

bloodied hands & velvet sheets

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/28625886) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/28625886>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence , Rape/Non-Con , Underage
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Harry Potter/Tom Riddle Voldemort , Luna Lovegood & Harry Potter , Harry Potter/Original Character(s) , Harry Potter & Severus Snape
Characters:	Harry Potter , Tom Riddle , Voldemort , Luna Lovegood , Minor Characters , Severus Snape , Original Characters
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Hunger Games Setting , Alternate Universe - Non-Magical , Forced Prostitution , Victor Harry Potter , Suicidal Ideation , Possessive Behavior , Treason , President Tom Riddle , Underage Sex , Underage Prostitution , Depression , dark themes
Language:	English
Collections:	Reasons I don't have a Life :) , Harry Potter , voldemort is my past present and future
Stats:	Published: 2021-01-08 Words: 9,167 Chapters: 1/?

bloodied hands & velvet sheets

by [Child_OTKW](#)

Summary

“President Riddle,” he said, barely managing to cover his alarm. To keep the snarl from slipping onto his face.

Riddle—Marvolo?—smiled at him, a wine glass in his pale hand.

“Harry,” the man purred. “So nice to see you again.”

The realisation that the president, the man responsible for his current lifestyle, was the one to request him had Harry’s throat constricting in panic.

Fuck.

Harry had belonged to the Capitol since the moment he was pulled bloodied and broken from the arena, sand still clinging to his hair and Luna's blood caked under his fingernails. Passed between the upper echelon, a pretty bauble for them to touch and fuck and *own*, he was haunted by his memories. But beneath the frost slowly encroaching on his heart, there was an ember.

Fluttering. Weak. But there.

And it was that ember that caught the attention of the one man in the world he hated more than himself.

Notes

This is a cheeky little birthday present for Skitty. It's a bit late, but hopefully you enjoy, you horrid little enabler 😊

Also, yes, the summary is a bit of a spoiler, but the first two chapters are just backstory really, before we get to the good stuff. And this thing only has like, five minutes of editing put into it, so I sincerely apologise for any mistakes.

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

Harry sat quietly in the empty office room.

His hands rested limply in his lap as he stared blankly at the wall across from him; the sound of his name, called in that shrill, echoing voice, rang like a death knell in his ears. Over and over, drowning out any thought before it reached coherency.

He felt numb, and cold; his breathing hitching ever so slightly. His mouth was dust-dry, and the fabric of his light blue shirt was itchy against his skin.

Harry blinked, then swallowed thickly to soothe the ache in his throat—the only sign of the onslaught of tears that were threatening to overwhelm him. Desperately, he cast his eyes towards the clock above the door, focussing on the incessant ticking of the narrow hands.

This was supposed to be his time to farewell his family, to get one last moment with those he loved before being swept away to the Capitol to die.

But there was no one for Harry to see. His parents were gone, killed years ago, and he doubted that the peacekeepers would let Ron or Hermione in to see him.

Relatives only, he had been told by the pampered, outrageous woman that had sealed his fate. None of her entourage had seemed to care when Harry had told them that he was an orphan; only she had paused, staring at him with soft eyes, before telling him with genuine kindness —

“That will make a good story for you, dear.”

He had almost thrown up on her ridiculous pink heels.

Harry’s hands turned, twisting to dig his fingers into his trousers as the nausea spiked once more. He bit his lip, bowed his head, and waited for the allotted time to pass.

He did not want to think about what awaited him. He did not want to think that he would never see his friends again, or that he was going to be dead within a week.

He did not want to think about the young girl across the hall, or the haunted, devastated expression on her father’s face.

Harry did not want to think at all.

*

Luna was smaller, somehow, than Harry remembered.

Bird-boned and thin, with pale skin and pale hair and pale eyes, she looked like a doll. Porcelain. Fragile.

Breakable.

There was less than a year between them in age, but she seemed so much younger as they sat together in the back of the squad car being driven to the train. Her fingers played with her necklace, twirling the cork bottle stopper around and around, until the leather cord began to curl close to her throat.

Harry wanted to say something, to ask after her—but there were no words he could utter that could ever breach the looming chasm between them. They were in this together, and yet so very alone.

The woman that sat in the front, Mafalda, prattled away, ignorant or ignoring the dark silence that shrouded the two of them.

Harry's eyes stung as he watched the outskirts of District 12 fall away behind them.

Something warm and soft brushed against his hand. Harry jerked, gaze snapping down to see Luna's fingers lightly touching his own.

The stone in his throat lurched up another inch, and with tears freely burning his eyes, he gripped Luna's hand tightly in his own.

*

The train they were hustled onto was long and silver, gleaming in the afternoon sun.

Harry tugged Luna along behind him, still clutching her hand, as they were led through the hallway and into the finest room Harry had ever seen.

It was so clean, the metal surfaces polished to a shine, and along the enormous wooden table was an assortment of food, coloured in shades that Harry had not even known existed.

"Come in, come in," Mafalda called, striding past the finery with the blindness of someone accustomed to such things. "Take a seat, dears. This entire compartment is for you to enjoy until we make it to the Capitol. Help yourselves," she added, gesturing grandly to the table, and smiling brightly.

Harry and Luna remained by the door.

Mafalda's expression pinched, but she recovered swiftly, clapping her hands together once. "Very well, I shall go find Severus," she told them, the skin around her eyes pulling taut as their silence stretched on. "He will be so happy to meet you. Wait right here."

She turned on her heels, her steps shuffling from the restrictive hem of her skirt, and then she was gone.

Harry turned to Luna, checking over her carefully now that they were alone. He licked his bottom lip, uncertain.

Luna spoke before he could.

“Do you think those are real strawberries?” she asked, voice high and sweet. Her head tilted to the side, all innocent curiosity, and Harry’s heart hurt. He cast a glance at the bowl of red fruit, then looked back to the girl.

He softened.

“Would you like to try one?” he asked, and when she bobbed her head, he felt a helpless smile steal across his face.

They approached the table together, hands still linked, and Harry watched with a gentle glint in his eyes as Luna tentatively reached out and took the topmost strawberry from the pile. She held it against her lips for a moment, then closed her eyes and bit into it.

She made a startled noise, eyes flying open in surprise.

“Luna?” he asked, stepping closer in apprehension, his other hand raised as if to help.

“Oh,” she murmured, staring down at the half-eaten fruit with glossy eyes. “It’s lovely.”

The wistfulness in her tone had an unnamed emotion coiling inside Harry’s chest. He cleared his throat, eyes dropping to the bowl as he took one for himself.

The burst of sweetness on his tongue when he took a bite was overwhelming, so strong it was almost sour. His mouth curled, unsure of the flavour as he swallowed; but Luna was watching him expectantly, so Harry forced himself to grin. “You’re right,” he said, “it’s lovely.”

Luna’s eyes were unerringly focussed on him, seeming to sear right into his soul. “It’s okay if you didn’t like it, Harry.” She placed the rest of her strawberry on an empty plate, the tips of her fingers shining with juice. She continued quietly, “You don’t have to lie to me.”

“Luna—”

“It was nice to try something new,” she spoke over him. “I don’t think I will get another chance to try such nice things after this.”

She said it easily, not resigned, but something close to it; her fate a foregone conclusion in her mind the moment she had heard her name called.

“You aren’t going to die, Luna,” Harry found himself saying before he could think. His blood pounded in his ears, and the rush of fierce *anger* that flooded him made him sway. “You aren’t.”

“Lie,” Luna replied, still in that soft, confident tone. She patted his hand, leaving sticky patches on his knuckles. “It’s alright, Harry. I said goodbye to papa.”

“No,” Harry said harshly, though Luna did not flinch. He framed her face with his hands, and for the first time this day Harry felt his mind clear as a goal crystalised in front of him. “No. I am going to get you home to your dad. You’re going to be okay.”

They stared into each other’s eyes for a long moment, and Harry *needed* her to understand. He needed her to know that he would do everything in his power to make sure that this nightmare would end for her. That she would see her father and their home again.

Harry had nothing waiting for him in District 12—not like she did. If one of them had the chance to return, it should be her.

If he knew that Luna, at least, would live, then Harry would gladly die.

He needed her to survive.

Luna’s expression eased, quiet acceptance settling around her, and Harry’s next breath was heavy with relief.

*

“You need to accept that you are both going to die.”

Severus Snape was an unpleasant man, and Harry had wasted no time in making his opinion known.

The moment the bastard had slipped into the compartment, hair unwashed and skin palled, dishevelled and tired, Harry had snarled.

That had been hours ago now, and Luna had already retired to her room for the night, but Harry found himself unable to sleep. He remained in the common area, eyes fixed on the passing scenery as those toxic words kept encroaching on his thoughts. Each time they slipped in, his anger grew.

“You need to accept that you are both going to die.”

The worst part, Harry had decided, was that Snape had not even looked apologetic. The casual brutality of his honesty had hurt, had felt like nails racking down his chest hard enough to draw blood.

The man had walked away before either of them could think to speak. His eyes had skipped right over them, dismissing them out of hand.

Their own mentor had labelled them a lost cause, closing the door on any of their chances of surviving.

“Fuck him,” Harry whispered, fists clenched at his sides. “Fuck all of them. We’ll get by on our own. I won’t be made a liar.”

*

The Capitol was unlike anything Harry had seen before.

It was all looming structures and glistening steel, towers that stretched high into the sky and water so blue it was difficult to look at. But the people—

He could barely call them human.

Watching from the windows as the train pulled into the station, Harry looked out at the crowds that pressed in towards them, screaming and waving in excitement—like they were *celebrities*, like the circumstances surrounding their presence here was something to be acclaimed—and found it hard to discern them. Harry had thought Mafalda, with her pompous clothes and heavy makeup and gigantic hair accessories, had looked absurd; but it was clear from the ocean of bodies condensing around the train that she was *plain*.

Harry kept an arm around Luna as they were led off the train and into the explosive cacophony of noise, trying to shield her as best he could from the bright flashing lights and the horrifying visages of the citizens.

One man with gems embedded along his eyebrows, and his skin dyed with broad purple lines, lunged forward only to be rebuffed by one of the guards herding them.

Hands stretched towards them, as if desperate to touch, and Harry had never experienced disgust as corrosive as this before. It poured through him in hot waves, choking, and he ducked his head away from these monsters to deny them the spectacle they evidently wanted.

A line of black vehicles was waiting for them outside the station, perfectly parked yet ominous in design. Harry almost tripped, his heels digging in instinctively as he was shoved towards the open door, and as he ducked inside he saw a handful of the other tributes, their faces only familiar from the news reports, being pushed into their own cars as well.

He settled heavily in his seat, and Luna huddled in beside him, side pressed against his. Mafalda slid in across from them, hands fluttering around her hair in concern before folding neatly in her lap.

The door slammed shut behind them, instantly drowning them in deathly silence.

Luna’s hand stayed curled around Harry’s wrist, grip flexing randomly as the car began to move. Harry glanced at her, taking in the wide eyes and the tense press of her lips. His own

stomach was rolling, and he felt dirty, like he had lost a part of himself just by walking through the crowd.

“Now,” Mafalda started, leaning forward, “I know you two might be a little overwhelmed, and that’s absolutely fine—but before we can get you to the training centre and into your apartments, we first have the Chariot Ride.” There was honest enthusiasm in her voice as she continued, “I’m sure you both have seen it in previous years, but it is something else to see it firsthand.”

Her eager eyes darted between them, searching for some glimmer of happiness. “But before *that* we will be making a stop by the makeup department to get you both looking appropriate. You are representing your district, after all.”

*

Harry was tense throughout the entire experience.

They had been separated the moment the vehicles had come to a stop, Luna dragged off by one group of colourful, loud people; and Harry by another.

They stripped him and sprayed him with floral smelling water, scrubbing at his skin harshly until he was red and raw, then did it again. His clothes were taken away, replaced with a plain smock that stopped at his thighs.

They cut his hair, trimmed and thinned it out, the hairdresser tutting over the state of it like Harry had the means or interest to care about his appearance. The man then ran his product-covered hands through the black locks, pulling and twisting with his brushes until he was satisfied.

In a whirl, he was sent into another room, shivering and shaken, his scalp itching from the harsh treatment he had been subjected to; and another swarm of people collapsed around him. He was forced into a tight black suit that covered every inch of him, from his neck to his wrists to his ankles. It rippled in the bright light of the fitting room, resembling condensed smoke, and Harry ran a finger along the invisible seam of his arm in wonder.

“Here,” the designer said, holding out a grey coat that loosely resembled one of the uniforms the miners in District 12 wore. It was thick and provided a little protection from the harsh chill of the air, but cut off at Harry’s hips, flaring out and leaving his legs in nothing but the undersuit.

Next, he was handed a pair of thick leather boots that reached halfway up his calves. They shone like wet stone and as Harry slipped them on they moulded to him. He frowned but did not bother wondering how these people already seemed to have clothing that fit his small, slim frame.

Dressed in the strange outfit, Harry stood straight on the podium, shifting uncomfortably. He felt incredibly bare under the assessing gazes of the designers. One woman stepped up to him, plucking at Harry's outfit with professional detachment, her gaze never straying above his neckline. Her long nails were tipped in hot pink, and stood out violently against the dark fabrics.

Harry let her work in silence, fixing whatever imperfections she could apparently see. After a few minutes of fussing, she stepped back and pressed her fingers to her mouth. "Beautiful," she commented, and then nodded graciously when her assistants began to applaud her. "Get him to makeup," she ordered, grabbing Harry's arm and gently moving him off the podium. "Tell Micca to go smokey. I want his eyes to pop."

"Of course!" A perky young man affirmed, latching onto Harry and steering him out of the room and into the hallway. He was taken down to one of the last doors and was hit with the overwhelming urge to sneeze the moment he stepped inside.

The young man with him pushed him into a seat, humming a pleasant tune under his breath as he went around setting up the space. He dragged a tray over to Harry's left and then patted him on the shoulder. "Micca will just *love* you," he said with a grin, teeth a bright white. "Green is his favourite colour, and your eyes are *gorgeous*."

The door opened then and another man strode inside, dressed in bold silver clothes and with gold accents. His own makeup was extreme, golden swirls rolling from the corners of his eyes down his cheeks in curling patterns.

Harry shrunk back in his seat when those eyes—sharp, pale blue—locked onto him. The man let out a gasp, hurrying forward and snatching Harry's face between his hands, turning his face left and right, staring right into his eyes with a burning hunger.

"Like emeralds in the sun," he whispered reverently, thumb caressing the skin below Harry's left eye. He flinched at the touch. "They told me your eyes were stunning, but *this*...my word. I have never seen such a splendid shade before!"

Micca snapped his fingers. The young man in the room eagerly jumped forward. Determination shone through every pore. "You will be *beautiful*, Harry," he promised, and plucked a small bottle from his assortment of tools.

*

Harry watched his reflection closely as he was transformed into someone else beneath the hands of a stranger.

Heavy black powder covered the skin around his eyes, stretching across the arch of his nose and towards his temples, like a mask. Gold and silver flecks were sprinkled over the area, but it was his eyes that called attention.

Harry's eyes had always been bright, and were easily his most distinguishable feature, but never like this.

Against the black backdrop, the green seemed to *glow*. They looked big and sharp, cutting like the gems the makeup artist had compared them to. They were impossible to ignore, seeming dangerous and unnatural.

Foreign.

These were his mother's eyes, and Harry no longer recognised them.

He gripped the arms of his chair to stop the tremors.

"Absolutely exquisite, darling," Micca whispered, breathless at his own work. "They will all want a piece of you."

*

Harry kept a white-knuckled grip on the handles of the chariot as they burst out into the Capitol sun.

In front of them, eleven other chariots rode in formation down the long, enormous parade path. Stands rose high on both sides of them, filled to the brim with exhilarated crowds, their fervour not dampened by the hours of waiting.

Harry stared up at them, the sick feeling coming back immediately at the sight.

He had only ever seen the event broadcasted on the television before, watching the tributes be paraded before the Capitol in frivolous outfits—some smiling and waving, others stoic, and a memorable few crying.

Their chariot had finally reached the beginning of the stands, and Harry startled when Luna grabbed his hand. She stared up at him solemnly, her own makeup far less obvious than his, nothing there to hide her youth. "We need to smile," she said.

"I can't," Harry said, shaking his head. "I can't. Not for them."

"Smile for me," Luna told him, just barely audible over the roar of the crowd. "I would like to see it, just this once. Please?"

And how could he deny her?

It's for Luna, Harry thought, forcing his lips to curl. She stared at him, eyes drinking in the expression, before her own smile bloomed forth in response.

*

That night, the replays of the parade would show the tributes from District 12 smiling gently at each other, attention never wavering from their partner as they passed the shouting masses.

*

President Riddle was a tall man, made even larger by the platform he stood on.

Harry stared up at him, eyes narrowed from the glare of the sun. The distance was too great to truly make out the man's features, but against the deep black suit he wore, the single white rose pinned to his lapel stood out like a beacon.

But Harry did not need to see him. He already knew the man's face well; could recall the week-long media storm that had followed Riddle's appointment just four years ago, and every piece of propaganda that had followed. The death of President Grindelwald had stunned their nation, and had been seen as a blessing to the Districts, a hope they hardly dared to hold.

Grindelwald's draconian reign had ended, and when Riddle had assumed the position at the tender age of twenty-five, they had all foolishly believed that things would change, that their torment would finally end.

The Games that year had been more brutal than any that had come before it.

Harry *hated him*.

He blocked out the man's speech, listening to the timbre of his voice rather than the words, and gritted his teeth as sweat began to bead along his forehead from the heat.

This entire thing was a farce, and a part of him just wished they executed them the moment they were reaped. The pageantry of it all disgusted him.

Harry glared up at Riddle, half-hoping the man could see it from his podium. It was only Luna's steadying presence that stopped him from doing something stupid; and as the crowd burst into cheers and their chariots began their last circuit passed the overhanging stage, Harry made sure to stare straight ahead, the smallest rebellion he could give.

*

It took almost an hour to change out of their outfits and into some plainer clothes. The simple pants and shirt were still some of the finest things Harry had ever worn, caressing his skin like silk, but with no sequins or glistening material, he could almost trick himself into thinking things were normal.

Once the last traces of makeup were wiped from their skin, they were once again pushed into a vehicle, and finally taken to the training centre.

It was a massive area spread out around one domineering tower in the middle, stretching up to the sky like the statement it was. As they drove over the boundary, the last car in the line, Harry turned in his seat to watch as the forcefield shimmered into existence behind them for a moment, then fade from sight.

He felt the final thread of disbelief and the naïve mantra of *maybe this was a dream* snap away.

There was no escaping now.

Harry slowly turned back to face the front and sunk into his seat.

It was cruel, he thought, that they used invisible fences.

*

Mafalda spoke all the way up to the elevators, rattling off facts and idle remarks to fill the void, and making the headache behind Harry's eyes start to throb.

He stared out the glass wall to distract himself, watching as they continued to rise fast. Harry was no stranger to heights, having snuck outside the district boundary many times with Ron to climb the trees and explore the forest—but this was something else.

His vision swam.

“—and of course, because you come from District 12, you two get the top floor for the tributes. Ah, here we are!” Mafalda exclaimed.

Harry turned around as the doors slid back. His mouth fell open.

It was *opulent*. Ostentatiously decorated and spacious to the point of being insulting. The area before them was an open-floor plan, allowing a view straight from the doorway to the bedroom halls.

It was large enough to fit at least three houses from their district.

It was downright *wasteful* in its design. There were people back home living in cramped huts—*Molly*, trying so very hard to support all of her children in a house that was falling down

around her ears—and yet here they had so much room they could afford to squander it.

Mafalda was still speaking, pointing out the different areas to them, her voice inaudible above the buzzing in Harry's ears. He grappled for the familiar rush of anger, but it slipped through his fingers like sand.

“For the sake of my sanity *stop squawking*.”

Harry's head snapped up.

The three of them looked over in surprise to see Snape emerging from one of the bedroom hallways. His scowl was impressive and fixed on Mafalda with a vengeance. “Can't you see that they do not care? You have been hounding them since the reaping—give them some peace.”

Mafalda drew herself up as Snape came to stop in front of her. “Now Severus,” she began archly, sounding so like a mother scolding an errant child, “there are many things that they need to be aware of before—”

“I sincerely doubt whatever wisdom you wish to impart is time-sensitive,” he cut in, gesturing dismissively over at Harry and Luna. “They don't need to suffer your presence longer than necessary. The Games are torture enough.”

Mafalda bristled. It was the closest Harry had seen her come to losing her composure, and he could admit that he liked it.

“Isn't there a bottle you should be drowning yourself in?” she hissed back under her breath, though Harry did not know why she bothered. Her façade was shattered.

“And I am looking forward to getting back to it without your inane voice interrupting me.” Snape replied evenly. “Go waste air somewhere else.”

Mafalda glared and huffed, her cheeks surely a burning red under the layers of powder. She turned sharply to face Harry and Luna, forcing a smile. Harry wished she had not; it was a brittle and ugly expression.

“I suppose I can let you have a few hours to get acquainted with your...mentor. Feel free to explore the floor, dears. I will be back for dinner to discuss your routine for the next few days. We are going to be *very* busy.”

She patted Luna on the shoulder, then swept past them to return to the elevator. Harry could hear the click of her heels the entire way.

The moment the doors closed, he slumped in exhaustion. Luna leaned against him in support.

“Thank you,” she said to Snape, peering up at him with inquisitive eyes.

Snape snorted, then walked away from them. “Don't,” he tossed over his shoulder.

“Where the hell are you going?” Harry bit out, his patience falling into tatters. “You’re supposed to teach us, aren’t you?”

Snape stopped by the drinks cart near the kitchen, plucking a full bottle from it and giving them a dark glance. “I already gave you the only advice you need,” the man answered briskly, and Harry scowled at the memory of the encounter on the train. “There is nothing I can do to help you. You’ve come from the poorest district, you have no stamina, no strength, not like the other tributes. Accept your imminent deaths and enjoy your last days alive in the lap of luxury.”

“Asshole,” Harry hissed as Snape made his escape back to his room, but it lacked the previous heat. He closed his dry eyes and sighed, only opening them once he was in control of himself. “Come on, Luna,” he said softly, “we should get some sleep. Tomorrow is...not going to be a good day.”

*

Dinner sat heavy in his stomach, too many flavours turning his tongue numb even after a few hours.

Mafalda had returned, just as she had promised, and the vision she painted of their next few days was as grim as Harry had suspected.

It was hard to think, knowing that in a handful of days, he would be in the arena.

He...really missed Ron and Hermione. Especially now.

His room was too big and quiet for his comfort. Everything, from the soft mattress to the smooth blankets to the air, was wrong.

He had already explored every inch of it and now he sat on the edge of the enormous bed, staring at the television screen as the violent scenes played out in front of him.

The Capitol always showed snippets from previous Games—to hype the populace, to *whet their appetite*—and Harry had been about to turn the thing off when he had caught sight of one familiar face.

Snape, all of sixteen, racing through marshland with blood running down the curve of his jaw.

Harry had scrambled for the remote, managing to pause the video on a blurred shot of Snape dodging the spear the tribute sprinting after him had thrown, the line of metal an elongated white streak cutting through the middle of the static image.

An idea burst forth suddenly, fuelled by the persistent bitterness that had been dogging him since Snape had first written them off.

There were other ways to learn from their mentor—ways that did not require actually talking to him.

The Capitol had every year of the Games saved on their television services, giving their citizens unlimited access to rewatch previous rounds and old favourites. He could watch Snape's year and study how the man had survived, noting what he prioritised, the survival techniques he used...even how he killed.

If the man refused to teach them anything of value, then Harry would just take the knowledge he needed. It was not fair of Snape to reject them, purely on the basis of being from District 12, when *he* had won and proven it possible.

Harry bit his lip hard, gripping the remote with both hands. He pulled up the menu, and went through the options until he found the list of previous Games.

*

Their training sessions technically began at eight, but through unspoken agreement, both Harry and Luna rose early, ate quickly, and arrived at the assigned floor over an hour early.

Harry was running on two hours of sleep, having spent most of his night speeding through the first lot of recordings from Snape's match. Already, he was condensing a list in his head of *dos* and *don'ts*. He would have to speak to Luna after training and begin formulating a plan.

If they could survive the first ten minutes of the Games and avoid the cornucopia skirmish, then they would have a good chance of making it through the first few hours.

That was what Snape had done, at least, and it had worked out well for him.

"Are you alright, Harry?" Luna asked as they entered the expansive training centre. There were already several tributes inside, and with a quick sweep of his eyes, Harry saw they were mostly careers. His expression soured.

"I'm fine," he assured her, mustering a small smile. "I just didn't sleep well, I guess."

Luna hummed, scanning him. She clearly did not believe him, but she was kind enough to let him get away with a lie. "So, what should we try first?" she asked, tilting her head.

She had braided her hair today, something he had never seen her do before. It looked nice.

"Probably focus more on survival skills," he mused, hands coming to rest on his hips. "I think those will be the most useful for us. How to conceal fire smoke, how to treat wounds, traps, things like that."

She nodded agreeably. "And weapons?" she asked.

Harry hesitated.

He looked over at the racks of different weapons put around the room, feeling sore just looking at them. He shook his head, “There’s nothing here that we could learn to use in a few days, we’d just be wasting time. Useless you’ve had some training I don’t know about?”

Luna shook her head, her lips curling briefly in resigned amusement.

“Then we’ll stick to daggers and knives,” he decided. “Those are the most common weapons, and the most versatile. We’ll have more of a chance with them.” He paused then, considering, then added, “Maybe look at ways to find water too. We have no idea what environment the arena will be. It could be a bloody desert—we won’t last long if there’s no supply of water.”

“Or they could taint it,” Luna tacked on helpfully. “They did that one year.”

Harry winced just thinking about that round. The Games had been particularly short that year, given that over half of the tributes had dropped dead within the first day.

“Yeah,” he agreed quietly, aware of the eyes now focussing on them. “We should head to one of the stations now. Do you want to train together, or separately?”

Luna frowned, thinking carefully. “Separately?” she suggested. “We can learn more things that way and,” her own gaze darted around them pointedly, “it would draw more attention if we stayed together.”

Disappointed but understanding, Harry nodded. “Alright then, after we finish here, we should start thinking through our strategy. Be careful.” he said, gripping Luna by her forearm and leaning in to whisper in her ear. “And watch out for the careers. Try to stay out of their way.”

Luna patted his hand in comfort and agreement, then ambled away. Harry watched her go worriedly, levelling a ferocious glare at the male tribute from District 2 that was staring at her too intently. The other boy grinned at him, wide and daring, but thankfully turned back to the throwing daggers he had in front of him.

Harry released a short breath, then made for the trap station.

He would have to keep an eye on that one.

*

He watched Snape take a brick to another tribute’s head that night, flinching slightly as the stone connected with skin and came away more bloody each time.

*

The trainers themselves were surprisingly helpful, answering whatever questions Harry could think to lob their way. The woman he had spent most of his second day with was around thirty, and was all whipcord muscles and firm hands.

“You’re smaller than most of the other tributes,” she told him, kicking his feet further apart and pulling his arms into place. “Younger and weaker too. That puts you at a disadvantage. But you can make up for it with speed. They will underestimate you—use that. Stay out of their range unless you have a solid shot at a killing blow. One hit from them, even a glancing one, could knock you off balance.”

She circled him once more, prowling like a large cat, and then stopped in front of him. “Aim for the weak points,” she told him calmly. “Eyes, throat, the groin. If you can nick an artery, you’ll almost certainly win.” She ran a finger down her arm, “Slice here as deep as you can, or here,” she did the same to her thighs. “The arteries are on the inside of the limbs. If you can sever one, they’ll bleed out.”

Finally, after walking Harry through where to punch and how to block, she looked him in the eyes. There was no remorse there, no sympathy, just blank efficiency—but Harry found he appreciated her stony professionalism right now.

He would not be able to stomach pity from someone teaching him to kill.

“Whatever you do, don’t let them get you on the ground,” she warned softly. “If they pin you, you’re done.”

*

Harry drank slowly from his water bottle, green eyes roaming over the training centre idly. A few of the mentors were here today, talking to their tributes or to each other. Snape had come, though Harry did not know why.

The man had stationed himself in the corner, only speaking to some of the other mentors when they came up to him; some with blind enthusiasm, others with more caution and respect—which, given what Harry had seen so far from Snape’s efforts in the arena, was actually warranted.

It made the man’s insistence in not training them all the more frustrating.

But he had felt Snape’s eyes on him most of the day, a silent judgement cataloguing his every move and measuring him against an unknown metric.

It pissed Harry off, to be completely honest. He wanted nothing to do with the man, so he pushed him from his thoughts.

Harry's gaze, inevitably, came to rest on Luna, who was across the room and listening avidly to whatever one of the medics was telling her.

"Careful lover boy," a voice murmured from behind him, "your staring is a bit too obvious."

Harry whipped around, startled, and met the eyes of the tribute from District 2. The boy was older than him, probably seventeen, and taller and broader. He stood only a few feet away, and the fact that Harry had not heard him approach disturbed him.

"What do you want?" Harry asked, mouth turning down at the sides.

"Nothing," the other said, shrugging languidly. "Just...making conversation."

"Go make it somewhere else then," Harry said, his eyes narrowing. "I'm not interested."

The boy cocked his head, his grin growing. "No, you're much more interested in your little friend. Which I can understand. She's *adorable*. Real shame that she got reaped."

"Shut the fuck up," Harry snarled, stepping forward without thinking. "You don't talk about her."

"What are you going to do about it, 12?" the other taunted, smile unnerving and vicious.

"Think you can protect her? *Please*."

"You so much as touch her and I will kill you," Harry promised, hands twitching and vision bleeding red.

"I really hope you try," the boy said, eyes burning. "I think you'll be a fun one. See you around, 12. Try not to die playing hero before I get the chance to have a go at you."

Harry gritted his teeth, fingers curling into fists as the boy stepped passed him, knocking shoulders as he went.

Shit.

*

It was dark when Harry shuffled out of his room, mind too loud to sink into the blackness of sleep.

He headed for the large floor-to-ceiling windows that dominated the outer wall of the common area. The Capitol was a sprawling web of lights, a mirror of the starry sky above and just as cold and distant.

Harry splayed one hand on the cool glass, eyes roaming over the cityscape, searching for something he could not name.

One day. They had one day left before the Games started.

It was an eternity and yet nothing at all.

He would be dead soon, and strangely the thought did not bother him as much as it had even just yesterday.

It was almost a relief in some ways, *freeing*, to know that soon all of this would be over. He leaned his forehead against the window and sighed, his warm breath fogging the glass.

Slowly, his fingers curled inwards, leaving streaks on the spotless surface. Harry pressed his knuckles into the window and closed his eyes.

He was so tired.

“Potter.”

Harry straightened, turning around to see Snape stepping out from the hallway. Dressed in dark clothes and steps naught but a whisper, the man resembled a shadow.

“What?” Harry asked, already returning his attention to the Capitol. His tone was short and barbed, but Snape was thick-skinned, and it would take more than Harry’s vitriol to wound him.

“You need to cut her loose.”

And just like that, Harry was incensed. “Excuse you?” he hissed, twisting around to glare at the unrepentant man.

“You heard me,” Snape said, still endlessly calm. “You need to cut her loose if you want a chance of surviving.”

Harry pulled away from the window, stepping into the man’s space. His fists shook from how tightly he was clenching them. “How *dare you*—”

“You need to listen—”

“I don’t need to do anything,” Harry interrupted. “I don’t want to hear anything you have to say. You have left us to flounder and struggle by ourselves since we got here. You’ve ignored and pushed us aside from the beginning—you think I want your advice *now*?”

Snape continued, tearing through Harry’s words like they were wet paper, “Staying with her will destroy any chance you have of surviving.”

“I know,” Harry snapped, and it was only because he stood so closely that he could see the flare of surprise in Snape’s dark eyes. Harry wanted to laugh at him. Instead, he smiled with his teeth, “I know that I’m going to die—but there’s no one at home for me. Luna still has her father. Between the two of us, she deserves the chance to live more.”

Snape met his eyes, an old pain lurking beneath his frustration. “You are a stupid, stupid boy,” he murmured.

“Not stupid,” Harry corrected, his anger waning as quickly as it was summoned, “just realistic.”

Snape stared at him for another long moment, before shaking his head. “You don’t know what reality is,” he told him, a special weight to his words, and then walked away.

Harry watched him go, confused, shoulders dropping with each step.

*

A six.

A six.

Luna had gotten a *three*.

Harry leaned back against the lounge and stared up at the carved ceiling, trying to identify what he was feeling.

A six was low in comparison to the others, though not necessarily horrible—but a three was *abysmal*. It was the lowest score Harry had ever seen a tribute get. The Gamemakers might as well have declared her dead meat.

An easy target.

Unthreatening.

Harry turned his head to the side to stare thoughtfully at Luna who was sitting beside him, watching as Mafalda shouted at Snape for not doing more to prepare them. Harry half-listened to the woman complain about attracting sponsors, as Luna glanced at him.

He raised an eyebrow, because if he knew one thing from these last few days it was that Luna had a steely intelligence to her that was often softened by her demeanour. She could have easily scored higher.

Luna smiled placidly at him, though there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

Ah, Harry thought, surprised at her ploy and reluctantly impressed.

Unthreatening indeed.

*

If there was one thing that Harry had been dreading the most, aside for the Games themselves, it was the interview stage.

Rita Skeeter was a special brand of unpleasant, everything about her making Harry's skin itch. Her flamboyance. Her lilting voice. Her shark-like smiles. Watching her, year after year, interview the tributes and speak to them like they were old friends and not sacrifices, always turned his stomach.

Though not as much as her interviews with the victors did. There was a *greed* to Skeeter that shone through her eyes, evident to anyone that bothered to look, whenever she sat across from those broken children; playing up their experience in the arena, asking them pointed questions, always looking for that golden moment.

Harry had never thought that he would see the woman in person, let alone be put on the other end of her focus.

He was just glad that it would be a one-time event.

They had been handed off to the makeup department once more, though this time there were no outrageous designs or extreme makeovers.

Harry was given a fitted black suit to wear, accented with green edgings and a silver vest, and a pale yellow square folded into his pocket. It felt too tight around the shoulders, and forced him to stand up straight, but every one of the assistants cooed at him as they fixed his hair.

"Like a doll," one said, hand fluttering near her cheek. "Such a handsome boy! What a pair you two make!"

What a pair referring to Luna, who was wearing a lovely green and silver dress that matched the shades on Harry's suit, and had a black hairband keeping her fringe back from her face.

They were clearly a set, a deliberate design choice from their wardrobe department; and when they were eventually taken to the waiting area backstage, Harry noted that none of the other tribute pairs matched to the same degree as he and Luna did.

It made him wonder who suggested it.

"How are you feeling?" Harry asked under his breath, eyes fixed on the television showing the interview of the boy from District 4. It had been less than an hour, and they were almost halfway through.

At least the interviews are quick, Harry thought. He had no desire to be paraded around in front of the Capitol again for longer than necessary.

"I'm okay," Luna answered, though her fingers twisted anxiously in her lap.

Harry looked down at her, then reached out to hold her hand. He rubbed his thumb over her knuckle, waiting until he had her attention to speak. "You'll be fine," he told her, "just...talk

about your father if she asks. Say how much you love him. It'll be over in ten minutes, and then we can go back and sleep."

Luna stared down at where her hands were covered by Harry's, before she looked back up at him and smiled. "Alright."

*

"Now, Luna, we all could not help but notice how close you and Harry seemed at the parade. Didn't they make a lovely sight, everyone?"

The crowd applauded, and Harry nibbled at the pad of his thumb as he watched Luna on the screen. He was alone in the waiting room now, and was glad for it. He needed the time to gather his thoughts before stepping out into the spotlight.

"Yes, yes, so tell us, dearie, is there something...more between you two?"

Harry glared at the screen, his hand dropping from his mouth. Skeeter looked intense, scavenging like a vulture for any hint of a scoop. Nevermind that they were *children*, not even fifteen, and she was trying to push something like this.

"No," Luna answered, voice sweet and clear through the speakers. She smiled brightly, shining under the lighting. *"Harry is like an older brother to me,"* she clarified evenly, *"he is very kind, and I am glad that he's here with me. I wouldn't be nearly as brave if I hadn't got to spend these last few days with him."*

Smart girl.

The crowd tittered at that, and even Skeeter appeared moved. It was not what she had been hoping for, but a brother-sister dynamic was just as compelling as young love.

Harry's shoulders loosened, relief bubbling forth in his stomach. He would not have blamed Luna if she had tried to spin it that way—would have probably played along, even—because the Capitol thrived on drama and intrigue, and that lie might have given them an edge.

But he was glad that she had done this instead. He did not want their last moments together to be tainted with a false relationship. He wanted to be *himself* when he died, not an act put on for the amusement of his captors.

*

Being on the stage was daunting, with the flashing lights and the screaming and Rita Skeeter's claw-like nails digging into his arm as she tugged him close.

"Harry!" She exclaimed, looking as fresh as she had for the first interview. "Come, sit, sit. It's so very nice to finally meet you!"

The crowd settled as Harry and Skeeter sat. Harry was still blinking the spots out of his eyes when Skeeter threw him the first question.

"So, how are you feeling, Harry? Excited? Nervous? It's a big day tomorrow."

Harry strangled back his first answer. "Nervous," he admitted, gaze darting out over the crowd before flitting back to Skeeter's dark eyes.

"Of course," she crooned, leaning forward. "I can't imagine what you're going through, but you must know that everyone here thinks you're *very brave*. Isn't that right, folks?"

There was raucous applause at that, and Skeeter's grin was wide enough that Harry could see her gold tooth. He stared at her, mouth twisted into a tight little smile, and thought, *you patronising bitch*.

"So, tell me about yourself Harry. No one seems to know much about you. Tell me about your family." It was the same question she had asked every tribute so far, and without fail, everyone had given her what she wanted. Everyone *had* family to talk about.

But not Harry.

"That will make a good story for you, dear."

He took a breath, a plan forming. *A story.*

"I, uh," he let out a soft, awkward laugh, "I'm actually an orphan. My parents died a few years ago, and other than my friends, I've been alone ever since."

Skeeter gasped, perfectly theatrical, and the crowd mirrored her.

"Oh, that is *awful*," Skeeter said with just the right amount of sympathy in her voice. She was a good actress, had to be for her job, but Harry could see the gleam in her eyes. "Do you miss your parents, Harry?"

"Of course," Harry said, fixing his expression into something tinged with sorrow rather than the angry scowl he wanted to let loose. What kind of question was that? "I loved them very much, and I'd like to think they'd be proud of me."

Skeeter nodded, lips pursing because smiling would not exactly be appropriate right now. "I think they would be. Luna told us earlier that you are a very kind young man. Tell me, what do you think of her?"

It was a soft question, easy to answer, especially given that he had been watching Luna's interview. Harry felt a rush of satisfaction at how clever the girl was.

“We’ve known each other for years, really,” Harry started, relaxing into his seat. “I’ve always seen her as a little sister, and I was really scared when she got reaped.”

Story, Harry thought, *give them a story*.

“I told her...I told her that I want her to win. That I would try to help her win.” The admission was breathless, and Harry hoped he had not just made a mistake, because everything seemed to fall silent—

Before the crowd erupted in support.

Skeeter gave him another smile, slightly more genuine than the ones she had been tossing around all evening, and she stood with him. “May the odds be ever in your favour, Harry,” she told him over the applause.

*

Harry was calm when he woke the next morning.

He showered, got dressed, and went out into the main area. Luna joined him minutes later, and they started on the food already prepared. Harry ate more than he normally would, until his stomach felt too full, not knowing when he would have the chance to eat again.

Once they were done, they were escorted out of their apartment. Mafalda clucked around them before they left, her eyes actually teary, though whether it was because she truly liked them, or the idea of them, Harry could not say.

He acquiesced to the hug she gave him, eyes tracking Luna as the girl walked over to where Snape was standing with a scotch glass in his hand.

Harry could not hear what she said to him, but whatever it was caused Snape to frown. Harry watched as Luna held something out to Snape, too far away to see what it was. She passed it to him with a peaceful expression, spoke once more, then returned back to his side without a backwards glance.

Snape was left standing there, clutching something in his limp hand, as they were led out.

Harry did not ask her what she gave him as they were taken to the hovercraft, but he held her hand the entire way.

*

“You’ll be fine,” Harry whispered, hugging Luna close, steadily ignoring the looks they received from the other tributes. One’s focus into particular made Harry want to shiver. The boy from District 2 gave him a mocking salute as he was escorted away.

She nodded into his chest.

“Remember the plan,” he said, squeezing her shoulder tightly. “Stay out of the cornucopia. If...if I can’t make it to you, if I get killed, you *run*.”

Luna pressed her forehead against his chest for a long moment, before stepping back and nodding.

Harry gave her a smile, quick and deliberately light for all his stomach was filled with lead. He tucked a loose strand of her hair behind her ear and committed her face to memory, just in case.

“I’ll see you up there,” he said, fingers brushing her cheek as he stepped back.

*

The light was blinding as he emerged from the tube.

Harry’s arm raised reflexively, giving his eyes a precious few seconds to adjust to the sudden brightness. He blinked rapidly to clear his vision and dropped his arm to his side to get his first glimpse at his surroundings.

As was tradition, he and the other tributes were arranged on podiums in a wide circle, clustered around the steel structure of the cornucopia. The whole area was packed with weapons and supplies, but Harry ignored all of that.

He looked around frantically, eyes darting between each face, identifying and discarding, searching for the only one that mattered as a large glowing set of numbers was projected above the cornucopia, and a voice rang out.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the thirty-third Hunger Games will commence in—”

30.

His gaze settled on Luna, who was almost on the other side of the circle, only just visible behind the edge of the cornucopia. She was already staring back at him, so tiny compared to the two careers on either side of her. Harry eyed them suspiciously, though he was relieved that neither of them were from District 2.

Harry bit his lip, praying that they both just ignored her and went for the skirmish instead. With her low score, Luna should not even register as a threat to them.

With Luna located, Harry turned his attention to the arena itself.

15.

They were in a flat plain, with sparse trees dotting the land and long pale grass. To his left, he could make out the outline of some buildings that resembled a miniature city that was clearly intended to be the main section of the Games. To his right, the plain dropped off into dense bushland, then dunes of sand, before finally meeting the shoreline of a large body of water.

Harry's breathing began to increase, adrenaline already flooding him as the world solidified and sharpened around him.

Stick to the plan, he reminded himself, swallowing the knot of nerves writhing under his tongue.

Harry quickly dropped his gaze, scanning the ground near him. He picked out several small packs that were sprinkled in the area, ones that were far enough outside of the cornucopia's orbit. Still a risk, but one he was willing to take.

10.

Harry tensed, bending his knees and balancing on the balls of his feet, ready to move as the numbers continued ticking down.

Grab the closest pack.

5.

Avoid everyone, particularly the careers.

4.

Get to Luna.

3.

Run towards the city.

2.

Harry clenched his hands.

1.

He was off like a shot, darting for the bag nearest to him. He did not stop, only leaning down far enough to snatch it up by its strap on his way.

It was heavy, but not so much that it slowed him.

He sprinted, dodging around one person, listening distantly as screams began to pierce the air. His chest heaved as he crossed the outer rim of the podiums, searching for Luna amidst

the pandemonium.

“Harry!”

He spun, finding Luna already a good distance away from the area, a pack of her own in one hand and her other in the air waving at him.

Smiling in relief, Harry quickly made his way to her, crossing the distance as fast as he could.

Luna had begun moving towards the city, speeding up only when he reached her side and grabbed her hand. “Come on!” he called, pulling her along. “We can hide in the buildings!”

They escaped to the sound of canons.

End Notes

Thoughts, comments, and incoherent screaming are all welcome. If anyone wants to stop by for a visit, my [tumblr](#) is here!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!