

The time that is given us

How love can change lives

Von Gepo

Kapitel 13: Thirteenth chapter

"Do you think he'll come back today?" Harry leisurely drank his morning tea. Going to church every Sunday was a given in this era and he hated every minute of it, but the tea afterwards was very nice. Finally, it was time to relax.

"If everything went well, he's heels over head right now."

"The saying is ..." He saw Edgar's smirk and discontinued the sentence. For a moment, he imagined the position and hoped he didn't blush. Damn it. Sometimes, that man reminded him of Ginny and her dirty humor. God, he missed their banter.

"So I should not expect him back today?"

"Definitely not. He's either happy or licking his wounds." Edgar leaned closer. "How about a tumble in the sheets for us as well?"

"Take Richard. He's been making puppy eyes at you for weeks now."

"Uh ... I am not a pedophile." Edgar shook himself. "He'll grow out of his infatuation. Sometimes, I am not sure if it is hero-worship or desire."

"I think he'll turn out homosexual. I actually hope he only turns out homosexual."

"How is it that this household is filled with homosexuals?"

"I am heterosexual." Harry scoffed.

"You are a honorary homosexual." Edgar winked.

"Tom will be heterosexual."

"You won't know until puberty."

"The women are heterosexual as far as I know."

"Sometimes I am not sure about Mary. She likes to stick to Brea rather obviously," Edgar mused.

"Well, Brea obviously likes you, so Mary will not have a chance there." With a frown, Harry looked at the other. "Hey, why are they all in love with you? Richard and Brea, both like you. Nobody likes me."

"You are their dad and their boss. It would be weird to like-like you."

"Like-like? Very mature. Maybe you are simply on their emotional wave-length."

"Pining for a man that I can't have like some teenage girl?" Edgar grinned.

Harry just rolled his eyes.

"Hey, Gren, what are we doing today?"

The man smirked. This brought up a sudden memory of a show he had seen Dudley watch as a child. "We are taking over the world today."

"Okay ... how?"

"With a lunch at the major's house to get you into politics and discuss women's

rights."

"Sounds great." The younger man just sighed. "With or without Tom?"

"Kid-free party. Margret is on child-watch for today."

"Thank God!" Edgar bit into his biscuit. "When do we have to leave?"

"In about half an hour, I think."

"Time to get pretty."

Harry just rolled his eyes.

Dear Gren,

I cannot thank you enough for what you have done for me. Gellert and I were able to reconcile. He actually forgave me for betraying and abandoning him. I told him about your theories and in return, he told me a secret he allowed me to share with you. I am still baffled by it. So I knew that Bathilda Bagshot – a witch who lived in my town – was his great aunt. Her birthname was Stauffenberg, an old German wizarding bloodline. His mother went to Durmstrang and met his father there, one Jörg Grindelwald. Grindelwald is a Swiss wizarding bloodline. What I did not know before was that this man was a claimed bastard of Gerhard Grindelwald, Gellert's grandfather. The man had an affair with a muggleborn witch. It seems that Gellert had always been ashamed of his father's heritage. With your findings, he finally accepted his history and actually cherishes his grandmother's addition to his legacy. We tried finding some foreign blood in my ancestry but alas, my family believed in purity. It does not surprise that my sister was a squib and my brother barely gets by magically. Sadly, Gellert has no siblings. It would have been most interesting how they would have turned out.

We were able to talk about what we did wrong in our research and how we should have tested our theories back then. The folly of youth, you find something that works and then you wholeheartedly believe in it without actually looking for proof. Gellert laughed at the irony of going from planning to wipe off Muggles to defending them to purebloods. He regrets his actions deeply right now because if he had been able to reenter the world as himself, it would certainly have made a hell of an impact. He would like to aid our cause and I believe his integrity. As for a new identity, he says that no change of his body will ever hide his Slytherin nature, his dark magic and his pureblood bearing. He asked me to find a family that would support his claim of being a distant relative. No one would believe a lost pureblood child suddenly turned up but he was fine playing a half-blood bastard of some family. I am at a loss who to ask though. Which dark pureblood family might I ask? Right now, I am only friends with Arcturus Malfoy and I am certain he would never accept a half-blood stain in his family tree, not even after entertaining the concept of genetics.

Yours truly, Albus

Dear Albus,

please take a moment to examine your feelings. I am very happy for you that Grindelwald and you are closer again. But you are describing a complete turn-around in Grindelwald's opinions. Are you sure it is that simple? Hearing that he was wrong, that he killed hundreds of Muggles and magical folk for a misguided idea – is it that easy to turn away

from his beliefs? If yes, does this mean he regrets his actions? What has he planned for the future?

Because if he radicalizes again and starts supporting breeding programs, genetic match-making, forced partnership of muggle-born and pure-blood couples or any other restraining and controlling action, I am not sure I want him on our side. Please think this through thoroughly. I have never met Grindelwald, not even in my time. But I am not sure if you can turn back from being a mass murderer.

Yours sincerely, Gren

Dear Gren,

my heart tells me to convince you but I am aware that you are right. I might not be the best to judge Gellert's state of mind. I'd like to invite both you and Edgar to meet him. Though I have to caution you – he is devastatingly handsome and charming, he knows how to pull people to his side. Please discuss my offer and send word about your decision.

Yours truly, Albus

"What do you think?" Edgar looked up at him from reading the letter over his shoulder.

"I think ... I wish one of my old friends were here. She could never be talked into anything. She saw through every kind of bullshit, exposing the truth beneath. When I had criminals like this one in for questioning, I called on her. She was a lawyer and a politician but she would have made a terrific cop as well."

"Did you ever ask her how she did it?"

"Yes." Harry tried his best to recall her explanation. "I'll try my best to remember. So everyone has a morale development. With the right upbringing, you can reach further stages of morality. A lot of criminals are driven to their wrong-doing not only because they are in need of something or have a feeling of being repressed but because they do not have the moral to keep them from their wrong-doing. So when you want a criminal to stop his actions, you need to address the causes for their actions as well as the moral principles driving them. Hermione told me that when she talks to criminals, she evaluates the underlying causes for their wrong-doings as well as their morale principles as well as their guilt and how they minimize it. Because how you cope with your negative feelings of doing wrong is also important. Does that make sense?"

"I am not sure that I understand the difference between causes of actions and how people justify their actions. Isn't the cause for an action also what you use to justify it?" Edgar sat down on the sofa.

"No. Let's say that you steal bread. The cause for that is hunger. But you may justify it by saying that the baker has enough money anyway, he won't miss one loaf of bread and for you it is the difference between surviving and starving. Hermione told me that there were six different categories of how you could make your actions sound better and the more of them and the more intensively you used them, the harder it was to amend your ways."

"Do you remember those six categories?"

"I'll try ... so first one was flat out denying you did something. That's the easiest one.

Next is giving reason why you are not guilty. You were hungry, you were delirious, you could not control your actions, you saw that bread and stopped thinking because of hunger. Then there was one blaming the other person. It's the baker's fault because they left the bread out in the open, easy to snatch, an invitation to a thief."

"That's simply rubbish." Edgar snorted.

"Yes, it is. But how often have you heard soldiers tell each other that they just had to rape that women because she was wearing a short skirt or had flirted with them or that she was a whore anyway, so what is one more man?"

"Okay, point taken. I have heard that a lot."

"Yeah, so ... denying, disclaiming guilt, disclaiming responsibility. Then there was one where you claimed some higher principle. You hit that man but it was to teach him a lesson, so he would do better in the future. You killed those people but it was to save your loved ones back at home."

Edgar closed his eyes in pain. Harry just winced, suddenly remembering that the man in front of him had killed hundreds of people in the name of their country. Both of them were murderers, defending their own actions by claiming a higher authority.

"It hurt me too to listen to her, don't worry." Harry sighed. "So the next one is discrediting the ones in front of you, the ones judging you. Have they not done wrong as well? Are they without blame? Who are they to judge you?"

"I remember using most of this. I am still using a lot of it. What have we done, Gren?" Edgar shook his head in despair.

"Yeah ... talking about guilt makes you face your own. I had to do it again and again and I hope it made me a better man." He sat down next to Edgar. "I wish we could decide to never kill again because killing is wrong. Who am I to decide that we need the oncoming war, just because I have no idea how to bring about change in any other way? I have the power to prevent millions of people from dying and I choose not to do it ... what does that make me?" He felt tears well up in his eyes. "I wish I were a wiser man, Edgar. I wish I had some other solution to this. I wish that ... that someone else had to make all of these tough decisions. I wish that Dumbledore didn't lean on me like this because most of my original time, I could lean on him to make these decisions for me."

Edgar just lay his head on Harry's shoulder and they shared a minute of silence. "What is the last one?"

"Last one?"

"You said there were six. You named five of them."

"I ... don't remember. There is speaking in euphemisms but that is a part of disclaiming guilt. There is dehumanization of the other person but that is part of disclaiming responsibility. There is comparing you with others, like saying they also did nothing, but that is disclaiming guilt. There is minimizing the consequences, like saying that it didn't really hurt, it wasn't that bad what you did. Oh, I think that was the last one. Damn, I wish I had a better memory."

"It was a pretty good summary anyway." Edgar snuggled up to him. "I wish I could have met your friend. She sounds awesome."

"She was. Is. Will be. Whatever." A deep sigh left his lips. "Anyway, that are the techniques people use to diffuse their guilt. When it comes to wrong-doing, it's better to use as few as possible and actually face your guilt."

"I see." Edgar had closed his eyes. "I shall do so. You gave me a lot to think about."

"I don't think we should face Grindelwald as long as we still ponder our own decisions."

The other man nodded into his shoulder.
God, he wished life wasn't as hard as this.

They spend a few evenings with Edgar talking about his decisions in war-time. Most of the time, he followed Gren, happy to have his commander make decisions, even if he sometimes questioned them. Most of those decisions were logical and calculated, minimizing losses but devoid of any empathy. Was it better to lie to a group of soldiers, so they happily walked to their death, instead of telling them the truth and having more of them die? Was it better to kill civilians to ensure a more swift peace or to let them survive, even if it meant a prolonged war? Gren had been all about saving resources – people's lives – and completely dominating their foe. Edgar had admired that, but with what he saw afterwards, he now questioned the why of that. Had Gren fought for peace? Or had he been all about keeping the war going? Had it been about the lives of his soldiers or had it been about his own glory? It was hard to say, even for Edgar who had been his partner.

They had reached a point where he could only go in circles, so he asked: "Tell me about this morale development, please. Right now, I can't decide if Gren was a genius or a madman."

"Even morality won't tell you that. It will only tell you how far he was in thinking about his actions. I am not sure that someone who thinks deeply about his actions equals someone good. I am not even sure that someone who does the so-called right things is someone good."

"I'd like to understand though, please." There was a lost look to his eyes, a man questioning his whole life and what he had believed in.

"As you wish. So again, we have six categories. Actually, it is seven but most people never reach number seven. Actually, most people never reach number six. Most stop somewhere around three or four. Seven is a category for people who never do anything else than think about morality all of their lives, people like the Dalai Lama."

"Okay, wait ... I think I'll note it down this time." Edgar got a piece of paper and a pen. "I am ready."

"So the first staging is thinking in terms of obedience and punishment. If I do this, will I be punished? It's an easy yes or no. It's how small kids think." He waited for Edgar's nod before continuing. "The second stage is weighing that punishment against personal gain. Even if you do wrong, you aren't always punished. So is the risk of punishment worth not doing the action or not? You begin calculating."

"Tom can definitely do that."

"Yes, very much, he has reached the second stage early on." Harry smiled remembering their little rascal. "The third stage focuses on what the action does in terms of your social standing. If your friends, if your family knew what you had done, what would they think of you? How would it change their perspective? What would onlookers think of you if they saw you doing this action?"

"It's what you tried to teach Tom with that picture incident, right?"

"No, I only talked about personal gain there. I talked about his teacher's and my opinion of him in terms of how he would benefit from our continued good impression of him. That's different from talking about how disappointed I would be if he didn't apologize. He has not reached the third stage yet. That stage requires bonds and that is something Tom is still developing."

"I see the difference ... is it normal that he has not reached that stage yet or should he have reached it by now?"

"No, most reach it in their teens. Puberty is the age where you begin to care a lot about how people see you, surpassing just thinking about your own gain. Kids are selfish by nature. This morale stage comes later in life. I will still try to instill as much as I can in Tom early on. In my time, he never surpassed the stage that he is in now. He never developed bonds in my original timeline, never cared about anyone."

"I see ... that's why you gave him a family. I am pretty sure that I care about what people think of me. Not everyone, but my sister and you and Tom and the other little ones."

Harry smiled indulgently. That's what he hoped Tom would learn someday. Right now, he was pretty confident that he would. Edgar was a great role-model for their son.

"Next stage?"

"That is social order. You begin to understand that rules are there for a reason. It keeps the social order, it keeps a society running. Rules should be adhered to at all times, not because you are punished if you don't but because they make sense. You do not kill people, not only because you are punished, not only because your loved ones would think badly of you, but because a society that turns an eye to killing people will suffer as a whole. It will give rise to questions about the worth of life, the worth of people, the worth of those still living as part of them. Once you allow discrimination against one of your own, you allow discrimination against any of them, even yourself. When you discriminate against homosexuals for example, it also gives rise to discrimination to people of color, people of other religions, women, disabled people, any kind of person actually. Even if you discriminate against people that openly discriminate others, you are no better than them. You begin to understand that society is a living system with a backlash on what you pour into it. The more love and acceptance you give, the more you may receive. The more hate and abuse you give out, the more you will be met with."

"That ... is something I am still trying to grasp. I hear your words and I know that's where I want to be at but I still catch myself doing actions that disagree with what you tell me."

"Don't worry, you aren't the only one struggling. In my time, people were focused on teaching morale and this point, stage three to four, was what most saw as the turning point to becoming an adult."

"I can't believe there are still three more stages ... God, I have a lot of work to do." Edgar sighed deeply. "Okay, continue to tell me what I'll struggle with for the next years."

"Stage five is where you understood every societal rule, why you should not kill, why you should not lie, why you should take responsibility for your own actions – and then you begin to question those rules. Yes, you should not kill. But what if you killed someone that would bring about thousands of deaths? You should not steal but what if you stole to save someone's life? What is the worth of someone's life? Is a stranger's life less worthy than that of someone dear to you? What is the worth of your own life? If your death can save more than one other life, would you die for them? If a life you held in your hands could save someone else, would you sacrifice them? You learn that rules are only the easy way out. Adhering to a rule is easy. But what if not adhering to it might bring about a bigger gain for society?"

"Like how you decided that letting this war happen might save more lives in the future because people will start to focus on learning morality in school?"

"Exactly that. At least I hope that is where I am at and am not deluding myself about my reasons for this decision."

Edgar just looked at him for a long moment before slowly closing his eyes in pain. Some of those were questions he struggled with. War seemed easy at first. You go where you are told to go. You shoot who you are told to shoot. You are a weapon, not the one making decisions. Sometimes you question those decisions afterwards but never before obeying. But what happens then? What happens when you begin to question if you should have disobeyed? What happens when your memories begin to pain you? How do you live with the guilt of obeying those orders? And what happens after you begin questioning the whole concept of war? What happens when you realize that it never was about defending oneself but about some people's greed?

"So ... you learned and understood society's rules, then questioned them again and noticed that some situations call for adjustments of rules and then what? What could possibly be number six or seven?" Edgar's sigh sounded deep and wary, his head held in his hands and his posture that of exhaustion.

"Number six is a person with an ingrained set of moral rules. You have societal rules, situational amendments and can make decisions based on those ingrained rules even in short amounts of time. Your code of ethics is driven by empathy, you are able to take on everyone's view of the situation and you actually feel their perspective. So you make decisions based on what's best of everyone involved and it actually is what is best for everyone because you understand others so well. You also understand yourself well, so you know what a decision will do to yourself."

"That ... sounds understandable, but can you give an example?"

"Let's say that you are a leader and sacrificing someone is the right decision to save a lot of people. You understand that this one person does not want to die but all the others want to live. Sacrificing him would be right for this society as a whole, even if killing is wrong. Level six would make you question what this decision would do to yourself and how the saved ones would feel about being saved by someone's sacrifice. Some would be happy and thankful, some would feel guilty. Would you feel right in your decision? Or would you question yourself for years if you could have made a better decision? Would your insecurity about your own actions prevent you from hard decisions in the future, thereby affecting society as a whole negatively?"

"God, I am definitely not anywhere near that point." Another sigh left Edgar's lips.

"The last stage, number seven, takes this even further. Not only would you ask how yourself and society would be affected by your actions, you would be able to calculate how this action would shape not only yourself but society in the future and how future generations would look upon those actions. You would actually have an idea how you yourself would develop and if someday you might regret the action you did today and therefore should not do it. You even count into it that if there were an afterlife, how would you look upon your own actions in years to come. It's a kind of transcendent morality."

"I just can't believe that there are people who can do that."

"There are. Those people need a lot of time to make decisions, weighing pros and cons excessively. You ask them a question, they need hours to answer you because they have so many perspectives to think through. I'd love to have someone like that to pose the question to if I should let the war happen or not. Should I kill Hitler now or not? I really feel ill-equipped to make that decision by myself. I am actually sure that I will regret it but I have no idea what else to do."

"So ... seeing as you can evaluate your own stance on this, even how it will change, have thought through societal consequences and the impact on society, you would be level six?"

"Maybe somewhere at five going on six. I spend a lot of time on the concept of morality after the war. I was destined to kill someone and then I found out that I had to die for this person to lose his immortality. So I died, it's what everyone would have expected of me, I was on level three at that time. I thought about everyone's disappointment if I baled out. I thought of how many people would die if I did not sacrifice myself, that were the first inklings of level four. So I died and then I was asked if I wanted to come back to actually kill the guy myself." Harry shook his head. "Of course I didn't want to. Death is peaceful. It's nice. It's where my family and most of my friends were. But people expected me to come back, to fulfill my destiny, to do as I was prophesized to do. Still level three at that time. I came back, I killed the guy. Seeing as he had taken over the government, I had to do a lot of crimes to finally vanquish him. So after he was dead and peace was restored, I faced criminal charges of breaking and entering of many accounts, theft, harming others physically and mentally and – of course – killing someone. Our government decided that all my actions were for the war-effort and therefore immediately annulled any charges brought against me. First, that was nice. Then I grew up and understood what I had done, how much damage I had wrought on some people. I felt immensely guilty and I had no idea how people ever decided to drop all charges against me without even hearing them. I reached level four and understood how damn wrong I had been in doing a lot of things just because I didn't know better. Really, a lot of people would not have needed to die if I had only thought about my actions some more."

"That's exactly how I feel right now." Edgar slowly raised his head. "For more than fifteen years, I blindly followed Gren, thinking him correct, stopping myself from thinking my own actions through. I simply listened. His alcoholism made me question first my faith, then him, then my own actions. Meeting you ... I got out my depression and started facing my failures. But now that I feel alright with who I am, I start thinking about who I was and what I did. That's just ... overwhelmingly hard."

"Learning from past mistakes without condemning yourself for it, without bringing them up time and time again, it's hard but it makes you a better person. We can't change what we did but we can learn not to make the same mistake again. Not only that, we can learn to anticipate consequences not only for small actions but for large ones, even for societal ones. The better we understand ourselves as well as others, the better our decision-making skills."

Edgar leaned back on the sofa and closed his eyes. With a sigh, he sunk into the cushions.

"I need you, Edgar. I am too far from Tom's mindset. You are perfect in your imperfection. Please don't feel bad about who and how you are."

"Yes, sir." His eyes stayed closed.

They were silent for a minute, both lost in their thoughts. Had Harry overdone it? It was a big topic. Hermione's answer had not been short and he had needed the explanations more than once. He had asked about endless examples, discussed morale decisions again and again. Edgar seemed a lot more overwhelmed. Was it because of his age? Harry hadn't been that much older. Had he been farther along the moral stages? He had been mostly at level four, only slipping up sometimes. Maybe it was because Edgar carried a lot more guilt with him than Harry.

"What do you think Grindelwald will be like? Will he be level two or six? Will he talk about the great reasons he had for killing people or will he have learned that it's only a technique to diffuse guilt?"

"I have no idea, I never met the man. But from what I read about his childhood and

youth, I got some clues about possible causes. He was raised by two dark magic parents, so he had a traditional upbringing. Everything is done for the image of the family. In a hundred and fifty years, no one ever found out that Grindelwald's father was a bastard. So there must have been one hell of a cover job and young Grindelwald must have been instilled from early childhood that his father's ancestry is a forbidden topic. Then he went to Durmstrang, a school that celebrates dark magic. He was thrown out of that school at sixteen for practicing a magic too dark for even this school. So he must have practiced black magic which means ritualistic sacrifices, blood magic, necromancy and the like. That magic has a heavy pull towards a focus on power and domination. It practically kills your empathy. Still, Dumbledore said that both were in love with each other as boys. Love normally requires a form of empathy. Dumbledore is wise enough to differentiate love from being in love, so a one-sided love from a love that builds on the feedback of the other. From what he told me, they have a love where both participate and care for the other, so Grindelwald did not kill off every shred of empathy with his actions. It means he must have one hell of a focus to escape the black magic pull. You could say that Dumbledore was his salvation to steer away from the path of self-destruction because that is what black magic leads to. But homosexuality is something unthinkable in a traditional pureblood upbringing. It was a scandal in my time when that tidbit of information came out after Dumbledore's death. As far as I know, Grindelwald's great-aunt was the only one who ever knew about them because she walked in on them once. Grindelwald lived at her house after being thrown out of school. As far as I know, he never had contact with his family again. Might be because he could never tell them about Dumbledore, might be because they were what made him turn to black magic in the first place. Anyway, he went bad, yes, but he never practiced black magic again."

"So ... a dire lack of empathy, possible childhood trauma, carrying a damn lot of secrets and being afraid of someone finding out any of them for multiple reasons. Early childhood criminal record, no friends except for a lover no one can know about. Neat." It must be the day of sighs because Edgar let out another. "I am deeply impressed by all this. This analyzing and working out how to help an individual mend his ways ... if we had a deserter, we shot him in the head, end of story. In front of everyone, so no one would come up with the idea of running."

"If it weren't for Dumbledore show-killing Grindelwald and hiding his body, they would have made a spectacle of his corpse, inviting everyone to look at him before publicly burning him and scattering his ashes because mass-murderers don't deserve burials. It's what they did to Tom after his death in my time."

"After what you told me about this moral levels, how can a society as a whole be this ... this low-level? At level four, they would have at least decided that dead is dead and a dead body is not open for public humiliation, right? They would have cremated him and scattered the ashes because a grave would only mean a place for strange people to gather, sure, but openly displaying a corpse? That's not even level three, is it? That's nothing but schadenfreude."

"Yes, that decision does not reflect well on wizarding society." Harry – who had sat his armchair for most of the discussion – looked away in shame for the first time. Even at eighteen, he had thought that it wasn't okay what happened but he hadn't said anything. No one had said anything. He had no idea who made the decision of displaying Voldemort, if anyone actually made the decision. "Hitler will decree that his body should be burned, so exactly that kind of display would not happen to it. They had two hours after his death before Sowjet soldiers stormed the place. The bodies

had been burned to be unrecognizable and shallowly buried. In the end, they were buried and exhumed ten times before their ashes were scattered."

"The bodies?" Edgar looked exhausted again.

"Hitler, his wife, his right hand man with his wife and their six children. They killed the children before killing themselves, knowing death would be a kinder fate than living with what their parents had done, in the hands of their enemies."

The other man just shook his head. "How are people cruel enough to blame the parents' actions on children?"

"They just are. Whatever we do, Tom will be blamed for it. I was reborn as a general of the British army, you as my right hand man. If we absent from the war, he will be seen as a coward for all of his life. His name tarnished, his reputation immutable."

"How ... how do you do that? Always thinking of him first, even to the point of your own death?" Tears rolled over Edgar's cheeks. "Don't you realize that this war will kill you?"

"Even your own death has a worth and sometimes it's a price worth paying, Edgar. I have died two, maybe three times by now. I saw what lies on the other side. Death does not scare me."

"Is there really another side?" His hands shook and he tried clasping them together to stop their shaking.

"Magic is a curious thing. You can talk to the dead, you can summon their spirits. There are inferi, there are ghouls, there are ghosts. Might be I can't ever die, maybe someone will chain me to earth as a ghost. There are magical portraits that save your essence. Death is relative when you are a wizard. But yes, there is a great beyond, a veil to lead you to the other side. Your ancestors are watching you, they see your actions and decisions."

"Okay ... can I have a hug?"

"Sure." Harry stood but nearly fell back into his seat with the might of Edgar crashing into him. Damn ... how much was he placing on these shoulders? On the other hand, people only grew with the challenges they had to master. Was he expecting too much from Edgar? "What do you need right now?"

"This." Edgar pressed against him. "And afterwards I'll go and hug Tom."

"Sounds like a plan. You have been a bit out of it these last few days and Tom asked me twice if he did something wrong."

"He's such a good kid."

"That he is." Harry patted Edgar's back. "He'll love the reassurance."

"When should we schedule a meeting with Grindelwald?"

"It's up to you." It was the least Harry could do. All this was hard on Edgar. Hell, it was hard on Harry too. He made the decision about the war but he sure as hell doubted himself about that one. Maybe he should talk it through with Dumbledore at a later date. It might also restore the power balance between them.

"Let's go next Saturday."

"Alright. I'll write to Dumbledore then."

Dear Gren,

thank you for your confirmation and also the time you took to answer my request. It made me question myself and I realized how right you are in doubting all of this. No one makes such a turn. Gellert was impressed by your findings but even he acknowledged the irony of going from a man intent on enslaving Muggles to someone fighting blood

supremacy and advocating equal rights for muggle-borns. Though he seemed empowered by the thought that once you break with all tradition, you could actually also promote homosexual rights. He says he is sick of hiding who he is to me and I to him. He asked me that if we were to decide to set him free, would I openly come out as his partner? Not Gellert Grindelwald's partner of course, but whoever he would impersonate. That scared me a lot but the answer is yes. I'd give up my power and reputation to be with him. I am sorry if that will thwart your plans in any way but I love him and that will always be my most important truth. He will be my downfall in every way and still, I'll never regret loving him. Be it that he is found out one day, be it my homosexuality – we are both so sick of living lies. Nothing is worth that much pain. This became clear to me these last two weeks.

Thank you so much, Albus