

The time that is given us

How love can change lives

Von Gepo

Kapitel 23: Twenty-third chapter

Dear Gren,

this summer was filled with a slew of surprising weddings for the pureblood community. After we met with Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Avery and Rosier, there were three secret weddings that have now become known. Ernest Crabbe, the second son, married Leticia Delbert, a half-blood witch. Henrietta Goyle married a Muggle-born by the name of Philipp Nettels, a marriage in which he took her name. To my outmost surprise, Malcolm Avery, heir to the Avery name, married none other than Cynthia Bones, half-blood light witch from the old Bones line. The Rosier family seems to be the only one still hesitating. That does not surprise me, their son is not only young but a shy, nerdy man. I would have pecked him for someone that will marry late and only produce one son out of duty, shunning the company of his wife because of lack of interest. Not due to my own reasons but rather because his interest fully lies in his studies.

As you may guess, the Avery/Bones-marriage was the one that could not be kept secret for long. It has been the talk of the community for days now. Everyone thinks that they secretly eloped and that Malcolm's parents will disinherit him. I read every new Daily Prophet with delight right now. The Bones family offered a statement that their children are free to chose their partners and they found Malcolm Avery to be an upright and well-raised young man. Seeing as the children's upbringing and education are in the hands of their mother, they don't see any reason to object to a husband with a dark magic background.

So dark magic males are okay because children get their magical inclination from their mother due to their upbringing. That is an interesting hypothesis, don't you think? If that were true, it would give females a very strong role in the way society develops. How much of your magical inclination is genetics and how much is learned? There have been some cases of dark wizards in light families, though I never heard of a light wizard coming from a dark family. Do you know one? I excitedly await your answer.

Yours truly, Albus

Dear Albus,

of course there have been as many light wizards in dark families as the other way round. Usually, the children are taught to look like dark wizards because their tradition is not one of acceptance and pride. It is easier for dark wizards born into light families though some are mistreated as well. When a light and a dark magical couple have children, these are a 50/50 mix. I was a light wizard, made dark by a curse, married a light witch and had two light and one dark child. The difference is not that big anyway.

You were right to question the Bones' hypothesis, the magical inclination is genetical and has nothing to do with upbringing. So the Avery/Bones-couple will have a 50/50 mix most likely, except if she wasn't pure-light, then it's likely they will have more dark than light children. But that is statistics and it may be that they have ten children and all of them are light.

Women do have a very important role in society though, even if this one thing is not linked to their parenting. Culture, that means norms and values, are given to our children by the ones telling them stories, singing songs and upholding traditions. Those are often their mothers. So if and what parts of themselves children feel free to express, that links to their mothers (when they are the main care-takers).

I am more interested in the general reaction to a dark/light wedding. Is it seen as a scandal or are people accepting? Has the Avery family given a reaction? Is any of the three women pregnant already?

Yours truly, Gren

Dear Gren,

the general reaction was one of amusement at the apparent scandal. It has now come out that there is no scandal and the Avery family is not disinheriting their son. They released a statement that their culture is one of purity of blood - but that it is also a fact that too close relations do not bode well for children. If intermarriage with light wizards is a possibility to protect their line, they would rather choose it than to intermingle with Mudbloods. They actually believed us and still made an anti-Muggle agenda out of it. I have to admit that I am boiling with anger. How can one be so blind?

That is what I expect from dark wizards. They take your support and stab you in the back for it. Jonathan is telling me that the Bones family basically did the same – rather marry a dark wizard than more Muggle-borns – still ... they did not throw it in everyone's face. What makes me mad is the blatant hatred that they spew. Everyone has prejudices and irrational grudges but decent people – what I see as decent people at least – don't force their opinion on you. So Jonathan tells me I am doing the same. That I blatantly favor Muggle-borns and Gryffindors. He is right and I am trying to judge fairly. Both of you are right that children are not responsible for the actions of their parents. If they spew racist and bigot opinions, it's their parents that are to blame. I will only teach them by being an example, not by suppressing them. I learned that now, I am trying my best to live it. But inside of me, I am boiling with anger sometimes. Jonathan is really good at expelling those resentments but I am not yet enough of a sage to simply let all of it go.

On a positive note, both Mrs. Crabbe and Mrs. Goyle announced their pregnancies. I wish both them and us the best of luck with those pregnancies. If those children prove to be more intelligent, less clumsy and more magically potent than their late ancestors – which really shouldn't be hard – it will be a huge step towards introducing our theories. I don't

think I ever thought about heterosexual people having sex and actively cheering them on this much.

Did you notice that I sound a lot more sarcastic than before? Minerva pointed it out to me. I think Jonathan might have an influence on me, now that we spend so much time together. I noticed that before – before you, before his change of heart, before this second spring of my life – I always held myself back. I feared what he could do with my emotions. It's different now. Jonathan is trustworthy, not only in his own actions but with my heart. Again, I cannot thank you enough. I never thought something like this could be possible between two men. My own prejudice held me back from trusting my partner with my feelings.

My thoughts are running away from me, I apologize. So after the Avery statement, the reaction was drastic. Some purebloods were highly offended and called the Averys traitors, others were supportive. A lot of light families have pressured the Bones family, most of them thinking that they were blinded by evil people. It's the topic everyone is talking about. Even the students are discussing the ethics of this marriage. Most light families are openly against it. They are offended by the Avery family's statement. The dark families are rather ambivalent. The more traditional ones snub the Averys, some more open ones haven't issued any opinions. It seems like a few people are simply waiting to see where this goes, treating them like guinea pigs. It is a mix of many different reactions and I pity the young couple that are under a lot of scrutiny now. Apparently, their marriage was actually one of love. Let's hope it can withstand the pressure society places them under.

I hope I have answered sufficiently, I feel like my mind is all over the place right now.

Yours truly, Albus

"Do you really have to leave?" Tom sounded like a small child asking for candy, knowing exactly how to trick an adult into giving into their whims. It was dinner and still a few days from Jonathan's last but somehow, it ended up as the topic.

"I need a formal education." Jonathan sighed, sounded exactly as reluctant. "Just like you have to go to school again next week, I have to do my degree."

"Can't you do it from here? You could go to work every morning, just like we go to school. Then we'd have the evenings and weekends."

"My job isn't exactly one that you can just leave from and come back the next day."

Both looked exactly as miserable as the other. "There are ... concoctions that need tending to even at night. It's a live-in position."

"Can you at least visit?" Tom was pouting by now.

"I'll definitely come for your birthday, okay?"

"That's half a year away!"

"I know." Jonathan sighed, not even pretending to eat anymore. "It's not like I want to leave, okay? But I need that degree. It's three years, maybe two and a half if the master isn't into arrogance and can live with the fact that I am actually good at what I do."

"By that time, I'll go to a boarding school and I won't be able to be visited. In three years time, I'll change schools to that special school dad found for me."

"I know, Tom." Jonathan's shoulders slumped. "I really enjoyed my time here. I don't want to leave. But to progress, I need to get my formal degree. In this world, people only respect you when you have papers to prove your skills. I know I would pass the exam if I had to do it now with a blindfold and one arm tied behind my back but no

one cares if I don't have the papers."

"That's unfair!"

"Life is unfair." He raked a hand through his hair. "I can't believe I am saying that. It's nothing one should just accept, isn't it? But it's true. I don't have a school degree, I don't have an apprenticeship certificate, I am basically on the level of a school dropout."

Well, he was a dropout. A very intelligent dropout but without any degree all the same.

"It doesn't matter that you are a better chemist than most others out there?"

"No. It's why you go to school and do your best to finish it. Papers open doors, not your skills. That's seldom what people ask for."

Brea supported the poor Jonathan: "It's true, Tom. All of us are blessed that Gren supports all of us in going to school. It's a gift. Our degrees will open doors for us, everyone will be able to choose their jobs. With Howard's mom working in our factory, all of us will be able to get degrees as seamstresses as well. We will not only have school degrees but will also be certified workers. You get a lot more money with such degrees."

Harry turned to her: "I want you to be able to choose if you like your work or want to do something else. I also want you able to choose your husbands carefully, not having to rely on men. Jonathan is blessed to be born into money, otherwise he would be dependent on his boyfriend. That is never a good basis for a healthy relationship."

Tom sighed, his arms crossed in front of his chest, and said: "I still don't like the fact that he has to leave for his degree."

"I'll miss you too." Jonathan put a hand on the raven hair.

The boy just scoffed, though he did not object to the statement. "Who will make soap and candles and perfume now? Who will make candy with me? And the special stuff we did?"

"You'll learn it in school. I'll also sent all of those other things, okay? When I visit, we can make something."

"You promise?"

"Of course." They shook pinkies. "And you can write. I'll answer your letters. You can sent me the Mug-, err, the books from here that you like and I'll sent you my favorites. I can even sent some schoolbooks in advance and we can discuss them via letter."

"It's a promise."

Harry just smiled, proudly watching his son having his first real crisis since discussing his family. The first time actually losing someone, letting go of someone that he held dear. It was great to see how attached he had become. The boy that had been unable to form connections actually stated openly that he would miss another human. It boded well for them.

That was without focusing on Jonathan, the man that had come an even longer way. Mary wanted to keep him as well and they also promised letters to one another. Harry had no doubt that this was a good thing. He trusted Tom enough to come to him if there was something strange in the letters. Even if not, he would discuss it with Mary and Mary would go to Brea and Brea would come to him.

It was time to let Jonathan go. Only two and a half days to go. Everything was arranged, his trunk packed up. Of course, that did not better Tom's temper. It was something he would have to do by himself. Harry would be there for the tears that would follow without question. Still, it was an experience he was glad for his son to have.

"How would you like to spend your last days here?," Harry asked Jonathan.

"Depends ... if Tom is up to it, he is right that we should stock up on perfumes and candles and all the other stuff we did."

"Can I help?," Mary asked them.

Jonathan looked at Tom questioningly. The boy just mumbled something into his non-existent beard that sounded vaguely positive. Harry told them to go all out and buy ingredients to their heart's content. Soap and candles did not go bad anyway. He could do without the perfume the girls liked on him, but as long as they were happy, he could relent.

He knew that Brea and Margret already planned a farewell feast because they had asked him to invite Dumbledore as a surprise. He wished everyone was magical, so they could conjure up some instruments – they would have to make do with the radio. Jonathan could ask his boyfriend to a dance, Harry could ask Edgar, everyone would be happy. Except for birthdays, they never had feasts just for themselves. Even then, they never danced. They just sung sometimes.

Harry missed the exuberant feasts they had with the Weasleys. Singing, dancing, often pranking one another. There was always someone looking after the children, so they could get drunk and laugh so loudly that the ghoul began to howl. Sighing at the memories, he knew that he missed having peers. Just people to drink with. Go to a pub and have fun for a while.

Would Edgar be able to overlook his history with Gren? Because he was the only one Harry would go out with. Neither Dumbledore nor Jonathan were people he wanted to see drunk – or to be drunk in front of. Edgar was alright. The worst that could happen was some drunken kissing back home. Maybe he should ask that sometime after Jonathan was gone.

Certainly after the part where Tom would not sleep well and end up in either one of their beds.

"So? How many nights were you awoken by Tom?," Harry asked when the two men were sitting in his study together.

Edgar just smiled and shook his head. "The sneaky kid doesn't wake me anymore. I simply awaken with a cuddly boy in my arms."

"Not the worst way to wake."

The other man just smiled.

"How does he cope with Jonathan's leave? He does not talk to me about it."

"He still cries at night. Mostly, he thinks he is not waking me, so I do not react."

Harry just sighed. "You think he'll be alright?"

"He's a tough kid. He'll be fine."

"I worry about the tough part. He does not have to cry at night all by himself. It's okay to miss someone. I don't want him to feel like he has to hide."

Edgar nodded slowly. "Do you think I should react?"

"He does not want to be alone but he is also ashamed ... just make clear that there is no shame in crying."

"Sure." Edgar snorted and changed his tone. "You cry so much, it's easy to learn that you can express weaknesses in this house."

Harry just blinked in surprise. "I ... don't think you ever used sarcasm on me before."

The other man just rolled his eyes.

"Sorry ... you are right. I don't like my role as the infallible role-model either."

Edgar blinked in surprise.

"I wanted to ask you about that, just ... after. I mean, once Tom is better. I know you have bad memories with Gren getting drunk, I just miss being buzzed and stupid sometimes ... I would really like to go drinking with you. Just a few beers. Have fun in a pub, sing songs, just the stuff men do with their free evenings sometimes."

"You ... want to get drunk and stupid with me?" Edgar blinked before grinning. "You are actually tired of being a responsible adult?"

"Just for a night. An evening. Being an adult is really hard sometimes. With Jonathan around, I always had to be on my toes. With you, I can ... relax for once."

"Sounds lovely." The grin wouldn't fade. "Don't worry, it does not remind me of Gren. You definitely aren't a drunkard. Don't worry."

"Thank Merlin, I was really worried. I did not want to remind you of bad things." Harry let go of the breath he had been holding in. "So, I need to show more insecurities in everyday life?"

"Well, I don't know ... you are like this perfect marble bust. Admirable but not affable. Approachable in a way but only for advise, not to share feelings with. You are too perfect sometimes. I am not sure if that is a good or a bad thing. Tom does seem to do well with it but when he is sad or lonely, he comes to me."

"I always thought that this was how it should be. You are his other parent after all."

Edgar blinked for a moment before he blushed. Not even slightly but profusely. Even his ears turned red, just like Ron's when he was asked about Hermione after the final battle. It had stuck because it had been the first good feeling he had after a long while. Watching Ron blush had been ... a feeling like everything could be right again. Some kind of hope.

Edgar's blush was different. It held no hope, it held happiness. An unexpected happiness, an unexpected kindness. His voice was only a whisper: "You meant that?"

"Of course. You are much more in tune with him. You are not someone he wants to impress. I don't think he would come to me even if I showed more weaknesses. It's not how we work. He wants my respect, my acknowledgment. Now that I think about it, I am a lot like one of those pureblood parents I normally despise."

Edgar snorted.

"You should call me Arcturus Malfoy." Harry lifted his glass for a toast, not to Edgar but to some imaginary person in the room. "God, you are right, now I feel like a jerk."

"Sorry, that wasn't the intention."

"It's how children like Tom are often brought up and I know that it works ... still, it's not something to copy. Why did I fall into that trap?"

"Maybe you spend too much time at those stuffy places." Edgar smiled indulgently.

"Definitely. I need that drink soon." He sipped his whisky. "I'll try to be more human and you start acknowledging Tom's tears. As soon as he is feeling well enough to sleep in his own bed, we'll go out for drinks, alright?"

"Sounds like a plan." They grinned at one another. "I like to see you relax again."

"We did a good thing with Jonathan but it was a strain."

"You never let that on either."

"Oh, he would have pounced on it at first."

Edgar laughed.

Harry raised one hand and made some clawing motions.

"I like you when you are silly."

"It's my natural state." Not when he looked after dangerous criminals and tried to save the wizarding world single-handedly. "I really need to cut back on the serious stuff."

"Obviously." The other man shook his head. "It's only some years until the next war. Let's enjoy them. No more politics. That can wait until after."

"I'll continue on the wizarding front but you are right that non-wizarding politics can be left until later." Could it? Jonathan had the right idea. When confronted with something new, something unbelievable, it was helpful if people had an idea how to deal with unexpected stuff. Something other than accusing, blaming and condemning others. Something different than hate. Maybe this was exactly the time they shouldn't miss.

Was living through World War II the right idea or was this actually the time he should be politically active? Could he stop the war? Would it be a good idea to stop the war or even parts of it? He had been so sure before. Could he be sure? He had changed the fate of the wizarding world without second thought but decided to not change the Muggle one. Why? On what basis did he make such a decision? Or was the basis simply that it seemed too much work?

The wizarding world was actually a small community, at least the British one. He knew it well. He knew how to work it, that was the most important part. He had lived through it, saw it. Hermione had single-handedly changed so much, he had always admired her for that. But he had also made fun of her, told her to relax, to give herself time. Would she have been able to change as much if she had been as laid-back as he was now? No. Even now, he was reaping the fruits of her work. If she had been here instead of him, she would have already found a way to prevent the war, make the necessary changes in people's opinions without death and destruction. So much pain, so much fear and suffering was about to happen because he felt overwhelmed with finding a better way to bring about the same burning desire for peace and quiet.

"Why do people so often chose violence first, what do you think?", Harry asked into the silence.

"Because talking with your fists is easier than actual talking." Edgar shrugged his shoulders. "People don't know better ... no, it's what people are used to." He suddenly sat up, his eyes alight with joy. "You know what was the first thing that made me really doubt that you were Gren?"

It wasn't the totally unbelievable amnesia story?

"When I came here, you were still teaching the kids yourself. Remember how I sometimes sat in on class? One day, Tom was really grumpy. Bad sleep, I don't remember, anyway, he was talking back at you. He called the lesson stupid and unnecessary and dumb and whatnot, he really was a little shit. Every teacher I know would have hit him and sent him to do manual labor or something. You asked him what he wanted to be, to which he answered that he wanted to be a lord and command around his servants. Everyone was annoyed at that point, I think Brea was very close to screaming at him. You simply asked why he thought that anyone would follow his commands. You were really nice about it, you weren't even annoyed while all the others were seething. Tom answered that he would have money to pay his servants with. So you asked where he would get the money and that seemed to be the point where he actually noticed the looks everyone was giving him. You just told him that you would not give him money if he behaved that disrespectfully towards other humans." Edgar smiled while remembering. "You know, now that I know you, that seems completely normal. But back then, I was blown away by the fact that you actually talked it out – in class! – except for just punishing him. I realized that how we treat our kids has a huge impact on what adults they'll be. And I don't mean the big things but the everyday things. Not hitting your child, okay, I knew some people did it

like that. But talking sensibly, discussing things, sometimes asking their input, even humoring their silly, unrealistic ideas. You never had to preach how a human should behave, you simply did it and everyone copied you. Violence is unnecessary. One learns that simply by interacting with you."

Harry just blinked in astonishment.

"When I finally noticed, I knew you were definitely not Gren. He was your polar opposite. When tactics did not work, he maimed or killed people."

"I do as well." Though sad, it was the truth. "When a madman killed my friends and went after me, I killed him. I did not try to talk it out with him."

"For revenge or for protection? If others would have been safe without him being dead, would you have killed him?"

"Of course not!" It's not like he wanted to be a killer.

"Yeah ... that's what makes you a good human while Gren and me weren't. We would have killed him regardless. You have a quality that we both lacked: Forgiveness."

"Don't be so melodramatic, Edgar. You forgave me for taking Gren from you. That's not exactly an eating-one-of-your-favorite-pastries-level of guilt and forgiveness."

"It's not like you did it intentionally."

"Yeah? How do you know? Only because we talked it out. Only because you understood my involvement, how your suffering came about and heard my feelings on the matter. That's how forgiveness works."

Edgar scoffed. "You think I would have been able to do that without watching you for half a year?"

"Well ... maybe?"

"Most definitely not. I would have debated shooting you, strangling you to death or simply beating the brain out of your skull, even knowing that it was Gren's body. If he wasn't coming back, I would never have allowed you a hair on his head. I would have killed and buried that body because it was mine."

Was he for real? Harry had expected anger and desperation – but killing intent?

"Then I would have shot myself on his grave." Edgar shrugged as if he was telling a folly of his youth. "So ... thanks for teaching me emotional and communicative skills. I think humanity is still lacking that and that's why we rather bash each other's heads in."

"Huh ... emotional and communicative skills ... do we really have to go to war and kill millions of humans for people to realize how important that is?"

"Most likely not but you are asking the wrong person for a better idea."

"Globalization helped. Books, films and stories about other people. Trying to think yourself into others, trying to understand their motivation. Learning about different cultures. Not thinking of people as enemies or unimportant but as neighbors. People that you want to learn about. Curiosity. I think curiosity is the key to becoming a better person."

Edgar just looked at him in interest.

"The biggest thread to curiosity is fear. So how is a war going to change anything? War brings about fear."

"When I asked you, you told me that the war would be horrible on an unimaginable scale. So people might ask themselves how it came to it. How it happened. How it could get so out of control."

"But why didn't that happen in the wizarding world? Gellert Grindelwald killed so many people. Still, people look up to him and mourn his loss. He was more destructive than what came after him. But the bad guy afterwards, that made people change. He

killed a lot less but he had more impact. So why? How could Grindelwald not change a single thing and the other remade so many laws?"

Edgar stayed quiet for a moment, then asked: "You know what I hated most about Jonathan?"

"That he got his fairytale ending?"

"Well, that too." Edgar rolled his eyes. "No, actually, it was the fact that he was pretty likable for a mass-murderer. I think that all of them act because they believe in something. They all state some kind of pretty reason to justify their murders. Protect their home, their country, their people, their way of life, their monarchy, their democracy, get more resources, more space, something, something. Afterwards, you can say that the idea was nice but the methods were wrong. Gellert didn't fight because he had a cooked up solution and wanted everyone to support it. He pointed out flaws and risks, he wanted people to come up with solutions. People didn't like to hear what he had to say and they attacked him for it. Sure, he didn't only defend himself. He proposed killing Muggles until another solution was found. He just never denied that he could be wrong. He wasn't a fanatic. He wanted people to stop living in the past and think that their old methods would protect them forever. He's not exactly someone you can hate as an atrocious monster or a misguided soul afterwards."

"Here you're telling me you have problems with forgiveness..."

"Well, killing people, threatening governments and annihilating everyone sent after you, he was still wrong in his methods. In the end, he killed wizards and Muggles alike, trying to change people, and failed miserably." Edgar sighed deeply. "With most fanatics, the people following are the ones that profit or at least believe to profit from the proposed solution. Gellert didn't really have a solution. Collect strong wizards, kill Muggles. It's not a very thought-out plan. So I like the fact that he never stated this would be the plan everyone had to follow."

"It seems you talked to him."

"Well, at some point I got the whole "Get interested in your enemies and broaden your worldview"-thing."

"Sadly, a lot of people believe that was the plan. So masses of people still support him even today and call for the annihilation of Muggles." They shared a moment of silence. "The guy after him went farther. Annihilation of Muggles and Muggle-borns. He made people register, planning to kill them off systematically. But he was suddenly a villain and everyone changed. I don't get it."

"Who stayed in power? Who told the story? What did the press write?"

So the narrative was the important thing? Not what actually happened? Could it be that the press was actually the one in power of changing everyone? Harry remembered Rita Skeeter for a moment and suddenly had a clear vision why the wizarding world was doomed for a long time.

Hermione had never stopped having that woman dance to her tune. She had used her again and again. Others had been recruited through other means, oftentimes bribery. Harry had sometimes wondered how an idealist like her could be so unscrupulous at times. He had asked her once and her answer had only been "I learned from SPEW."

She had known that her visions were unpopular. So she had made them popular by getting the press on her side. In some desperate cases, she had used Harry, making him hold a speech or posing for some photos. It wasn't something he could plan and execute. Maybe after the war ... maybe he could become a voice for peace, a bid to end bloodshed. Writing wasn't his forte but maybe he could inspire others.

"You taught me not to go with the first feeling that came up. Journalists can channel those feelings. I guess they play a huge role in what people think in the end."

There were ripped from their musings by a faint knocking on the study door. Harry called in whoever it was and wasn't surprised seeing his son in pajamas. Edgar extended his hand and Tom went to him.

"You weren't in your bed", said an accusatory voice.

"Sorry, we were up and talking."

"What about?" The anger drained from his voice and made way for sleepiness.

"How we miss Jonathan."

Tom scoffed and snuggled up on Edgar's lap. "You're glad he's gone."

"True. I found him annoying. But he wasn't all bad. I'm glad you made a friend."

"You're lying."

Edgar poked the little one's cheek. "Why would I?"

"You don't want me to get angry."

"Sure." Edgar smiled. "You're an intimidating little warrior and I quake in fear before your might." A kiss to the head was added. "I wasn't lying. I just disliked him more that I liked him. It doesn't mean there weren't good things about him."

"Like what?"

"Like how happy he made you."

"Hmpf." Tom closed his eyes, his voice a mere whisper. "I miss him."

"I know, kid." Edgar tightened his grip. "There's a lot of people in my life that I miss as well. At least you'll see him again."

"Will I?"

"Why wouldn't you?"

"He's an adult. Maybe he'll just forget about me."

"I doubt it, he really likes you. He'll be here for Christmas, I'm sure. If not, we can go crash his workplace and tell his boss that he's a slave-driver to keep someone away from his friends on Christmas."

Tom chuckled. "Really?"

"Well, we'll need the help of Mister Dumbledore, do you think he'd help?"

"He does what's best for Jonathan."

"Then he'll let us meet. Friends are a good thing. You are at least, me maybe not so much."

"Hm ... Edgar, why do you dislike Jonathan?" It was such a sad voice, it spurred Harry into motion.

He went over to the couch and took both of them into his arms.

The other man just sighed but seemed to decide to be honest. "I am jealous of him. He did so many bad things and still got a second chance and a wonderful boyfriend. So instead of looking for a boyfriend, I am childishly angry at him."

Tom looked up in fright. "Would you leave if you found a boyfriend?"

"What? No!" Edgar had leaned back against Harry, his head resting next to his. "I am not leaving. I am not even looking for a boyfriend. Don't worry."

Tom's gaze flitted to Harry who nodded. His tiny hands took Harry's arm and laid it over Edgar's chest. This time, his question was directed at Harry. "Promise?"

"No one is leaving until you'll go to school." He secured his arm around Edgar and could feel that one's cheek heating against his own.

Tom observed them and nodded after a moment. "Okay, I believe you."

"Right. Bed?" Harry raised his eyebrows in a rather suggestive way.

Edgar just squeaked.

Tom grinned and nodded.
"Up we go then."