peach to her skin, highlighting the tiny freckles decorating part of her cheeks and the tip of her nose, her gaze becoming caramelized like honey. She stares at him like a doe and he can see the bit

of fear in that look.

Tom knows, she lies to him. Sweet lies. Half-truths. He knows because he's told so many he's become an expert at spotting them. She thinks she can play him, but little does she know it was him who was inviting her into the trap. He wants to unravel her, to know why she is so harried, why so suspicious, and what she is hiding.

While it irritates him that she thinks she has the power to manipulate, he is also strangely captivated by the challenge. She is intelligent and skilled, he cannot deny that. And, it would be a waste of such intelligence and skill to fall into sameness. *She would be such a good weapon if used correctly*, he thinks.

He has spent the night thinking of how to turn the game in his favour and to do so, it is necessary to isolate her, to cut the ties that bind her to others. In due time, in the fragility in which she finds herself, he will introduce her to the Diary.

If the blood that runs in your veins is of pure ancestry...

They heard someone knocking something over and the two turned to see who was watching them. Both Hermione and Tom, half-closed their eyes to the empty corridor to their right. Tom took a step forward, ready to investigate the intruder, but Hermione soon walked back, willing herself to run away from the situation. Noticing her evasion, Tom turns back so he can follow her steps.

When they get close to the door of the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom, they can hear teacher Merrythought's voice and some students laughing.

Opening the door slowly, they secretly enter the room quietly, the professor and students distracted by the conversation.

"Ah! There you are!" Professor Merrythought exclaims. "Come on, come closer, Mr Black."

"Why me?" Alphard asks.

"Don't be silly, come on." She slips her arm over Alphard's shoulders, almost dragging him along, positioning him in front of the sealed trunk.

"I think that's so unfair, you know? Every time it's something terrifying, you call me first. I still have nightmares from my first experience with it. Is the lady in love with me?" it is said as a joke,

drawing laughter from the class, including a soft chuckle from Hermione herself, who hides it well through a pacifying touch with her index and middle finger on her lips.

Despite wanting to look angry, Professor Merrythought laughs, though she pulls the hood of Alphard's uniform down over his face and leans against her desk. Alphard makes sure to get his vision back quickly when he hears the *tap -tap* of Professor Merrythought's boot's beak against the wood of the trunk.

The trunk opens so fast that it almost topples backwards, Alphard is already in a fighting stance. The dark mass in the trunk, emitting a kind of white noise of its being, seemed to think, undecided as to what form to take when a nest of rat came out of the darkness.

"Oh, shit-" Was all that could hear from Alphard. " *Riddikulus!* " He shouted, before it spoke thinner than Fat Woman's chant, after all, if there was one animal he hated, it was rats. The monstrous rat, abnormally large and the size of a six-foot human being, soon turned into a small, fluffy rabbit.

"Congratulations Mr Black, you certainly did better than last time." Professor Merrythought praised. "If I remember correctly, you left here running and screaming down the Castle corridors."

"It's not fair. Everyone's talked about it for days." Said Alphard, he didn't seem to have an iota of shame about his faults. But he had learned that the best way to come out on top of a situation was to either take it in good humour or not make such a big deal of it, otherwise, no one would let go.

He turned to go back to the Slytherin House queue, making faces as Professor Merrythought spoke, making the class laugh, but received a slight spell on the buttocks, given by the teacher.

"I saw that." She condemned him.

Alphard raised his hands in surrender, smiling and giving a wink to his teacher, who rolled her eyes. Professor Merrythought was practically fifty-five years old by now, and even though Alphard wasn't the best student in the class, he was the kind of student who would leave memories.

Professor Merrythought was taking as her teaching basis, to observe how fast the students became in doing spells they had already learned, before teaching the new Defence spells. Because, from sixth grade onwards, the contents became more serious and it was, for her, necessary for the students' minds to be sharp.

"You know what to do." She commanded the class, who happily pushed themselves to make an Indian line, much happier and more confident than the first time they had attempted the *Riddikulus* spell.

Hermione made little or no point of being first, second or third she was content to be almost one of the last. Her mind was very much focused on Tom, who left an unrecognisable feeling in the pit of her stomach. His words, so analytical, so sure, a quick learner and observer, that's what he is.

"Are you afraid?" His voice is very close, but it is low and for her ears only. *He is behind me.* She shakes her head, denying it. It's easier to make the gesture because her voice needs a moment to make its appearance. "Look at that silly fears. Spiders, mice, clowns, crows, the dark, cats... and so on. Childishness, it feels like I'm stuck in third grade."

All the fears mentioned, some continued, others modified, but all overcome in some way, the laughter of joy. They take a step forward, but close to the Boggart.

Tom wants to change, he feels a constant need to evolve and experience things he's never done before. One of the few things he can say he loves, or rather feels appreciation for, is Hogwarts, yet at the same time he feels trapped by the norms, morals and ethics and has to constantly maintain his role as a good boy.

"It's normal to be afraid of something, Tom. It's natural. Everyone has." She replies and can feel his smile stretching across his face. "Let me see, you're not afraid of anything?" Hermione says with irony. At her core, she is so curious to know what the Dark Lord fears. An answer, a weapon to be used against him. Just like that.

"No, I don't." He is confident, so confident. She almost answers, but her attention goes to Ectur, who is staring at his fear. His mother. She watches his hand shake before he casts the spell.

"So he's still afraid of *mummy* , it seems that hasn't changed."

"It's not funny, Tom." Hermione cuts the sentence off before he can continue to disturb Ectur's fears.

"What do you think, hm? Why is he so afraid of his mother?" he whispers, close to her ear. She can feel his head above her shoulder, and through the field of vision, she catches a glimpse of the

movement of his eyelashes. Hermione is about to rebut, when he says, "Take one more step, we're almost there, Hermione."

Ectur walks past her, the glint in his eye at the sight, she can feel the fleeting touch of his fingers on her hand as he passes to join the others who have already passed the test. The line moves quickly, the students getting Merrythought's approval.

"Your taste in freckled redheads, it's questionable. I expected more from you."

"Why are you like this?" She asks, it's an honest question. Perhaps inappropriate for the moment. She has seen something rare, he was once a quiet, perhaps gentle child. A naive baby, Hermione cannot understand where he has changed. She turns to him. "Don't talk about him." To her it's like, *Don't talk about the Weasleys, don't talk about Ronald, don't talk about Harry, about Neville, about Luna, about Minerva McGonagall, don't talk about everyone else. Don't talk about my parents.*

Tom doesn't respond to her.

"It's your turn." That's all he says.

She turns around and finds herself at the front of the queue, Professor Merrythought gesturing for her to come closer. Hermione takes a step, watching the bouncy stuffed monkey that was left by the last student before her. She faces the Boggart, until that instant moment, she wasn't afraid, but the bouncing monkey stops with his back turned to her, his head turning unnaturally by one hundred and eighty degrees to face her. The plush's red eyes stare into her soul, fixed.

The truth is that I was undecided, there were many fears within one person, and it was an endless feast for the Boggart.

With a snap, the non-being transformed. A black hole, making *click* sounds like the Time-Turner, the screams. *Mione!* She heard someone shout her name, the sound of glass falling in sequence. The battle at the Ministry. The sound of spells being cast, growls from Fenrir Greyback, The Fall of Hogwarts.

Mione, Hermione, MIONE!

Everything stopped suddenly, silent for a second before a laugh, soft, ironic, melodious, endorsed

by madness.

Hermione let out a sigh, freezing in place like a deer, her pupils increasing in size as her eyes burned with unshed tears and her body turned icy and pale.

" *I see you, filthy little girl.*" She sings, the exaggerated laughter echoing.

From the dark form, hands with black painted nails emerged, paving the way to make herself present. Her long, dark hair waved over her face, her black dress with a corset, lush, and beautiful. The years in Azkaban never took away from Bellatrix Lestrange's beauty.

It was a predatory, wild, untamed, uncontrollable beauty and Hermione knew what it meant, being sucked into her fear, which was many, many traumas, but encased in the personification of Bellatrix.

She took a step back, and the Boggart, Bellatrix, took a step to catch her. Although Hermione understood it was a non-being, she couldn't connect to make her brain work in that sense, she was just afraid.

" *I'll make you scream, your friends won't save you this time.*"

She remembers being trapped in the *Crucio* curse, screaming, her mind begging for help, and her body aching. She was close to breaking if it was not for Dobby, Ron and Harry.

Hermione shivered, from head to toe. *Dobby was dead.*

" *You won't make it, you'll be stuck here. I'll make everyone see who you are, I'll kill you. Crucio* "

Bellatrix moves forward so fast, Hermione bumps into Tom, who puts his hands on both her arms, before putting his body in front of hers, stopping the Boggart, who just as he's standing in front of someone else, transforms. Turning back into the dark hole, but unlike Hermione, while the non-being decided what to turn into, the transformation for Tom was... **nothing**. It had no sound, no movement, it wasn't an animal or a person, it wasn't an object, it was nothingness.

Tom had no fears.

Confronted with a person who had no fears, the Boggart squawked, shrill and high-pitched in frustration. Revealing, perhaps, its true voice, before running to the bottom of the trunk and locking itself in.

If there was laughter before, now everyone was petrified by this horror show that was the last moments. Most of the students were frightened by Hermione's fear that had said a forbidden curse, by Tom's lack of fear, and by the true voice a Boggart had, since there are few if any accounts of the true form.

Hermione was still frozen in place, paralysed as she was confronted by her fears, fears that were far worse than Professor McGonagall giving her a bad mark. Real fears that would haunt her for the rest of her life. She stares into nothingness as she is forced to confront the concept, a silent sigh coming from her lips.

"Hermione." It is Bilius who approaches her, placing a hand on her shoulder. She startles and although it is Bilius who is closest to her, her focus goes to Tom, who is staring at her with big, green eyes.

It's not just him, she realizes. It's the whole students. Everyone whispering. It's horrible and she feels pathetic. She does what she does best recently, she runs. Leaving class without looking back.

Idiot, fool, dumb, dumb, dumb! Hermione curses herself, using the heels of her hands against her eyes, the fingers of her hand at the front roots of her hair. She doesn't know if she's cursing herself because she froze in front of Bellatrix Lestrange, because she didn't fight back, because she's in the mood to cry, or because the words of non-being and the memories have affected her strongly. Cowardly, she runs, she wants to hide, because, in her ears, she can hear *everyone else* calling her name as if she had abandoned them, she can hear the broken glass falling as well as the structure of Hogwarts suffering from the attacks of Voldemort's army, she can smell the rain as she can also smell the food her mother used to prepare when she was at home.

It is painful.

All she knows is that she kneels against one of the benches in the hallway and hides her face in the nest of her arms. She feels useless, *the great and clever Hermione Granger, is here*. Where has the brightest girl gone?

A short time later she hears:

"I found you."

She lifts her gaze and finds Ectur standing a few feet away from her, his breathing quickening,

holding his Gryffindor robe in one hand and his satchel in the other. He approaches her as if she were a wounded animal. Cautious and sympathetic.

"Do you want to talk about it?" He asks. Hermione lowers her gaze and denies it with her head. She feels him sitting down next to her. Silence is everything. "It's not my mother I'm afraid of." He says after a while. Ectur looks to the wall, specifically to nowhere. "It is of what she represents. Of the control, she has over my future. People don't understand if I don't explain."

Hermione looks out of the corner of her eyes. His expression is a kind of guilt and sorrow. She can't say she understands his feeling because her parents are good, no, great parents. Who have always tried to be as supportive as possible for her.

She places a hand on Ectur's forearm, to signal empathy.

"...I froze because I couldn't focus on something good and fun so I could do the spell - " Hermione thinks she should say something since he found himself opening up and confessing to her. "- but every word said reminded me of worse things. It was pathetic." She craned her head, looking at the bench in front of her. "It seems the only one who isn't afraid of something is Riddle."

Ectur frowns, turning his face towards her. "What are you talking about, Hermione? Of course, he has a fear. His fear is strange. In the third year, Riddle saw his corpse, half freshly dead, half decomposing and bloated. It was horrible. It was weird."

At Ectur's words, Hermione lifts her gaze.

"What?"

"Well, yeah. That was it. In the third year, when it was Riddle's turn, he saw his lifeless, putrid body. Shocking, to say the least. It was the only time I ever saw him flinch during a spell."

This makes Hermione analyse; being afraid of death, is...well, basically, normal. But it's not something you're constantly thinking about on a day-to-day basis. You don't wake up on a Sunday day thinking you're going to die crossing the street or taking a shower, nor does it even stop you from living life routinely.

But as she thinks more carefully, she can see the reason, the irrational fear that controlled Tom to the point where he created Horcruxes. *Is that why?*

The dark cloak of Death is upon him long before he is aware, he should not make it the guide to life and yet he did.

Ectur seems to think her silence is some kind of dread - though not entirely wrong - with a mild questioning expression, his features are slightly reminiscent of Ron, and Hermione goes forward without a second thought, hugging him. The movement seems to catch him off guard, as he takes a moment to reciprocate. Feeling safe, she closes her eyes momentarily, savouring and enjoying the comfort, but when she opens them again, she sees him: Tom. Standing, a few feet away, staring at her and Ectur.

Hardly any situations take him by surprise, when they do, Tom tends to keep his expressions neutral. He controls as much as he can to not show anything, something that can sometimes be difficult. When he said he had no fears, he wasn't lying. If he was once afraid of death, there's nothing to be afraid of anymore, not when he can't die - at least not in a conventional way. - All the other factors can be controlled, remedied and masterfully overcome.

However, what he saw in the classroom did not make him afraid, but surprised, when yet another piece of connection about Hermione Granger made sense.

A witch, he remembers her voice.

Would you kill her if you had the chance? He asked.

He would have gloated at everyone's expressions, had he not been involved in the situation himself. Tom had made a gesture to hold her, but she had moved, turned her back and run as if her robes were on fire. It didn't take long for Prewett to follow her, *the knight in shining armour*, Tom rolled his eyes.

Now he was here, watching her throw herself into the red-haired freckled man's arms like a lover. Watching the scene, made his stomach turn and unconscious clench his hands into fists. He gritted his teeth when he saw her revelling in the embrace, but especially when he saw Prewett tightening his arms around her body, reciprocating.

Then she opens her eyes and looks directly at him, staring. Mysteriously, her brown eyes paralyzed him for a moment. Luring, insinuating, probably taunting him, as if to say: see me with another.

Tom clenches his jaw.

He wants to curse her, Prewett, both. His fingers twitch, eager to lower his wand from its holster.

He turns and walks away, with quick steps, angry looks and disgust, he doesn't want to analyse these emotions deeply, especially the reason behind them.

oOo

Someone had broken in, stolen her jewellery, and denigrated her final rest. He is furious. How dare they? He thinks.

The sight of the island disgusts and infuriates him in equal measure, as well as awakening anguish in his chest. A feeling he does not want to feel.

The island, once a paradise, is now a port island, with metallic sounds, cement, smoke, and the smell of gas. He stares at it, not understanding.

How long has he stopped coming, that he has now turned...that?

He searches for the cliff, the cliff where she should be. The advance of the sea caused coastal erosion, but it wasn't only that, the muggles also have their big part. Although the part where she was buried became a kind of ecological reserve, it doesn't do much. The cliff collapsed suddenly last night, large amounts of earth and rock falling away and taking with them, her coffin, into the deep and almost eternal darkness of the sea.

When she looked at the sea and the sun on afternoons on the beach, was it her destiny that she saw? He wonders.

Nowhere, no longer exists.

Under the eyelids of his closed eyes, he feels the sunlight diminishing, the sky darkening, the wind getting stronger, and the clouds darkening. Which is the beginning of a storm. Which is the beginning of chaos.

He looks at the landscape that has become dark, the sea seems infinite and turbulent. His face is

expressionless, somehow even strangely angelic.

The muggle world knows the Death Eaters. The muggle world knows the Dark Lord.

-

He's more withdrawn these last few weeks, much, much more attentive. His eyes trained on her behaviour. She's showing off, flirting, brazenly. *He thinks, no, he's sure.* Tom crosses his arms, if he ever thought she was different, to him, she is no longer. He can see through her actions, she is no different to other girls, all she wants is to climb the social ladder, get married and have a 'comfortable life'.

Well, Ectur Prewett is an idiot, because he falls for her charms with ease, following her wherever she goes like a lost puppy. It irritates him more than he wants to admit. Tom has never paid attention to Prewett before, the world could end and have a long list of names, he would frown and wonder: *Who is this?* But that's not the case anymore.

From where he is, on the second-floor balcony of Hogwarts, he can see Prewett and her. He watched them talking, and though he couldn't hear what they were saying from there, it was all smiles and laughter. He frowned to himself, unsure of the feeling that was morphing at the base of his skull. A headache? No, that was too nauseating to be a headache.

Not wanting to watch the scene anymore, he turns away, his ears picking up a giggle coming from Granger.

His thoughts don't quiet down, not for a moment, all the voices are background noise in his mind. Tom enjoys the Divination class, Professor Najla is explanatory but not tiresome, however, even though he enjoys the class, he cannot say he is entirely concentrated. Working in automatic mode, Tom still manages to be faster than his classmates. The crystal ball in front of him is hazy. He is obsessed with the future, prophecies and all the mistakes he can avoid.

Narrowing his eyes to mist in the crystal ball, he tries to see something, just an insight. There is a movement, the mist is undoing and creating shape, and something will appear...

"You forgot your books in Arithmancy class."

Tom blinks, lifting his gaze to her, the tormentor. She makes a confused, innocent expression at his silence.

"Why are you here?" he asks, she hadn't signed up to take Divination classes. She had some kind of

disdain for the subject.

"The books, Tom." He gestures. " Professor Finley asked me to give them to you." Hermione turns to Professor Najla and Tom watches the movement of her hair half pinned-half loose. "Thank you, professor, sorry to interrupt your class." She uses politeness to say goodbye.

Motioning to go, he notices that she's without her Gryffindor robe, so that her Hogwarts female uniform is more visible, it's not uncommon for girls to wear like that, but it draws his attention to her, the pleated skirt and pantyhose. The whole ensemble, to be honest.

When he turns his attention back to the crystal ball, he is mesmerised, through the reflecting glass he can see that his eyes are wildly open to the image he sees: blood dripping, he and she standing by a fireplace, someone hooded, she crying and staggering to help someone - he behind her, a dead lioness with a snake sticking out of her mouth.

He stands up, shivering - it's not fear. Attracting everyone's attention, Professor Najla narrows her eyes.

"Mr Riddle?" She's much more sensitive.

Making a gesture with his head, he sits down. The students slowly return to their respective crystal balls.

"Are you okay?" Pearl asks, he just nods 'yes'.

His nights were becoming long and headache-ridden, sitting in the armchair facing the fireplace in the Slytherin Common Room, Tom watches the fire dance incessantly. He taps his index finger against the arm of the armchair, rhythmically.

In the fire, he imagines what he saw.

His peace disturbed, is Araminta, coming down the stairs in her long satin nightgown and dressing gown. Tom arches an eyebrow.

"Still awake?" Her voice is soft, lyrical even, deceptively gentle. Araminta is as fierce and sadistic as Lestrage.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of your company, Miss Black?" He asks. Araminta's real surname is Crouch, although she prefers to use her mother's surname and to stroke her ego, Tom often uses it when addressing her.

"I'm not here to disturb you, it's just that, company." She leans on the arm of the sofa she sits on. "We can keep each other company." She smiles.

Tom looks her up and down in disbelief, however, he comments nothing. Turning back to watching the flames. Slowly he can sense that she is uncomfortable with the silence, that she wants something, biting her lower lip, undecided about how to approach him.

"Tom - ?" She tries.

"Go to sleep, Araminta. I want to be alone." He orders, not giving a second glance and cutting off her sentence before she finishes.

She gets up and stands for a while thinking he will change his mind, but when he says nothing, she gives up. She's lucky, he could be in a worse mood. He could do things to her of which she would regret coming to him, or maybe not, maybe she would like it and come crawling back for more. Who knows?

Araminta's second intentions are clear to him as the sun is to day and the moon is to night, but not to her second intentions that call him. It happened again, he masturbated thinking of Granger, mixing his darker side. He imagined himself fucking her after killing Prewett. Bizarre, *fuck*, he doesn't care.

He leans back, resting his head against the backrest, and he thinks of the island. He thinks of her and all the strange moments they spent together. He thinks about the magical static in the locket she wears, he thinks about what he saw in the crystal ball.

That's enough. He gives up, stands up, and makes a decision. The route he takes is hidden and avoids the main means of circulation, especially when Mr Pringle may be making the dawn rounds, although Tom has no fear of confronting him.

But it is in the place of his ancestry that he is comfortable. The Basilisk sleeps in the resting place, trapped in eternal sleep until awakened by Tom's call. Even though he misses the huge snake, that is not why he has come to the Chamber, but for the Diary. As he feels the diary in his hands, the

bond with the Horcrux practically sings. He opens the pages but writes nothing, propping the journal against the study table, he raises his left hand and holds his wand with his right hand. Aiming the tip of the wand at the flesh of his palm, Tom performs a cutting spell. The flesh slowly opens up, red contrasting with the paleness of his skin. The dermis and epidermis are bruised, blood comes to the surface, the liquid noise is audible to the eerie silence, and the blood drips. The pages of the diary drink from the blood of their creator.

So be it.

Let the Diary poison, corrupt and consume the mind of whoever it is at the behest of its creator.

May the Diary rule Hermione Granger's mind.

For fate is yet another link closing in the chain.

Chapter End Notes

Boulengerina also known as Water Cobras, is the nineteenth most venomous snake in the world.

Author's note:

0.0. - I know it took me a while to post this new chapter, but it was for a good reason. Well, I had to adapt these last months to work and the beginning of my master's degree, all together and still maintain a stable social life. It's much harder than they say, it's not easy to do all that and stay sane, but... that's not all. Venenum already has seven more chapters on standby, they need to be edited and I during this time that I was away, with the day to day tribulations, I tried to write continuously, not to lose the idea. We are reaching a point in the story where the puzzle will start to fit together and their relationship will change, besides that, I had to do some research and physics studies about time travel theories and the consequences. Trying to make it as cultured as possible within my intelligence, as I don't have a degree in physics, and a fantasy story. The theory about what Magic is within the Harry Potter universe in this chapter, is mine.

The original author, J.K. Rowling, never explained in the books what magic is in the Harry Potter universe, and how it works, I just put what I think and how I think magic would work if it were real.

0.1 - Well, it's more reflective to say: I received a "critique" or "advice", whatever you want, about the story. It's not the first criticism I've received, I'm very open to it,

except of course when there are offenses, but this one caught my attention. Look, in no way it was offensive, but I'll make it clear here, I don't intend to leave trigger warnings in the chapters. All warnings have been placed in the first chapter of the story, in addition to the main page itself. This is a story for those over the age of eighteen and who need to have a little bit of stomach. I warned that there are no heroes here, just stories and different points of view.

0.2 - Question for readers: Do you understand when the point of view changes from one character to the other? This is a story written in third person, however, sometimes there may be interpretation difficulties on your part and that will be entirely my fault. So I'm asking this sincere question about you guys understanding, because otherwise I'll have to upgrade the writing.

0.3 - Did you like the chapter?

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