

The time that is given us

How love can change lives

Von Gepo

Kapitel 12: Twelfth chapter

Dear Grenmore,

Ursus Black proved to be too hard to even have tea with but I had a nice chat with Arcturus Malfoy. Mayhaps I can make use of his library once I know him better. I explained Mendelson and other Muggle authors to him and he showed remarkable interest in their findings. As you know, most Malfoys have blond hair and have a tendency to marry blond partners. Finding out about recessive and dominant genes therefore fascinated him. The concept of genetic penetration made us look at his ancestry gallery. He invited his son Abraxas along, so I have hopes that he wasn't repulsed and will continue to meet with me on the topic. I insinuated that I planned on taking another look at the theory of magical inheritance in light of these genetic findings. If I was able to have Arcturus Malfoy join me at the presentation, that would shake the political landscape. Light and Dark wizarding families have had no joint projects since Gellert shook us up.

I had a realization though and decided to share it with you, even though I fear your reaction. Light families are known for marrying Muggleborns and half-bloods while Dark families intermarry. If that continued, wouldn't Dark magic die out eventually? Should we really share our findings? It would strengthen Dark magic families in the long run, wouldn't it? I already know you'll call me a fool but my doubts cannot be quieted.

Yours sincerely, Albus

Dear Albus,

a Malfoy is a great support and I congratulate you on your diplomatic skills. I will read up on current biological findings on genetics, so if Mr. Malfoy would ever like to meet a Muggle on the topic, I am at your service.

You are right that Dark magical families would eventually dwindle if nothing happened. You think of that as good while I think of it as a disaster. Dark magic is powerful and heady. It can work miracles but it can also be addictive. What we both think of as bad is when people grow addicted to pain and power by using too dark a magic. But that does not make Dark magic bad, just the misuse of Dark magic. Dark magic was needed for a lot of great inventions. Dark magical families, those with an affinity for Dark magic, can

wield it without succumbing to it's addictive components far longer than wizards with a Light affinity. If Dark magical families died out, we would need to have Light wizards performing Dark magic for research and rituals – those would have a much higher chance of growing addicted and performing misdeeds as a consequence. Dark pureblood culture is meant to cultivate balance, to teach skills that make you able to withstand the addictive components. It's why I would actually like for Tom to learn pureblood culture. Not the supremacy and not the arrogance but the inner mindset needed to withstand the Dark pull. So if Arcturus Malfoy would be open to meeting, I really would like to meet. In my time, most purebloods had died. Their progeny often hadn't learned the ways of training the mind. Draco Malfoy (he would have been the great-grandson of Arcturus Malfoy) was one of the last purebloods alive that had learned those techniques. He taught them to his son Scorpius who became friends with my Albus. I have not been able to learn much before I left that time, so I would love to meet the source of those teachings. I am ill-equipped for training Tom in that regard. I'd love to learn. Though I want you to meet Tom before I ever meet with any Malfoys. They were my enemies in the war, the fiercest I fought against. So I need to be sure that you are on Tom's and my side whatever happens.

Yours truly, Gren

Dear Gren,

I apologize for my rather judgmental character, I never thought to differentiate between Dark Magic and it's misuse because both are so often linked. It makes perfect sense now. I will further look into our endeavor.

I think that Abraxas will ask about the source of my new found interest soon and I would like to tell him about you. Not that you are from the future, just that you are a Muggle that adopted a half-blood child from a pure-blood line and used his scientific background to study magic. I would spin it that upon finding out about magic, you registered at the Ministry as a trusted Muggle and have been in contact with the Department of Mystery and me about your findings. We could say that the amulet that gives you a magical aura also gives your soul slight traces of magic, so if anyone ever questions your ability to occlude, we link it to your exposition with magic through the amulet. No other Muggle ever wore one, so it should tide us over. Do you think of that as a good idea or should I try to keep you as a mysterious source?

I would also love to discuss all this with Gellert. I know you most likely don't have a good opinion of him but he has a sharp mind. He has been my only real friend for years and while that most likely alarms you, please keep in mind that even in your time, he never convinced me to use Dark magic or kill Muggles (as far as I know from what you told me). I love talking to him and keeping all this from him is hard.

When would you like for us to meet next? I am at your service.

Yours sincerely, Albus

Harry clicked his tongue and sighed a lot while reading the letter. Great. So Dumbledore was in constant contact with none other than Gellert Grindelwald, the guy known for charming every captor into bending to his will sooner or later. It was true that Dumbledore never released him but that was as long as he felt horribly

guilty about letting him loose onto the world. If Dumbledore worked on his guilt, would he stay as immune to Gellert's charms as he was now? What an abominable situation. Was there no one else that could act as Gellert's jailer? Did it have to be his lover, his best friend? Poor Dumbledore.

Harry couldn't imagine having to lock Ginny in, cutting all contact from the world, being her only confidant but having to keep her under lock and key, all the while checking if talking to her changed his thoughts and actions over the years. What kind of love was that? What kind of twisted situation was Dumbledore in? He really pitied the man. There was no going back from Dark addiction, no cure. It was like locking your heroine-addicted partner up forever, just to keep him or her alive and clean, all the while having to live with their half-crazed ravings intercepting normal communication. No one should be in that situation – but there was no one as powerful enough as Dumbledore to do it. Both magically and mentally, the man was a bastion. Edgar had a lot to say about that. He had lived with Gren for years, watching him deteriorate, watching him succumb to alcohol, not able to stop him from destroying himself. He had often thought about locking him up to save him from himself. He had tried it once, trying to keep Gren from going to a pub. He had suffered a beating, verbal and emotional abuse and humiliation. He had weathered it all stoically. But Gren's tears had brought him down. He had been unable to suffer the crying, the screaming, the begging. He held Dumbledore in high respect for not succumbing to any of that.

Harry could not even imagine the pain of going through all of that. In some ways, he was still innocent. Even with the war, with his own death, with losing so many people close to him, he still retained some innocence. Love had never been tainted for him. Dumbledore and Edgar though, they knew that even love wasn't the epitome of goodness. Even love could be trumped.

What would Edgar have done if he had found out that war wasn't about protecting and saving but only about killing off innocents to have some men keep power and money while Gren had still been alive? Would he have talked with Gren about that, knowing it could destroy the man's equilibrium? Even knowing that Gren might have told him that all he ever cared about had been the power? Or would he have kept the knowledge? Dumbledore wanted to tell Gellert but what would be the consequences? What if Gellert twisted their findings? What if Gellert wholeheartedly accepted them and repented for his actions? All of those options were scary. Gellert was an unknown factor but a very powerful one. Because Gellert Grindelwald was without doubt Dumbledore's heart and soul.

Edgar looked lost thinking about that. Too many emotions ravaged his soul. He commiserated with Dumbledore, feeling a certain kind of kinship. He could only conclude that Dumbledore most likely would not last long in his silence. Hiding from your partner for long was unimaginable. A good partner found out sooner or later. Allowing a controlled setting was always better than Dumbledore hiding from them in the long run.

Dear Albus,

I am alright with telling Arcturus Malfoy that story. It adds up. If anyone questions why I adopted Tom, I will simply say that he was a bright boy, the best I could find in an orphanage. Small children often show accidental magic. Looking into his history, I finally found my way into the Ministry. We should stay obscure about the details of that. Just

say that you do not know. You found the boy on the school list and maybe you sometimes check in on Muggleborn magical children? Do you do that? I would make sense that we met that way.

The topic of Gellert Grindelwald is a rather hard one. I know who he is to you. I'd love to trust in your integrity but you are in a horrible situation. Both Edgar and I agree that – if it were in any way possible – you should be relieved of being captor, jailer, confidante, lover and best friend all at once. As a friend and confidante, of course you should be allowed to talk to him about all this. As a lover, he may cloud your judgment but I trust you to keep it separate. It's the part where you are his jailer that worries me. He will want books to read up on it. He will want to be updated. He might even regret his own choices and propose things he could do from his cell to help. If he were given an opportunity to redeem himself, who will be his judge to decide that there can never be redemption? You'd be in the situation of having to keep him locked up against your heart's judgment that everyone deserves a second chance. What I fear the most is that Grindelwald will support us and redeem himself. He is the one person that can bring you down, not only magically and emotionally but socially as well. If anyone ever found out that he is alive, they'll have your hide for that. Giving him world-changing knowledge could prove fatal in unexpected ways. I'd like to discuss it further before we decide on anything.

How about Saturday next week? Same place at one pm?

Yours truly, Gren

The hard and horrible thing about having power was making decisions. You could talk to others, inform yourself as good as possible and even ask specialists but in the end, you never knew exactly what your decisions would lead to. Oftentimes, success was expected. Oftentimes, there was some negative feedback involved. Oftentimes, you never knew all factors beforehand and had to adjust over time. Being a politician always meant being hailed, glorified, hated, made fun of and blamed for all kinds of failures and mistakes at the same time. It took a certain personality to withstand that and Harry had never felt like being able to take on such a responsibility.

Hermione had. From a young age, she had informed herself as good as possible, made decisions and also lived with the consequences of those decisions. She had a way of looking forward and working on current problems without being crushed by guilt by her past mistakes. She still learned from them though. Harry wasn't sure he was as good as that. He had the "not looking back too much" part down but did he learn enough? Did he inform himself enough? He wasn't sure.

He certainly did not know enough about Grindelwald to make any decisions. Over all, the question was if he even had to make a decision. It was Dumbledore's decision and he could only reflect with him. If Harry was certain of something, it was that he did not want to be another leader that made decisions for everyone. It wasn't his style. Everyone was able to make their own decisions. The goal was never that everyone listened to him. It was what had annoyed him about Voldemort and Dumbledore both – they were two sides of the same coin.

He wanted the political key players to learn to discuss problems instead of pushing their opinions by military might. Diplomacy was the key, not war. War only meant death and destruction and if a politician needed it, it showed weakness rather than strength. Grindelwald, Voldemort, Dumbledore – they had all chosen war. In their own way, they had all become terrorists. But all of them had tried talking first. If talking

had been an option, if discussions would have been taken seriously and change made possible, none of them would have needed war. No one would have had to die if there could have been open discussion.

So yes, silencing Grindelwald and putting him away forever – just because his opinion was unwanted by current power holders – was wrong. As long as he abstained from killing and terrorizing, his voice was as important as any other. The question was: Could he abstain from violence? Could he be brought to see that toppling over a government that was hard to talk to for one of open terror and even less opportunity for voicing opinions was just more of the same?

And over all of that: Was gaining Grindelwald worth losing Dumbledore? Because if people found out that Grindelwald was alive, they would crucify Dumbledore.

Harry groaned in annoyance. He hated unsolvable puzzles. He needed more perspectives.

“Dad?” Tom patted over after shutting his book. “What’s going on?”

“I have a problem I don’t know how to solve.”

“Can I help?”

“I don’t think so.” Why not actually? Tom might be seven by now but he was as bright as a star. “Okay, let’s try. Sometimes things can be solved simply by telling someone else. Edgar couldn’t help but maybe you can. So in this problem, we have a bad man and a hero that saved the world from the bad man.”

Tom sat down on the other side of the desk and nodded.

“Everyone thinks that the hero killed the bad man but he didn’t. The hero thinks that killing is wrong, so he locked the bad man away to keep him from doing bad things. But the world thinks that the bad man is dead. If they knew that he were alive, they would fear his escape. Makes sense?”

“Sure.” Tom went into his thinking pose, one leg thrown over the other, his fingers lightly touching another.

“Now the hero began to like the bad man. He thinks the bad man might be redeemed. But if that happened, what would he do then? He can’t release the bad man. The world would turn on him and think he went bad as well.” Harry sighed. “That’s the point I don’t know a solution to.”

“Is that man easily recognizable or could he change so much that people would not know it was him?”

Harry looked up and tried to follow his son’s thinking. What was he on about? “What do you mean?”

“Well, the bad man is officially dead. Could he take another identity and live as someone else?”

“You are a genius, Tom.” Harry blinked. “What an easy solution, how did I overlook that?”

“You need a child for easy solutions.” Tom grinned. “You tend to think too much, Dad.”

“I don’t think any child ever accused me of that.” The man shook his head in amusement. “Thank you, Tom. It was a good idea to talk to you.”

“Sure. Ask me when you need help again.” He jumped down the chair and went back to his book on the couch, a proud smile on his face.

So ... the solution was to bring Grindelwald around and then offer him a complete second chance – new look, new identity, a clean plate. Just like he had offered Tom a different life. Dumbledore knew his lover best, so he would have to be the one to decide when Grindelwald reached the point of having earned a second chance. Just like he would have to be the one to imprison or even kill him if it went wrong again.

Yes, it should be Dumbledore's choice. Harry would only support him in this. It wasn't his call to make. After all, he wasn't the one who would have to live with the consequences.

Dumbledore showed no reaction at all when Harry voiced his thoughts, his doubts, the possible endings he could see in involving Grindelwald in all of this. The older man stayed silent through all of it, having learned that listening and asking questions often brought about more than voicing opinions too early.

"May I formulate an answer while we drive to your house?"

"You have enough time for that?"

"I cleared my weekend. I'd like to make these meetings easier for both of us. I see more of them coming. Also, I'd like to meet Edgar and Tom. I'd really like to know more about where you are coming from and meeting those extraordinary people."

"The drive will take a few hours."

"That will suffice for thinking about everything you told me regarding Gellert. Maybe we can continue this talk tomorrow?" Dumbledore's eyes seemed to shimmer, filled with not enough and too much emotion all at once. "I don't think I can talk about this today. Just the thought of seeing Gellert free again, being able to have him in my arms again ... it cancels out all rationality right now. I never expected our acquaintance to fill me with hope ... right now, it hurts more than I can say. My mind rebels the thought, too afraid to be let down and hurt again."

"I don't even want to think about you somehow finding a way where I could go back to my own time-line, so I know where you are coming from. Take your time, Albus."

"I just ... no matter what happens from here on out, I want to thank you, Grenmore. I can honestly say you turned my life around. I don't know where I will end up, maybe I'll curse you and hate you forever in the end but ... right now, I am just happy. I don't think I ever really realized how tired, bitter and jaded I had become over the years."

"Acceptance helps to settle into life, but not every thing in this world going wrong needs to be accepted just because change is hard. Your situation with Grindelwald is ... it shouldn't be like this. I don't know if I can help. Maybe it will mean actually killing him in the end. But a lot of things are better than the life both of you lead right now." Dumbledore looked close to tears by now. It was a confusing look on the man in his forties.

"Tomorrow." Harry nodded to himself. "I'll pay and we'll go."

The other man just stared into space.

They arrived in Bath in the evening, having driven most of the way in rain. Dumbledore conjured an umbrella but they both got quite wet anyway. Margret opened the door to let them in before closing it right after them.

"What a lousy weather!" She curtsied to Dumbledore. "Nice to meet you, sir."

"Well met, dear one. I am Albus Dumbledore."

"I am Margret, the maid. May I take your coat, sir?"

Loretta had come over as well and taken Harry's coat. She was still a quiet girl but she seemed to like helping out Margret. Competent at needlework, cooking and dusting, she would certainly find good employment if she decided not to stay. She also had beautiful penmanship, often exchanging letters with her sister.

"I made stew and left it to simmer. Would you like to eat now or later, Mister Horten?"

"Give us a quarter of an hour. Which guestroom can we give my dear friend, Margret?"

"Oh, I can ready the yellow one. Maybe it convinces the weather to brighten up."

"Splendid idea." He nodded to her. "Albus, let's warm ourselves in front of the fire, shall we?"

"Dad!" Tom took the stairs three at a time.

"Don't fall or I'll laugh, Tom." He went down to one knee though and braced for impact. His son had become more earnest and more lively at the same time – sometimes wise beyond his age, sometimes more silly than someone half his size. Dumbledore chuckled. "So, this must be young master Tom."

"Nice to meet you, sir." Tom actually turned to him, nodded and held out his hand. A perfect little gentleman in the span of milliseconds.

They shook hands while Dumbledore grinned.

"May I inquire about your name, sir?"

"Dumbledore. Albus Dumbledore. Your father and I are old friends."

Tom suddenly froze and looked up at him with huge eyes. "You're ... you ... you signed the letter about my mom. The one about the school." He nearly hissed the last two words.

"Let's talk about that in my study, away from prying ears, later," Harry suggested.

"So he knows?"

"So he does." Harry led them into the living room. "I had this fireplace installed when I moved back here."

"What a great idea. Perfect for even a grown man."

Well, the workers had looked at him strangely when he asked for a fireplace as big as a man. They had outdone themselves though. It was perfect for flooring.

"Could you connect it later?"

"Certainly." Dumbledore sat in a seat next to it. "A real mansion you have here. Multiple guestrooms, maids ... all of that for you two?"

"Not at all. You'll meet everyone for supper. I don't see any sense in dividing between employer and employees when we are living like a family."

"We are seven kids and three adults," Tom informed the older man. "Dad has taught everyone how to read and write. The other six kids are older, they work in the factory and around the house. Margret is our full-time maid and Edgar keeps the factory's books. Dad and him teach me business."

"It sounds like you have pureblood etiquette down to a T." Dumbledore raised an eyebrow.

"I try to imitate the good stuff." Harry grinned and sat Tom on his lap. "I am not much into having slaves, keeping apart from the less fortunate and arranging marriages." He saw Tom's questioning gaze. "All the kids here come from orphanages. They came here on their own free will and are given food, board and wages for their work. They aren't allowed more than eight hours of work and have half of Saturday and Sundays off. Most Saturday evenings are spent reading stories. I would guess most of the kids are in the library right now."

"Yeah, it's where I came from. We heard the door," Tom informs them.

"Then why were you coming from upstairs?"

"I was on the balcony. We replayed that scene from Romeo and Juliet. Helen played Juliet and I read her lines to her when she forgot them."

"So you and Helen went through my study even though I was away?" Harry lowered his voice.

"No! We took the ladder!" Tom bit his lip. "Okay, I went through it when we heard you." He lowered his head. "Sorry, Dad, I forgot."

"And you are sure that you simply forgot and did not do it to show the others how

privileged you are by being allowed in my study when I am there? Because I am sure the other kids wouldn't dare."

"But you're my dad!"

"And does that exempt you from the rules?"

Tom looked sour.

"You don't go into my study without me there." Harry tipped his son's chin to remind him to look at him when they were talking. "I want to trust you on this. Otherwise I will need to lock my study. Do I need to do that?"

"No, Dad."

Harry waited for a moment. His son's eyes searched his face.

"I am sorry I went through your study without your permission."

"Good. Did you close the doors behind you at least?"

"Maybe ... I should take a look?"

"Maybe that is a good idea." The boy hopped from his leg. "Tell the others it's supper time in five minutes."

"Will do, Dad." He ran off.

Dumbledore looked deeply amused by their interaction.

"Raising a Gryffindor: You simply stare at the mess they made after disobeying your rules. Raising a Slytherin: They drop hints of their mischief wanting you to catch them and call them out on it."

"It doesn't tire you out?"

"It keeps the mind sharp. But I am happy to have Margret and Edgar. It's not something you do on your own."

"I guess it's easier when you don't have their parents breathing down your neck."

"It's worse. You have teachers, friends' parents and even your co-parents breathing down your neck how you can so hard on so sweet and nice and well-behaved a young boy. They really don't know how once you look away for a second, your son organized a crime ring to rake in candy."

"So Slytherins need a firm hand?"

"Someone strict as well as emphatic. Someone in their corner that does not let them get away with any shit. Someone unafraid of calling their bullshit without becoming their enemy. One of their own."

"In essence, a honored Slytherin they can aspire to that makes it his goal to bring out the best in them."

"Or her goal." Harry smiled. "Women, especially traditional ones, may be docile next to their husbands. They become fierce lionesses when they don't need to stay in their husbands' shadow. Maybe a widow that was famous before marriage?"

"Women don't tend to-"

"Lyadrett Selwyn? Catherine Parkinson? Meredith Ashura? Victoria Lestranger?"

Dumbledore closes his mouth in surprise and seems thoughtful.

"I just want to broaden your perspective. There has never been a female Slytherin head of house though a lot of head girls have come from Slytherin."

"How are you so- oh, Margret. Is it time already?" Dumbledore smiles at her. "Let's meet your family then."

They stood and went to the dining room. Dumbledore froze in the doorway before smiling broadly.

"Reminds you of something?," Harry teased.

The big table full of dining ware and food with teenagers and young adults sitting at it looked a lot like a miniature Hogwarts table.

"You need a crystal chandelier," Dumbledore decided while pointedly looking at the ceiling.

"You may outfit this house with one." How easy that would be for someone of his caliber. A minor transfiguration. "Now, let's take a seat. Everyone, this is my dear friend Albus Dumbledore. He's visiting for the weekend."

They sat down and Tom spoke their blessing before everyone began to fill their plates.

"So, this is Edgar. Edgar, this is Albus."

They nodded at each other. Edgar said: "It's a pleasure to finally meet you. Gren has told me so much about you."

"Same here. He is always full of praise in regards to you."

Edgar actually blushed and Harry had to ask himself if those two were flirting right under his nose. Richard's panicked gaze across the table seemed to say the same. How was it that he attracted gay men and boys like flies? Did Voldemort have a sexuality? Maybe that had ended with splitting his soul, so who knew? At least Tom would have a lot of support if he ever turned out to have a different sexuality or gender identity.

"Well, we can get a drink later." Where he reminded both of them that they already had someone they loved. "Let me introduce the children." That took a while, so Harry finished his meal long after everyone else.

Tom got some cookies for everyone that he had baked that day.

"They're exquisite!" Dumbledore smiled at the boy. "I have a sweet tooth, did you know?"

"I'll be sure to remember, sir." Tom's rather sinister smile said exactly that, yes. Harry was sure that his son just booked that under bribing material.

"Did your father teach you to bake?"

"No, Dad's not allowed in the kitchen." Tom grinned. "I learned from Margret. She's a great cook."

"Yours seems to be quite a skilled household."

"Edgar teaches everyone boxing, even Dad. Most of the girls stopped though. Brea and Mary are still with us and Richard never misses a session."

"Might be because of the shirt," Harry mumbles under his breath.

"Do I distract you too?" Edgar smirks at him.

"Sometimes I think that's the only reason why you always remove it."

"Maybe it is." Okay, so Edgar was back to his normal self, flirting with Harry instead of with strangers. When had he gotten so possessive?

"So, can we go to your study?," Tom asked impatiently.

"You want some whiskey too?" Harry huffed. "Bring the biscuits."

They got up and went to the first floor. As master of the house, Harry gave a tour on the way. He pointed out Dumbledore's room next to Edgar's. They settled into Harry's study with Edgar pouring them each a glass of whiskey and one with water for Tom. Harry checked the door to the library before making the warding motion with his hand.

Dumbledore muffled and warded both doors.

Edgar and Tom both looked awed at seeing the grey-haired man flicking around a little twig. Harry just reminded himself that even at this age, Dumbledore was openly carrying the Elder Wand with him.

"And both of them are safe?"

"I trust both of them, yes."

"Even your boy? He's only seven. Kids brag."

"He also knows that bragging means being made to forget. Someone messing with your memories is not a pleasant experience."

"Fascinating." Dumbledore looked at the boy. "Even more fascinating that I can see the beginnings of occlusional walls in his mind."

"I teach him some basic mind control techniques. If possible, I'd like to hire a professional teacher before he goes to Hogwarts."

"You are quite ambitious for a Gryffindor."

"Houses don't define us forever. Some of us never fit their house perfectly. I was loud and boisterous as a child but I liked to sneak around and solve riddles just as much."

Harry gazed at Tom proudly for a moment. "Children are all unique and all of them need a different approach. This one has high expectations of himself, so I want to support him in that."

"Gren told me that you are of a similar mind as Tom." Dumbledore turned to Edgar.

"Sharp, cunning, ambitious."

Edgar laughed and smiled at Harry. "I really don't think I am. Gren has been too kind."

"Modesty?," Dumbledore wondered.

"Everything pales next to him, that is not modesty." The man turned serious in the blink of an eye. "My ambition is to stand by his side, to follow him wherever he goes, to be his support in his every endeavor."

"Loyalty?," Dumbledore wondered even more.

"Faith." Edgar pierced him with his gaze. "It's more than loyalty when one lays his life down for another."

Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment, his visage pained. He had got Grindelwald to trust him, had edged him on and then pulled back when the other stepped too far. Lost faith. But there was still loyalty. Somehow, Harry was sure that Grindelwald chose to stay incarcerated. Point being that in his original timeline, the man hadn't even left after Dumbledore's death. He had stayed in that tower even without a jailer. He had let himself be killed. He had laughed in Voldemort's face.

What had he laughed about? Voldemort's lack of knowledge? His failure? His brokenness?

In a way, Dumbledore had not only captured Grindelwald, he had captured his heart again. He just did not know that.

"I think the most Slytherin attribute is single-minded drive. It might be towards a person or towards an idea. It might be a thirst for knowledge or development but it always has a scary intensity." Harry looked at Edgar. "It can be overwhelming but also deeply admirable."

"I think I know exactly what you talk about." Dumbledore looked wistful and took a sip of his whiskey. "Why a person and not an idea, Edgar? Why him?"

"Sometimes a person and an idea equal one another. Gren has a vision and this vision is something that surpasses simple personal bonds. It's the man that inspires me and the vision that has me hooked."

Dumbledore nodded but his mind seemed to be elsewhere. Harry was sure he immediately drew a parallel to Grindelwald. His lover had followed his vision and taken over when Dumbledore drew back. Just like Edgar would take over if Harry faltered. Just like he hoped that Tom would carry on the legacy. It really was something beyond loyalty. One could call it ambition but it was a lot more than that. Faith might not be too far from it. It was a fight as fiercely as a Gryffindor would fight – just more sneaky, more underhanded, less open and a lot more complex.

"When it comes to fighting and possibly dying for a vision, Gryffindors and Slytherins aren't dissimilar." Harry smiled, seeing that Dumbledore shared that conclusion. "Their methods are different and they look down on each other's way of reaching their goal. With combined forces though, they are unstoppable."

"It just ... imagine I hadn't pulled back. Imagine Gellert had ...," the older man seemed at a loss for words.

"You and him against a government? They wouldn't have stood a chance." Harry looked at Edgar who had Tom on his lap. "I guess it's good we are polar opposites. We hardly agree on anything but when we do, it's worth fighting for."

"A fight against discrimination is worth fighting for." Edgar smiled at him.

"Not when you are the leading class and the discrimination keeps others from threatening your position. People have to see their own benefit to decrease discrimination." Harry looked at Dumbledore again. "It's why we need a popular pureblood on our side if we want to do this right."

"Well, Gellert is obviously out."

"I hear you are becoming fast friends with a certain Malfoy." Harry had to smile, remembering those words aimed at him when Albus started bringing home Scorpius. It really seemed like a lifetime ago now.

"You really want to bring Arcturus Malfoy around?"

"A Light pureblood wizard, a Dark pureblood wizard and a Muggle. Certainly a combination not seen before." Harry grinned.

"Us three proposing an idea that will pave a future for your son?"

"I don't want him ostracized for things he cannot control. I want him to have the best chances in life he can have."

"You do realize that sometimes all your work is thrown in your face?" Dumbledore sounded resigned.

"That would be his choice. It doesn't change that I can tell myself that I did the best I could. Trying my best to change the world that it will be more accepting of him ... right now that's the best I can think of."

Tom pouted while Edgar looked at him with something like adoration. Harry just felt like a fraud. Who was he even? What gave him the right to hold such lofty speeches when he hadn't reached anything yet?

"Sometimes I wish I had children." Dumbledore sighed longingly. "Parents' love and devotion is something I can only envy."

"Why don't you adopt?" Edgar looked at the older man.

"Because there is only one person I wish to have children with. I fear it's not someone I trust around a child right now."

"Is it a violent person?" Tom asked with the blunt curiosity of a child.

"Planning on massacring most of the Muggles and enslaving the rest is a very violent act."

"Why would anyone want to do that?" Tom looked at Harry.

"What is the reason for discrimination?"

"Fear of the unknown, hatred of something foreign, possible loss of power," the boy reiterated.

"Killing and enslaving is the ultimate form of discrimination. Dumbledore's loved one is someone that discriminates against Muggles."

"So he's a bad man?" Tom thought for a moment. "Is it the same bad man as in the story with the hero? Is Mister Dumbledore the hero?"

"Sharp as always." Harry smiled at him.

"So you think Mister Dumbledore's loved one could see reason and stop discriminating Muggles?" Ah, the naivety of a child ... even one as sharp as Tom. Dumbledore drew in a sharp breath.

"It's not important what I think. It's important what he thinks." Harry gazed over to the man that had gone remarkably pale. "Sometimes speaking about such assumptions can hurt, so I think we should change the topic."

"No." Dumbledore looked at Tom. "Tell me what your father told you."

"Uhm..." The boy looked at Harry uncertainly. "Well, he told me that there was a hero and a villain. The hero incarcerated the villain and the world thought that the hero had killed the villain. It's what made him a hero. But now the hero thought that the villain might be redeemed. But if the hero let the villain go free, the world would brand him a villain too."

Dumbledore averted his gaze, the pain clear in his eyes.

"He asked me for a solution and I told him that you could give the villain a different identity. Then no one would know that the villain was still alive, he would go free and the hero would stay a hero." Tom had gotten more quiet, obviously unsure if he should keep talking. "Dad thought that was rather brilliant."

Dumbledore just nodded dumbly, his eyes still on the carpet.

Harry continued softly: "Albus ... I am not sure if Grindelwald can be redeemed. But if it happens, I'd like to have a solution that doesn't sacrifice you."

The older man stayed silent. His gaze seemed lost to them, maybe even lost to himself. Lost to a time that he wanted to change, an episode filled with regrets gnawing at his soul. Dumbledore took a long sip of his whiskey.

"Thank you for your honesty," Harry whispered to Edgar.

"It's nothing to be ashamed about. I am proud to be able to say all this aloud."

Tom just looked at them as if they were a puzzle that needed solving. It was so cute, Harry just had to ruffle his hair.

"I need to go," Dumbledore said with a sudden clarity. "Gren, I'll connect your floo and then I need to use it."

Harry blinked his eyes for a moment. Go? Go where? Why sud- oh ... of course. That was a rash decision. "Are you certain?"

"I don't think I have ever been more certain. I need to apologize to him. I let him down. It's my fault he ran rampant like that ... I should never have been such a coward. If I hadn't let him down ... I need to go."

"Albus." With two steps, Harry stood in front of him. "Grindelwald is no child. He will not be molded into shape. He may use and twist your guilt. That man is a league of his own ... what will your apology mean to him?"

"Everything." The older man's spine straightened, giving him a few imposing inches.

"Do not stop me, Grenmore."

"I just don't want you to add to your guilt with a rash decision."

"This is not rash. It has been long in coming. It's something I should have done long ago." With a wave of his hand, the wards on the door fell. "Thank you for enlightening me in so many ways, Grenmore. This is one journey I need to do on my own, though."

God, Harry wished he had any power over this. But he hadn't. Albus Dumbledore was also a league on his own. He watched the man stride downstairs, cast a Notice-me-not around him – which Harry saw by how Edgar suddenly wandered off, the only one that Anti-Muggle-magic could be used against of their group – and enchant the fireplace. They would hereby go by the name of Horten manor.

"Can the floo actually get you all the way to Germany?"

"The floo?" Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "It's the magic. It can do anything." He conjured a box of floo powder, took a bit and stepped into the flames to be whisked away. The name of the place was immediately muffled, so Harry was sure it was under Fidelius.

He stared into the flames for a long moment. Tom was silent, changing his gaze between the fireplace and his father.

"Is that a good or a bad thing?" he finally asked.

"That remains to be known." Harry drew breath and sighed deeply. So much for not mucking up time ... he may have just released a monster.