

The time that is given us

How love can change lives

Von Gepo

Kapitel 10: Tenth chapter

Tom really was a devil. A cute one, able to make hearts melt with his smile, but still a devil. He read more books than any kid his age should know and began correcting his teacher. He solved his math problems faster than any other kid and called them out on their jealousy. While he had learned not to lord his intelligence over them, he defended himself viciously if they attacked him for it. Some kids tried beating him up and he gave back as much as he got. Edgar's teachings changed to self-defense tactics and non-lethal combat. But while Tom could hold his own against kids his age, their older brothers had no qualms about beating Tom up for being "an uppity little shit". Edgar and Harry taught the boy to talk to them and complained to the kids' parents and teachers. All in all, it worked, but Tom still earned some beatings and animosity for smart-mouthing other people sometimes. Edgar saw it as a necessary evil for learning to differentiate between people you could correct and people that easily flew off their handle but Harry fretted. He and Edgar finally worked out that their parenting worked best if Edgar focused on the everyday stuff and Harry focused on long-term development.

Harry got himself books on legilimency and occlumency. He practiced meditation and impulse-control with Tom, explaining that once he went to Hogwarts, all of his actions would be what would define him later on. Most teenagers did idiot things during their puberty and did not have to worry about that. But those with high aims could be brought down by youthful stupidity, so every action should be well-thought through and seen from the eyes of an adult looking back. A few hours of that, telling stories about youthful exploitation and bad choices made a whole lot of difference and at seven years old, Tom resembled a perfect young lord instead of an unruly child. He had the grace and decency that Draco Malfoy hadn't reached even after school.

Which didn't mean that he couldn't be a child. He built snow-men and had mud-fights and spitting competitions with the other children. It just meant that sometimes, he asked if this or that behavior might be seen as strange or shameful. He did not have a grasp on shame yet – not that Harry would have expected that from a seven-year-old – but he understood on an intellectual level. They often recapped the day and went through situations Tom had questions about. Where he had been boisterous and overbearing before, he now stayed back and observed and analyzed. Sometimes they even reached points where Tom knew he should have intervened but didn't – wanting to see how something worked out. Teaching Tom about group dynamics took all out of Harry. He wished he could get some of Hermione's books on mass psychology but

mournfully, most weren't written yet.

Sadly, one of the best books on the topic was actually the one written by Hitler himself.

In it, he described how you could bend the masses to your will, how you could manipulate and redirect their focus, how you could sow distrust and use prejudice and hatred to further your gain. Harry described to both Tom and Edgar in detail how those techniques were used. They read the paper together, discussing the articles about what went on in Germany, comparing it to other rulers in the past. Harry also taught them the opposite – how to use those techniques to make a society more open-minded, how to fight prejudice, how to make people reflect on themselves.

He knew that he gave Tom the tools to bring about devastation as well as salvation. He taught him Grindelwald's and Dumbledore's techniques. After all, they were the same, just used for different aims.

He described society as he knew it – a world where women were equal to men in terms of intelligence and decision-making and men equal to women in terms of child-care and household skills. Tom was pretty confused about that one because why wouldn't men be good at child-raising? Harry sent him off for a sleep-over with the Smith family. The father had calmed down after not having to meet Harry again and not getting bad-mouthed by Tom. Harry had sworn him to observing only with that man, seeing as Howard's mother would most likely be the one to suffer if Tom talked back to Mr. Smith. Tom came back deeply confused with a million questions about why the kids feared their father, why he hit his kids instead of talking with them, why he never played with them and most importantly: Why that man thought himself so great when he was shit at being a decent human being.

Edgar had to explain that part because Harry just wanted to rip Mr. Smith a new one after hearing what Tom had observed. The next barrage of questions was why Mrs. Smith didn't leave her husband, sued him, sent the police after him, why she tried to make everything look fine and most of all: Why she didn't hit him back. Tom had not been able to hold himself back, he had offered her to visit boxing training with Edgar. He told them that she had only smiled sadly and hugged him, never giving an answer. This time, Harry had to answer because for Edgar, a lot of prejudice and rules were branded into his skull so deeply that he didn't even recognize them as discrimination. He explained stigma, ingrained societal rules, how well-thought ideas had turned into grotesque standards over time. He had never expected to be happy about having to sit through all of those Hermione monologues on women's rights but no he used them to explain change of deeply ingrained standards. He wasn't exactly happy about what he had to explain but with a sigh, he shouldered on and said: "Well, for it to make sense, I need to explain rape to you."

"Gren!" Edgar put his arms around Tom. "He is too young for that."

"Edgar, he has heard it happen."

"What?" The other man looked down at the seven-year-old that just seemed curious and a bit excited at the prospect of hearing about something he was deemed "too young" for.

"He just told us that in the night, Mr. Smith woke the kids and threw them out of the bedroom. They were only allowed back in later and Harold told him that such a thing happens all the time."

"That's not rape-"

"It is." They shared a look, Harry resolute, Edgar confused and a bit distraught. "Don't worry, I won't get too graphic."

"Well ... okay." Edgar still pulled Tom onto his lap. "But we stop if this is too much for him, yeah?"

"Of course." Harry focused on Tom. "So, first of all, what I am teaching you now is something that people normally don't talk about. It is seen as a taboo. If people talk about it, it is with friends and it's normally only adults. Kids aren't supposed to know about this, so don't talk with other kids about this. If anyone hears you talking about this, they'll see you as extremely strange and might even think of us as mistreating you."

"So it's like violence? Like how Mr. Smith beats his wife and I am supposed to ignore it because I am not supposed to know about it, even though I can see it happening?"

"Very much so. Rape is the worst form of violence. Just like beatings, it also happens to kids and as before, it is not supposed to happen, so people don't speak about it. If someone speaks about it, they are often told that they lie or have imagined it."

"And like with violence, the not talking about it makes it happen more often because people don't get help?"

"Exactly. I am glad you understand the pattern."

"Which means that someone in power should begin talking about it, so that people become aware of the problem and start believing in kids and other mistreated people that talk about their mistreatment."

"You are entirely correct, Tom. Well done." They had encountered the same pattern again and again in previous arguments.

The boy just smiled proudly.

"So, first of all: sex. That is short for sexual intercourse. It is an action where two adults use their genitalia to pleasure each other."

Edgar closed his eyes and groaned in exasperation while Tom scrunched his eyebrows and asked: "How does that work?"

"Do you remember when you asked Brea why her breasts were growing?"

"She nearly hit me and you explained the differences between males and females in class the next day. It was fun, all of the others looked really embarrassed. Why were they embarrassed?"

"Because once you hit puberty, normally around twelve to fourteen years old, you become embarrassed about your genitalia. That is normal because you begin to be able to feel pleasure by your genitalia then and the embarrassment saves you from experimenting with it too early. You are supposed to begin sexual intercourse once you are older than sixteen, best older than eighteen. But your body needs a few years to adjust, so the embarrassment helps to keep back from acting on your sexual urges while your body is not mature enough for it."

"Hm ... makes sense." Tom looked over his shoulder. "Why is Edgar embarrassed still?"

"Because I am telling this to you and you are very young. Most people have this inborn embarrassment when it comes to anything sexual around children. It is a mechanism to protect the children. He wouldn't feel embarrassed if you weren't in the room."

"So why aren't you embarrassed?"

"I am." Harry felt his cheeks flush for a moment. "But I know how important this is and where to draw the line on what I can tell you and what not. It keeps the embarrassment in check."

"Hm ... yeah, I get that. So once I'll hit puberty, I'll become ashamed of my own penis?"

"A lot of things will happen then and I'll tell you about them once you reach that age. The important thing now is that after puberty, your penis will be very sensitive and

you'll be able to feel pleasure when it is touched. If someone touches it, that is a sexual act. It should only happen between consenting adults."

"So sex is when someone else touches my penis?" Tom seemed to think about that for a moment. "And that is not allowed until I am an adult?"

"It might not make a lot of sense now but it will after puberty. Your genitals are a private area. Touching you there is a violation. With girls and women, that is also between their legs and their breasts. It is why Brea nearly hit you for asking about her breasts. That is something very private."

"So even asking about my penis is not okay? Because a girl in my class asked me if I would show her my penis."

"No, that is not okay and no, you shouldn't do that."

"But she offered to show me her ... what is it called? What girls have?"

"Just say genitals. Male and female genitals."

"So she showed me her genitals and I showed her mine. I wanted to see hers."

"You are not supposed to until you are an adult." Harry sighed. "If anyone else asks you again, you say no and you explain to them that genitals are private and shouldn't be shown to other people. If an adult ever touches you there or asks you to show them your genitals or they show you theirs, you tell me immediately. All of that is very, very wrong."

"Huh ... the nuns touched our genitals."

Edgar nearly flew off the couch, only stopped by Tom still sitting on him, spitting out an unbelieving, "What?"

Tom just looked unsure, most likely not knowing if the anger was directed at him or not.

Harry prompted him, "Tell me about that. Maybe I need to intervene, so they don't hurt other children."

Edgar's anger puffed out to hurt and sadness at seeing Tom's fear. He whispered, "Tell us, please."

"Well, they bathed the smaller children and they touched their genitals to wash them. They lined us up nakedly. They also touched our genitals if we couldn't sleep. They sometimes rubbed my penis, so that I would calm down."

Edgar just hugged Tom close, breathing in his scent for a moment or two.

Harry also focused on his breathing until he could speak again: "So ... the washing was okay. Small children need help with washing. They should not have paraded you nakedly but I have seen your living conditions. They did not have enough people to care for you like they should have. The rubbing to calm you down, that is very wrong."

"Oh, I remember! My penis was sensitive then. It isn't anymore."

"It shouldn't be. Your body is not mature enough for sexual intercourse, so nature protects you by keeping your genitals non-sensitive after the age of five or six. That rubbing that the nuns did, it screwed with your natural development. It might have meant that you wouldn't have lost your sensitivity and therefore would have had to battle sexual urges while not having the embarrassment to keep those urges at bay. It would have been a constant battle with sexual urges until you were old enough. Therefore, what the nuns did was a violation and thank God that it did not damage you."

"I want to shoot them dead." Edgar muttered.

"I will have a word with them, next time I visit London." Harry promised.

"I don't really understand why this sex thing is bad." Tom tried to wriggle out of Edgar's embrace. "You say that my body isn't mature enough for sex and that it can

damage me. But how can touching my penis damage me?"

"That is a question that I will answer once you have your first sexual urges. You can ask me then and at that time, I will explain in detail. Right now, you are too young to even hear about it."

Edgar looked relieved at that while Tom just looked put out and sulking. He ruminated about what he had been told and finally asked: "But you say that I saw it ... rape. I guess that rape is the word for sexual intercourse with violence? So if someone forcefully touches your genitals?"

"Hm ... you are right. I need to explain a bit at least for this to make sense."

Tom immediately sported his victory face while Edgar groaned in dismay.

"Do you remember what girls have instead of a penis?"

"They have a vagina and an uterus. So a hole in their body and an organ in which children can grow." It had been a year since Harry had explained that in class but as always, Tom had a great memory.

"Exactly right. So one form of sexual intercourse is entering the vagina with the penis."

"Ewww!" Tom scrunched his face.

"Yes, exactly that is the reaction you should have. You are too young to even think about that. It changes with puberty and adults do that for fun because it feels good to them."

"I don't wanna know." Tom shook his head.

"Yeah, that's what I meant when I said that I'll explain the details later in life. You now get why?"

Tom just nodded, his face a picture of disgust. Edgar just smiled at that reaction and cuddled the boy.

"And imagining something like that, does it make sense that sexual intercourse can damage a child?"

The boy just put his hands on his ears and closed his eyes.

Edgar said bemusedly: "I think he got the point, Gren."

"Anyway – doing that to a child is wrong and doing that against someone's will is wrong and it is called rape. I guess that is enough to understand the words sex and rape."

"I do understand." Tom looked deeply unhappy but unplugged his ears. "Can we stop talking about those disgusting things?"

"Now that you understand the words, yes. We go back to women and their position in society?"

"Yes, please", said Edgar while Tom just nodded.

"So in ancient times, the taboo on sex was a lot smaller because people had sex in front of each other. They were so poor, they didn't have houses, so there wasn't a lot of privacy. Consequently, children were aware of sex from an early age and the embarrassment trick from nature didn't really work. The bad thing about that was that adults' embarrassment also did not really work and some adults not only had sex in front of children but with children."

"Which is rape," Tom stated and had Harry nodding.

"And damaged the children. So people tried to come up with rules to spare the children, especially the girls. One of the first rules that when you had sex with a girl younger than three years old, you had to pay money to her father for the damage done. Another was that if she was older than three years old, you had to marry her and protect her from other men."

"Dear God." Edgar shuttered. "That's much too young."

"Yeah, they realized that. So once this system actually worked, they raised the age limit to seven years old."

Tom pressed his legs together and looked mildly disgusted again. It seemed Harry had been too graphic after all. His son saw a lot of seven years old girls on a daily basis.

"Yes, that is still too young but better than before. Next, they raised it to twelve years old."

Edgar slightly relaxed at hearing that. Tom leaned back against him.

"They encountered a problem when they wanted to raise it further – some girls look pretty mature at twelve years old. So they couldn't raise it further on account of the girls being too underdeveloped. They needed a new idea. It was also a problem that while the rules stopped strangers from raping children on account of the money to pay, it did not save children from their fathers agreeing to the rape. So they came up with an idea that made fathers even more responsible – they used God."

Edgar and Tom both hung on his lips, both looking fascinated.

"The Bible stated that Marie had been a young girl when she birthed Jesus. They changed the Bible, so it now stated that she had been a virgin when she birthed Jesus."

"What is a virgin?" Tom immediately asked.

"It's someone that never had sex in their life. Rape included. The church invented a belief that being a virgin was really important at marriage because of God. They even celebrated that extensively by allowing virgin brides to wear white clothes when they marry, while the non-virgin ones still married in color. They made propaganda that a good father was someone that protected their daughter from both sex and rape, so that she could marry as a virgin. Then they raised the age-block for marriage to fourteen."

"That's really clever." Edgar blinked in amazement. "When was that?"

"Twelfth and thirteenth century mostly. The initial idea was really good."

"But?"

"But once virgin brides were established, the non-virgin ones had extensive problems. You can't help being raped. It's violence done to you. But it was the girls that suffered for it. It was an age where unmarried women mostly didn't survive long. So those that had such violence done to them were doubly cursed. They were expelled from their families, unable to marry, often pregnant without anyone's support."

"Like my mom?"

"Yes, like your mom, Tom. With the difference that your parents were married and her husband's family expelled her. But it is mostly the same: Young girls, unable to support themselves, unable to find work, pregnant, slowly starving."

"That shouldn't happen."

"My thoughts exactly. Now what would be the next best step to protect those girls?" Harry looked at Tom for the answer.

"Making people realize that being raped is not their fault and caring for those poor girls and the consequences."

"That is possible if people are rich enough for it. Paying doctors, feeding a girl and a newborn, giving her child support and help with parenting. Once everyone has a good living standard, that will become possible. Right now, people are too poor for it. Next idea?"

"Another thing from God? Family is sacred?" Tom began to look pensively.

"Already tried that, wasn't enough. When you don't have enough food, you cut the

weakest off. A pregnant teenager is the weakest in a family. Still the same non-solution as the one you tried before.”

“How about a mom’s home? Like the orphanages? A place where pregnant women can go?”

“A very good idea, that one. You could invent shelters for pregnant women and young moms. You would need some people that can look after children, give parenting advice and help with women’s ailments. So midwives, nurses, older mothers. You also need the space and enough money for food.”

“So either become a politician or do charity work.” That had often been a conclusion from their talks, so Tom already knew that. “If someone had done that before, I’d still have my mom and would not have lived in a crappy orphanage.”

“Another good reason to become either a politician or a charity worker – our current orphanages are crap. They don’t have good locations, they don’t have enough workers, they don’t have enough food.”

“Dad, why aren’t you a politician?”

Harry just sighed. Well, how to explain that one? “You know ... when we are talking like this, it makes sense. You do stuff because you know it makes sense. But once you discuss this with politicians, the question is not if it makes sense. The question is how to pay for it. It’s like the family deciding to throw out their daughter because she is pregnant and they don’t have the money for that. Governments work the same way. They only have a limited amount of money and as a politician, you need to argue why spending money on this makes sense. There is war brewing on the horizon. War kills people, a lot more than crappy orphanages do, so they spend money on soldiers and weapons. In a world where conflict is still solved with war, the old and the young and the helpless get left behind and die.”

“So for better orphanages and shelters, war has to stop?”

“Exactly. The less money you need to spend on soldiers, policemen, judges, lawyers, jails, weapons, espionage and what else you need because countries fight one another, the more money you have to care for your people, educate them, build infrastructure and social support systems.”

“I see.” Tom looked from Harry to Edgar and back. “Still, why are you two soldiers and not politicians?”

“Because when someone tells me they rather invest in a new tank or a nuclear bomb instead of using the money to raise thousands of kids decently, I just want to punch their faces. I am a man of action, not talk.” Harry harrumphed. “I tried that politician thing, I am really not made for it. I don’t have the patience to talk to such short-sighted people. I just want to shoot them. I make a pretty good soldier but a very bad politician. I am only good at shooting them in the head.”

“He tries to raise you to become a better man than him.” Edgar smiled down at Tom. “I think I’d like to try that politician thing myself. If we survive the next war, I’ll retire from the military to become a politician. I have a bit more patience than you, Gren.”

“If?” Tom asked into the silence that followed. “What do you mean ... if?”

Oh. Damn. Edgar sent Harry a helpless look.

“Well ... soldiers die in war. Even some as high-ranking as us. There will be a war in the future. It might take us.” Harry tried to explain calmly.

Tom just shook his head, his eyes filling with tears.

“Don’t you fret, little one ... it hasn’t started yet. We still have some years.” Edgar pulled Tom closer and pecked his head with kisses.

“Dad?” His voice shook.

Harry came over and knelt down next to them. "We still have some years, I promise." A hand stretched in his direction, so he sat down next to Edgar and pulled both of them into an embrace. Tom sniffed and winced, not exactly crying but not exactly far from it either.

"Gren? Why don't we become politicians now?" Edgar asked in a whisper.

"Let us talk about that later."

"Okay."

So they just sat, letting Tom cry on them until he fell asleep.

"So ... why not become politicians?" Edgar sat down again, the exact same spot he was in before they brought Tom to bed.

"Same reason as stated before: I am really bad at it. You could decide on it, of course. I wouldn't stop you. But it's not for me. I need something to do, I can't just talk all day long. I'll lose first my patience, then my reason, then my grip on social morals. I am neither sly nor cunning nor underhanded enough to be a politician. I fly off the handle much too quickly." As he had explained to Hermione over and over and over again.

"There is something else I am good at."

"What is that?"

"Being a soldier, especially someone that organizes them. You see ... once you change a system from within, there are three things you have to fear. The first is easy: No one being on your side, no one listening to you, never getting anywhere because you can't convince people of your view. The second is a bit more tricky: The population turning on you. The more change you bring, the faster you change systems, the more people will be against you. You need to be patient, do it step by step, convince everyone again and again, hold your endgame close and always talk yourself out of everything, distributing the responsibility to a lot of other people. But then there is still the third: A military coup. Soldiers should work for you. But if they see the population suffer, they will turn on you and then you have nothing to protect you. So, to be a good politician, you need to be persuasive, patient and you need good friends in a lot of positions, especially the military."

"So ... you'll stay in the military to support Tom? But how does the non-magical ... wait. Have you speculated that I might decide to become a politician?"

"You are extremely capable, Edgar. I had hoped you would decide on that course of action. Now that you have taught me about the military, I think I can make it work, even if you decide not to stay by my side. If you want to become a politician now, I'll root for you. Or you decide to become one after the war. I think you would have more impact that way. But on the other hand, you are right that we might die, so maybe it's best you become a politician and only I join the war."

Edgar scoffed and shook his head. "And here he says he is not sly enough to become a politician. You do get how persuasive you are?"

"I am perfect behind the scenes. But I am bad in the spotlight. I need people like you and Tom. Both of you can smile prettily while you would like to strangle the person in front of you." Was it a sly thing that he was manipulating both in that direction? After Hermione made him into a political player, it was hard not to further her agenda. All of her ideas were spot-on. At least those that did not have to do with magical creatures.

"So you want us both on the non-magical front while Tom takes on the magical government? That plan is missing a player in the magical military ... oh, wait. You said you had some contacts in the magical world. This man you look up to, the homosexual

one that battled his own lover – that one is a higher up in the military?”

“There is no magical military, they only have law enforcement. Dumbledore is not part of it though. He is head of the only magical school and is on his way to becoming a political player. He may be able to support Tom to get a foot in the system.” Harry leaned back with a sigh. “Tom will have to make his own allies in the law enforcement or use Dumbledore’s contacts.”

They sat in silence for a moment.

“I can see the gears turning in your head.” Edgar smiled a truly Slytherin smile.

“We could secure his position by introducing him to magical society. Making friends with some people, becoming part of their community ... I’ll talk to Dumbledore about this. We need him on our side.”

“I really like this cunning side of you.”

Harry snorted. Cunning and ambitious. The hat had told him that he would do well in Slytherin. He always thought that had come from the Horcrux but that soul piece was long gone. Maybe Harry Potter was actually a lot more Slytherin than everyone had believed. Would believe in the future. Maybe not, he had most likely already erased that future. Or had he absorbed Gren’s soul? Because from what Edgar told him, Gren would have been a Slytherin.

“I don’t want you fighting alone though. It might make more sense to change to politics now, especially in light of one of us having to survive for Tom. But honestly ... I can’t let you go off to war alone. I can’t sit back and wait for the news of your slaughter every day. We either live or die together. My heart won’t allow anything else.”

“Are you sure?” Harry’s gaze found Edgar’s. “I want you to live.”

“I want the same for you.” The smile on the other man’s lips was shaky. “So I will make sure you make it out alive. You have a son and a mission.”

“I had a few of those in my life. Missions as well as sons.” Harry closed his eyes in pain.

“If I learned one thing it is that even the best of plans often fail.”

“Oh.” Edgar fidgeted on the couch. “So you think we’ll die?”

“High chance of that.”

“Hm.” He stared into space for a moment. “I’ll crumble without you. I had a few months without Gren and it was pure hell. I don’t want to sit back in an office, knowing that somewhere a grenade bomb has ripped you to pieces.”

“There will be bombs falling from the sky, ripping London to pieces and making the rest go down in flames.”

“All the more reason to be by your side.” Edgar took a deep breath and straightened his spine. “We either die or live together. I don’t want it to be any other way.”

Harry wished his friends weren’t as stubborn as this. But this was his fate: Gaining the most loyal friends, people that would even die for him. He wished it wasn’t this way. Edgar should stay safe. But Harry knew that nothing he could say would sway Edgar.

“As you wish.” He nodded to himself. “I’ll write to Dumbledore to come up with a plan on the magical front. Can you gather some intel on how best to change into politics after the next war?”

“Yes, sir.” Edgar saluted. “First of all, I’ll go to sleep though.”

“Is that insubordination? We need to have a strict word about that,” Harry joked.

“Uh.” The other man closed his eyes and shuddered. “That was some innuendo Gren sometimes used before sex.”

“Oh. Uhm ... sorry.” Harry scratched the back of his head sheepishly. “The soldier jokes come rather easy with you.”

"You need to break that habit before we rejoin the military." With an indulgent smile, Edgar shook his head. "What will happen to the factory once we are gone?"

"We will need a manager. It is a few years in the future though, so I thought we first expand a bit. Politics always take a lot of money, so getting rich on the war is sadly the only way to ease you into politics and secure Tom's future."

"What will happen to the factory after the war?"

"We'll just change the production to fashion."

"Fashion?" Edgar blinked. "What a gay thing to do, my dear non-Gren."

"Oh shut up."

"Just saying." The grin was infectious. "You certainly have all our futures laid out for us."

"I have a rough idea is more like it. Now go to bed. I'll write a letter to Dumbledore first thing tomorrow morning."

"Just one question before I go ..."

"Yeah?"

"If we introduce Tom to wizarding society early, does that mean I'll see real magic?" Edgar's eyes sparkled.

"Uh ... I guess so. If not, you'll see it once he turns eleven. We will need to shop before he goes to school."

"Awesome!" Edgar grinned like an excited child. "I'll cross my fingers and hope this Dumbledore will be helpful. I want to see magic."

Harry just smiled a bit tiredly. He remembered being this excited. Magic was something grand. Right until it turned political and magical terrorists threw around killing curses. He bid the other man good night and started putting together a letter in his head.