Summary

[NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let go of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

Notes

Note from SeparatriX, the archivist: this story was originally archived at HP Fandom, which was closed for health and financial reasons. To preserve the archive, I began manually importing its works to the AO3 as an Open Doors-approved project in August 2016. I e-mailed all creators about the move and posted announcements, but may not have reached everyone. If you are (or know) this creator, please contact me using the e-mail address on HP Fandom collection profile.
Life and After-Life

Best Served Cold

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or co. they are owned by JK Rowling, Warner Bros and her publishing co. They own the characters and I own this particular plot but I’m not making any money off of this, no malice intended, no infringement intended and so on etc. If this is similar to any other fanfics, it was not intentional. As per usual, any original characters, theories about magic and anything not already known to JKR’s HP world or general fandom is mine. Please ask before borrowing.

1. Life and After-Life

The Battle of Hogwarts had taken place over half a decade ago, yet the memories of the curses fired and the empty eyes and lifeless bodies of loved ones and foes are a permanent part in the dreams of one Harry Potter. Hailed as the Saviour of the Wizarding World, Harry is a National Treasure and an international celebrity. He was awarded the Order of Merlin – First Class for defeating the most vicious Dark Lord in over a century. With such fame and respect one would imagine him to have married a lovely girl from a Light family and produce a bunch of messy-haired green-eyed kids. One would want to read all about the Chosen One in the biographies and memoirs of his adventures before and after he destroyed He-who-must-not-be-named. One would want him to be an integral part of the Aurors and fight the Dark, Evil ones to protect this world. But all these hopes were grounded to dust a few months after the Final Battle.

-x-

It was around four months after Fred Weasley’s funeral and Harry found it difficult to stay at the Burrow, the home of the Weasley clan. He expected Fred to appear from a corner along with his George and prank Ron or joke about something. But Fred never came and the other twin seemed lost without him. He wished could have saved the friendly redhead, even Remus, Tonks, Colin, Sirius, Cedric and so many others. Little Teddy was now with his grief-stricken grandma who had gone into seclusion. If only he had acted earlier. If only Dumbledore had not been so loopy about him having a childhood, that meddler was very much aware of his ‘innocent childhood’, hell he wanted a people-pleasing compliant Saviour. If only, he thought

Harry was standing by the stairs near the dining table when he noticed Ginny arrange the plates for dinner. He was about to make a move towards her when he saw her sigh and begin muttering to herself: “...I should start lacing his food again, mother had asked me to start after a few months after that Snake-face was dead. She said he needs time to recover of the trauma, but it has already been so long. I want him to propose so that I will be the wife of the Boy-Who-Lived. I would get all the lovely dresses and I will get to live a beautiful manor with many elves. I will never be poor again...”

Luckily for her the object to her mutterings had wordlessly cast a Disillusionment Charm on
himself and heard everything. To say Harry was hurt, that would be an understatement. Ginny and Molly – a girl had hoped to marry and a woman who was mother-figure to him and both of them were involved in such a scheme. Harry wanted the truth, rational, logical facts to understand what he had just heard. And there was only one person who had always been honest with him, but he was dead.

Harry needed air to breathe and not to eat anything at the Burrow anymore; Lord knows what this deranged girl would try next. He went up Percy’s room which was allotted to him. It seemed like Percy had fallout with his overbearing again after Fred’s demise. He left a few weeks after the Battle.

Harry locked the door and opened his trunk. He began looking for the items he had hidden inside. He observed that his books were pushed around and his old robes where below the trunk. His eyes widened, someone had gone through his stuff and obviously could not find anything. He smiled. He had guessed this much now.

Harry cast a Notice-Me-Not charm and a Silence Charm all around the room. He sat heavily and looked for something within his trunk. There is it was; hidden on the right corner, a little hole. To someone who does not know what it was, it was simple a defect in manufacturing. But to the ones who knew what it was, it was button for a secret compartment. Harry had had this since the fifth year. He hid all his treasures in this part of his trunk. Sirius, Harry’s eyes moistened a bit, had it created for him and had asked him to keep it a well guarded secret. He thanked his stars he did not tell anyone about this.

With a tiny snapping sound the compartment opened. Magic, such brilliance Harry thought. Inside the truck was mini trunk of sorts. It possessed all of Harry’s treasures. The elusive Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone and his mother’s Willow wand which he found hidden in Snape’s cabinet after the battle. He had kept all this hidden just because it was his instinct. And Harry always obeyed his instincts.

He picked up the Stone, turned it around his head three times and wished for the two people he wished to speak. Within moments two faint shadowy figures stood in front of him; Lily Potter and Severus Snape. Even before his mother could smile at him or Snape could sneer, Harry launched into his story.

“...so now I just don’t understand what to do! I mean at one moment I feel violated and furious. Other than that I’m becoming extremely curious. Please tell me what to do.”
Lily nodded at childhood friend, knowing he knew better of this situation. Severus Snape knew he would be summoned for this; he just did not know when this foolish boy would come to his senses. But hiding the Stone, that was very Slytherin of him and that made him smile.

“Harry before I begin I want you to know I’m sorry for giving the Dark Lord the prophecy. I wish I could change things. I really do, but alas here we are.”

Harry nodded, like Lily did. Had he been Hogwarts when these words were uttered, he’d feel he’s hallucinating. But here was Snape who continued his words.

“I had always suspected something was eerie about that girl and her mother. Now first things first, we need Veritaserum, at least 5 vials. And I know just the person who can brew the best quality, my godson, Draco.”

Snape’s eyes even after death were gleaming with pride. Harry had to accept that Draco was far superior to him in Potions. He was about to argue when his mother asked him to listen to Severus before running around. Severus continued,
“You tell these fools in this shabby place that you need sometime, say you want to go for therapy. After all you did have a fragment of the Dark Lord’s soul in you. Play the ‘pity card’ and use your fame for once. Then get Mr. Longbottom, Ms. Lovegood and head to Malfoy Manor. I’m aware that Lucius Malfoy is under house arrest for one year while Draco and Cissy are free thanks to your words at the Wizengamot. Show them the memory of this day. Cissy is an excellent healer, while Lucius understands politics better than any of us.”

Snape shook his head again. He was changing his plans; something more concrete needs to be done. He asked Harry to apparated to Diagon Alley, wear his father’s cloak and head to the Mr. Mulpepper’s Apothecary in Knockturn Alley. The owner sells the truth serum for little more than regular price but his quality was authentic. Harry needed to buy this in the sly. Nobody needs to know of this purchase. Severus explicitly asked Harry to use the Black Vaults for this purchase. He can tell the people in this house that he wants to buy something special. They will eat out his hands, which they did. Harry was instructed to buy food that each member this family and Ms. Granger enjoyed the most and put more seven drops the serum. They need to speak more than a few minutes. Harry was told that in this case every Weasley and Ms. Granger – all are guilty till proven innocent.

Harry did exactly as he was told. Nobody thought it was unusual. Hermione encouraged it and suggested she’d join him, but he said he wants sometime on his own. She agreed grudgingly.
Author's notes: NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

2. PLANS

A week had passed since the incident. Harry along with Luna and Neville was seated in the parlour at Malfoy Manor. Lucius, Narcissa and Draco were seated in front of the trio. The atmosphere was highly tensed; all other occupants of the room wondered why they had gathered here - may be not Luna who had an ethereal look on her face. On the other hand Neville was tensed being in the same room as his nemesis in school and the sister of the woman who had tortured his parents to insanity. Lucius wanted to know the purpose of this formal meeting that Mr. Potter had requested a week ago. There was request for strong silencing charms and protection wards for this occasion. Narcissa wondered how much of a seer this Lovegood girl was. Draco knew Potter had had to have a very strong reason for meeting with his family. Harry sensed all this and he took the Stone out his pocket.

“Draco before we begin anything, I want to acknowledge something you said all those years ago and apologize as well. You were correct then ‘...some wizarding families are much better than others...’ I should have taken your help.”

Draco wanted gloat, may be even push up hands and shout, but he just could not. A lot was lost, too many people were lost. Of all the people he had lost he missed his godfather the most. Severus would have understood the euphoria he was feeling now. He was right all along. He noticed Potter moving his gripped hand around his head. Suddenly there was the ghostly form of the object of his thoughts and another lady. She was pretty. Her eyes were pretty, just like Potters’, who interrupted his thoughts.

“Everybody I would like to introduce Professor Snape and my mother, Lily Potter.”

Luna smiled at the couple that materialized out of thin air in front of her. Neville looked at the man who had tormented him for five years with the respect he deserved. Harry had told him everything. The Malfoy family was shocked to say the best. Draco had tears in eyes. Severus was right here, in front of him, another proof that he was gone. Lucius wanted to say something but words were lost.
to him, and his wife felt similar emotions.

Severus saw his surrogate family and felt a pang of loss. He decided not to dwell on that and focus on the task before him.

“Lucius, Cissy, Draco, Longbottom and Ms. Lovegood – this meeting was requested on my suggestion. Lily thought she’d bring in James but even after death the man’s loyalty is not lost. He should have been a Hufflepuff.”

Lily nudged him angrily on the ribs. Snape smiled, he always adored her temper. Neville was confused by this show.

“Harry heard something very interesting last week, and he summoned us for advice. On my suggestions he followed an elaborate plan. To say he has discovered something humungous would be a travesty.”

The audience looked at Harry and the ghostly figures. Draco impatiently snarled, “Sev, please cut to the chase and let us what is the true purpose of this meeting.”

“Draco, patience.” His father chided, but he too wanted to know what was going in this room.

Lily knew it was time she spoke. She had thought about time since sixteen years. With every new day she understood different facets of the information she heard. She walked close to Harry and tried to smooth his hair. Her eyes got wet.

“My son heard Ginevra Weasley’s musings about mixing some love potion in his food like she did a year ago.”

She saw the reaction Severus had predicted. Alice’s son was stunned, the pretty blonde girl with the unusual ear-rings nodded as if she knew it already and the Malfoy family almost smirked. Draco could not control him. He had to say something.

“I knew it! I just knew it. Blaise and I were always sure Potter has better standards.”
Narcissa smiled at her son’s antics, while Lucius wanted to gloat as well. Weasleys were a pathetic excuse of a wizarding family. The older children may be more thoughtful, but Arthur and his banshee of a wife and his youngest son and that deranged-stalker-like girl were certainly blinded by their hero, that muggle loving old fool and their own prejudice. Talk about hypocrisy.

Lily continued knew she will need to continue for time was of essence.

“According to Severus’ plan, Harry met with every member of that family and fed them food mixed with Veritaserum, in private of course. We have learnt that the entire prophecy was taken wrongly by that old meddling fool and Harry and Neville’s entire life was constructed by a well devised plan.”

She waited for Neville’s reaction, for he was a highly important player in this entire situation. He was manipulated just as much as Harry. She saw her son’s shaking hands. He needed her. He needed support. Neville saw it as well. He moved close to Harry and wrapped his arms around him.

“Neville there is one more thing you should know, your mother was Harry’s godmother and I was yours.”

Neville nodded at the pretty lady but his attention was only on Harry. This was the boy that had always stood up for him, who had faith in him and supported him in everything so far. Now he knew it was his turn and he’d be damned if anyone hurt his Harry. His Harry, he liked the sound of that.

Lily and Severus saw what had just happened. This was good for Harry, and he had accepted the much taller boy as well.

Luna spoke for the first time. Her voice was focused and sure. All traces of Loony Lovegood were gone.

“Lily, tell us what needs to be done.”

Lily first asked Harry to show everyone the pensive memories of all the Weasleys along with Fleur and Hermione. Harry had even been to Gringotts. He did not want to believe all this but there was evidence for every single accusation. He snuggled closer to his friend. It felt good to say that. He had interviewed Luna and Neville as well.
Harry felt safe in this room. Draco was grinning like the Cheshire cat while looking at Neville and him, but he turned pink when Luna looked right at him and smiled a bit. Ah, this is interesting.

Lucius and Narcissa both never trusted that old fool but after viewing all memories and listening to Severus and Mrs. Potter, the couple began to hate that man. So many had died, so much was lost—all because he wanted the Dark Lord dead! And all of it because of a misinterpreted prophecy!

“Lucius, Lily and I were thinking if you could help us make things right. The entire thing is dangerous and even exhausting but the result shall not only help us all but could very beneficial.”

Narcissa knew Severus had planned something vast. She nodded for him to continue.

“If you and Lucius agree to perform a ritual, it will take five year for its preparations. It is very similar to time-travel but the difference is that the one person on whom it is performed, he/she will have all of his/her memories, knowledge and even magical core and strength in the body of their future selves. Let us say we send Harry, he needs to train in very advanced magic so that it would be useful to him when he returns.”

Lily began to speak when her friend stopped.

“It will take so long because the potion that are difficult to brew and we need to prepare the traveller. But Severus came up with this brilliant idea which shall help Neville, Draco and Luna. He thinks all four of need to learn the Mind Arts up to the level of mastery, Runes, Wards, Wandless and Wordless Magic and Animagus Transformation

He also thinks if we involve the Goblins the other three children could also receive their knowledge and strength. I think the Goblins do have a potion for this. You know one can also carry Life Debts even if they are unclaimed even when they return. So let’s say if Harry travels to past, he will have all his memories; then he needs to go to Gringotts, summon all other three and viola!”

Narcissa saw the precision in the eyes of the two before her. She knew she could save her son from the trauma of that vile creature’s mark. Lucius thought the Malfoy name could be saved.

Draco thought he could be friends with the boy he had admired as child and may be getting to know this pretty girl, may be even Longbottom as well. Luna giggled at Draco as if she knew exactly what his thoughts were. Neville could think of nothing but the boy in his arms. May be Harry could be with him now that red whore was exposed. Harry and he could be good together. ‘If only’, he thought.
Harry felt content in Neville’s arms. He had heard Ginny confess she had obliviated his and Neville’s memories and fed him those stupid potions. May be this time he thought he could save all the innocents and the Wizarding World would prosper.

The Malfoy parents and Lily and Severus along with the four teens discussed every detail. Every little event of the past was written in order of its happenings and how they could alter it. This world needed its people and children. After the war there were many orphans and too many casualties on both sides. If this scheme succeeded there would peace and security.

-x-

It was a month after that fateful meeting. Harry, Luna and Draco had moved into Longbottom Manor with Augusta who was more than happy to help. The Goblins too agreed for with the plan since it could once again lead to a time when their premises would be the least penetrable place again. Ragnuk, the Head Goblin agreed to become the Secret Keeper on the Fidelius Charm performed by Harry on the manor. Harry sealed all Potter and Black vaults and properties. It was widely agreed upon that Harry provide Lucius with a full pardon. Harry used his fame for the first time in this way and to be honest he enjoyed it.

-x-
Those Left Behind

Author's notes: [NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

3. Those Left Behind

Five years had passed since Harry had disappeared. Ginny Weasley was now a professional quidditch player for Holyhead Harpies. She was a known name in the Wizarding World as a known sportswoman. She is also famous as the former girlfriend of the Man-who-defeated-You-Know-Who. But most importantly she is infamous as the girl who was issued a Restraining Order to stay away from Harry Potter by Madame Bones herself. This led to her losing an opportunity to work with the Daily Prophet as Quidditch reporter.

Ginny still could not remember what had she said to Harry a few days before he vanished. She had gone to the Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt to file a missing persons report and to the Prophet as well – but everywhere they had rudely dismissed her saying ‘Mr. Potter had informed them about his absence days before.’ She wondered if Harry had obliviated her, but she knew he never would. She had fed him enough of the twins WonderWitch Love Potions to make him drool for her and worship the ground she walked on. ‘How wonderful was her fifth year was. The Boy-who-lived had experienced after that lemon-drop-sucker was killed had almost cancelled the effects of the potions. ‘So not fair, I spent all the Knuts I saved to buy that potion; the twins were so rude, they would not give me anything for free, I’m their baby sister.’

She happily remembered that months after the Battle she and her mother had decided to brew Amortentia so that she could quickly become Mrs. Potter. It would have so great then and they would not need to act like thieves to get the Galleons they deserved from the bank from those filthy creatures. But He had to vanish and seal each and every vault! ‘Where will we get our share from? We placed our lives in danger for him and I was promised that he will be mine. I could have been so rich.’ She wanted to wait for Harry but one must understand a girl has her needs. But mum did not approve. Not fair.

Ronald Bilius Weasley was one angry young man. George had ordered him in clear words to never, ever enter his shop. The Department of Magical Law Enforcement had given him the ‘pink slip’. It was not pink. But Hermione had explained it was a Muggle way of saying politely while kicking you on the arse: ‘you are fired’ (damn Know-it-all. Thank Lord they broke up). Now the Ministry had to copy the lowly muggles! They, especially the Minister said he was lazy and did not take his job seriously. Their nerve! He was a part of the Golden Trio. He had helped in defeating that snake-like-creature. He had risked his life so many times for the Potter boy. But no, no credit was showered upon him. They all had to praise their Golden Boy and that Muggle-born Witch. They all
said he simply could not grow up! Their nerve.

He was just as tall as Bill and even Weatherby. He was sure taller than Potter who according to Ronald was ‘a tiny little fella’. The goblins had thrown him out of the bank saying he was being rude and insulting clients. But come on everyone knows Pansy Parkinson and Blaise Zabini are slimy snakes and they are evil Slytherin – baby Death-Eaters. Those vicious creatures would not give him any more Galleons since Potter and Black Vaults are sealed. They had even taken away all the gold out his vault which he had earned since the age of eleven. He had placed his life in danger to get that little boy trained. But where is his glory? Nowhere. ‘What did he tell that ickle boy? Those pies were yummy.’

And now he had to work as a junior assistant manager for Holyhead Harpies on Ginny’s recommendation. Why didn’t Ginny and mum feed him that potion? The twins’ potion was not strong. George would not even talk to the family anymore. Ron had seen how Harry looked that squid Longbottom. Fruits. If only mum and Ginny had done their work, he would have a manor and they would hire him as player for the Cudley Canons.

Molly Weasley (née Prewett) was furious. All the money from the family vault was taken because she had stolen from Potter. She did not steal; the Headmaster had given it to her. He said she and her family had earned it. How could those underground creatures insult the Great Dumbledore? Even the keys to Potter’s vaults were not useful. She sold them saying they were former keys to Potter’s Vaults to some fans. On Albus’ order she did not spend much of the gold she had gotten. He had told her to spend it only after her dear Ginny was Lady Potter. But now she had to work for the first time in her life! It was so undignified working a place like Madame Malkins! She was pure-blood witch of the Prewett and Weasley line.

Even that dogfather of Potter left her nothing. Firstly he was so rude to her. But she had shown him his place. He was just a dog, just a fugitive escaping from the law. She had cooked for him and that tiny, tiny brat. Even her dear Ginny is taller than him. And the nerve of that Black from the Dark Family of Evil Snakes to tell her Harry was old enough to attend the Order meetings. He was just a baby. She wanted to contact Amelia Bones and get his grungy arse Kissed. But Albus had promised her that she'd get that Townhouse when they’d rid of the dogfather, so gloriously they did. He barked into the Veil. He should have known better than to play around it. It was great that Albus had Imperio-ed that crazy woman. Even after dying the dog-man had to interfere. It all went to Potter. And now the boy had sealed his vaults.

Harry was such a good boy. He was hero. Just a little potion made him fall madly in love with her Ginny. He was the Savior. Ginny and he could have made such a lovely couple. She would have been the mother-in-law of the Boy-who-lived.

Arthur Weasley looked his family and often wished he had stopped Molly from listening to everything Albus had to say. Sure, her brothers worked with the man but not everything he said was gold. Look what happened. Bill and Fleur hardly visit. Charlie refuses to return from Romania. Percy has given up the family name since Harry left. Ronald was plain lazy and arrogant – just as like when he was a child. Kingsley was right to have fired him. Hermione looked so tired. Poor thing, she worked for more than sixty hours a week. She could hardly come over to visit after she and Ron broke up. It was Ron’s fault, he never treated her well.

And Harry, he just left. His family was broken now. He should not have listened to everything Albus and Molly said. Such irony! At one time he and his family were so close to Harry, now his
daughter had a restraining order and almost his entire family for publically and legally asked not even try to make contact him. Everybody at the Ministry tell him to ‘grow a pair’, sure it was muggle thing. It did not sound fascinating.

Hermione Jean Granger had such hopes when she had first stepped into Diagon Alley. It was magnanimous. Flourish and Blotts was her way to the Holy Grail. The smell of the store, the parchments, and the books – it was all so intoxicating. Now that was all that she could smell for this was the only place she could get a job. The ministry would give her a job as a secretary. That is it! It was as if they refuse to think a muggle-born girl could be smart and competent for a good job there.

Yes, she was paid decent at the bookstore; only because she attracted a lot of customers. They all wanted to meet and greet ‘that Muggle-born Witch’ who was Harry Potter’s best friend. They all wanted to see the girl who had helped defeat the Dark Lord. It felt as though she was on display at a zoo. And to top it all her parents were furious at her for obliviating them. She doing what was right for them. It was safe for them. They agreed it was safe. But they refused to forgive her when they were told about Gringotts vault getting cleaned up for stealing from Harry. She did not steal. The Headmaster said it was donated to the Order by the Potters; and since she was helping the Order by keeping an eye on him. Yes, she was paid; but only from the fourth year. He was her first friend. Unlike the Weasleys she was not paid to befriend him. She did not know that Dumbledore was stealing from Harry’s family vaults.

She did what was good for Harry. It was not right to be a poof. She was just saving Harry from the shame of being with a boy. Granted Neville became brave and tall and handsome and charming by the time of the Final Battle, but he was just so below Harry as child. Dumbledore had been furious when she reported to him how Neville was helping Harry cope with the Triwizard Tournament. He had said Harry should marry someone like Ginny. He had even promised her a job at Hogwarts.

McGonagall had curtly told her ‘jobs not were distributed based on promises or fame. One needs to get their Mastery in the subject.’ But how could she study any further when all the money from her vaults was gone. Her parents refuse to pay anymore. Even all the books that were promised to her from the Potter and Black Libraries and vaults were not given to her. Agreed Ginny is a nutcase fan-girl. But then Harry should have married any girl from a good, Light family so that she could have had her books and money.

According to her parents the only good thing she did so far was breaking up with Ronald. She did remain in contact with the family. She often wondered why they loathed the poor boy. Sure he was a little lazy and pompous, but he is not as bad as Malfoy. Her mother said he was not good for her. Fine, he was not good academically but he played sports. Sure, he fought viciously with her over every single thing but which couple never fought. Yes, he is stubborn and does see the world in a Gryffindors v/s. Slytherin canvas. His temper and attitude rendered him unemployed – so she decided to stay away from him. He does not even realise what he says when he loses his mind. Now is always angry.

Both her parents often suggested she should marry some nice muggle-born boy. May be they had a point. That Hufflepuff boy Justin Finch-Fletchley did have crush on her.
Back from the Future

Author's notes: [NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

4. Back from the Future:

Winter Solstice, December 22nd 2003:

A bright light surrounded the Ball Room of Malfoy Manor. Every individual felt a shift in their magical cores. The Latin word ‘CORRECTUS’ was resonating in their subconscious. Every occupant of the room – the witches and wizards, the goblins, and even the elusive centaur Firenze had their hopes pinned on the young man who was on his way to become the boy-who-lived again.

Luna and the centaur shared a look of understanding and sight. Each nodded to the other and the latter made his way back to the Forbidden Forest and to gaze at the stars – ‘Mars had chosen not to come anytime soon’. Draco, a few years back would have muttered ‘lunatics’, but now he knew what that look meant. Luna had seen what was about to happen. He hoped there would be no bloodshed this time. ‘Magical blood is precious and limited, it needs to be nurtured and preserved with care’ – his father had said just before the ritual. Draco prayed to Mother Brighid* for his friend’s safety and success in his voyage. Luna smiled that blond boy and curled her fingers around his. She knew her needed her assurances just like she needed to feel the warmth of his presence.

Neville saw his Harry fade and all that was left now was a Pentagon and pagan runes drawn on the floor. The runes and the figure – were drawn with the freely given blood of five witches, five wizards and five magical creatures. Lady Longbottom, Narcissa, Luna, Amelia Bones and Andromeda Tonks supplied a vial of their blood; and so did Lucius, Draco, Neville, Blaise Zabini and George Weasley (who made an Unbreakable Vow in order for secrecy). Luna, with her easiness, got vial of Thestral blood, Unicorn blood which was freely given, Firenze, the centaur, readily his blood on her request and Ragnuk provided Goblin blood.

The tall Longbottom heir had his fingers crossed and all his senses were praying for success. All these years of extensive learning and training with Harry had cemented his bond with his lover. He knew things will change for the better but he was already missing Harry. ‘Those beautiful eyes’, he sighed.
Lily and Severus’ pale figures were observing these three and the elder Malfoys - each had hope, faith and determination ingrained in their auras. The two knew this the most essential part of the ceremony. Severus had explained ‘in Pagan rituals good intentions, exact timing and consent are a must.’ Lily knew now all had come on Harry’s shoulders. And she knew he will prove her right. He will live up to his reputation.

-x-

Winter Solstice, December 22nd 1985:

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, and International Confederation of Wizards) – the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, had received the news of one young Harry Potter. It was very good and it was very, very bad.

Potter was able to perform accidental magic twice within a single week. Both events were highly advanced for a wizard who just a five years old. Apparition by a five year was almost unheard of. ‘It was good that the Longbottom boy is still considered a squib’. While Harry’s magic was news, it was bad for Albus. Even with his magic bound by him, the Grand Sorcerer himself, the little brat was able to perform magic at this young age. He needed to be ‘grounded’ so that he would be a humble, meek Saviour who will defeat Tom and cleanse the Wizarding World of Slytherin evil.

The very good news was even better than Albus had hoped. He was satisfied with himself for placing Potter with the Dursley family. Minerva was right, ‘worst sort of muggles’. Arabella had given Albus the most wonderful report. Vernon Dursley and family had beaten the brat till he was blue just like his teacher’s wig. The brat will be kept in his cupboard for a few days. Such good news, the Headmaster sighed happily. Just six more years and he would send Hagrid to ‘rescue’ the boy. And Hagrid being, well Hagrid, will sing carols and hymns praising ‘the greatest wizard alive’ to the impressionable boy who believe him to be his rescuer and do everything as he says. Such joy.

Impressionable; yes, that reminded Albus to contact Molly and family. Since her brothers have been ‘killed by scum Death Eaters’, Molly had put all her faith in him. After all who would even think it was all him! The Weasleys have always been a Light family and they needed gold, desperately; that would be a good Christmas gift which will earn Molly’s implicit trust. He remembered young Ronald was around Potter’s age; yes, a suitable ‘best mate’. And young Ginevra – the foolish little girl is already obsessed with Potter. He will advise Molly to make the girl believe she and the boy were meant to be. ‘Bedtime stories’ – people think they are innocent, but they have no idea how they affect a young mind.
Albus remembered ‘The Tale of the Three Brothers’ and the Hallows. Gellert and he were so fond of them. It was a shame they had to duel for the Wand. Gellert should have known better, Albus deserved it. It was all for Albus’ ‘Great Good’. Albus thought of his former lover and the excitement of youth and their ‘ambitions for glory and plans to bring about ”a new world order” in which wizards would rule over Muggles’. He hardly cared about Muggles, those inferior, savage beings. His poor sister was scarred for life. His father was sent to Azkaban and his dear mother died as well. The muggles are to be blamed. Tom was right they are inferior. He could not let Potter hound the glory that he was rightfully his. He would mold the boy to be the ‘Light side’s Weapon’ and then hand him to the Weasleys as a reward for being as faithful as they will be.

He already had two of the Hallows. James Potter was just as good as Molly. He gave away a priceless magical artefact to him. He should have been in Helga’s house. If only he could get the Stone and he’d be the Master of Death. It had to be somewhere. It cannot be lost. May be the Potter boy could be of some use to get it.

Yes, that letter would do wonders and his ‘objects’ placed in the Muggles’ home would make the boy the perfect malleable weapon.

-x-

Winter Solstice, December 22nd 1985:

4, Private Drive.

The Dursley family was out for dinner. Dudikins wanted to have nice burger and fries. The freak had spoilit his mood to eat at home. Potter was such an unnatural boy. ‘Turning wigs blue!’ Vernon felt the horror. Pet had told him about her sister turned things into animals. That was just an abnormal. Those freaks should not have dumped their waste of space in their home. Ah, Dudley wanted some ice-cream. He is such a nice boy. ‘Why could the Lily’s son be normal?’ Petunia thought. May be she should let her husband handle this when they return from Marge’s the next evening.

The subject of Dursleys musings was locked in the cupboard under the stairs. He was blue and scarred with belt marks. Harry Potter had stopped crying since he was three. He knew no one was coming to rescue him. Uncle Vernon had said ‘nobody wants a freak’. There was no food for dinner. Harry knew he had to stay in here in the cupboard till his relatives came back. They had said there is no such thing as magic. But then what will explain the wig and him appearing on the roof? Harry’s hair was source of trauma for his aunt and now there was this pleasant sound. It was as if someone was singing a ballad in the country side and a flute was played to support the voice. It was a soothing voice. Its effect lulled the little boy to sleep.
At midnight the cuckoo clock in the kitchen chirps silently. Inside the cupboard under the stairs there was an electric blue light for a few seconds. Just inside it. The light curled around the little boy and settled into his skin like a glove. The boy woke up with a start.

‘It worked!’ Harry Potter was the happiest little boy with an infectious smile on his face while he had bruises all over him. He had a black eye and a swollen lip. But nothing mattered. The ritual worked. Harry could feel the difference. He felt oddly energetic. His mind was working rapidly like the wings of hummingbird.

It was time to test things. Harry waved his finger and silently cast ‘Alohomora’. All the locks on the cupboard door opened and no missive arrived from the ministry. ‘So the trace is place after we reach Hogwarts. And since I did not perform magic with a wand or in front of a muggle, I’m safe.’ Harry did not clean the cupboard; instead cast an advanced level notice-me-not charm and the Colloportus2 on it. He wanted all the possible proofs.

Harry walked around the house and tried to locate any runes or magical objects which inform the old man of magical activities in this house. He went in the kitchen, nothing. When Harry entered the sitting room with the telly, he felt a tingling. With his training he knew there was something magical in this room. It was behind all telly. There were three of them. They looked like a regular little broken junk that Dudley throws all around the house. He cast a spell that hides all magical activities and signatures in this premises till he undis it himself. He knew wandless magic could not be detected but he wanted to be safe. He cast the Specialis Revelio3 on them. One of them had an advanced compulsion charm on it to loath magical population – which meant Harry. Another object had a charm report any magic done in this house to the caster (aka the old meddler) and the last one was a listening device of sorts which would be activated when emotions are highly aggravated in the house. ‘So this is how he knew when to send Hagrid and send that howler.’

Harry knew better than to get angry. He ate a bit in the kitchen and cast the Goblin version of the disillusionment charm, with this charm neither Moody’s magical eye nor Homenum Revelio4 can detect him or the hidden object. Ragnuk had taught the four of them a lot of magic of his kind but under an Oath to never break into the bank again, instead to come for help instead. He walked out of his aunts’ house and walked towards Mrs. Figg’s place. He wanted to cancel the blood wards around Private Drive by denouncing it as his home. But they had decided it needs to wait.

Harry entered Mrs. Figg’s place which was home to many, many cats. Had it not been for McGonagall, Harry would have hated cats with a passion. He cast Silencio on all the inhabitants of the house. Now in a time like this, Harry had to let go of his moral and he directed Imperius Curse on Arabella Figg. He planted fake memories in her mind and to give the Headmaster false
information when Albus asks for it. He also strictly ordered her to refuse to acknowledge him till he asked her to do so. He removed all the memories of this visit from her mind.

The body of a five year is easily exhausted and the boy fell asleep on the couch.

--xx--

*Brighid was the patron of poets and bards, as well as healers and magicians. She was especially honoured when it came to matters of prophecy and divination. In addition to her position as a Goddess of Magic, Brighid was known to watch over women in childbirth, and thus evolved into a goddess of hearth and home.


2. Colloportus: Magically locks a door, preventing it from being opened by Muggle means.

3. Specialis Revelio: Causes an object to show its hidden secrets or magical properties

4. Homenum Revelio: Reveals humans near the caster. Used by Dumbledore to detect Harry under his Invisibility Cloak, but first named when used multiple times by various characters in Deathly Hallows.
Harry woke up the next morning a little groggy. The memories of his five year old self and his past self (of his twenties) made him little light-headed. He thanked his lucky stars that the Dursleys were out for the day. He found a weird looking set of little cubes on a chain around his neck. It was placed around his neck by Ragnuk; that reminded him the second task in order.

Harry silently ate a bit of his breakfast. There was a lot to do; Gringotts, Malfoys, Lovegoods and Neville and the Ministry. Harry was glad for the first time since returning. There was no scar on his hand. Umbridge was going to pay. Harry found a notepad and a pen by the telephone. He began to write while trying to work with his child-like writing. The list was topped by: Bank – seal Vaults again. – Find Will – Give cubes to Head Goblin followed by other important people and situations discussed in the past, err future?

Happy with his writing, Harry put the paper in his pocket and focused so he could apparate in the abandoned alley beside the Leaky Cauldron. He felt as though forced through a very tight rubber tube. He hated apparating. Luckily he did not land on arse this time. He managed his balance but remained a bit shaky. As he stood up he began to cast strong glamour charms on his person. His hair was now dirty blonde and eyes were brown, he stood tall and transfigured his glasses into a better shape. He looked more like eleven year old now instead of a tiny, malnourished five year old. After being satisfied with his appearance walked inside the pub.

A feeling of déjà vu rushed through his senses. Tom was attending to a few early customers. It was just eight in the morning. Harry stomach growled for food. But in this body he was used to remaining hungry. He ordered toast and eggs with milk. He gave Tom muggle money which he happily accepted. He had stolen a few pounds from his aunt’s cabinet. The barkeeper tapped on the brick wall for the ‘polite muggleborn lad’. Harry wondered how Tom would react if his identity was revealed.

Diagon Alley was exactly like it used to be. ‘Harry wished he had about eight more eyes. He turned his head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once:
the shops, the things outside them, and the people doing their shopping.’ 1 He had the same
thoughts the first time he visited with Hagrid. Harry promised himself to do all that he could so that
he could protect this magical world.

As he walked down the alley, he saw all the shops – Ollivanders Wand Shop, Madam Malkin's
Robes for All Occasions, Flourish and Blotts, Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour, Magical
Menagerie, Eeylops Owl Emporium, Quality Quidditch Supplies, The Daily Prophet's main office
and so many others. And there stood proudly the imposing building: Gringotts Wizarding Bank.
Harry entered the bank and into the small entrance hall and another set of doors. Engraved on these
silver doors were the words:

Enter, stranger, but take heed
Of what awaits the sin of greed
For those who take, but do not earn,
Must pay most dearly in their turn.
So if you seek beneath our floors
A treasure that was never yours,
Thief, you have been warned, beware
Of finding more than treasure there.

Harry walked with confidence which he had lacked the previous time. He bowed in respect while
addressing the Chief Teller in fluent Gobbledegook:

“Morning sir, may I have a private meeting with Head Goblin Ragnuk. It is about the Cubes of
Gringott.”

The teller knew this was no ordinary client; though he wore glamours and hid his age there was
wisdom and respect in his stance and language. Goblins seldom thought of any wizards as worthy
but this child deserved it. He bowed to acknowledge the child’s request and asked him to follow.
They walked towards the Head Goblin’s chamber, a place where even the most influential families
would be eager to enter.

The teller led him towards an inner chamber wherein sat an ancient looking goblin with knowing
grey eyes. Harry knew this was the Head Goblin. He looked around the chamber. There were
paintings of Ragnuk the First: maker of Godric Gryffindor's Sword and Gringott: Founder of
Gringotts Wizarding Bank, goblin made weaponry and several heirlooms which were often thought
lost. ‘Hermione would do anything to visit this chamber,’ he thought.

Ragnuk waved his hand gracefully and Harry’s glamours were gone. The Elder smiled revealing
his scary teeth. He saw the tiny boy who was badly bruised and malnourished.
“Mr. Harry Potter what surprise! We did not expect to see you so early. I believe you have a Cube for us Goblins.”

Harry nodded. Ragnuk was intimidating even with his short stature. He walked towards the boy and removed a cube from the chain. Harry was asked to sit while the cube was verified.

After a couple of minutes Ragnuk re-entered the chamber and sat on his daunting chair.

“Gringotts Bank and the Goblins would like to apologize for the inconvenience and pain caused to you in the future because of one our own faltered.”

Harry accepted the apology given by his teacher.

“I believe you want your parents’ will, render all your vault keys obsolete, get the vaults to open only in your person till you personally make any changes and you want to recover all that is stolen when you decide. Am I correct so far?”

The boy nodded. He was given a legal parchment. Harry found nothing harmful. He was given a blood quill and assured that it would not scar him. He also was assured nobody could challenge this document regardless of his age since as the Heir of the family he was within his rights to do so; nobody would be told of the actions taken since it was a personal matter. And if anyone attempts to touch his gold or things or property – they will be informed that a cheating goblin was found and thus all this clients’ vaults were frozen. Ragnuk assured the boy that Griphook shall be punished by the Goblins Council for such a severe breach of trust. Harry, the accused goblin shall be executed.

Harry wrote his name on parchment which immediately glowed. He was informed his vaults were safe, all keys were useless and all stolen gold and heirlooms will be returned when he chose. Ragnuk summoned the Potters’ Last Will and tapped on it with a metallic wand. A quaffle sized globe appeared out of thin air and in it appeared James and Lily Potter.

James looked boyish with an air of mischief so typical of the Marauder. Lily seemed serene and melancholy. She had those green eyes which Harry inherited.

Harry saw his parents, his eyes watered a bit. It was overwhelming for the five year old in him. He heard the Goblin asking him to pay attention and he heard the will from his parents themselves.
“IF THIS WILL IS ACTIVATED THEN IT MEANS WE, JAMES AND LILY POTTER HAVE PASSED ON. WE WOULD LIKE TO INFORM OUR LITTLE HARRY WE LOVED HIM AND WILL ALWAYS LOVE HIM.

ALSO, IF WE ARE DEAD THAN IT WAS PETER WHO BETRAED US. PETER PETTIGREW WAS OUR SECRET-KEEPER. SIRIUS BLACK WAS A DECOY.

WE’D LIKE REMEUS TO HAVE THE COTTAGE IN IRELAND AND 100,000 GALLEONS. SIRIUS BLACK IS TO BE GIVEN 50,000 GALLEONS AND ALL PRANKS, JOKES AND TRICKS CREATED BY THE MARAUDERS. BOTH OF YOU BETTER SETTLE DOWN. REMUS PLEASE DON’T BE HARSH UPON YOURSELF, ANY GIRL/GUY WOULD LOVE HAVE YOU AND DO FIND SOME TOUGH GIRL/GUY TO TAME PADFOOT.

SINCE THIS SITUATION HAS COME UP WE WOULD LIKE SIRIUS BLACK TO BE NAMED HARRY’S OFFICIAL GUARDIAN AND REMUS LUPIN AS HIS SECONDARY GUARDIAN. PADFOOT TAKE CARE OF HIM AND REMUS, KEEP AN EYE ON BOTH OF THEM.

IF THE ABOVE TWO ARE UNABLE TO TAKE CARE OF HARRY, WE’D LIKE HIM TO BE RAISED BY HARRY’S GODMOTHER – ALICE LONGBOTTOM AND HER FAMILY, FRANK AND AUGUSTA; FOLLOWED BY AMELIA BONES. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD OUR SON BE SENT TO PETUNIA DURSLEY AND HER FAMILY WHO HATE MAGIC.

HARRY JAMES POTTER IS THE SOLE HEIR TO THE POTTER LINE AND SHALL RECEIVE ALL GOLD, HEIRLOOMS AND PROPERTIES. IF ANYONE WHO TRIES TO INTERFERE WITH OUR LAST WISHES THEY SHALL BE PUBLICALLY TRIED BY THE WIZENGAMOT WITH THE POTTER VOTES AGAINST THEM.”

SIGNED
JAMES AND LILLY POTTER

WITNESS: ALBUS PERCIVAL WULFRIC BRIAN DUMBLEDORE.


-X-

Harry had tears in his eyes. He had heard this before but the betrayal was not reduced. The pain was as fresh as the bruises and scars on all over his body. He cleared his eyes and asked Ragnuk to
summon the trio. It was time.

-x-

Author's notes: [NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

6. The Snake. The Lioness. And the Oddball

The Malfoy Manor:

The grand ancestral estate in Wiltshire with white peacocks playing around its manicured green lawns and hedges and a huge garden filled flowers and doves is a famous location. Only a chosen few are invited for a tour of the manor and its reputation is preceded by its residents – the Malfoys.

Lucius Malfoy was known for his skills as a politician, as a shrewd businessman who could sell overcoats in deserts, as a Lord of a powerful ancient family tree, as a charming, attractive man and most crucially as a ‘former’ Death Eater who was under the ‘Imperius Curse’ during the first reign of the Dark Lord. However, the general wizarding population was unaware of his love and priority for his family and its standing. His affection for his wife was legendary among the beau monde of the Wizarding society and he was known to have spoilt his five year old as a pampered Prince.

Lord Malfoy is, in addition, notorious for his profound belief self-preservation. He had joined the Dark Lord at the behest of his late father but the choice was his. At that time the Dark side was about to taste victory and a Malfoy always stands a winner. After that Potter child mysteriously got rid of the Dark Lord, Lucius had to find a way to remain out of Azkaban. Fortunately, the ministry believes all his excuses of the Imperius Curse since he is a very wealthy aristocrat with high political connections.

Lucius agrees with the principles of the Dark Lord but it had cost a lot of precious magical blood. He agreed that the International Wizarding Statute of Secrecy was almost useless and that the Ministry is an absolutely sham of a governing body. He agreed that muggles were a threat. But Lucius never agreed with killing, especially of children regardless of their family background or birth.

When the Dark Lord rushed to eliminate the one to ‘vanquish him’, a fifteen month old child,
Lucius could not help but feel he was on the side of the demented. Yes, every war had the inevitable collateral damage but running around like a headless chicken because of a half heard prophecy was plain ludicrous behaviour. One should know anyone would retaliate when provoked especially when their children’s safety and lives are on the line. The Potters and the Longbottoms (Thank you very Bellatrix – the Dark Lord’s unhinged protégé and Lucius’ sister-in-law) will strike back, the only variable was when. Of course he dare not say that to the Dark Lord who favored the Cruciatus Curse way too often.

The Malfoy Family Head wished the Dark Lord was easonably sane and a little less impetuous like an unsophisticated Gryffindor. He should have known there are much better ways to bring down ones’ enemies like finances, status and communal disgrace; look at the Weasleys, they have no gold or political standing. Like Lucius, he should have remained a true Slytherin – a master in the craft of being scheming and devious.

Lucius often felt they should have protected rather than depleted magical blood while implementing their ideals of Wizarding supremacy. That would have made the Dark Lord a hero rather than a possessed sociopath. His father used talk with fond nostalgia how the charismatic Dark Lord wanted to reform their world for it was too corrupt and prejudiced. That was the objective of the Knights of Walpurgis, the former name of the group now infamously referred to as the Death Eaters. The whole ‘Pureblood garbage’ was introduced to bring in financial resources, ‘Pureblood – look at the number of squibs because of inbreeding’. If only the Dark Lord had chosen to remain in the political arena rather than the battlefield. If only there was a way to make things better, he wished.

Now only Salazar knows where the Dark Lord is. No body was found – just ashes; even his wand was never found. Must be the rat, he thought. All because a single hasty decision the Malfoy name was now discussed like that of a commoner like those ridiculous Weasleys. What Lucius needed now was an opportunity to reinforce his recent shaky standing.

If only Lucius knew prayers were so easily answered when an owl entered his study.

Lucius wondered who send one at this time. It was hardly nine in the morning. Mails usually came by ten. He took the letter which had the Gringotts seal. ‘Must be important, to send a missive at this time’ he thought. Ah, it was a private meeting requested at noon; it may continue till late evening. He needed to reply right away to confirm his presence. He was requested to not discuss this with anyone. Now this should cheer his day. Malfoys loved secrets. He replied in kind.

-x-

The Longbottom Manor.
The dichotomy of innocence and melancholia living and thriving in the same household was common in the Longbottom family manor. Since that fateful day in 1981 the once cheerful family was now reduced to a constant state unusual alertness and worry. The walls in the library are now decorated with pictures of the Alice and Frank who are now permanent inhabitants of St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

‘Frank and Alice; Alice and Frank. Alice. Frank.’ – Augusta Longbottom, the matriarch and the head of the family sighed. Not a single day had passed when she does not miss her children. Every room she looked at had memories of Frank’s childhood; the memory of his impish smile made her smile and cry now. And then there was Alice, ‘that funny little girl’ – as Augusta fondly called. Alice was like the daughter the elder lady never had. Her sweet yet firm demeanour rivalled that of Augusta herself. She missed both her children but she had to remain strong for her Neville.

Neville is such a sweet child. He reminds her of Alice’s innocence. That child would join her every Sunday to St. Mungo’s and hold his mother’s hand and put it on his chubby cheek. Neville idealised both his parents. He would talk to Frank and shake hands with him and hug both of them every time. Augusta marvelled at the innocence of the child but felt immensely sad for him.

She was worried about him; he hardly displayed any magical talents. Albus had told her not to worry, ‘a lot of children are late bloomers.’ She had to be a little stern with the child but he seldom whined. He spent all his time in the greenhouse and the gardens. The boy was born with green thumbs. The house elves once complained he wasn’t letting them do their job. But the child refused to let anyone tend to ‘his plants’. Augusta fondly remembered her late husband who just as gifted as her Neville. ‘If only the child had his grandfather’s confidence’ she wished.

She had just completed the Prophet while sipping her cup of green tea when an owl from Gringotts entered through the window. It was an urgent request from Ragnuk for a meeting within an hour. She was asked not discuss it with anyone and bring Neville with her. The letter was a portkey which will activate exactly on time at eleven. She knew it must be really important.

It was ten. She called Twinkle, the head house elf, who was in charge of Neville. She asked the elf to get her grandson ready to leave on time.

-x-

The unnamed Lovegoods’ home - Ottery St. Catchpole
Xenophilius Lovegood was eagerly waiting for the letter from Gringotts. Luna had told him he’d get one around ten before she began painting. Others may think this family to weird, but that was the whole intention. If anybody got any hint of his Luna having the Sight they’d try to harm her like those poor boys from the Potter and Longbottom family; or even worse, some goat would trap his child like Cassandra Trelawney’s great-great-granddaughter Sybil in a tower.

Mr. Lovegood, fondly called Xeno by his wife, is the creator The Quibbler, a bimonthly magazine which spoke of things which the Prophet refused to talk about. There was so much he wanted to write in regards with magical beings but that toad woman sent him notices and threats to not do so. So now he writes engaging articles about the Crumple-Horned Snorkack living in Sweden.

Luna had asked him to enjoy the time ahead and keep an open mind. He was working on the article for his magazine when the much awaited owl entered. He took off the letter; just as Luna had said a meeting was requested at noon.

While he was writing back to the bank, Luna entered the room and the owl flew on her stretched arm. She giggled while the bird hooted.

“Daddy it says we will have lots of friends soon.”

-x-
Reunions

Author's notes: [NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

7. Reunions

While the letters were sent Ragnuk had summoned the best solicitor and healer – both of them had taken the secrecy oath. The Goblin, after watching the memories provided by Harry in the Cube, knew things had to be taken much seriously and with every possible precaution.

Desmond Davis had represented Lady Zabini and had successfully proved with ease that five of her late husbands had died in baffling accidents, got her a clean receipt and their fortunes. He had represented Lucius Malfoy as well. In short, the man is brilliant and he is known for chewing his opponents and spitting out their skeletal remains. He was the one they needed in Harry’s case. The lawyer had suggested that in case like this the media would be an asset if it was swayed on their side. Ragnuk knew a little beetle that would kill for a portfolio like this one.

Glenn Connolly was a well known private healer. She was neutral during the First War much like Davis. She was impartial and had a respectable relationship with the goblins and all wealthy wizarding families.

When the lawyer and the healer were asked to take an oath they knew this had to be really big for goblins never took interest in the matters of wizards. Glenn was asked to enter a private conference room inside the bank and given a briefing to take many pictures of the bruises and wounds of the child and record every word he said with regards to his injuries. The healer suggested they make a history of the child’s physical and mental health for that could be of use to the solicitor who was waiting outside.

The healer was aghast by the amount of bruises on the little boy. He had large scars and gashes all over his body, most of which were recent, some were old. There were broken and unhealed bones. As asked in the letter she had carried a wizard’s camera in her person. She took pictures of the child who had the word ‘freak’ written with a sharp object on his back; his chest and abdomen were blue and yellow. His teeth were broken and his eye sight was horrible. He seemed way too tiny for a child his age. He was given no vaccines, muggle or magical. She shuddered, ‘if this is the state of the Saviour of this world, what would the other orphans be like, and what about
muggleborns in general.’ This child was Harry Potter the boy whom this entire owes a life debt of sorts and here he was like puppy starved and beaten to death.

-x-

While Healer Connolly was attending to the child, Desmond Davis was asked to create watertight lawsuit papers against one Albus Dumbledore for kidnapping and hiding Harry Potter, not acknowledging the last will of the Potters and illegally making himself the magical guardian of the said child, placing a magical child in a magic-hating household, hiding magical objects with illegal charms in a muggle house, placing wards around the said house, placing a squib to spy on Harry Potter and not rescuing even when he was neglected and harmed physically and mentally (there will be Healer’s record to support it), not providing existing proof of innocence of Lord Black and most importantly stealing gold and heirlooms and properties of the Potter family and bribing a goblin, which was crime against the Goblin Nation.

Ragnuk also suggested filing a lawsuit against all companies that published Harry Potter books and toys for invasion of privacy and printing false information. Ragnuk reasoned with the lawyer that the boy was living the worst sort of muggles since that night, the Potters were dead and You-know-who was also dead – then how did these publishers know what had happened that night and who had given them the right to print all the ‘true events’ without consent from the guardians of the child and the child himself.

Desmond knew victory in this case will make him the most sought after law representative in the Great Britain. He was glad he suggested the media and Rita Skeeter for she will feed Dumbledore to the wolves – the fickle society that believed all her words.

-x-

Augusta Longbottom and her cute grandchild landed on their feet in Ragnuk’s private chamber. The goblin asked them to join him. As the two walked the goblin explained that this meeting would require utmost care for it is concerned with a sensitive issue. The elderly lady could help but ask:

“Ragnuk do tell me what is my role in this situation?”

The goblin gave her a copy of the will while Neville was given a children’s book to read. Augusta was fuming with anger. She knew her intuitions were correct. Sirius Black would never betray James and Lily. He was James’ brother in all but name. He was the boy’s godfather. How could Albus do this? And where was the child? Nobody had seen him since that night. Every time when
she asked the senile meddler would say ‘he’s at a secure location, away from Death Eaters and his
dame which will make him big-head.’ Augusta had foolishly accepted the explanation. The boy’s
dame could make him a prat. But Albus had no right to hid the will or let Sirius rot in Azkaban.

Neville had never seen his gran this furious before. She was strict but never so angry. He could not
help but feel sorry for the one who had made this angry. He did the one thing he could think of. He
went close to her chair and took her hand in his little hands.

“Gran calm down. You said being angry makes one lose their
ration mind.”

The old lady smiled and corrected the child, ‘It is rational, Neville. And thank you for helping your
gran.’

The boy beamed with happiness. Gran always said he was like his father when he corrected her like
this.

Ragnuk cleared his throat, ‘it is time.’ He gave her one of the cubes on Harry’s chain and asked her
to view the memories in the pensive. Augusta agreed with the goblin and asked Neville to head to
the conference room.

The round boy was led by a nice lady into this big room with lots of chairs. There were a few
potted plants in there and a few pastries on the table. He wanted to eat one but waited for gran. In
one corner of the room there was a little boy, who was around three Neville thought, on a
cushioned chair. He was thin as a matchstick, his hair looked like birds nest and he wore dirty
round glasses which were broken and bent. His clothes were way too big and soiled. He had lots of
cuts on his face and hands. There was black bruise around his left eye, his thick lips were swollen.
Neville knew from playing in the park that the little boy was beaten by bullies. He went closer to
him. Neville felt this urge to hold that little boy and protect him from bad people. He could do that.
Gran always said he was the strongest boy ever. Even the nice lady at St. Mungo’s said he was
very tall for his age. Neville’s thoughts stopped when he saw the boy’s eyes. He had never seen
such pretty eyes which were green like the leaves of the herbs he planted. It was a beautiful shade
of green.

The boy was watching Neville with anticipation. His fringed hair was pointing in every direction.
The boy wiped the sweat on his forehead revealing a scar shaped like lightning bolt. Neville
stopped in his tracks. He knew this boy’s name. He had heard of him but he was told this boy was
strong and powerful. This boy is Harry Potter! Who would try to bully him?
Neville thought ‘it does not matter, I will look after him.’ The five year did not know what brought these thoughts but he meant what he had thought. This beautiful boy was his to protect. Harry smiled at Neville who grinned back. He felt coy, ‘Come on Harry you were with him a day ago.’ He blushed and shyly spoke, “Hello, my name is Harry Potter. I’m pleased to meet you. And you are?”

Neville gaped for a moment. Even his voice was lovely. He turned pink and said, “Neville Longbottom.”

-x-

Augusta was infuriated and proud at the same time. She had seen Her Neville being as talented as Frank and as kind and loving as Alice. He was brave. He was strong and powerful. Her Neville fought death eaters and stood almost unharmed to tell the tale. She had tears of happiness, her boy is just a late a bloomer. He would grow up to live up to the family name. Her thoughts swayed to towards the one whom Neville had chosen. Harry Potter.

That boy had come back to make things better and she vowed on her life and magic to help this boy who brought the best out of her Neville. Augusta asked Ragnuk to explain everything, which he did. Glenn Connolly was more than happy to explain things to Lady Longbottom for she knew this woman was one never to be crossed. Desmond knew this is what he needed, a lioness. He explained the planned lawsuits and the next course of action. The Head Goblin asked Augusta what they should do next. She simply said, “Let Malfoy and Lovegood arrive – Dumbledore is about to get taste of his medicine – meddling.”

Lucius knew there was something utterly severe happening. He suspiciously emptied the contents of this little cube into this large pensive. The bowl was on the verge of overflowing. He put his head in it and he saw Potter’s life as child as he was savagely abused by muggles, the boy fighting a possessed professor, killing a Basilisk and a young Dark Lord from the Diary, conjuring a corporeal Patronus at the age of thirteen and battling hundreds of Dementors, participate in the Triwizard Tournament, the awesome flying with a dragon chasing him, the Dark Lord’s resurrection, the Battle of the Department of Mysteries, the Prophecy, his own time at Azkaban, the trauma his Draco had to go through because of a unstable Half-blood out on revenge, Severus killing the senile old man for his son, his status after his escape from the prison, being a nobody in his own manor, losing his wand, Bellatrix killing that elf and torturing that Granger girl at his home, Severus’s death, the Horcruxes, Narcissa lying to that snake-face for Draco, him and his
family abandoning that man’s cause, Potter disposing off that vile creature at last; Potter standing up for his family in front of the entire Wizengamot and getting them free, Potter coming to him for help on the advice of Severus’ ghost along with Augusta’s grandchild and Lovegood’s girl, the betrayal of those blood traitor Weasleys and the Dumbledore, Potter using his fame to get Lucius out of house arrest, the training the four children received, the plans made and the Ritual.

As Lucius stepped out of the pensive he felt his head becoming heavy. A vial of a potion was produced by Augusta – she was grinning. ‘Calming Draught’ she mouthed. He swallowed it quickly. There was so much information to process. But the Malfoy could not help but murmured to the people to the five people, “We rescue Potter, we use Rita, we rescue Black, find the Dark Lord to fulfil the Prophesy while Augusta, Black and Lovegood shred every piece of the old man’s name, get rid of him, handle the Weasleys and make me Minister!”

Augusta nodded and said “More or less – that is the plan.”
Lucius had never seen that woman smile like this; he had to admit he was afraid. ‘Remember to never piss off Lady Longbottom, ever’. He looked at Lovegood with a new found respect the man who cared for his daughter more than anything, just as he felt for Draco. He had seen Draco’s affections for that beautiful girl. Luna Lovegood is one special young girl.

Xeno was glad he had Luna’s warning. In his cube memory they had agreed with Harry and Luna that the Prophet would work for this mission while his magazine would print Harry and Lucius’ columns which would lead the magazine to prosper.

Lady Longbottom suggested they meet the traveller and summon a certain Beetle.

-x-

Glenn had fed the boys when Lucius was getting his head straight. When the adults arrived in the room it was past lunch. On entering, they a tiny beaten Harry Potter fast asleep in the arms of an adorable Neville Longbottom.

-x-
Author's notes: [NL/HP] - CANON COMPLIANT EXCEPT EPILOGUE.

Harry does not let of the Hallows. Months after the war, he hears something not meant for his ears. With the help of the man who was honest and the one who died for him, Harry and trusted few plan to change to course of time wherein they find true love and friendship.

Dumble, Ginny, Ron, Hermoine, Molly - Bashing

8. The Prince’s Allegiance.

4, Private Drive.

When Vernon and Petunia Dursley returned home the next evening there was nothing out of ordinary. The freak had not blown up the house and nothing was missing. They let the freak stay in the cupboard. They had brought take out for their precious Dudley.

They did not notice Harry had left. Harry, however, did not want Dumbledore to know he had left. He had added a bit of his magical signature all over the house in the form of his blood with the Statis Charm on it; below the sofa, in the cupboard, in the garden, in the kitchen – all over the house. He did not touch the broken toys or the letter from Dumbledore. The evidence was needed.

The next morning Petunia knocked the cupboard door but the boy won’t wake up. She tried opening it but it would not open. Even Vernon tried but he fell across the room. ‘Now who do the chores and cook for us’, they wondered.

Petunia found a little piece of paper beside the stove. ‘Bye. H.J.P.’ She knew he had run away. Thank God. The freaks had dumped the boy on them and never came to check on him. She hoped they continued to remain absent. They would tell the neighbours that he had gone to stay with Marge. She hoped Arabella won’t poke her nose in this. Petunia happily began cooking totally forgetting the letter she had hidden in her closet.

-x-

Early morning December 24rd, 1985. Malfoy Manor
Narcissa Malfoy was known for her calm demeanour and composed personality, unlike her elder sister Bella. Fondly known as Cissy among family and friends, Narcissa had full blown panic attack last night when Lucius showed her all those memories. She was frightened for her son, frightened of what had happened in her home. Bella had killed a poor elf in her foyer, Bella had killed her favourite cousin and that snake made a meal out a woman in front of her only child’s eyes. Draco had to bear the agony of the Dark Mark and given the impossible mission to get rid of the old man.

It was widely known that Sirius Black got along excellently with Andromeda but only a selected few knew that Cissy and Sirius adored each other as children. He was her favourite cousin. It was only after he joined the Fried Chicken Order that she distanced herself from him and that had broken her heart. Bella had felt the same, for Sirius was the only one who had taken her seriously as a child. They did fight over differences of opinion, but who did not have difference of opinions with their family and peers? They were family. Both Sirius and Bellatrix were first and foremost Blacks and Family is First.

When Cissy saw the memory of Bellatrix sending that unknown curse at Sirius that knocked him through a veiled stone arch in the Death Chamber, all she could do was cry. It looked like a mere stunner. Cissy was sure that though Bella loathed Sirius for being a “blood traitor" but she would never kill him

Her fear turned into rage when she saw Harry Potter’s memories wherein Molly Weasley had confessed under the Veritaserum that Dumbledore had Imperio-ed Bella so that Sirius could get knocked into the Veil. Molly Weasley was delighted when she had said that. It was all planned. Even Nymphadora’s murder was under the Imperius Curse by Molly herself; all because Dora and her wolf had begun to question the Weasley matriarch.

Andromeda lost her entire family because that old man wanted a grand battle because of a damn prophecy. Cissy and Lucius had often met Andy, Ted and Nymphadora in secret. Bella hated to Ted for being a muggleborn but she was very proud to have Dora as her niece. Bella had loved it that Dora was Metamorphmagus, a talent inherited from their grandmother.

Cissy agreed her sister did not deserve much mercy for doing what she, her husband and others did to poor Alice and her husband. But Bella would have never killed Sirius or Dora. Dora is a precious child.

Narcissa Malfoy née Black vowed to make everyone pay who led to her family’s downfall.

Severus Snape was never a pleasant man. But who could afford to be pleasant when you bear the Dark Mark and are a spy for both the sides. He wondered why Lucius had summoned him so early in the morning. The elf just asked him to come over immediately and not tell anyone; as if he’d go running to the old man and say Lucius Malfoy’s invited him for tea.

He flooed to the Malfoy Manor, when he reached the floo room he was surprised to see Augusta Longbottom chatting with Lucius. ‘Did hell freeze and pigs begin to flying!’ Severus thought. Lucius noticed him and greeted him. Augusta merely nodded in his direction.

“Lucius what is the meaning of this?”

Augusta Longbottom stood up, walked towards and gave him a file filled with Healer’s records. As he read them, Severus paled. This child was abused to the core. He winced as read about each injury, some of which were brutal. Even his own father did not go this far. Severus wondered why were they showing him all this. Lucius spoke to reply the question he had spoken in his mind.

“The child so vividly described by Healer Glenn Connolly is someone you have vowed to keep safe, the child for whom you chose to spy for that man.”

Severus had a look of disbelief on his face. Lucius and Augusta both knew the cynical man would want proof. The two took out their wands and swore on their life and magic. The Potions masters could not believe what he had just read. That report also stated that the child’s magic had been forcefully bound, how was what possible? Albus had assured him that Harry met only been around two magical people after the attack, him and Minerva. Snape knew for sure Minerva would never do such a thing, but Albus would if it was what he thought was best. He never felt so betrayed. Even the Dark Lord had told him he’d let Lily go if she did not interfere. But Albus, he should have known. The man had turned blind when Potter and Black had traumatised and humiliated him in school; the man refused to expel Black when Severus’ life was endangered by sending him to a werewolf. That moment he realised, Harry is nothing but a means to an end for Albus. Harry was needed to just get rid of the Dark Lord for Albus. Nothing more.

Snape knew Healer Connolly was the most incorrupt one in her profession; she never lied about her patients. If she had written this then it is true.

Augusta cleared her throat and asked him to make an oath to never tell Albus Dumbledore or anyone faithful that man anything he learned now on. He was asked to take an oath on his life and magic. He could not reveal anything to anyone verbally or written or by any other means until has
the express permission from one Harry Potter.

Severus was a curious man. He wanted to know what had brought this woman and his friend in the same room as allies. But he wanted more evidence. He was about to ask for the same when the door of the room opened and a small boy entered. Snape did not see the injuries on the child to know who it was. The child looked with James Potter with Lily’s eyes and her petite stature. The boy ran towards him and crushed him in a hug.

“Severus you are here. I’m so glad you made it. Thank you. Thank you.”

Snape wanted to pinch himself. This was by far the most amazing hallucination he has had. But the child felt real albeit featherlike. He not only had Lily’s eyes but her voice and her lips and her height. Obviously the boy knew him but he had never met the child.

Lucius directed Severus and the child super-glued to him to the study. He gave the Potioneer a tiny cube. Severus’s eyes shot open, he knew what this was, ‘the legendary Cube of Gringott’. These are rare and only the Head Goblin had access to them.

He looked into the memories and saw everything. His bones chilled by the time he saw his death by that snake, the evil Horcruxes and this tiny boy kill the Dark Lord using a simple Disarming Charm. He thought this was it, but when was life simple?

He saw Harry summoning him along with Lily, they discussed the treachery by the Leader of the Light. The Weasley family’s division; Bill, Charlie, Percy and the remaining twin had cut all ties with their parents. Arthur was stuck with his wife and youngest two who were no suitable mates or friends for anyone. Their deeds should not be punished.

Severus knew there was more. He heard Lily talking about the Life Debts of the Weasley family and that know-it-all girl. He saw the abilities the boy possessed even now and his extraordinary talents they had been unbound then. Even his godson, Augusta’s grandson and that Luna girl had abilities that rivalled many a talented wizards and witches. The Ritual which was carefully orchestrated by Lily and him with the help of the Malfoys, Lady Longbottom, Luna, Amelia and many others had succeeded. Even the oath was his suggestion for their safety. Severus understood why the boy had hugged him. Harry had told him he considered him a mentor and a friend. Lily had approved of it.

Snape shook his head and looked at the little boy, well only in body, and he the kind spirit of his mother and the reckless rule breaking attitude of that James Potter. Harry did break the Laws of Time by this ritual but this Potter was Harry. Not James, just Harry. He put the boy down and
made the oath he had suggested in the past, err future. With this oath now no Mind Magic or Truth Serum could make him say anything; neither his words, oral or written, nor body language could find a way out it.

Harry knew he had successfully altered the time line for good with this oath.

-x-
As Severus left for Hogwarts that noon, he had to remind himself to not hex or poison the Headmaster. He had spent a few short hours with his godson, one peculiar Longbottom boy and Harry Potter an astounding man-child.

According to Professor Snape Neville Longbottom could never be a squib, ‘the boy radiates a strong magical aura which seemed to very protective of Harry’. Severus thought the boy was an interesting mixture of Helga’s loyal affections and Godric’s bravery. This was observed especially when Harry was in the same room as him. Augusta Longbottom had proudly spoken of her five year grandson’s skills in Herbology. When Draco sneered at that, Harry stood up and addressed how understanding herbs is a basic step towards Potions. He went on explain that in the previous century Herbology and Potions were considered sister branches of wizarding education. Draco looked at his godfather for its validation. Severus nodded and told Draco all potions and especially healing potions required herbs and a better grasp in other field would enhance his skill in Potions.

Severus was glad Draco’s outlook had begun to change when he asked Neville for help in the subject. The Longbottom boy did what a true Slytherin does, he asked Draco to help him with Potions. And thus a true friendship was born. The Sorting Hat was correct in the house of Salazar one does ‘make real friends’.

Harry had asked the Potions Master to meet him in the floo room before he left; alone. The boy wanted to discuss something related to potions. Severus was glad he had seen the memories for he would have never believed James Potter’s kid wanted to discuss his subject. Harry entered the room and cast a heavy privacy ward and a silencing charm. He focused all his energy on his core. Snape’s eyes observed something that was considered impossible since Falco Aesalon, Morgan le Fay and Cliodna – a magical animagus. The boy had transformed into a phoenix. The bird was unusual in colour. It had Harry’s eyes, and it was fiery yellow with red and a few green highlights. But it was smaller than Albus’ familiar. The phoenix cried its eyes out and willingly gave two feathers to Severus. The boy explained that he needed to say the password ‘Lily Alice’ before he viewed his Cube Memories again so that he could watch the memories of the potions he needed to create. Severus in his ghost form with Lily had worked on the creation of these three unique potions, two of which were successful but one was untested.

“Severus, these three unnamed potions which I’d like you to brew at the potions lab at Malfoy Manor. Lucius has agreed to finance the entire endeavour. Could let you tell Dumbledore that you
want to spend the holidays with your godson? The potion would take around a week to brew. That way he won’t be suspicious.” Snape nodded and left.

-x-

Lucius had a herculean task of his own but if he succeeded the rewards were magnanimous. He had managed to pull a few strings at the Ministry to get a two way international portkey. Harry had focused on his scar and the darkness inactive in his head. He tried to initiate on the link he shared with Voldemort. After hours of meditation during the night before he found what exactly he wanted. He gave Lord Malfoy the all the necessary information before he used to portkey to go to Albania and find the parasitic spirit of the Dark Lord.

Lord Malfoy made it back within a few hours with a tiny bundle in his arms. The creature in his arms looked exactly like the mutilated baby Harry had seen when he had met Dumbledore in limbo. The Dark Lord was too weak. The only characteristic of Voldemort that this small creature had were those terrifying red eyes. “The Dark Lord had the shape of a crouched human child, except anything less like a child. It was hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black. Its arms and legs were thin and feeble, and its face — no child alive ever had a face like that — was flat and snake-like, with gleaming red eyes. The thing seemed almost helpless…”

Lucius set the rudimentary form his master on the bed and let Harry handle the rest.

Harry Potter sat on the chair in a corner in the room while waiting for the man who had killed his parent to wake up. He did what Voldemort had done to him in the fifth year. He showed the sleeping spirit all his memories, the horrible time with the Dursleys, the pain and humiliation he had endured at their hands, he showed the man how he had suffered all because of Albus Dumbledore and all information on the Horcruxes and prophecy. Harry sent emotions of repent and guilt in the dream. He wanted the man to feel his anger and ache but also show how they both were hurt by same enemy.

The most feared Dark Wizard of this century, born as Tom Marvolo Riddle, was experiencing his first nightmare after decades. He wanted to savour this human feeling yet he loathed it as well. He saw the life of one green-eyed child. The beatings for being a freak, the injuries caused only because he was he better than a fat muggle boy at school, being locked in a cupboard because he was a waste of space, being locked in a little room with tens of locks, a cat-flap and grills on his window, working like a house-elf since the age of three. The Dark Lord felt this was worse than his childhood at Wool’s Orphanage. He witnessed the meddling of the man whom he loathed more than anyone, the same one who rescued him and dumped him at the orphanage till he was of age. He saw how people pretended to be this child’s friends and lovers and family figures for money.
He saw how the old man stole this child’s heritage just like he had covered up Tom Riddle’s heritage for being the Heir of Slytherin. He saw another interpretation of the prophecy. He saw the plans this boy had. He hated the boy for showing him such agony in this state.

He was startled when the boy showed him the side-effects of his Horcruxes and how he had moved so far away from his original plans when he had formed the Knights of Walpurgis which he had changed to Death Eaters when he had killed his muggle father and created the second Horcrux, the ring. He just wanted to meet his father. He was sure his mother was a muggle and his father was the descendent of Slytherin. But when he met his mother’s brother, Morfin Gaunt, he realised she was almost a squib that used love potions on a muggle; it angered him. He went to the man who had abandoned his mother, the man who did not follow the honourable path and left his wife and unborn child. Tom Riddle Senior refused to acknowledge his sixteen year old son despite the appearance they had in common. In fit of rage, Tom killed the man who had sired him. He made his Grandfather’s ring into a Horcrux for the temptation as too difficult for him to handle even though he had decided to make only one.

As time went by he found priceless objects and heirlooms. The Locket that was rightfully his and it was almost stolen from his poor mother, Helga’s Cup and Rowena’s Diadem all lured him to make more Horcruxes. He just wanted to have nice things he never had as a child.

The boy went on to show him all the side-effects: his dehumanising, his changing appearance, his instability and the final side-effect – the inability to move on from Limbo after death. He saw how he was forced to exist in the stunted form of a flayed and mutilated baby, he was unable to return to the land of the living, unable to become a ghost, and unable to go to the land of the dead because his soul was maimed and unwhole.2

Voldemort shuddered. This was never his plan. He along with his comrades wanted to reform this wonderful world for it was too corrupt and prejudiced. That was the objective of the Knights of Walpurgis. They had included the whole ‘Pureblood garbage’ for the finances; ‘Pureblood – look what happened to the Gaunts, look at the number of squibs because of inbreeding’. They had to reform this world as the International Wizarding Statute of Secrecy is useless and so is the Ministry. Muggles are a threat. Tom Riddle and his associates had seen the way muggle had fought their World Wars, they seen the mass-destruction of life and property. They never wanted to spill magical blood. Even muggleborns were important for they came from the shunned squibs. But the corrupt system forced them to become revolutionaries and then terrorists instead of reformers. He had tried to tread on the right path by wanting to teach children and explain the need to protect their world but the old man refused to give him the job. Then there are his Horcruxes, his fascination with the Dark Arts become uncontrollable. All he wanted to do was help and make this world as safer place.

He wondered from where all these were emotions were coming in his head when he woke up with a shock. Because of his instability he accidently made another Horcrux. Harry Potter.
Harry saw something which had never thought he’d ever see - emotions of the scarred face of Lord Voldemort. He collected his thoughts, looked into those red eyes and began saying something that he had practiced for years.

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches…Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…And the Dark Lord will mark him as equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..

“This is the complete prophecy made by Sybil Trelawney which was completely misinterpreted by both you and Dumbledore. Tell me something, Marvolo; is killing the one to vanquish you the only way to fulfil this prophecy? Did you ever want to kill so many people?”

Voldemort looked into the green eyes of a small child who had that famous scar. The scar was burning red but child made no noise. Instead, he continued speaking.

“How about we make a deal?”

The Dark Lord was shocked, to say the least. This was the same boy whose parents he had butchered but yet he was here, offering him a deal. He nodded at that tiny lad.

“I’ll help you make your soul complete and also with the whole reforming you wanted, in return you make an oath to make this world a better place without any bloodshed and try to remove the whole pureblood rubbish you have encouraged and at least some prejudices. I know what your true ambition was when you were in Hogwarts. I still believe you can do it all if only your soul was not ripped apart. You can make all the differences without the pureblood propaganda if you get the support of the right people. You can clear the name of your ancestor as well. Show this world that Salazar Slytherin was not a crazy man, but he was just a man with opinion. Would you think over this?”

Harry knew Voldemort needed time. He saw the man contemplating his options. After an hour later the man spoke in the voice that chilled his spine.

“Why would you want to help me? I did kill your parents. What about the prophecy? And if I let
go of my Horcruxes, I shall no longer be immortal.”

Harry did anticipate these questions. So he asked the one question which was relevant for the prophecy.

“Voldemort, did Tom ever forgive his father for abandoning his mother and him, for his miserable childhood and refusing to acknowledge him?”

The Dark Lord was furious, the child spoke his name. He hated that muggle name. But he was curious why the boy used both his names.

“Tom Riddle is lost and ripped apart because of the Horcruxes. Voldemort was born when Tom’s humanity was completely gone. Did he ever forgive his father?”
When he got no answer he knew he had his answer. Who knew the entire prophecy was this simple? ‘Luna’s a genius’ Harry thought.

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches…Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…And the Dark Lord will mark him as equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives… - lets discuss the entire thing.

“With the power to vanquish the Dark Lord which is Voldemort, not Tom. And why are we so sure it is you? It could be Dumbledore as well. He did pretty awful things to you and me both.”

The Dark Lord, err, Tom was surprised at the words of insight from the child.

“Born to those who have defied him thrice, born as the seventh month dies – that could my parents or the Longbottoms, i.e. me and Neville? You chose me because we are both Half-bloods and may be because we both have such common names!

“You marked me as your equal – it could be as simple as your soul is latched on mine. I have your soul; hence I’m your equal. And the powerful you don’t know is Forgiveness. I forgive for you even though killed my parents and tried to kill me because you wanted to eliminate all threats. You could not rationalise because of the instability of the Horcrux. Yes I’m upset that I will never have my parents but that is the fact which I have to live with.
“Tell me something don’t you think it is very weird that Dumbledore would interview Trelawney at a pub instead of Hogwarts? I mean even you had gone to see him for the job at his office. Right? So I think he already knew the prophecy and Imperio-ed the seer to repeat it at a place where your followers often hang out for information on the old man. May be he planted this whole thing so that we would be after each other’s blood. You did kill my mum and dad but it was the old man who pushed you towards them. Hell, if he really wanted to protect us why did he not become the secret-keeper himself?

“And if you let go of the Horcruxes we can make your soul complete. Tell me something how has Nicolas Flamel managed to survive all these centuries?”

“The Philosopher's Stone! But wait what about the last part of the prophecy: “And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…”?

The boy nodded, “Think Voldemort, how did you survive all this time and how did I live? Think, how is a five year old able to use Legilimency to send you dreams?”

A realization dawned and he could not help but ask what had truly happened. The simply said, “You killed many people I loved, I destroyed all the Horcruxes and let you kill me thus destroying your soul piece in me. Still I survived because you had used my blood to recreate your body. We duelled and you died. Then I find out that all this time Dumbledore had been using me as a pawn to get rid of you but he had stupidly worn the ring, so he died. After the war I find out that my entire life was a well planned event. So I got angry and came back to make that man’s life hell and to do that I need you. After all an enemy’s enemy is a friend. We both have a beef against that man so why not join forces to get rid of him. On the plus side you can fulfil your dream as well.”

The boy smiled. Voldemort knew the boy thought this all for a long time. He hated to say that a lot said by the boy made sense. The boy said something in the end that sealed the deal.

“You let me have all those objects, with a certain potion that will be ready in a week you will return like normal wizard with all your knowledge and power. I will return the Ring and Locket to you since they belong to you but after I’m done working on them. And in return you will get an entirely new identity, a new name, your humanity and become the ghost Minister of Magic.”

The Dark Lord smiled, “Ghost Minister?”

The boy said, “Let Lucius lead the Ministry for a term. Let him enter you into the political world. And then you can become the Minster as Marvolo Riddle Gaunt and he can be your right-hand man again. And yes, he is game with the entire plan.”
“What about you? Don’t you want something?”

“Yes I do. I want to be a child again. Live with my godfather and guardian whom I have to rescue while I get a rat Kissed. Enjoy my childhood as I could not during the last time, even you had a great time at Hogwarts.” He pouted and whined.

The Dark Lord laughed and sealed with deal as the exchanged oaths.

-x-


The Elf, the Minister and the Dog.

10. The Elf, the Minister and the Dog.

Harry left Marvolo’s room for the man needed his rest. The man, err creature was crazy and he asked more questions than a curious child on a sugar rush. It was late evening and Harry was exhausted. As he was crossing the hall he saw a very familiar face. It made him happy to know that he’d be able to save everyone he loved and cared for. He entered the study wherein sat his anxious audience.

“He’s made the oath but provided I never plan to ‘vanquish’ him, I’ve never met anyone so terrified with the idea of death or defeat. He’s even agreed with Lucius being the Minister for a term provided you get him an entirely new identity. Apart from Dumbledore, Slughorn and a few others nobody knows the name Riddle. Slughorn is too ashamed to open his mouth and Dumbledore would have no credibility to proclaim that Marvolo Riddle-Gaunt is or was Voldemort.”

Augusta finally gave some rest to her erect back. She asked the elf to get her a cup of green tea and some hot chocolate for all the kids. She stared at Harry to defy her words. The boy sat next to Cissy while she applied some salve on his bruises. Lady Longbottom hated that creature resting inside the manor but she also knew he was essential for their plans. He was needed so that no more children could get hurt. Harry sensed her trouble.

“Gran, believe me when I say I don’t like him either but we need him as much as he needs us. He did not order the Lestranges to hurt Aunt Alice and Uncle Frank but does not make him any less guilty. But I have a theory regarding their attack. Cissy didn’t Bellatrix suffer from a few miscarriages?”

Lady Malfoy nodded. She had been there every time; once Bella had a beautiful son who died right after birth. Lucius often thought that had driven the woman crazy. How many children could a person bare losing?

Augusta asked what that has to do with her poor children.

“Gran I think any woman who has lost her children would never even think of putting another child in jeopardy. As far I remember the Ministry records state that Neville was in the same room the night the attack happen. Why would Bellatrix endanger a Pureblood child? Didn’t Barty Junior claim he was innocent? Bellatrix, Rodolphus, and Rabastan Lestrange – they valued pureblood children way too much to kill.” He turned to Lucius.
“Lucius did the Lestranges or Barty ever confess under Veritaserum or were there any pensive memories to prove their crimes against the Longbottoms?”

Lucius shook his head and said Bella had warned Crouch that the Dark Lord shall return and they will be rewarded. She was screaming at the hearing but there was no serum or memories. It was Igor Karkaroff’s testimony that sealed their fate.

Harry thought of the corruption. Crouch had not given any Blacks or Lestranges a trail but he had gotten his son out. Augusta was very angry. Harry was implying that the madwoman had not attacked her children.

“Gran tell me something does not it worry you that along with Sirius, four others were not given a trial? Bellatrix had killed Sirius under the Imperius Curse. There is a chance, may be, that the attack on Neville’s parents was planned? Just in case I turn out to be useless to the Order, then Neville could take my place. No offence but he did not feel cherished as a child till he proved his worth during the fifth year.”

Augusta Longbottom felt hurt and humiliated but the boy had pointed out the facts. She had seen how Neville was pressured to live to his parents’ legacy and use Frank’s wand the last time. But how could Lestrange and Crouch be innocent? ‘Could Albus really go this far?’

Harry went to her and promised to help her find the truth. He turned to Lucius and asked if he’d make a small deal with him. Malfoy was curious. What did the boy want? And what would he offer?

“You give me your elf, Dobby and in return you get all the credit of saving me from the ‘terrible muggles and reuniting me with my guardians by finding my parents’ hidden will?’ How about you also get to prove that Dumbledore was stealing from me and even got royalty from all those books and toys? That should sweeten the deal.”

Cissy and Augusta laughed at this, while Lucius simply muttered ‘deal’ though inside he was glad to have gotten rid of ‘the Great Harry Potter’ worshiping elf. He called for the elf, “Dobby”.

With a tiny cracking noise appeared Harry’s favourite elf, Dobby. He had large, tennis-ball-like green eyes, a pencil-like nose and long, bat-like pointed ears. He was dressed in a body-covering pillowcase. He was shaking in fear to summoned in room of witches and wizards, err, a small wizard with green eyes like his. The boy smiled at the elf while he gave Master Malfoy his sock.
Lucius made a disgusted face while he gave the elf the sock. The elf burst into tears. Harry sat down next to Dobby and offered his hand.

“Dobby, I requested Mr. Malfoy to free you. Would you like to friends with me? My name is Harry Potter.”

The elf cried even harder, embarrassing his previous owners and made Augusta laugh at Lily’s son. The boy was just like his mother.

“The Great Harry Potter freed Dobby and wants to be friends with him? Dobby is free!”

“Yes, you are. Would you like to work for me? I will pay you ten Galleons a week and weekends off.”

The offer made the poor elf cry even more. He agreed to become Harry’s personal elf and friend for one Galleon a week and one day off per month – just like the previous time.

The elf refused to let go of Harry hand for a while and then overfed the boy saying he was too thin. Later, Harry introduced Dobby to his friends. Dobby liked Neville and smiled at Draco. Draco was glad his father gave the elf to Harry. Harry was glad he was friends with Draco this time.

-x-


Minister Millicent Bagnold was graciously invited to the Longbottom Manor for Augusta’s Christmas brunch. ‘Milli’ and Augusta were friends at Hogwarts and their friendship continued all these years. They were there for each other every time in need. The Minister had stood by Augusta when her husband had passed away and when her son and daughter-in-law were attacked. Millicent knew how much her friend had loved the two of them. And her friend had stood by her side when she had buried her late husband. She was thinking about young Neville when the boy entered.

Neville had his grandfather’s calm appearance and also his dark blond hair. The boy tall and had
baby fat which made him adorable. He always had interesting titbits about plants. He sweetly
invited her to the dining room where the other guests were waiting for her.

The independent lady entered in a room with a huge round table with twelve chairs. She was
surprised on seeing the guests in the room. This was not the usual group Augusta invited. She
knew these people and all of them sitting in a dignified manner together shook her to no end.

Lucius Malfoy was a rumoured Death Eater, an aristocrat, complete snob and a thorough politician.
His wife Narcissa was called the Ice Queen of High Society. The minister saw their pointy blond
son chatting with another little blond girl who had this dreamy look on her face while she was
playing with her earrings. ‘Are those corks?’

Next to the girl was an ice blonde couple, much like the Malfoys, only these looked completely out
of place yet they seemed totally unaware of it. The minister knew this man; he owns that funny
magazine Dolorous kept complaining about. What was his name, Lovewood, no Lovetook, yes
Lovegood. Umbridge option pointed out they were a group of nutcases which translated to they are
good people who do not agree with that crazy woman. Millicent loathed that woman.

She looked around and thought if Augusta and she were the only non-blondes in the room when a
little boy entered the room. He was holding on to an elf which was jumping in excitement. It
looked like the boy could hardly keep up with the happy elf. She turned to Augusta as she sat and
hissed inaudibly, “What on earth is going?”

Augusta replied in a grief-stricken voice, “Milli yesterday Lord Malfoy was visiting the Leaky
Cauldron when he heard a child crying. Malfoy did what any parent would; he scanned him for
injuries and asked where his parents were and who had abused him so badly. The boy was too
terrified to reply so Lucius took him Healer Connolly. He thought he’d get the child healed and if
he was a muggle he would contact the Ministry. But he found something that shook him to the
core.”

Millicent asked impatiently, “Augusta this is the child Malfoy found? Don’t answer; I can see the
bruises all over the boy. Who is he? Is a muggle?”

Her friend moved the boy’s fringe to show her the most famous scar of the wizarding world. Albus
had assured her that the boy was safe and secure and happy and probably getting spoilt rotten by
his relatives.

“This boy is Harry Potter. You remember who he is right?”
The Minister shook her head in disbelief. “It cannot be. Dumbledore had assured me that the boy
was hidden away for his safety.”

“I knew you’d believe that man instead of us. Did you know that the Saviour of our world had lived under a cupboard under the stairs all these years and worked as house-elf for a family of magic-hating MUGGLES, fed next to nothing and beaten regularly for being a freak? Here read Glenn’s reports.”

Augusta angrily gave her friend the reports. The Minister was well aware of Glenn Connolly’s reputation. She read them quickly, her forehead was wet. If this got out in the media she’d be butchered to pieces. She looked at Augusta for an explanation.

“How did he reach here? Not that I’m glad he is safe. But why did Lucius bring him to you?”

Lucius got up as if on cue. He spoke with his thorough tone, “While Healer Connolly was treating the child I pulled a few strings at the Child Welfare Department at the Ministry to inquire about the child and his parents’ will or anything about his guardians. Did you know that there was no copy of the Potters’ will? As you are aware that every pureblood parents make their will as soon as their child is born, and I know for a fact the Potter had made one since they were the Dark Lord prime targets. Did you know Madam Minister the Headmaster had made himself the child’s magical guardian? He was not appointed by the Potters.

“I went to Desmond Davis to check if there was any record of the will. He told me that the Potters’ will was not opened on the orders of one Albus Dumbledore! I went to Gringotts, requested a meeting with the Head Goblin himself. Dumbledore had indeed hidden the will and he is stealing from the child by bribing. Did you know that man has been getting all the royalties for those Harry Potter toys and books which I’d like to point out that are all without the boy’s guardians’ permission? If you do not believe a ‘Death Eater’ like me as that Ministry official, Weasley, accuses me to be without proof, then here read the will and the Statement of the Potter Vaults and the Headmaster’s private vaults.”

The Minister took the will and the statements. She read them carefully and asked the child who he was living with. He murmured in fear, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon. He began crying and begged her not send him back. She saw his famous scar and his other scars as she saw red. Such blatant miscarriage of justice under her regimen; if that Rita got wind of this she’d blame the Ministry. Minister of Magic Millicent Bagnold was mighty angry at one Albus Dumbledore for thinking he was above the law.

Before she could think any further her friend gave her the lawsuit papers drawn by Desmond Davis. They had listed every crime against the Boy-Hero and the Potters and the Head of the Black family (Walburga Black had passed away a few months back). The solicitor had suggested they also check the Weasley vaults. That was odd. Arthur is a good man who he did not know when to stop his
muggle-objects-obsession; he also needed to keep that woman he calls wife in check, Molly had the nerve of sending Howlers to the Ministry complaining about the ‘twins’ pranks.’

Augusta cleared her throat, “Milli I understand that the first few years of your term have been bad but why did you give Crouch complete authority to send anyone he pleases to Azkaban without any trial? And why is Dumbledore allowed to interfere with my Alice’s godson and Lily’s will and to steal from the Saviour of our world? If I were you I’d plan some serious damage control.”

Millicent Bagnold nodded. Her friend was right such behaviour shall not be tolerated. Augusta had more to add, “Milli you know you can use this to your advantage.”

“How? How can I even think of gaining one supporter now? It is during my term that the Potters’ were killed and your kids were attacked by that madman and his followers? It is during my term that the former head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement has caused such a travesty! It is during my term that the Chief Warlock has done such horrible things! Augusta how can I even think of advantage? I’m so fired and banished.”

The Minister was strong woman that made most people tremble in her presence but this could ruin her forever. She turned to her friend and to Lord Malfoy and to the boy-hero. She needed some help; any help was good at this moment. She heard the little boy speak.

“Ma’am, am I in trouble?”

She assured the boy he was not. Such good manners, such a sweet child, how could Albus do this? The boy held on to Narcissa Malfoy comfort and that elf was try to soothe him and little Neville was offering him chocolate while young Malfoy and the little girl were on the edge of their seat. The Minister asked him if he knew anything about a person called Dumbledore. The child had a very interesting story to share.

“Ma’am every time my muddle Aunt and Uncle (Augusta corrected the boy, ‘Muggle’) left me with Mrs. Figg she’d give ask me to play with her cats while she’d put her head in the fireplace and talk to herself and mutter ‘just a squid and yes, Bumblebore, or yes, Dumblebore or something like that.’ And every time after that her eyes looked glassy grey. It really scared me and she’d feed me stuff with weird cabbage taste in it.”

Millicent knew the Headmaster was able to cast very potent Imperius Curse but this! She asked Augusta what she would do if she were in her place. Lady Longbottom curtly replied he’d speak to a person known for his political mind.
Lucius Malfoy knew the Minister was about to cave-in. He said he’d love to help the boy. Lucius was known for his concern for children and he was never accused of any crime against them. He suggested they should contact Amelia Bones; give Sirius Black a trail and implement the Potters’ will.

The Minister of Magic loved this idea. Lucius gave her parchment with some very confidential information which made her very happy and very upset with her Ministry Officials. The Head of the Malfoy family said he had hired a few private investigators at Gringotts since he had found young Harry and had found some interesting information. He suggested they arrest each offender one after another post Black’s trail.

-x-

Amelia Bones was summoned by the Minister for an emergency on Christmas day. She was not pleased. She hardly had any time to spend with her niece Susan. Millicent had asked her to get Susan as well. When the aunt and nice flooed in the atrium of the Ministry she was greeted by Augusta Longbottom and Narcissa Malfoy and Millicent herself. The two were led into the Minister’s private room where they met Lucius Malfoy and Desmond Davis and a severely black and blue boy. Millicent launched into her story without so much as ‘Sorry for disturbing you on a holiday’

Neither Amelia nor little Susan could believe that little boy was Harry Potter. Susan had begun to cry when the boy described how he had so many bruises all over his person. Amelia wanted justice for this child. She assured the Minister that they could help the boy without Albus’ poking his pointy nose; she had met Minerva this morning. Albus was at Hogwarts.

Madam Bones called for Kingsley Shacklebolt to immediately head to Azkaban to collect Black while Auror Patil visited Surrey. Amelia had called the entire Wizengamot and asked to them to arrive within an hour. Everybody knew better than to refuse her or call for the Chief Warlock; nobody wanted to cross Bones for they all had many skeletons in the closet. Amelia and a few Aurors went to Crouch’s house to arrest the man.

Millicent Bagnold was one happy Minister to have such an amazing witch as a part of her team. She had called Rita Skeeter on Lucius’ suggestion. To quote him, ‘It is beneficial to have that woman and her quill on the side of the Minister’.

-x-
Sirius Black had been the resident of the highest security cell in Azkaban prison since four years. It had been that long since James and Lily were killed because of the betrayal of that treacherous rat. He still laughed at times, Peter had bested him! Who knew the rat had it in him?

He was looking at the bars of his cell. The opposite cell had home to his cousin Bella. She on her routine rants of: ‘He shall return’, ‘He will reward us’ and ‘WE were faithful’. Sirius wondered what happened to that strong girl he knew as a boy. The cell next to his was now empty. Young Barty did not even survive a year in this hell hole. The boy died a few days after his parents had visited him. Sirius was brought out his meditation by a tall black wizard. He was bald, and wore a single gold hoop earring.

Kingsley had a job to do and did not chat with his former friend. He silently cuffed Black and took him out. He hoped Amelia knew what she was thinking getting this man out. He was the right-hand man of Voldemort. Albus had assured him Sirius Black was a spy and a traitor. But the lack of any signs of insanity and the firmness in the man’s eyes did not say ‘criminal.’ The Lestranges had the look, not Black.

-x-

Auror Patil had to call for extra help to get the squib, the walrus like muggle, his horse like wife and their whale of son and those cursed objects and that letter – all to the Ministry. There was a lot blood in the cupboard under the stairs which was magically locked. He could not help but check the magical signature in the house. The Headmaster is in big trouble.

-x-

Amelia had found something she’d never see: a dead man alive under the Imperius Curse!

-x-
Dolorous Jane Umbridge sat to next to Cornelius Fudge at the Wizengamot. Cornelius had begun his career as Junior Minister in the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes and had already become the Head of that Department. The man could very well become the next Minister with speed he is getting promoted. Dolorous did not care that the man was an ineffective bumbler. He took advice from the likes of Albus Dumbledore and Lucius Malfoy. Umbridge knew if this man became Minister he was her ticket to power and position.

She happily thought she would get rid of all those filthy "half-breeds"; which included centaurs, merpeople, and werewolves, and even that half giant at Hogwarts. She loathed them all and felt they did not deserve employment among ‘normal folks’; and they should to be rounded up and neutered. Furthermore, she hated children with a passion; her Blood Quills would be a good punishment. She is waiting for the day could practice it on a few ungrateful Half-Bloods. She was brought out of her reverie when she saw mass-murderer Sirius Black brought in, followed by Madam Bones, the Minister, Lord Malfoy, and Lady Longbottom along with Desmond Davis.

Umbridge knew that man had never lost a case in his entire career. She knew she should never cross him.

-x-

All members of the Wizengamot had arrived except Dumbledore himself. Each member wondered why were they summoned on a Holiday, why was the Chief Warlock not called and why was there a trial for Black and most importantly why was Lady Longbottom sitting next to Lord Malfoy?

Madam Bones called the session in order.

“We have gathered today for we the Judiciary have committed a mistake. Every member here has sworn to stand for the rights of the magical community yet we have failed to a fair trial to this man. Our system states a person is innocent till proven guilty not guilty till proved innocent. Before we begin I’d like the Aurors to bring in the accused.”

Sirius Black looked at all these hypocrites. They never gave him a trial. They assumed he was a criminal. None of them bothered to know the truth. What had changed?
Amelia went on say, “We do not need to try this man for we have wronged him and we have to apologize and compensate him for the humiliation, pain and defamation for illegally imprisoning him.”

There was uproar in the chamber. ‘What is she saying? How can it be? Has Amelia lost her mind?’

Sirius was asked if he would agree on taking Veritaserum or provide with pensive memories to prove his innocence. He chose the potion. After three drops of Veritaserum were given to him, Amelia began to ask him questions chosen by herself, the Minister and Mr. Potter’s attorney.

“What is your name?”

“Sirius Orion Black”

“What is your date of birth?”

“September 9th 1959.”

“What House were you in at Hogwarts?”

“Gryffindor”

The Head of DMLE was satisfied with the potion.

“Were you the Potters’ Secret Keeper?”

“No, I was not.”

“Who was the Secret Keeper?”

“Peter Pettigrew.”

The whole court began whispering. Rita's quill had began.

“Could explain what happened on the Halloween night in 1981?”

“I had a feeling that something was wrong so I went to check on Peter. He was nowhere to be found. I panicked and went to James and Lily. When I reached their house it was in ruins. I found my godson alive and kicking and my friends were dead. I was devastated. Hagrid had come to collect Harry for Dumbledore. I gave him the child and ran after the rat.”

“What happened when you met Pettigrew?”

“I found the traitor in Muggle London. He was planning to flee. Before I could confront the coward shouted, ‘How could I do this to Lily and James’; he cast Bombarda Maxima which killed the muggles around. In this mayhem caused, he cut his finger and transformed into a rat and ran into a drain.”
The entire court was aghast. Rita turned a little pale.

“What do you mean by turned into a rat? Was he an animagus?”

“Yes. He goes by the name Wormtail.”

“Are you an animagus, if yes, what is it?”

“Yes I’m. My animagus is the Grim.”

“Why were you laughing when the Aurors captured you?”

“The coward had bested me! I never knew he had it in him.”

“When you were captured why did you say you had killed your friends?”

“I never said that. I said I may have as well killed them. It was my idea to make Peter the Secret Keeper.”

“Why?”

“Everybody knew I’m Harry’s godfather, and James’ best friend, hence I was the natural suspect for anyone. So I was the perfect decoy. Nobody would have suspected Peter.”

“Who had cast the Fidelius Charm?”

“Dumbledore”

The court was silent. Even Amelia’s tongue was tied at that moment. Rita Skeeter was sitting her corner. Her mouth was salivating. This was brilliant news. Lucius Malfoy and the Minister had promised her she’d get more dirt.

“Why did you Harry Potter over to Rubeus Hagrid?”

“I trusted Albus to keep the child safe. I was devastated by the loss of my friends. I want to avenge them by killing the rat.”

Amelia said, “All in favour of Sirius Black’s innocence rise of hands.”

Even Umbridge had to put up her hand reluctantly.

“We would like to formally apologise Lord Black for misjudgment caused by this court. We know this would not bring back the last four years of your life spent in Azkaban. Please accept Five Million Galleons from the Ministry and a wand would be made especially for you by Ollivander. You are forgiven for being an illegal animagus for our mistakes outweigh yours being unregistered. An apology will be printed in all newspapers in all magical countries.”

Sirius wanted to leave but he was requested by Madame Bones to sit beside Augusta. The elderly woman whispered the dirty looking man to shut up and listen to her. She wickedly smiled and said this would be long day in court. Sirius had no energy to argue. He glumly sat in a corner like a chided child.
Amelia called Arthur Weasley and ordered him to get his son’s rat without a single word to anyone. His job was in jeopardy. That was his warning. Arthur rushed home to get Percy’s rat. Madam Bones wondered why Desmond gave her this request on his list.

The court thought they were to leave but Madam Bones asked them to remain seated. A pair of Aurors brought in Bartemius Crouch Senior. He was cuff ed and tied to the defendant’s chair. Another pair of Aurors had a person in a black cloak. This person’s face was covered. Crouch was forced to take five drops of Veritaserum. The members of the Wizengamot could not believe what was happening. Sirius was enjoying the show while Rita wanted to jump like a little girl. Her acid green Quick-Quotes Quill was running rapidly.

“What is your name?” Bones asked him sternly

“Bartemius "Barty" Crouch Senior” the name replied glumly.

“What post do you hold at the Ministry?”

“Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation”

“Why was Sirius Black never given a trial?”

“Dumbledore guaranteed he was guilty.”

“Why did you believe him?”

“He is the Chief Warlock”

“Why didn’t you give the Lestranges and your son get trial?”

“Karkaroff had testifies against them and Dumbledore said they are guilty.”

“So neither case had a fair trial with the Serum or memories because the Headmaster told you the accused parties were guilty?”

“Yes.”

The once stern man was shaking with fear. Amelia had already cornered him. She read the next question that made her sick.

“Is your son alive?”

The man shivered. He wanted to lie but the potion was too strong.

“Yes”

“Where is he? How is he alive?”

“He is next to the Aurors in the cloak. Albus had promised me that if I got Black and the Lestranges in Azkaban he will help me rescue my son. He wanted to honour my dying wife’s last wish.”

The former Head of the DMLE confessed the entire operation of how he got his son out of prison
and switched places with his wife. He also confessed using the Imperius on his son for three years. He admitted he had forced his son to take the Dark Mark so he could spy but the boy chose to side with Voldemort. Sirius thought of the boy he thought was dead held prisoner by his own father. The boy was held under the Imperius for three years! The entire Wizengamot was ashamed to call this man their colleague. Amelia asked him final questions.

“Did the Albus Dumbledore hide the Potters’ will?”

Crouch said yes. Sirius did not know of a will. He was going to say something when Augusta hit him on the head.

“Who has been a part of this entire conspiracy of hiding the will and stealing from Mr. Potter’s vaults?”

“Albus Dumbledore and myself”

Crouch confessed Albus’ plan to make Harry Potter the Light’s weapon to kill Voldemort. Sirius wanted to kill Albus; Augusta shot him a murderous glare and told him Harry was safe and out of the old man’s clutches. That calmed the newly released man.

“Who was responsible for the deaths of Fabian and Gideon Prewett?” (Harry knew this was a fluke he had to take. He was suspicious of the man. He had asked Desmond to include this question. He trusted his instincts.)

“Dumbledore”

Sirius did not want to believe this. Remus, James and he had idealised the man this man. He felt like an idiot. His mother, Bella, his father, Cissy, Andy and even Lily had warned them not to trust the man implicitly.

“Why?”

“They had found that Albus been stealing from Potter family vaults to finance the Order of the Phoenix. He was bribing a goblin all these years. They found out that he was prejudiced against Muggles and both us often dressed as Death Eaters and killed Muggles and Muggleborns. They found out that Gellert Grindelwald was his lover. They wanted to leave but Albus could not allow them to leave. They could have caused a bad reputation for him and the Order. They had to die.”

The whole court was taken aback to silence. Arthur Weasley had just entered the court when the last question was asked. He fell on the ground with a stunned rat in his hand. The Aurors helped the man and captured the rat in a box that would keep it asleep.

Madam Bones asked the Aurors to show Barty Crouch Jr., to St. Mungos’ for treatment with maximum protection. She declared that Bartemius Crouch Sr., declared guilty for his crimes and conspiracy, all his vaults and assets were to be divided among the Black and Potter families and him to get the lifetime in Azkaban without any chance of retrial or parole. It the verdict was unanimous. Crouch’s wand was not snapped. Sirius Black was presented with his wand. The Order of the Phoenix was declared an ‘illegal group’ and its members were called for investigation against crime against muggles and muggleborns.

Sirius had tears in his eyes. His hero was worse than Voldemort; at least the snake face did not lie, betray or steal from his supporters. He might as well have listened to Bella and his mother and remained neutral if not join that creature. Rita felt jubilant. ‘Gellert Grindelwald was his lover,
stole from the Potter, and destroyed the Prewett line, killed muggleborns!’ – The Headmaster’s reign was finished.

A motion was immediately passed by the Wizengamot to give every person arrested a trial with Veritaserum or Pensive Memories; or both, no matter the situation or crime of the accused. The Court did not know if they could handle anymore shocks for the day. Amelia sent a Patronus message to Dumbledore and summoned him to the Ministry instantly. The Court waited for the Supreme Mugwump to arrive.

Amelia read Healer Connolly’s reports and the crimes of Dumbledore against one Harry Potter and Sirius Black and the Prewett family. The Potters’ Will was read by Madame Bones. The Minister of Magic described Lucius Malfoy’s contribution – looking out for Harry Potter in time of need, the hidden will, the stealing, the royalty. Sirius wanted to thank the blond aristocrat for rescuing his godson. ‘Cissy was right, Lucius would never harm a child’ he thought. Sirius Black was given primary custody of Harry Potter while Lady Longbottom requested to be made his guardian in case of need. Sirius was more than happy to agree.

The lawsuits against Dumbledore and the toys and book companies were to be held the next day at noon. (The Dursley and Mrs. Figg were locked for the day at a cell in the Ministry.) Albus Dumbledore was declared traitor for his crimes; there was enough proof against him but he would be given a trial. His wand was reserved for Harry Potter for his crimes against the Potter family as requested by the boy’s lawyer. The court had no option but to agree, Dumbledore had messed up big time. They had to make the ‘Saviour’ happy. Rita was already itching to talk to the child.

-x-

As Dumbledore happily flooed to the Ministry atrium, he was guided to the largest Wizengamot chamber. May be they needed some advice from the Leader of the Light, Defeater of Gellert Grindelwald. The entire court was full. He saw Sirius Black sitting next to Augusta who was next to Lucius Malfoy. What was happening?

Before he could react, Kingsley snatched his wand and four Aurors cast magical ropes on him. The old man’s magic was bound. It was only six in the evening. It would be long tomorrow as well. Merry Christmas!

Rita Skeeter wished she had a Chocolate Frogs to celebrate.

-x-
12. A Beetle’s Bite

Boxing Day

The last surviving Marauder, or so he thought, was experiencing the Holiday blues. He lived in a tiny cottage by the forest. He had no neighbours or friends. Dumbledore had asked him to infiltrate the werewolf packs. But none of them would accept him. Greyback had accused him of going against his nature by consuming the Wolfsbane Potion. Many other wolves had told him that it was the potion that was making him weak and tired. ‘If only he’d accept his inner animal he won’t suffer the pain during each transformation and he’d be healthier’, they said. But he hated his wolf. He hated Moony.

The Headmaster had told him the potion controlled the animal. Remus Lupin did not want to lose the tiny shred of his remaining humanity. He believed the Headmaster. But the other wolves always told him to trust his instincts which did not trust the grandfatherly man with twinkling eyes. Moony loathed the man for separating his cud from him. Moony loathed the man for it blamed him for breaking up his pack. Moony did not trust Wormtail. Remus knew Moony was being unreasonable. Dumbledore had shown him nothing but kindness and sheltered him and let him have education. The other wolves said the man was responsible for his self-hatred. The other wolves did not like the old man. They said he was prejudiced. ‘How could Albus be prejudiced?’ he thought. The other wolves snickered that the old man had a pet wolf. None of the packs would accept him and that made Moony sad for his own pack was lost.

Remus was preparing his morning tea and eggs when the owl flew in through the window. He placed a Knut in the pouch, gave it a treat and took the paper. The bird flew away. Remus went on with his chore, he was little slow. It was full moon a few days back. He felt a little tired. May be the other wolves were right the potion was affecting him; it also made him broke. But the Headmaster had said...
Remus did not want his consciousness and Moony quarrelling early in the morning. He placed his scrambled eggs on the table and set his tea. He unrolled the paper and as he looked at the front page he jumped off his chair. The entire page had articles by that horrible woman. But it was not the woman’s name that caused his flight. The headlines and the pictures, all of them, had somehow proved that Moony was right all along.

-x-

BOY-SAVIOUR ABUSED BY MAGIC HATING MUGGLES – ORDERED BY DUMBLEDORE?
SIRIUS BLACK INNOCENT, FRAMED BY PETTIGREW, DUMBLEDORE AND CROUCH.

HARRY POTTER FOUND ON STREETS BY LADY LONGBOTTOM AND LORD MALFOY

DUMBLEDORE, ORDER OF PHOENIX STEALING FROM THE BOY-WHO-LIVED AND POTTER FAMILY

DUMBLEDORE GETS ROYALTY FOR POTTER BOOKS AND TOYS

POTTERS’ WILL HIDDEN BY HEADMASTER, DISREGARDS LATE PARENTS’ WISH

LORD BLACK SENT TO AZKABAN AT CHIEF WARLOCK’S BEHEST

CROUCH SR. FAKE SON’S DEATH, GAVE NO TRAILS TO SIRIUS BLACK AND LESTRANGE FAMILY ON DUMBLEDORE’S ORDERS.

CROUCH VAULTS AND WAND – GIFTED TO LORD BLACK

PREWETT TWINS MURDERED BY DUMBLEDORE: CROUCH SR

DUMBLEDORE MUGGLE-HATER, LOVER OF GRINDELWALD, SYMPATHISER OF YOU-KNOW-WHO: CROUCH SR

HARRY POTTER...
DUMBLEDORE...
LORD BLACK
LADY LONGBOTTOM
LORD MALFOY

-x-
Remus did not know what to believe. The entire Daily Prophet had been dedicated to Harry, his
cub; Sirius, his pack member; Dumbledore’s crime and the praises in favour of the Lucius Malfoy.
There were pictures of Harry; the poor boy was hiding behind Augusta and Lucius. There was
Sirius who looked nothing like his past self. The handsome features were replaced by a gaunt,
sunken face, waxy skin, yellow teeth, and long, matted hair; but his eyes were ecstatic. Sirius was
hugging his godson. Dumbledore looked furious, he was retrained and four Auror had held him at
wand point. Amelia Bones had spoken for the Ministry; it was all true. The copy of the Potters’
Will and Healer Connolly’s report – both were printed along with Desmond Davis’ lawsuit.

Remus had to sit down. His head was spinning. Moony had been right all this time. It never trusted
the rat or the old man. The rat was alive. Sirius was innocent. Harry had been abused. Moony was
howling in pain for it cub had to suffer and it had done nothing.

The other wolves were right. He did not notice for a while that two owls were on the table. When
he checked, there were letters from Augusta Longbottom and the Ministry; he was officially asked
to testify by both today at noon.

-x-

Severus Snape enjoyed his breakfast. This was the best morning he had in years. Rita Skeeter had
promised the readers’ exclusive interviews with the ‘adorable little Saviour who had bruises and
scars all over him’, the innocent Sirius Black, the kind hearted Lucius Malfoy and Lady
Longbottom (Severus almost choked on his pancake), the Minister Bagnold and Madam Bones.
Snape knew the Ministry would try everything to have the Press in their favour without realising
that Harry was on them the whole time. Rita also wrote she’d also manage to get an interview from
the Weasley matriarch, Molly. Severus snorted, ‘good luck with that.’

-x-

‘Lies, this horrible woman is lying. Fabian and Gideon were murdered by dirty Death Eaters.
Albus had said so. This is just a stunt pulled by that vile, slimy snake Malfoy. All Slytherins were
evil. Look they have done to poor Albus, how dare they! Albus had protected their world. This is
how the Ministry is repaying the man! That boy is lying. Albus had told her the muggles did
discipline and spank him a bit. The Headmaster was right the boy needed to be rescued. He was the
saviour. He should not be associating with Snakes. He should be with a nice Light family like hers.
Her Ron and the boy will be best friends. Her Ginny’s already in love with him. Her little darling
will be Lady Potter, Albus had said so. Her family vault already had a bit gold form Albus’ own so
that she could teach her youngest two for the Potter brat. Augusta’s gone senile.’
Molly Weasley knew the Prophet was lying. ‘Albus was a good man. He said he had embraced celibacy so that he could focus on the betterment of the world. He was not a fruit basket. GELLERT GRINDELWALD! Has Rita lost her mind? That man was evil. Albus does not kill muggles. He is a good man.’

She kept muttering to herself. Little Ronald and Ginevra knew Headmaster Dumbledore was great man. They knew Rita Skeeter was a fraud. Mummy told them the Potter boy was lying to get attention but Daddy and their brothers did not believe Mummy. Ronald scowled, ‘as if he’s not getting enough fame and money and attention.’ Ginny dreamily saw Harry trying to hiding Augusta and thought he was cute though a little short but she and he will make a great couple. Mummy had said ‘Dumblebore had promised he’d marry her and buy her nice clothes.’

Some people never change.

--

The Head of the Weasley family was sitting by the garden shed with his children barring Ron and Ginny. All five of them listened to their father talk about the previous day. Dad told him them everything that happened at the Wizengamot. Molly did not want them to know, saying ‘they are just kids’ but the kids refused. They wanted to know. Arthur felt they had the right to know. The patriarch knew it only time when the family would be divided. If only the simple man knew, there were separate groups already.

That morning Arthur was sent an owl from the Ministry. He knew it was about that lazy rat. Now, he had his suspicions about the rat. He could not believe his son shared a room with a traitor. He was right and he was wrong. Amelia had asked him to testify if in case the rat was Pettigrew. She had also sent him an official letter. The family vault was shut. It had gold from the Potter family, transferred by Dumbledore two days ago. He was did not understand why would his family vault have Harry Potter’s gold. He was asked to come to the Ministry with Percy at noon.

The family had already split.

-x-

Minerva McGonagall was one angry lioness, err cat. She had just read the Prophet. She had gone to meet Augusta. She had told Albus those muggles were worst, they were horrible. But he did not listen to her. The Transfigurations Professor cried in her chamber. She had let down her students. Lily was like the daughter she never had. James and Sirius were her favourite trouble makers. She had loved them like her own children. She was hurt. Even before she could get her letter from the Ministry for a testimony, she had promised Augusta she’d stand for the child. She was to meet them at eleven at the Ministry atrium.
Harry was so small and tiny and blue. The lioness was enraged. And you never want to anger a lioness especially when it comes to her cubs.

-x-

Nicholas Flamel was unhappy. He had sent his concerns to Madam Bones.

All Order members had received their letters. Sirius was more than happy to spill out their names. Moody was not a happy man. Albus had betrayed him. He killed his best friends. The twins were like his brothers.

Dumbledore did not know he had burnt his hands while playing with fire for neither Alastor nor the Goblins are of the forgiving kind. Ragnuk had received the word from Harry. Gringotts did not come under the Ministry’s jurisdiction. The Goblins received a large commission. All of Harry’s gold and property were returned. All the family heirlooms were back, including his father’s cloak. All trinkets, instruments like the Pensive and the Deluminator and his personal books in his office and private chambers were now in Harry’s vaults for Dumbledore’s vaults did not have enough gold to pay the interest. He had been stealing since the late 1970s, when James Potter’s parents had died. That was a lot of interest. (Ragnuk, Desmond, Augusta and Lucius wondered how a brave man like James was so blind!)

The Headmaster’s chamber was bare save the Portraits of the predecessors, a table and three chairs. Fawkes had left the office after the goblins cancelled the forced bond between it and its master. It seems like Dumbledore was a ‘Dark Lord’ after all. The phoenix sang and flew away to its intended master, the one from whom it was stolen. It was true; Dumbledore had very few supporters and the list was topped by a deranged woman and her crazy kids.

-x-
Harry Potter was one exhausted five year old boy. On Christmas Eve, a day before the trials, Lucius and he had been travelling. They had spoken to Marvolo who insisted they find all his treasures. The Diary was already at hand so they decided to retrieve the others.

Cissy accompanied the duo at 12, Grimmauld Place. She carefully spoke to Kreacher and extracted the Locket promising to destroy it. The miserable elf burst into tear. Master Regulus’ orders would be followed. Cissy instructed the elf to clean the house and make it habitable. She assured the elf he had done well, ‘Regulus would be very proud of him.’ Marvolo had suggested they let the fake Locket rest.

Walburga Black’s portrait was pleased to have Cissy and Lucius and an unknown little boy as her first visitors. The Malfoy couple told her how her eldest was betrayed by the Leader of the Light. The sharp-tongued woman began to say how she knew it all along. She had never liked that old man. Lucius explained to the late Lady Black that Sirius was the Head of the family and he will reinstate Andromeda back into the Black family as soon as he was out of prison. They told her about Dora and her wonderful abilities. The late woman didn’t say much but they knew she was melting. They hit right on the nail when they told her Bellatrix had been framed. They said Sirius, as Lord Black, could help Bella. (Harry thought may be being alone in the house with a sulking elf had made the woman crazier. May be they had come in time so that she’d be less unpleasant.) By the time the trio left the unkempt townhouse with Slytherin’s Locket, the crazy elf was happy while Walburga was warming to the idea of her first born living in her home.

The next one was the Cup from the Bank. Since Bellatrix had no heirs and the Lestrange brothers had no kin, Cissy and Draco were their beneficiaries. The Head Goblin had accompanied her to the vault when they collected the Cup, at the same time Lucius and Harry had gone to the Gaunt Shack to get the Ring. With Harry’s training and Lucius’ experience with the Dark Arts, they got the Ring without much ado. They went to Riddle Manor where they luckily found Marvolo’s wand.

Meanwhile, at Hogwarts Severus was clearly instructed by the boy to get the Diadem without even thinking to put it on. The Potions masters sneered at the man-child and said he had seen the Cube Memories and knew what was to be done. He also informed Harry that the Potions would take the allotted time to be ready.

Marvolo saw his treasures. His wand, the Diary, the Ring and Locket of his ancestors, the Cup and the Diadem and the Boy – the Dark Lord felt like child who had received his gifts a day before Christmas.
After a stressful day at the Ministry, Christmas Dinner at the Longbottom Manor was a cheerful affair. The Lovegoods and the Malfoys, Harry and Sirius were staying there on Augusta’s insistence. Cissy was fussing over her cousin who would not let go of Harry and Dobby was on a mission to fatten up his young master. Lucius and Augusta discussed what needs to be done next while Draco, Luna and Neville were running around the Manor with Twinkle on her toes. The Lovegoods were fascinated by the company.

Sirius could not believe he was free. He was free. He wanted to shout from the rooftops and jump around. He had his godson with him and he did not let go of the boy the whole time. He could not believe Cissy and Lucius. They had turned their backs on him when he had joined the Order. And now, they were primarily responsible for his trial. They told him how Harry was found and the rest; Cissy had agreed with Harry to tell him the complete truth after he had recovered from his stay at Azkaban. The Head of the Black family was grateful and had vowed to his loyalty to the couple. Cissy had asked Sirius to get Andy back in the family but to keep it a secret till things settled down.

Sirius was happy he had a part of his family back. Cissy had been such a sweet child. Andy always stood up for him. He was upset when Lucius explained his theories about Bella’s imprisonment. Sure, he did have issue with the woman but he did not hate her. He was thankful to have Harry with him. But another part in him was deeply hurt.

His best friends were gone, Moony was yet to be seen and the man whom they had all trusted so genuinely had betrayed them. He fed Harry his potions and personally applied the salve on the child’s wounds. He could not forgive himself for giving up Harry for his intense desire for revenge. Had he controlled himself and not run after that rat his godson would not have been so badly hurt. There were many regrets in Sirius’ heart like joining the Order against his mother’s wishes.

His mother had always told him she did not like Dumbledore. But the woman was an inch from being declared a nutcase. She was paranoid, prejudiced and showered all her love on Regulus for being a Slytherin. They were just houses in a school. He was not abandoning his family by being a Gryffindor. It wasn’t his fault; the Hat had sent him to the House of Lions. But Sirius did not regret being a Gryffindor. He had the best seven years of his life at school. He had met his best friends there – James, Remus, Lily and the pathetic traitor of a rat.

Sirius Black had learnt a very important lesson the Christmas of 1985. ‘Do not trust blindly, you will fall.’
That night Harry could not sleep. He kept turning around his bed. His emotions were going haywire. Hermione had once told him not to mess up with time. Harry had already changed history. He was feeling guilty on some part. He had expected many things from Dumbledore but Crouch’s admission to being a partner in the man’s crimes had shaken the boy. He wondered how many secrets the Headmaster carried to his grave the last time. The Prewett twins were merely a suspicion just like another one he has. Harry felt like he did not want to get these questions answered. But a part of him was curious. What else did that man do so that things work out for him?

And then there was Sirius, and even Remus. He did not know if he wanted them to know about his plans with regards to Marvolo, Severus, and Lucius and about what Dumbledore had done in the past with them and him. He knew their entire belief system was challenged. Could he really shake them completely? Could he show them the past?

He got off the bed and went into Sirius’ room. He saw his godfather sleeping erratically. He man kept turning about. He knew this was his only chance to have father-figure. Severus is a mentor, a guide but not a father. But this time he is not a teenager. He does have the mind and memories of a twenty-one year old but his body is young. He craved the affection he never had as child. He climbed next to Sirius who held him close to his chest in his sleep. Harry sighed and let his mind rest. He let the world and its worries leave.

Sirius was awake when Harry had entered. He let the kid climb next to him. He gently rubbed the child’s back. The child put his head on the man’s heart. The man thought may be the two of them could heal each other. This kid was his son. James and Lily had made him young Harry’s godfather, it was time Sirius becomes the father.

Augusta was fulfilling her own tradition. Every Christmas night she would read Neville a story. She did the same a few times every week, but Christmas night was a ritual she had observed since Frank was a baby. Neville interrupted her while she was reading ‘The Wizard and the Hopping Pot’ from ‘The Tales of Beedle the Bard’. He asked if Harry was leaving now that he had a godfather. She knew he’d ask her this question. She smiled at the boy and said Sirius and Harry will be staying with them for many more days. She assured him he could meet Harry anytime he wanted. He told her he really liked being Harry’s friend and did not want the boy to go. She agreed and said she, too, liked Harry.

“Gran do you like Draco and Luna? I like them as well.” The boy asked her. Augusta said Draco was a very well mannered boy who was very intelligent. She said Neville should spend time with
Harry, Draco and Luna. She told her grandson she was really fond of Luna who was lovely little girl who is very creative. He asked him if she would love even if he was a squib like his great-uncle Algie said.

“Neville you are NOT a squib. You are very brave. You have magic. You are a strong Wizard. I will always love you. I have always been proud of you.” She promised the child. She said he had his mother’s kindness and his father’s bravery and his grandfather’s skills. She told him could not be any more proud of him for being so nice and protective of Harry. She said she loved him for being so friendly with Luna and Draco.

The boy smiled. Yes, he was nice to his Harry. He liked Luna and Draco. He looked at his Gran and said: “I love you Gran. I love Mummy and Daddy too. I think I love Grandpa as well, but I have never met him. Is that okay?”

Augusta laughed and assured him ‘It was all very okay.’ It was on days like these when she missed her Frank and her Alice the most.

- 

Xeno and his wife had a similar experience with their Luna. The little girl said Harry and Neville and Draco will be her best friends and ‘Draco is very nice and a very nice boy’. She had giggled like all other little girls. Luna behaved like herself with friends and family. Xeno did not like his four year old giggling over a boy. She was too young. But he had thought the same when he had seen those Memories. He did not want his little girl to grow up. Why couldn’t she remain the lovely child she is? Though he did admit Draco is a very well behaved boy who respects his elders and is very courteous with his Luna. His wife assured he need not worry. He would chase Draco after many years. Xeno had wished for once neither of the mother-daughter had the sight.

-

Lucius and Narcissa kissed their sleeping Dragon’s forehead and made their way to their room. Draco always wanted siblings but Cissy could not have more children. The couple made their peace. Now, Neville and Harry were like the little brothers Draco always wanted.

Draco had told his mother he really like Harry and Neville. He did confess he was jealous of Harry being partial to Neville. His parents calmly told him he was a little more attentive to Luna. Lucius had never seen his son turn pink before. He told Draco it is okay to be a little fonder of one friend more than others, the boys won’t mind. He asked his son if he’d like to introduce his new friends to Blaise, may be even Theodore. Draco almost jumped off his bed. He knew his father approved of
them, this meant he approved of his new friends as well.

Lucius was glad Narcissa too approved of Lovegood’s daughter. He prayed Cissy would like Luna, though she had seen the memories. He was glad Draco had so easily mixed the new kids. He knows it would beneficial to his son in the future. Lucius is after all a politician and here he had both personal and professional gain. His reasons to help Harry Potter were partially altruistic and partially to establish his family future and reputation. It is nice how things work out.

-x-

Rita Skeeter felt this was the best day of her career. After the events of the Wizengamot she was invited for tea and biscuits with Lady Longbottom and Lord Malfoy. They offered her a deal which could not refuse even with the condition stipulated.

She was promised exclusive interviews with young Harry Potter, a tour of his former muggle home and interviews with his Healer and Solicitor on the condition of printing them verbatim. They also gave her a little juicy gossip she could verify. She knew all these would make her the most popular journalist in Magical Britain. Lady Longbottom told her she was very fond of a few insects and the Beetle was one of them.

Rita’s face paled. ‘They knew! But how? Nobody knows!’

Lucius Malfoy smiled at her and said, “We hope to share a magnificent working relationship. You write and print a few things for us, you get to enjoy all the fame and we shall keep your little secret.”

The deal was settled. It was very sweet. It was tad bitter.

-x-
Boxing Day: Early morning.

A set of Aurors were sent to make an arrest. One of the unoccupied cells next to Dumbledore’s heavily warded one was now occupied for a few hours till noon. The Aurors knew it was going to a long day.

-10 AM

Amelia Bones knew she’d hardly get any rest till the whole Dumbledore mess was cleared up. ‘The man may have more charges against him than Voldemort’ she thought. She knew with the Minister, Augusta, Lucius Malfoy and even Flamel and most importantly Harry Potter’s names involved the man had no chance. And with Rita Skeeter sniffing the man’s life like a hell hound there is hardly any chance for him. ‘Even if he manages to get out his status has been too soiled to be cleaned. Crouch has literally shredded the old man’.

Augusta had fire-called to ask if Susan would like to spend the day with her Neville and Draco Malfoy! Narcissa would be babysitting! ‘Sure, the next thing would be the news of Voldemort being a reformed man and Bellatrix Lestrange is a kitten in disguise as a crazy bint!’

Madam Bones knew Susan would be safe. Augusta guards that little boy more than the Goblins protecting their Vaults. If the Augusta certifies Lady Malfoy as a safe option then even she could. Susan was excited to spend the day with children her age, even though Harry Potter would in the court to testify. ‘What was the world coming to? Children in the Wizengamot, what’s next May-Eye becoming a womaniser!’

Whilst Amelia was enjoying her tea, she received an owl. One more trial had been pushed in with the rats and the old man. Millicent might as well ask her to live in her chambers at the Ministry. She dressed and left home for the day. Augusta and Minerva wanted to see Milli and her before the trial.
‘Why hadn’t his familiar come to his rescue? Fawkes had never failed to answer his summon. Something was wrong. The binds had frozen his magic. He could not attempt any magic – non-verbal or wandless, nothing. He was as good as a squib. How could they do this to him? Didn’t they know who is? They should all respect him and worship the ground he walks on, he had saved their sorry buttocks from Grindelwald. He is a famous alchemist who has worked with Nicolas Flamel. He is credited with discovering the Twelve Uses of Dragon's Blood. He has developed a method to communicate using Patronus charms. He is the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. He holds the Order of Merlin, First Class, for Grand Sorcery. He owns the Death Stick and the Cloak of Invisibility. He owns two Deathly Hallows. They have some nerve to treat him like a mad criminal! Didn’t these people realise this was all for the Greater Good?’

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore was a very angry man. He was a very helpless man. He was a bound man. He was locked up like some lowly convict and that was unacceptable to the man. His cell was warded with ancient spell by the Unspeakables. He had to hold his horses. He would show them all that they are making a mistake. Little did Dumbledore know his future was in the hands of a man that had made a Black Widow look innocent after burying five husbands and a ‘rumoured’ Death Eater walk about like a free man!

-x-

All members of the Wizengamot were a little excited. Among them sat Lord Black who was also representing Lord Potter. Among them sat little Harry Potter next to his godfather on the seat meant for Head of Potter Family. Lady Longbottom was talking to Lord Malfoy, second day in a row. Rita Skeeter was sitting in her corner, smiling like an evil villain with a sadistic plan. And to top the pudding, the accused for the day’s session was the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot! The day could not get any better!

Madam Bones addressed the grinning Vultures and the witnesses summoned. She stated there would be three trials for the day. The members began murmuring without noticing one of them was missing. The first accused was brought in. Cornelius Fudge was perplexed. Why had the Aurors tied the Madam Umbridge to the Defendant’s chair?

Dolorous Umbridge was infuriated. The Aurors had barged in her home early in the morning and arrested her possession of a Dark magical object. ‘Are they stupid?’ she thought as they cuffed her and confiscated her unusually small wand. They cast the Priori Incantato on her wand; the last spell was an Unforgivable. She was dumped into a cell in the Ministry.

She began insulting the Aurors, calling them “half-breeds” and ”Mudbloods". This is exactly what Madam Bones had hoped for. Apart from the charges of using an Unforgivable and possessing a Dark magical object, Umbridge was charged with contempt of the Wizengamot and insulting
Aurors. She was not given a choice, like Crouch she was forced to take five drops of Veritaserum. Cornelius knew his colleague was going to Azkaban.

The Ministry official confessed possessing Blood Quills and her full intentions of using it on ‘naughty children’. She confessed using the Imperius on shopkeeper to purchase the Ornamental Kitten Plates for a few galleons; ‘he refused to give her a bargain despite knowing she worked at the Ministry’. She confessed she would use her position in to cleanse the wizarding of filthy “Half-breed” creatures and ‘Mudbloods.’

The trial and the votes were quickly cast. Umbridge, like Crouch, had received a one-way ticket to Azkaban for using an Unforgivable on a civilian, possessing a Blood Quill and her wand was snapped and burnt in front of her. She was immediately sent to Azkaban. Fudge had lost his strongest supporter. The trial was finished within twenty minutes and Rita was gloating on her seat, her quill was working for her.

The Aurors bought Arthur Weasley’s rat which was fat and one of its finger was missing. They put the sleeping rat on the floor and cast the Homorphus Charm on it. Everyone in the thought all this was ridiculous till they saw the rat transformed into an extremely short, fat man with small, watery eyes, and a pointed nose. His hair had thinned out, lost its colour, and acquired a large bald patch. He was still unconscious. The Aurors were instructed to look for the Dark Mark on inner left forearm. There it was a bit faint but very present – a skull with a snake protruding from its mouth.

Harry held on to Sirius’ hand that was shaking since they had produced the rat. Remus was sitting in dark corner; Minerva was trying to calm the angry werewolf. Meanwhile all the members had begun to buzz. Amelia was furious at Crouch for his incompetence; an innocent was sent to Azkaban while the guilty was given the Order of Merlin!

The Aurors’ whispered ‘Rennervate’ after they tied the man on the chair. Peter Pettigrew opened his eye and they went wide with fear. In front of him was the entire Wizengamot! He looked around for a familiar for a face for help. He saw Amos Diggory, Mad-Eye Moody, Lucius Malfoy, Augusta Longbottom, Sirius, Minerva, Remus, Arthur Weasley, his pompous son that had found him and a boy who looked exactly like James! He tried to call the pompous boy and little Harry. Both looked disgusted.

The pompous boy and his father were called to identify him. The boy said he had found the rat in his garden as little boy. The father said it was true. When asked if he would say that under the serum, he said yes; which he did. Arthur Weasley identified his son’s rat Scabbers.

He squeaked in fear as they forced the Veritaserum down his throat.

“What is your name?”
“Peter Pettigrew”

The members were stunned.

“What year did you attend Hogwarts?”

“1971”

“Were you a friend of James Potter and Sirius Black?”

“Yes”

“What year did you attend Hogwarts?”

“1971”

“Were you the Potters’ Secret Keeper?”

“Yes”

“Did you give the Potters’ location to Voldemort?”

The rat-man was shaking. “Yes”

“Are you a Death Eater?”

“Yes”

“When did you get the Mark?”

“Since I graduated from Hogwarts”

“Were you hiding as an illegal animagus, a rat, in the Weasley family’s residence?”

“Yes”

“Did they know who you were?”

“No”

“Did Albus Dumbledore know you were the Potters’ Secret Keeper?”

“Yes”

“How did he know?”

“He had cast the Fidelius Charm”

With further questions he confessed and supported the answers given by Sirius the day before.

Peter Pettigrew was stripped from his Order of Merlin, First Class. He was declared an illegal animagus, a traitor and a Death Eater. He was convicted for killing twelve muggles and framing Sirius Black, a Lord and Head of the Black Family. He sentenced the Kiss after a week in the highest security cell with constant surveillance by the Dementors.
Sirius and Remus were sad and angry. The person they considered a friend had betrayed him. Their friends were brutally killed. They both wanted to kill the rat but justice was delivered. It was too little, too late. James and Lily were gone.

As Wormtail was sent to Azkaban and his end, the every person sitting was waiting for main event.

Auror Patil first brought the Dursleys and Arabella Figg. All of them were shaking in fear. The muggles were terrified in the presence of so many freaks and the freak police. Arabella knew this was not good.

-x-
Previously:-

Auror Patil first brought the Dursleys and Arabella Figg. All of them were shaking in fear. The muggles were terrified in the presence of so many freaks and the freak police. Arabella knew this was not good.

Now:-

Desmond Davis read every charges of this lawsuit. As the legal representative of the Boy-Saviour, in a high profile trial like this, the man was within his rights to make such demands. Amelia Bones let him stand in front of the Vultures and the chair.

Desmond knew this is the moment of truth. He had sat with the Head Goblin, Lucius, Lady Longbottom and ‘young’ Harry to discuss what they precisely wanted him to do. The solicitor had expected vicious stuff from Augusta, Malfoy and even Ragnuk but it was the little boy who spoke lucidly with a composed mind. The boy knew exactly what to say and what he really wanted from this trial. The child wanted to remove every skeleton from Dumbledore’s closet.

Glenn Connolly was called first to describe everything she had observed the day she was asked to attend to the boy saviour. The healer first showed the pictures she had taken that day. Harry Potter had large scars and gashes all over his body, most of which were recent, some were old. The entire Wizengamot was shocked to see the word ‘freak’ written with a sharp object on the back of the Boy-Who-Lived; his chest and abdomen were blue and yellow. The healer told the child’s teeth were broken and his eye sight was horrible. He seemed way too tiny for a child his age and was severely malnourished. He was given no vaccines, muggle or magical. She was asked to swear on her magic to verify the truth. She did as she was asked.

To make things even more gruesome for the elders and powerful members of the Wizarding Community, Desmond asked Harry Potter to come forward and show his scarred back to the audience. Many of the members had tears in their eyes, while a few of them were furious. Sirius was angry but kind of composed. Augusta had briefed him about the situation but Moony had to be held down by Minerva and Arthur. Rita’s quills were busying writing and she had a muggle pen to take short notes, just in case.
The lawyer asked him to tell the ‘good people’ what he had told the ‘nice Mr. Malfoy’ and ‘Madam Milli’. The boy gave the court the exact words he mumbled to the Minister. Harry looked terrified and started crying when he saw his muggle relatives, especially his uncle Vernon. He told them in school the teacher’s wig had turned blue and the next day he was running from Dudley and friends while trying to escaping from their game, ‘Harry-Hunting’, the child spoke with awe how he had found himself on the roof of the school. His uncle was angry; he was beaten with a belt and thrown in his cupboard. He was glad he did not have to cook that night.

Desmond asked the boy what he meant by his cupboard and did not have to cook that night. Harry said his ‘room’ was the cupboard under the stairs. He had been sleeping there since he was a baby. When asked where did he keep his clothes and toys. The boy calmly said he wore Dudley’s old clothes and had to find his broken toys in the garbage can if he wanted to play. He said he had hidden a few of them in his cupboard. Harry explained he had been doing chores like gardening and cleaning for his aunt’s family since he was three and he was doing laundry and cooking since he was four. When asked why, the child simply said he had to earn his keep as a free-loading freak whose parents had died in a car crash.

The court became silent. James and Lily Potter died in car crash! It was a travesty. The boy did not seem to know about his true identity at all. Dumbledore had told everyone the boy was being treated like a prince!

Desmond asked Harry if he knew he was a wizard before he met Mr. Malfoy. The child simply said he thought his name was freak till he went to school. He was told there was no such thing as magic.

When asked what he had seen at his babysitter’s house the child spoke: “Every time my muddle Aunt and Uncle, Amelia corrected the boy, ‘Muggle’, left me with Mrs. Figg she’d give ask me to play with her cats while she’d put her head in the fireplace and talk to herself and mutter ‘just a squid and yes, Bumblebore, or yes, Dumblebore or something like that.’ And every time after that her eyes looked glassy grey. It really scared me and she’d feed me stuff with weird cabbage taste in it.”

Harry had repeated the precise words. Minister Bagnold knew these words. ‘May be the child has been blessed with a fantastic memory.’

Arabella Figg was summoned. She confessed under the serum that she was feeding the child potions as ordered by the Headmaster. She said she is a member of the Order. When asked why she never reported the abuse the boy had to endure, the woman had an interesting answer-

“I have been telling Albus about it since the boy had his first bruise on the cheek, but he said it was necessary for Harry’s training as the Saviour. He said the boy-who-lived needs to be humble and
easy to handle. Believe me Mr. Lawyer I argued, I threatened to report to the Ministry.”

Madam Bones asked what happened after her threat.

Arabella said in a very hurt voice, “He said who would believe a squib like me over the words of the Chief Warlock, and then I began to forget things. I was ruder to Harry and fed him loyalty potions given by Albus. He said the boy needs to loyal to the Cause and the Order of the Phoenix.”

The elderly woman began crying. She said she never wanted to be rude to the boy but she did not understand why she was. Everyone knew the Imperius Curse often makes one forget things. The Wizengamot knew the woman had taken the serum, but still all this was surreal.

Madam Bones asked if she’d mind giving the court a few memories to verify. Mrs. Figg nodded like an eager child. The Ministry had a pensive projector that showed all the memories on a charmed white screen.

They saw Dumbledore casting the Imperius on the woman; they saw him ordering her to ignore Harry Potter’s beating and to ignore that he had to work like a slave. He gave her loyalty potions stating it was necessary to make the child loyal towards family and friends chosen by the Headmaster.

Arabella began crying. This is not why she had joined the Order. Desmond suggested that the helpless woman not be punished harshly for she was forced by Dumbledore. The Wizengamot decided Arabella Figg was to never come in contact with Harry Potter, banned from ever contacting any of the boy’s friends or acquaintances. She was told she would be obliviated.

Mrs. Figg was grateful. She thought she would be going to Azkaban. She was taken out of the Court and her mind had no memories of knowing Harry Potter or Dumbledore or the Order of the Phoenix.

The next were the three Muggles who were forced to take two drops of the serum. Even then walrus-man and the horse-woman were shouting freaks and unnatural and weirdoes and what not.

Auror Patil produced the Letter and the three items. They recognised the letter. They said they had found it on the doorstep with baby Harry on the morning after Halloween. The woman complained how irresponsible the freaks are ‘to leave a baby outside in the cold on a November night, anyone
could have taken away the child or some animal could have made a snack out of the kid.’ She continued that decent folks like themselves that the guts to talk to the people on whom they dump an unwanted child, they had the humanity to keep the child warm and assure its safety. The Letter was the heights of spinelessness and morality; saying she ‘had to look after the child because some Lord wanted to kill it!’ She criticized the freaks of never checking on a child of their kind.

The fat muggle boy recognised the three items. He confessed that he had accused the freak of stealing his toys and had his daddy punish him for it. Auror Patil addressed Madam Bones and said;

“All of three of these broken toys and the letter have magical properties. One of objects and the letter – both have an advanced compulsion charm on it to loath magical population. The second one had a charm to report any magic done in the muggles’ house to the caster and the last one was a listening device of sorts which would be activated when emotions are highly aggravated in the house.” Everyone knew all this was illegal and a serious invasion of privacy.

Amelia asked to whom the objects reported to and whose magical signature did they possess. The answer was simple, ‘Dumbledore.’

The Dursleys paled. The big man started yelling how criminal the freaks are. The man was asked if he had ever beaten his nephew. The man did not want to reply but he did, ‘yes, but the freak deserved it. He stole our Dudikins’ toys, he spoilt our garden, he burnt our food, he turned the teacher’s wig blue and he did magic tricks.’

The woman too replied in kind. She said she hated her sister for being a witch yet the old freak dumped her dead sister’s boy on her doorstep. She further went on say she and Lily had never spoken since she married that stupid Potter. The fat boy confessed about his Harry-Hunting games, and the fact that he had forbidden all kids at school to not befriend his freak of a cousin.

The muggles confessed they were cruel because they wanted to remove or beat out the freakishness out of the boy. They said they felt really happy and proud of themselves whenever they thrashed the boy.

Auror Patil gave his memories because of which the Vultures saw the cupboard under stairs with blood drops on it. The broken toys hidden and that there were no pictures of baby Harry anywhere in the house.

The members of the Wizengamot wanted the muggles to get the Kiss. Desmond had a better suggestion. Vernon Dursley would be sent to muggle prison for child abuse and assault fifteen
years without parole. Petunia Dursley be sent to muggle prison for ten years and Dudley to be sent to Juvenile Delinquents Home for one year and then to be sent to his aunt with obliterated memories that his parents were dead in a car crash. The muggles will lose the custody of their child and their home, money and all assets be sold and given to Harry Potter as a compensation.

Desmond pointed out how Dumbledore ignored the Potters’ will and placed a magical child with these muggles. He said the old man thought he is above the law as he kidnapped Harry Potter and made himself the Magical Guardian of the boy.

The Vultures agreed. Amelia hit the hammer. It was time for the testimonies of the summoned witnesses.

Solicitor Davis summoned Professor Minerva McGonagall. She took an oath on her magic. The woman said she had warned Dumbledore about the Muggles but the man kept muttering about being the child’s only relatives and the blood-wards would protect the child. He assured her Harry would be safe. She also said she was unaware of the potions or and the charmed objects. She confessed feeling guilty for not checking on the child. She said she wanted to but Albus had promised her Harry was safe and happy.

Davis questioned her role in the disbanded Order of the Phoenix. The woman took the serum said she joined in order to help against Death Eaters and You-know-who. She had no role in the stealing from the Potters or the deaths of the twins.

She also told the court:

“On behalf of all staff members of Hogwarts, we have an ultimatum. All of us will quit the school if that man returns there under any position.”

She produced a parchment with the signatures of all her co-workers.

Davis called one Remus Lupin to testify.

Remus confessed he is a werewolf. He said he was friends with James Potter, Sirius Black and Pettigrew. Remus informed the court he was unaware of the will and that Dumbledore had assured him that Sirius had betrayed the Potters. He said he did not question the man because the trusted the Headmaster and he was mourning the loss of his friends. He also said whenever he asked Dumbledore about Harry, the man assured him that ‘Harry was safe and was being treated like a
Desmond asked Arthur Weasley to stand in front of the court. The man was given three drops of the serum because of the mysterious two thousand galleons from Harry Potter’s family vaults via Dumbledore’s private vaults and his involvement with the Order.

“What is your name?”

“Arthur Septimus Weasley”

“What is the date of your birth?”

“6th February, 1950”

“Are you a member of the Order of the Phoenix?”

“Yes”

“Are you a part of the financing thieving from the Potter family’s vaults?”

“No”

“Were you aware of the same?”

“No”

“How the Prewett twins die?”

“Dumbledore said they were brutally killed by Death Eaters”

“You believed him?”

“Yes”

“Did you have any role in their murder?”

“No”

“Did you participate in any of the muggle and muggleborns killing disguised as Death Eaters with Crouch and Dumbledore?”

“No”

“Were you aware of it?”

“No”

“Did you ask Dumbledore to put the gold in your vault?”

“No”

“How did your family vault get all those galleons?”

“I don’t know”
“How did you find the gold in your vault?”

“I did not find it. I got a missive from the Ministry about it”

“Who handles your family vault?”

“My wife, Molly”

“Would she be aware of this stealing?”

“May be”

Arthur Weasley was told he was free to leave but the stolen gold will be taken away. The man agreed, stating he did not want gold that was no his, he is an honest man. He also informed that his wife will be called on a later date for questioning. The man simply said ‘sure’.

Solicitor Davis called all the owners of the companies that published Harry Potter books and made Harry Potter toys. Seven middle-aged wizards came forward. The lawyer said that Harry has been living muggles since that night, the Potters were dead and You-know-who was also dead – then how did these publishers know what had happened that night and who had given them the right to print all the ‘true events’ without consent from the guardians of the child and the child himself.

Each of them was accused of invasion of privacy of the Potter family, spreading false information about the said family and distributing false information among the public. He accused them of using a child’s name for financial profit. They were accused of stealing as the said child has never received any royalty.

That was enough for these to scare all seven of them. All of them confessed that they were told of the events by Albus Dumbledore. The man had given them the consent to print the books and make the toys, stating he is the Magical Guardian of the boy. The man had also been getting royalty past four years and all gifts sent from the fans to Harry Potter.

The Wizengamot ordered these companies to withdraw all these books and toys, cease production and handover all profits made to Harry Potter and publish a formal apology in all newspapers and magazines stating they have been cheating the public by selling fabricated stories by Dumbledore.

Amelia was exhausted, the rest of the Vultures were tired. Desmond saw this as an excellent sign. He said his clients would be more than happy to accommodate the trial to another date provided the Wizengamot would strip Dumbledore of all his titles including Headmastership of Hogwarts and keep him in custody at the maximum security cells in Azkaban. He said the court had enough facts to let Harry Potter have the man’s wand as the final compensation since the Goblins had already done their job.
The worn out crowd agreed. Amelia agreed as well but put the condition that Dumbledore’s wand should not be used till the child was to enter Hogwarts. Davis said his clients agree. Desmond smiled as Madam Bones spoke:

“With all the evidence and witness the Wizengamot strips Albus Dumbledore from all his given titles and Headmastership of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He no longer is the Chief Warlock or Supreme Mugwump. With the given confessions including that of Bartemius Crouch Sr., and Peter Pettigrew, testimonies and statements sent from Head Goblin, Ragnuk, he is declared guilty of all charges of fraud, kidnapping and hiding Harry Potter, not acknowledging the last will of the Potters and illegally making himself the magical guardian of the said child, placing a magical child in a magic-hating household, placing magical objects with illegal charms in a muggle house, placing wards around the said house, placing a squib to spy on Harry Potter and feeding him potions and encouraging physical and mental of the said child, not providing existing proof of innocence of Lord Black and most importantly stealing gold and heirlooms and properties of the Potter family and bribing a goblin, which was crime against the Goblin Nation.

“Dumbledore is accused of murders of Fabian and Gideon Prewett and mass murders of muggles and muggleborns. He is a convicted criminal. He will be brought in this court for his sentence and trial for the alleged charges under Veritaserum.”

The court was adjourned till the 10th of January, 1986.

Amelia really needed the break as she cursed the old man. She saw Sirius Black and Remus Lupin hugging, little Harry chatting with Lord Malfoy and Rita; that was still difficult to digest, and Augusta, Millicent and Minerva conspiring while looking at Sirius.
The Cold Innocent Memory

16. The Stumble of Dumble

A gust of cold wind was felt on the stone surface on the tiny cell, it was not from the tiny excuse of a window, neither from the door nor from the air off the stormy sea around the fortress. It was colder than walking barefoot on cruel snow, it was freezing. The inhabitant of the cell felt the low temperature gradually entering his skin, into the thin flesh and in his bone to the marrow. It was cold, it was freezing and that was all he could gather in his mind. There was no warmth anywhere.

No thoughts or memories wandered the corners of his mind; even if they did they were not happy. The only thoughts he had were those of despair and pain. The memories would not let him sleep. They rushed in his head like waves on a rock, nothing could stop them. They just came and hit him again and again, till he could feel the moments of regrets and cries of pain.

The shields that once protected his mind were broken and crushed. He had foggy memories of the time when the walls used to protect his mind like a fortress. Now the coldness could stroll in like an invited guest. Screams and whimpers could be heard in his mind. It was a long time ago when his mind had the pleasure of silence.

Ah, there is the aloofness in the air again. The Dementors are back. He had lost the track of time. Did they leave for a few minutes or hours or days or months? Or were they here the whole time?

Here they are again, Ariana, Aberforth and Albus and himself. Wands were pointed, spells were fired and there was so much shouting and screaming. The poor girl yelling at them to stop, the jealous younger brother accusing his older sibling of negligence, the older brother violently denying while standing in front of him, and there he was casting spells after spells at the younger kid. The older brother was trying to protect his siblings from his wrath. Soon the older brother’s wand participated, and there they were – three teenagers duelling while a young Ariana begging them to stop. The poor girl tried using her own magic to stop the boys, there were curses flying all around and one of them had found a target. There was no noise, no arguments, no shouting – absolutely nothing; just the silence of reality, of truth, of death surrounding the young girl. She looked very peaceful; Aberforth gently closed her vacant eyes and caressed her cheek. She looked beautiful and in peace with death. Albus tried to touch her but his brother won’t let him. And Gellert had to flee after witnessing the first death in his life. He had seen the girl’s eyes go wide with shock as the curse had hit her on her heart. He saw the look on Albus’ face as he had fled. He thought it was him and he fled. He did not trouble with authorities.

Gellert had seen this memory the most. He had seen it every day for forty years. Each day he examined that evening. He could remember it easily since the Dementors loved this memory the most. He lived this scene every day for four decades. He knew who had killed the girl. He knew
for he had seen it over and over and over again while sitting in the top-most cell inside his own prison, Nurmengard, a freezing hell which he had created for his enemies. Such an irony!

Gellert could hear Ariana even now. He had killed many and seen many die but she was the most innocent.

-x-

In another cold cell, just as freezing and much dirtier with many more cloaked figures for company sat the greatest wizard alive; or so he kept telling himself. He kept telling himself ‘this is impossible, this cannot be happening’.

He clearly remembered the day before this, it was Christmas. Ah, how he loved Christmas. The gifts from Potter’s fans for him, the candies and chocolates, the colourful robes and so much more – he was enjoying them. His luck was still rotten with Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans. That morning he got Troll bogey. He ate a Chocolate Frog to get rid of the taste, but he could not. During breakfast he saw Severus was scowling like he was bitten a lemon, Minerva was focusing on her food; Filius and Pomona were on leave. The caretaker was possibly running around with his cat while Hagrid was preparing his legendary rock-cakes. Aurora (Prof. Sinistra), Septima (Prof. Vector), Charity (Prof. Burbage), Irma and Poppy all of them were out as well. All of them were to return that evening. He rather enjoyed the company of Minerva and Severus; the two would argue or ignore each other the whole day while he would simply watch them. It was every entertaining.

He was busying looking at Gellert’s diaries. It had been decades but yet there was so sign of the Stone. Gellert’s journals had to have something. He knew he was missing something. He had a feeling he may have overlooked the obvious places for clues. Looking for Stone had been his hobby since he had got the Cloak.

He fire-called Arabella to check on young Potter, ‘one ought to keep tabs of their favourite pawn’. She did not reply. May be she was out. He wondered if she needed to take a bit of Harry’s potions. He continued reading post tea time; just before six in the evening he got a patronus message from Amelia. He was urgently called to the Ministry. He knew something was wrong. May be Tom was back in Britain or was it some rogue Death Eater or some fool like Arthur getting fond of Muggle things a little too much.

He took another chance and ate another Bean. It was lemon. He happily flooed to the Ministry atrium, he was taken to the largest Wizengamot chamber. He was thinking maybe they wanted his advice on redecorating that place. It was terribly depressing to sit there for the sessions. Albus was very proud of his skills in duelling and decorations. His robes always testified that. Or maybe they needed some advice from the Leader of the Light, Defeater of Gellert Grindelwald.
As entered the chamber he saw every member sitting. It was complete Wizengamot hearing! Why was He, the Chief Warlock, not called?

He saw Sirius Black sitting next to Augusta who was next to Lucius Malfoy. What on earth was going on?

Before he could react, Kingsley snatched his wand and four Aurors cast magical ropes on him. His magic was bound. Had these idiots lost their mind?

He was dragged like an ordinary hooligan into a warded cell. This was not the kind of Christmas he liked.

-  

Here he was, in a nauseatingly dirty little cell in Azkaban. How can they just throw him away in this hell-hole?

His bounds were release but he was unable to perform any magic. He knew what this was. This part of the Tower had special wards and protective enchantments. No magic could be performed here. He hated being like a squib. He was angrily muttering to himself when he felt the chill within his bones. Seven Dementors were outside his cell.

Albus tried to perform the Patronus charm. He tried to summon his magic but nothing happened. As the room got colder and all sense of warmth began to vanish, Albus heard loud screams of agony in his head. He tried to use Occlumency shields to protect his mind but his visitors were strong and vicious. The voices did not stop and the shields were in tatters.

The voices brought the faces of the twin and their eyes filled with despair and pain and betrayal. He saw their dwindling determination and blood oozing from their wounds. He saw them go still and empty. The memory vanished and another materialized. He saw his dead mother and another memory appeared.

Albus began to scream in pain, he knew this was all in head but he could not fight the pain and sorrow. He saw Ariana, Aberforth and Gellert over and over and over again till he fell into a black abyss.
Albus had lost track of time within five days. The sun was not bright enough, it was not warm enough. The night was not cool enough nor was it calming. No dream entered his mind. The seven cloaked figures made sure of that. There was no nightmare either. The only thing that rang in his psyche was that evening in 1899. He heard himself begging Gellert not to hurt his little brother and sister. He heard his own thoughts torn between desire and duty. He saw his wand. He saw Aberforth and Gellert’s wand as well. He saw curses and hexes flying all over the room. He saw Ariana trying to pacify them. He saw her trying to stop them. He saw her eyes wide open with shock. He saw the curse hit her heart. He saw the caster of the curse. He saw himself trying to touch her cheek but Aberforth won’t let him. He saw Gellert running away. He saw for days and nights till he could remember everything.

He saw the curse fly from his wand and hit Ariana on the chest. He saw her fall slowly. He had seen the death of an innocent.

Ariana’s cold, lifeless body was the reason he had come to loathe Dark Wizards like Gellert and Salazar. He began to loathe muggles with a passion for their prejudice and violence had made his innocent little sister unstable. It was because of muggles his mother was dead and his father had to die in Azkaban.
It was then he loathed Dark Arts for they tempted him. It was because of the Dark Arts and muggles they had this fight and it was because of them his baby sister had to die. It was that day when had made up his mind - Dark Arts and Dark Wizards had to go and Muggles shall pay; it was ‘For the Greater Good’.

-x-
Taking Augusta and Narcissa’s advice Sirius agreed to see a mind-healer at St. Mungo’s to recuperate from his stay at Azkaban. He had a lot of issues to sort and Glenn was more than happy to recommend a friend. He knew he would need a lot of time to trust people, especially after Harry showed him the memories at bank. While the goblins were setting the papers in order for him to formally become Lord Black, assume his responsibilities, take over his frozen vaults and properties and his inheritance from his uncle Alphard, Harry and Ragnuk answered each of his questions.

Sirius could not believe he had died such a death; knocked into the Veil by a mere stunner! At least, he was protecting Harry. He could not suppose himself to be so stupid to duel at the place like that! He duelling with Bella could be fun but fatal. He was well aware of her talent as a duellist and that she could take him down without much sweat. Sirius, himself, was known for his skills but she was better and he knew that well.

The ultimate shock for him was Molly’s confession memory. Dumbledore had used the Imperius on Bella to get him killed ONLY because he was on their way! They did not want Harry getting a family or any sort of independence which he could have gotten from him. That man got him killed so that they could manipulate the life of his godson. He was glad in a way that Harry was back to sort things; for the Light had forgotten, Sirius is a Black and Blacks do not forgive and Blacks do not forget.

He had seen in the memories how he had to hide and listen to that rude, bossy, insufferable woman insult him in his own house. He saw the look of satisfaction on that banshee’s face while she had happily spoken of his murder. There were many things that troubled him but among the top ones was the look on Bella’s face when she had ‘killed’ him. Bellatrix Black would kill anyone for her ideals but she would not kill family; come what may. Sirius knew he had a lot to sort and a Dark Lord to address.

At first Sirius had a panic attack when Harry casually told him about his plans about Voldemort, his eye popped out when he learnt that Harry is a Horcrux and he was going to burst a vein on his forehead when Harry simply said he will vanquish the Dark Lord and help Marvolo return. But all this was not as troubling for him to accept as was the fact that he will have to play nice to Snivellus. He had seen the admiration his godson had for that man. He had seen the man protecting Harry and he had seen Snape and Lily, not James and Lily, guide Harry with the ritual and his training.
He knew he will have to be nice to the man Harry considers his mentor. He knew Harry wanted his new ‘dad’ and mentor to get along. Harry asked him a simple question, ‘Why do you hate Severus?’ Great! Now that greasy-bat was Severus!

“Harry, I hate Snape because he is a Death Eater and responsible for your parents’ death.”

The five year replied, “No, what I really meant to ask why did you hate him in School? I have seen his memories and he wanted nothing to do with you or dad but it was you guys who would not leave him alone. It was you guys that drove him away from my mum who was his best friend; and it was you guys who drove him to isolation when no one especially Dumbledore would not take any action against all the bullying you guys did. Tell me why did you hate him the first time you met him?”

Sirius had to think. He had to confess he could not truly point out why he hated the greasy-hair boy who wanted to be sorted into Slytherin; maybe it was because his mother expected him to be a Slytherin and this boy in rags made it there while he did not. Maybe it was because his first friend James Potter loathed Slytherins and called them ‘evil slimy snakes and Dark Arts worshipers’; maybe because James and he were just spoilt rich boys who sneered on the less fortunate. He told Harry that Snape had begun to dislike James even more after the infamous rescue from Moony. Harry simply said, “Severus hated dad because of the motive; dad was trying to avoid expulsion from school.”

After hearing all this, Harry said the thing the shook the floor on Sirius’ feet.

“It seems like Dumbledore encouraged prejudice against Slytherins by never punishing you guys. It seems like he pushed the Slytherins to join Voldemort after all the Leader of the Light was not fair to them. And most of all I’m disappointed with my father. He sounds exactly like Ronald Weasley, prejudiced and a blind-follower of Dumbledore. I know loyalty is a Hufflepuff trait, but believe me Puffs do not follow so stupidly, Puff have standards and solid reasons for their famed Loyalty.”

Sirius was stunned. Was he any better than his family? He was just as narrow-minded. The words from the child made sense but the boy had lost all respect for the father that had died while trying to save him. Harry understood what Sirius was thinking.

“Sirius I don’t disrespect my father, I do not love him any less. But now I won’t put him on a dais like the last time when everyone went gaga about him and seldom spoke about Mum. In a way I’m glad I know all this. Now I know my father and I are alike. We both trusted the wrong man and did not think for ourselves.”
Lord Black’s mind tried to grasp the explanation but all this was too much. He was glad he had agreed to go to the mind-healer. He was glad he had Remus. He was sad James and Lily were gone. But he was glad the child had opened his eyes.

-x-

31st December 1985

Remus Lupin was a rational man. He believed in reason and logic. He believed everyone deserved a chance. Well, that was before Harry Potter had told him about the plans that involved the murderer of his friends. He could not fathom why Harry was keen to help that vile creature. This was one of the few times when Moony agreed with him. He tried to reason with the little boy who would not listen.

Harry was exasperated. He thought Sirius would be difficult but it was Remus that refused to see the bigger picture. He had shown the werewolf all the memories including the ones after his return. Remus had the boy on his lap and would not let him go. Moony was terrified of losing his cub. Moony had seen the pain the boy had to go through after he was killed in the Battle. The mere thought of his cub being hurt enraged him.

“Moony how about I promise to let you join me every time I meet Marvolo? Would that help?”

Sirius, Lucius and Severus understood the fear that was ringing in Remus’ mind. Sirius was afraid for his godson being hurt, ‘he is so tiny!’ Lucius was praying like a child before a test; things had to work out, he refused to be a puppet of that deranged thing. Severus’ mind was concerned with the potions. He knew two of them would work. It was the third one that petrified him, ‘It has to work.’

- 

Lord Voldemort was getting bored out of his delicate skull. Young Harry had told him the potion would take a week to brew. ‘That was yesterday’, the impatient Dark Lord grumbled.

Ever since young Harry shown him those memories and they had taken the oath, the Dark Lord had come to detest himself. Looking at himself he saw a helpless pathetic creature who was neither strong enough to be called alive nor weak enough to be dead. He hated being weak. His thoughts
went to the time when he had dreamt to reform this world and make it great for children like him. The ambitious Tom Marvolo Riddle inside him was shaken awake by a little boy with big green eyes.

The helpless Dark Lord was brought out of his thoughts by a knock on the door. Lucius and Severus entered the room with Sirius Black and the old man’s pet wolf. Young Harry was placed like a baby on the wolf’s hip. The wolf refused to let the boy down. That was funny. This boy had destroyed Dumbledore with a few fake tears. He had eliminated the Dark Lord and here he was, carried by the wolf like a little boy. Harry Potter was pouting and grumbling. He demanded the wolf let him down. It looked like a puppy trying to growl but it mewed instead.

The Dark Lord could help but laugh. It felt good. He had not laughed since ages.

“I see my trauma makes you laugh. I’m delighted to be cause of your mirth,” the little one snapped. The wolf had a crossed expression. The boy sighed and gave up. Wolves are notoriously protective about their young ones. He had to say something.

“It is very odd of you, Remus Lupin, to embrace the parental side of your wolf but you refuse to acknowledge its existence otherwise.”

Harry wanted to ask what he meant but Sirius beat him.

“What do you mean? Moony sees Harry as his cub so he is keeping him close.”

The Dark Lord wondered did Dumbledore truly beat out all sense of logic out of his minions. He looked at Lupin who was challenging him to continue.

“Well the wolf here is slowly killing himself. Wolfsbane potion exterminates the consumer at a very slow rate, it is exceptionally unnoticeable. Your wolf here is on his way to commit suicide. He hates being inhuman but he readily accepts this part where young Harry is his offspring. A Werewolf is dark creature because it is naturally a dominating, territorial being. Your friend hates his wolf and is killing it and him in the process. Tell me something Lupin, what does your Moony look like?”

Lupin knew what this vile creature wanted to say. The other wolves had said this numerous times and he never listened. Here, he wanted to assert his dominance in this group but he wanted them to like him as well. Voldemort saw this and knew how the old man had got a pet wolf.

“Lupin your intense desire to be liked is your principal folly. Should you embrace your wolf, you’d
be healthier, better looking and very much stronger. The potion controls the wolf, not allowing it to rein even for the one night.”

“What if I hurt people? I don’t want to be a monster.”

Dumbledore definitely had idiots on his side. The Dark Lord asked him a simple question.

“Before you began taking this potion, did you feel you were harming anyone while you played with your little friends at the Shrieking Shack?”

Sirius and Remus were taken aback.

“Oh please don’t look so shocked. Pettigrew had vomited all your dirty secrets. Tell me was the transformation painful as it is now? Did you feel just as exhausted the next day?”

Remus said things were simpler back when he was in school. He never harmed anyone till the incident with Severus. The Potions Master flinched at the mention of that horrifying incident.

“Did your wolf feel threatened when Severus entered the Shack that night? Did you feel he was trying to break your pack?”

Remus nodded. Moony had felt Snape was trying to hurt his pack.

“Did Dumbledore suggest you take this potion after that incident?”

He nodded, “What does that have to do with all this?”

Voldemort could stop himself this time, “The old man was as master manipulator. A wolf can sense people with ill intentions; if your ‘Moony’ was allowed to thrive, it would have suspected the old man. So he decided to play with your guilt and your overzealous craving to be accepted. He convinced you to drink that toxic potion.”

Remus was flabbergasted.
“What about Greyback? He harms people.”

“Well is every human being alike? Greyback retaliates against the Ministry’s prejudice by turning children. Not the brightest idea but that man has more brawns than brains. You, Mr. Lupin, have the brains, you have intelligence. Harry says you are and I quote ‘a fantastic teacher’. That means you’d make a worthy Alpha. But that potion hurts your body; it does not let you embrace yourself. Greyback is the Alpha because people, err wolves like you refuse to accept yourselves and pretend to be normal humans with a ‘furry little problem’. Greyback looks so disgusting because the glamours he has on him. He wants to scare the Ministry, but the idiot has no lucidity or persuasive skills. You are a werewolf, be proud of it. Doesn’t the old man keep saying intent makes a person, not their origins?”

Remus was able to understand. He did see reason in this discussion. Harry heard the whole talk. Marvolo was emerging. All he needed was emotions. The man could make a wonderful speaker. He is a natural leader; he is natural at making people see things his way. And now the man was exhausted; this body got tired easily.

Lupin was busy in his thoughts when he heard Severus and Harry begin to discuss the potions.

“My Lord, the first potion here-”

Severus was rudely interrupted. “Don’t call me that. I have a name. Call me Marvolo.”

“Marvolo, you have to drink three drops of this potion for every Horcrux, hold each object very close to your person and recite this incantation:-

"Flower gleam and glow
Let your power shine
Make the clock reverse
Bring back what once was mine.

Heal what has been hurt
Change the fate's design
Save what has been lost
Bring back what once was mine.1"

Marvolo thought the incantation was preposterous. “Little girls reading nursery rhymes would sing such a thing!”
Harry insisted he need to recite it with remorse and complete faith and be prepared for extreme agony. He said he said spent half a decade reading every book on Horcruxes and Dark Magic that was found in Slytherin’s library in the Chamber of Secrets. Marvolo still thought the song was outrageous.

Severus thought the boy had some guts to make the Dark Lord sing such a song. The books clearly stated the creator needs to drink the potion, hold the object containing the soul piece and feel repent and have faith; singing could be helpful.

Marvolo was fed three drops of the potion with the Phoenix tears and a Phoenix feather; he held the Diary close of his heart and sang. At first he thought nothing happened; he tried to feel sorry for killing Myrtle. Suddenly he felt sorrow for the dead and the guilt that was lost with his humanity. He felt as if he was under the Cruciatus Curse for hours and thousands of white hot needles were pierced on his skin into the bones. He tried not to scream but the pain was unbearable. His voice was loud. Sirius and Lucius tried not to flinch. Remus held Harry close to chest while Severus stood firm without a single emotion on his face. Harry remained calm. He had expected this to happen. The pain meant the ripped soul pieces were rejoining. The Diary held the biggest soul piece since it was the first Horcrux.

Marvolo’s scream subsided, he was wailing. His first tears in decades. He felt pain. He felt grief. He felt human! His bones felt stronger and longer.

He was tired but young Harry had asked him to complete all of them at once. He put the diary in the small bag with an Undetectable Extension Charm.

The next was the Ring, then the Locket, the Cup and the Diadem. Each time he felt unimaginable pain and grief. Each item was no longer cursed; each one was back to its original state. Harry’s mind was fixed on the Ring. The Stone could be retrieved now. All the items were now in the bag. Harry had placed the standard Featherweight Charm and another interesting charm on it. Anyone can put things in it but only Harry can remove things from it. While he was thinking of the Hallows and its significance, the others were struck by the person in front of them. Lord Voldemort was gone.

This was not the oddly tall and thin creature with waxy and oddly distorted features. He did not have awfully pale skin; he did not have a chalk-white face that resembled a skull, snake-like slits for nostrils, and long, thin hands with unnaturally long fingers like a spider's legs. He was not hairless or lipless. He did not have the long, sharp, pale blue fingernails. That monstrous creature created due to the Horcruxes was gone.
The person in front of them was elegantly tall. He was charmingly handsome, with pale skin and jet black hair. He had a soul that was aching for its final bit; his soul wanted to be complete. He had a soul, he was finally human.

Marvolo wandlessly sleeked his hair back and conjured black robes. All four men were mesmerized by the attractive thirty-something man in front of them. Lucius was almost drooling for the man’s appearance oozed charm and power. Sirius could not believe the sophistication of the man in a simple robe. Remus was shut to silence; the man was radiating confidence and power. Severus knew that man shall age very slowly. The potion had Phoenix tears which heal all illness and the crushed Feather would keep his heart pure.

The only flaw on the otherwise striking countenance of Marvolo were his eyes. They were properly shaped but the irises were red; the only reminder of Voldemort.

Harry heard a soothing voice call for him. He sharply inhaled his breathe. This magnificent man was far superior to the Tom he had met in the Chamber of Secrets. He felt drawn to the man. He moved towards him. Remus walked a bit towards the man. Harry put his hand on the smooth cheek; it relaxed the anxiety running through his veins.

He murmured, “You are back! It is you.”

Harry put his arms in front of the man; the universal sign of all little kids – ‘pick me up’. Marvolo fulfilled the child’s wish for he was drawn towards this child as well. Yes, he saw young Harry as a child that had a life similar to his. He felt an odd kinship with this little boy.

Remus and Sirius questioned why two were the hugging!

Severus had the answer. “The soul piece wants to become complete. The Horcrux in Harry is calling Marvolo’s soul. The two will share a strong bond of similarity and understanding even after this process is complete. Harry has protected Marvolo’s soul. He is the human vessel that is returning the soul it had protected; hence Marvolo will be concerned about him like a protective parent.”

Marvolo did not take his eyes off the little boy with the emerald eyes. He drank the potion and touched the famous scar. Harry felt no pain. He felt comfort and safety. Marvolo sang in the most melodious voice:

"Flower gleam and glow
Let your power shine
Make the clock reverse
Bring back what once was mine.

Heal what has been hurt
Change the fate's design
Save what has been lost

Bring back what once was mine.”

This time Harry felt as though someone was taking away something very important from him, something that is his. His mind and magic tried to fight Marvolo but the call of the Souls was powerful. The pain was tough for the little boy who buried his face in the crook of Marvolo’s neck. He cried because of the tremendous loss he felt. He saw a thin golden rope connecting Marvolo and him. The pain eased. He felt safe, he felt peaceful.

Marvolo felt the shift in his magic. He felt complete. He felt as if he was awake after a real bad dream. He attempted to soothe the child in his arms. Harry’s cries made him sad. He wanted to pacify the boy. He wanted to do everything he could to make this boy happy, to make him smile, to keep him safe. He knew he would stand in front the Killing Curse for the little boy – just like the heroic woman with red hair and green eyes. He knew he will fight for the child like that brave man with unmanageable hair and hazel eyes. The golden ropes surround the two of them. Marvolo’s eyes became brown like chocolate. Harry felt lightheaded and attached to the man. He softly said to the man: “You have the gentlest eyes Marvolo.”

Severus said, “Harry is the Magical Heir of Marvolo Riddle-Gaunt. He shall possess the magical gifts hereditary to the Slytherin Line.”

‘That is oddly comforting’, thought Marvolo.

Harry remained in the man’s arms for he fit snugly. He looked his godfather and guardian, at Lucius and his mentor. His smile lit the room.

“The Prophesy is fulfilled. The Dark Lord is vanquished. Marvolo is back.”

The rest were silent. Lucius was stunned; Salazar Slytherin’s Magical Heir has the blood of Godric Gryffindor! Moony could feel the paternal pride radiating from the man. Moony could feel the affection Harry felt for the man. Severus knew Marvolo would make an excellent father figure. Sirius strangely did not feel threatened; he knew would all the possible help in raising Harry. The boy would need two parents, a guardian like Moony, an uncle like Lucius and a mentor like Severus.

Marvolo looked at Sirius and said, “We are both his fathers. You are the link to his parents and I’m his father by magic.”

Yes, the Dark Lord is gone for Good.
Rita Skeeter was a very happy person. The Christmas break of 1985 was the best time of her entire career. The rescue of young Mr. Potter by Lucius Malfoy and the disgrace of one Albus Dumbledore had given her a promotion and a huge raise at the Daily Prophet. Every day the paper sold like hot cakes and her articles and exclusive interviews made her a celebrity of sorts. She was now recognised as the brilliant reporter who had the most delicious yet completely factual scoops on Dumbledore, Umbridge, Pettigrew and Crouch.

She knew it was very unwise to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Harry Potter and his guardians have been lethal on their enemies, they had changed many things around and they knew all the dirty secrets. Yes, Rita knew she will play nice to the little boy, for she knew a resourceful child like that would make an excellent ally. She also knew he was a dangerous foe.

Being a journalist made Rita see reason in situations like these. Pettigrew, Crouch, Umbridge, Figg, the Dursleys and Dumbledore – all these people had something to make that little boy angry. Rita had heard of Lily Potter’s legendary temper. Yes, it was best to remain on this boy’s good side.

She sipped her herbal tea, ‘it does wonders for your skin’, while she read the notes she had made during her recent visits to the Longbottom Manor. Lady Longbottom had asked her if she’d be interested in a series of interviews with Magical Historian Bathilda Bagshot who was the neighbour of the Dumbledore family. Ms. Bagshot had been invited by Augusta to stay at her home for as long as she wanted. The lonely Historian had graciously accepted the offer. The stern looking Longbottom matriarch had winked at Rita and suggested she should write a book on Dumbledore, ‘before anyone else thinks of it.’

Rita loved this new side of Lady Longbottom. The woman had wicked sense of humour and a deadly motive to destroy the old man forever – that made her Rita’s favourite person alive. She loved the sessions with Bagshot; the woman was reluctant at first but Augusta convinced the old Batty in no time. Batty Bagshot had some serious dirt about the unknown past of the Dumbledore family. Rita loved her new friends. She was thinking to name the book, ‘The Lies of Albus Dumbledore.’ Sounds like an instant best-seller.
January 2nd 1986

The Lestrange brothers and Bellatrix, residents of Azkaban Prison had visitors on the day after New Year’s Day. Bartemius Crouch Jr., had visitors at his ‘secure ward’ at St. Mungo’s. Another two people had a visitor the same evening. The visitors were able to come and go without any notice. They did not use the doors.

January 3rd 1986

The Minister of Magic, Millicent Bagnold had received a patronus message at lunch time from Augusta. She was asked to immediately to come to St. Mungo’s with Amelia. The matter was private and very urgent. Milli hoped the matter better be urgent, she had to give up her house elf’s fantastic cooking.

Amelia Bones had just put Susan for her afternoon nap. Little Susan slept like a log after her lunch. She was relaxing in front of the fire place while reading the Prophet. Occasionally she would look out of the window and see the beautiful snow whilst enjoying a mug of hot chocolate. She was making most out of her holiday break. Just as the thought had entered her mind, she got Milli’s message.

Madam Bones was ready in minutes. She hoped someone better be dead this time. Little did she know, her prayers had been accepted.

As the two power-women rushed into the meeting chamber at St. Mungo’s, they were greeted by a very happy looking group consisting of Glenn Connolly, Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy and one sullen Severus Snape. Millicent asked what was so urgent to make her forsake her meal!

Glenn was really excited. This was brilliant news. The firm looking healer was on her toes like a little girl who had just touched a unicorn. Amelia knew this was going to be a long get-together.

“Alice. Frank. They are awake! They are fine! I just spoke to them!” Glenn said.
Amelia could not stop herself. Frank and Alice were the most competent Aurors’ she had trained. “When did that happen? How? Are you sure? This is incredible news! Can we see them?”

Narcissa Malfoy spoke this time. “Last night Augusta had come to see the two when she saw Alice trying to sit and Frank trying to hold a glass of water. Nobody knows how it happened. They just woke up! The specialists and mind-healers won’t let us meet them for another hour or so. They are checking those two for everything.”

Millicent asked, “How are they? Are Augusta and Neville with them?” Her voice was choked. Her best friend’s children had recovered. ‘This is a miracle!’

Glenn nodded, “Yes, they are. Young Harry is with them as well. Apparently he wants see his godmother and Neville wanted him there.”

The witches and wizards sat around the table. Severus knew this was his time to pitch in.

“Minister Bagnold, Madam Bones I have a suspicion. You both want to know why I am here.”

The women nodded.

Severus and Lucius revealed their left inner arm. The skin was clear and unblemished. No scar or marks or old injuries were visible.

Amelia snapped, “Where are your Marks? No offence Lucius but I know you both had it. What happened? Tell me right now.” The lady had gone into official mode.

“Madam Bones this is the other reason why we had asked you to come here. This morning I noticed the lack of the extremely faint. It had faded since the Halloween of 1981 but now there is no Dark Mark or any Dark Magic on either of our arms.”

Glenn confirmed the absence of Dark Magic on their arms. She said their arms were thoroughly checked by the most competent and reliable healers St. Mungo’s. The Dark Mark was gone.

“What does that mean?” Millicent asked. She had her suspicions. But she wanted them to say it.
They were rumoured to be part of the Inner Circle.

“The Dark Lord is finally gone. He is dead” Lucius said.

“What on earth do you mean he is finally gone?”

Severus spoke for Lucius, “Was there a body fond? I mean at the Potter’s place, that night? I know there was no body. Dumbledore had told me that the Dark Lord was too weak to fight so he fled, but he was sure the Dark Lord shall return. But with this disappearance of the Dark Mark, we – Lucius and I feel that he is dead. The magic on the Mark was connected with Dark Lord himself. If the mark is gone without a trace, it is simple - He Is Dead.”

Millicent was ecstatic. The arrest of Dumbledore and Crouch and the proof Voldemort’s death would help save Ministry’s decreasing reputation. The abuse of the boy-hero and lack of proper trial for an innocent Lord Black had made the people lose faith in the government. This could save the Ministry.

Amelia did not share her thoughts.

“So what about other Death Eaters? No offence.”

“Well why not check Barty, Bella and the Lestrange brothers? I cannot say about the others for these are the people I knew well. Others were seldom identified and Igor, well good luck with one.” Severus spoke with his usual arrogance. It was essential that Amelia believed this ruse. Inside Severus and Lucius were very, very happy. The potions, both of them, had worked.

Amelia checked their arms herself. It was a fact, not a single trace of dark magic. There was no glamour or anything that could prove this was a trick. She said she will go to Azkaban herself after she has spoken to Frank and Alice.

Meanwhile the Janus Thickey Ward, a long-term residence ward on the Fourth Floor of St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, was the epicentre of contagious excitement. Since the Longbottom couple had begun to show signs of stability and normalcy, healers all over Great Britain were summoned to check on their progress.
Augusta looked at every person in the room like a ferocious lioness. Her children were awake and they had spoken to her. The healers had told her they would have to remain at St. Mungo’s for a few more days for further observation. But the look on Frank’s face was enough for her. She said she has enough resources and help for her children. Her decision was not challenged. ‘They will be coming home by the next evening.’

She sat next to her son and checked his face, eyes, and his nose. Yes, he was back. She saw Alice holding on to Neville and Harry. She peppered both of them with kisses and hugs. Augusta was worried about her grandson succumbing to jealousy and possessiveness but there was no sign of any such thing. Neville had almost agreed to share his mother with his new friend when he had asked for Harry to join them.

Neville had thought Gran was lying when she told him his mum and dad had woken up and asked for him. Gran never lied. They had asked for him! Gran told him that mum had asked about her godson as well. He knew Harry already had a godfather and a Moony and Mr. Snape and Mr. and Mrs Malfoy. But his Harry did not have a mum like he did. He asked Gran if Harry could join them. Gran said she was very proud of him.

For a long time Frank and Alice Longbottom’s mind had been the vacant halls of a deserted manor since that fateful night. They were brought out of their slumber by a soothing voice of a child. They felt a little hand gently massaging their throats after they were fed a potion. As they woke up after a long dreamless slumber they saw a child that begged them not to tell anyone of his presence. He begged them not to talk to him about it till they had time to be alone with him. The child had saved them. They agreed.

They wanted to see their son. They wanted to see their mum. But they were tired. They wanted to sleep. The child told them he’d see them soon. As they shut their eyes, like a dream the child was gone.

They saw Mum later on. Alice tried to sit. Frank wanted to water. They were hugged for a long while by their crying Mum.

They saw that child again the next morning. The boy looked tiny next to another boy who had a
cute round face with pink lips and dark blond hair. He had Alice’s brown eyes, just like chocolate. He was tall like Frank. This was their son. Their Neville was in front of them. Their Neville had his fingers holding the little boy’s hand. The little boy’s hair was messy and black; he had round glasses like someone they knew. It was the child’s bright green eyes that made the connection in their head. They were Lily’s eyes! Their Neville was protectively holding Lily’s son. This was James’ son.

The child that their son was with was Harry Potter! Neville was protecting little Harry from all those healers who were shamelessly gawking at him!

‘Her Neville was with Harry. Her son and her godson were so cute together. They look like they balance each other.’ Alice could not help but think so. She hugged the two and kissed their little noses and their heads. She missed her baby. She had missed her little godson.

Frank saw something between the two boys. Harry looked at Neville for help when everyone was starring at him. Harry did not like the attention. He had held Neville’s hand when they entered the room. Neville angrily looked at anyone that stared at Harry for too long for the boy’s comfort. ‘This will be interesting,’ Frank thought.

8th January 1986

Amelia Bones was on her way to Azkaban prison. She had checked on Barty. There was no Dark Mark on the young man’s arm. She had met Frank and Alice. She had taken their statement. The two of them clearly remembered what happened on the night of their attack. They willingly gave their memories.

Madam Bones was never easy to anger; that was until she had seen those memories. The Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement had made up her mind. She had told the Minister of her plans. She needed to verify a few things.

First she went to the Lestrange brothers who were cuffed and bound to the chairs in the Visitors’ Room. The room had special enchantments; no magic could be performed by the ones bound. She checked their arms. The infamous Dark Mark was gone. She fed them the potions she had brought. All obliviated memories returned and effects of the Imperius decreased considerably. The first question they asked confirmed the Longbottoms’ testimony.


“Is that little boy safe?”

Bellatrix was much easier to subdue. It seems the loss of the Dark Mark had broken the woman’s heart. It was a known fact, Bellatrix idealised the Dark Lord. He was her mentor. She began firing insults as soon as she had taken the potions. After her rage had settled she asked the question:

“Is the Longbottom boy safe? We did not harm him, did we? Believe me Madam Bones we did not want to use the Cruciatius Curse on the Longbottoms. I swear on my magic. We had gone there to question them about the Dark Lord’s whereabouts. We are not dim-witted to attack two high-profile Aurors after what had happed to the Potters. But that senile old man had cast the ‘Petrificus Totalus’ on the Longbottoms. Then he used the Imperius on us. He had forced us to torture them. Please believe me we did not want to harm them. We tried to fight but the old man very proficient with the Imperius. He kept saying he needed a spare pawn. He was muttering about filthy muggles, some twins and Potters’ gold. He had obliviated us. I know he did that. I swear on my magic I did not want to harm them.”

A golden light surrounded Bellatrix. Amelia knew the woman had spoken the truth. She assured the weeping woman that she, her husband, her brother-in-law and Barty will be given a proper trial under Veritaserum. She assured the woman they would be immediately moved to a better cell without any Dementors. The Head of the DMLE assured her that they would most likely walk free on the 10th as they already done their time for being former Death Eaters. Madam Bones was assured her that lack of a fair trial and the Imperius would most likely free them.

Amelia was waiting for Dumbledore to be brought. The former Chief Warlock was dragged in manacles in the room. He was securely bound to the chair but his hands were kept free. Amelia drank a sip from her tea and offered the aged wizard the same. She ate a bit of her sandwich and offered it to him.

Dumbledore was glad to away from his seven cloaked companions. ‘Amelia had tasted the tea and food. It was not laced,’ he thought. He eagerly gobbled the offered food. Amelia took out a tiny vial form her bag and poured its contents in her tea. Albus looked at her in question. She smiled calmly.

“Not to worry. That’s just the antidote for the Veritaserum.”

Her smile was dangerous. He was tricked into consuming the Truth Serum. Amelia removed a roll of parchment and a Quick-Quotes Quill which Rita had graciously let her borrow.
“Did you use the Imperius on Bellatrix Lestrange and her comrades and make them torture the Longbottoms?”

Albus shook his head. He wanted to say no but he simply could not. The woman had given much more than the three drops. Amelia waved an empty vial at him while the Quill had already begun to write on the parchment.

“Yes I did”

“Did you kill the Prewett twins?”

“Yes”

“Have you been stealing from the Potter Family since the mysterious death of James Potter’s parents?”

“Yes”

“Did you kill James Potter’s parents?”

“Yes”

“Why?”

“I needed gold to finance my Order”

“Did you frame Sirius Black for a crime he had never committed?”

“Yes”

“Did you intentionally hide the proof of his innocence?”

“Yes”

“Did you hide the Potters’ will and knowingly place young Harry Potter in mortal danger?”

“Yes”

“Did you pay Molly Weasley to train her youngest two children to befriend young Harry Potter?”

“Yes”

Amelia read all the questions she had and the ones given to her by Desmond Davis. The Quill had worked overtime. She asked the final questions.

“Did you force a certain Mr. Riddle’s Phoenix to bond with you?”

“Yes”

“Did you disguise as a Death Eaters and kill muggles and muggleborns?”

“Yes”

“Why?”

Albus gave his reasons.
“Did you kill your sister, Ariana?”

“Yes”

Albus Dumbledore felt old as he had answered these questions. Amelia Bones looked at him with disgust. She stood up and walked towards him.

“Albus Dumbledore, you are hereby stripped of your right to a fair trial. You no longer possess the status as bestowed to a wizard.”

She forced a vial of a foul tasting potion. He was forced to drink it as the Aurors pinched his nose.

“Your Magical core will be consumed in a few minutes. You are no longer a wizard. I hope you enjoy this freezing Hell.”

Yes, revenge was a dish best served cold. Albus got the dish frosty with painful memories.

-x-
In an interesting turn of events at the Wizengamot, the shamed former Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Albus Dumbledore, was denied the right to trail. However, this humble reporter is not complaining. Madam Bones, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, showed the entire Court of Ladies and Lords a very interesting memory willingly given by the miraculously revived former Aurors’ Frank and Alice Longbottom (exclusive interviews with the Longbottoms will be published very soon in the Prophet and the Quibbler – both by this modest reporter).

It appears that Dumbledore has stooped much lower than the common expectations. The memory clearly shows Bellatrix Lestrange, her husband Rodolphus, her brother-in-law Rabastan and Bartemius Crouch Jr., had in fact tortured the Longbottoms under the effect of the Imperius Curse cast by the once mighty Dumbledore himself; recent events show that the aged wizard is highly proficient with this particular Unforgivable.

The Longbottoms were so ruthlessly tormented only because they refused to let their son, young Neville, become a ‘spare Saviour’ and ‘pawn’ for the elaborate plans of the old man. Dumbledore thought he may need Neville Longbottom for his nasty schemes if in case Harry Potter should ‘die young, or get severely damaged’ at the hands of his vile and barbaric muggle relations.

Madam Bones then showed the Court her own memories of the private interrogation of the Lestranges and Dumbledore that happened on the on the 8th of January at Azkaban prison. The esteemed lady swore on her Life and magic that none of the memories were tampered with or false. The memories shown had silenced the entire Wizengamot. The depth of Dumbledore’s actions had shaken all present to the core.
indeed made the innocent Lestranges and young Barty harm the Longbottoms and then denied them the right to fair trial along with his co-conspirator Bartemius Crouch Sr.

He had in fact murdered the beloved Prewett Twins for they had found out about his nefarious schemes which involved stealing from the Potter family and killing muggles and muggleborns disguised as Death Eaters (it does make one wonder how many poor people were actually slain by the ‘notorious Death Eaters’). The former Supreme Mugwump confessed that he had killed the parents of James Potter just so that he could fund the now illegal Order of the Phoenix. He had been stealing from the Potter Family Vaults since 1978! Poor James Potter never knew he had been loyal to the murderer of his parents all his life.

Dumbledore admitted he had framed Lord Black to gain control over young Harry Potter. The elder wizard seemed too obsessed with young Harry, who is such a sweet child. The man had hidden the Potters’ will and intentionally placed the Boy-who-Lived in mortal peril. He had bribed a goblin who has been executed for his crime as informed by Head Goblin Ragnuk.

It also came to light that Dumbledore had paid Molly, the estranged wife of Arthur Weasley, to ‘train’ her youngest children – Ronald and Ginevra to befriend young Harry. It is interesting to note that the old man had used the Potters’ gold to bride the woman. An illegal marriage contract between Harry Potter and Ginevra was found in the possession of Molly. The contract was written and signed by Dumbledore himself. More about Arthur Weasley’s reaction: MOLLY – NO LONGER WEASLEY OR PREWETT

It was also disclosed that Dumbledore had stolen and forcefully bonded himself with Fawkes the phoenix. The phoenix was freed by the Goblins when they had taken possession of Dumbledore’s properties to recover the stolen Potter fortune. The beautiful bird belongs to a certain Mr. Riddle who was a Slytherin at Hogwarts. Mr. Riddle had been banished from the Great Britain and placed in a Magical coma by Dumbledore during the late 1950s. More on the mysterious Mr. Riddle and his Slytherin connection: SLYTHERIN’S DESCENDANT MASTER OF STOLEN PHOENIX – DUMBLEDORE PLANTS FALSE RUMORS

This stealing led to his final confessions. Albus Dumbledore had in fact murdered his little sister Ariana, aged fourteen, back in 1899 and had managed to hide the truth all these years.

With the express permission of the Minister of Magic herself, Madam Bones had administered the foulest potion known to Wizarding kind, the ‘Mugglus Potion’ which completely removes the consumer’s Magical core – thus making them something between a Squib and a muggle. Dumbledore is no longer a wizard. Hence he has no rights in our world.

(Mugglus Potion is considered to be most dangerous of all potions for it makes a magical person completely devoid of their magic. The Potion is highly controlled. It is not allowed to brew or sell
MOLLY – NO LONGER WEASLEY OR PREWETT

By Rita Skeeter

Arthur Weasley has confided in Madam Bones and this humble correspondent that he has released his wife from their marriage contract and demanded the custody of his children; except Ronald and Ginevra who have stubbornly said ‘they want to be with mummy.’

As the head of the Weasley and Prewett family, by succession and marriage, Arthur Weasley has disowned his estranged wife and youngest two for treason against the names of the family. Molly and her youngest two now have no last name till another family adopts’ them and they have no right to the family vaults or any properties under the Weasley or Prewett names.

Molly shall be sentenced for conspiracy against a minor and National Hero, accepting bribe, possessing an illegal marriage contract and being unfaithful to the marriage contract between her husband and herself. She shall be a resident of Azkaban prison for a minimum of five years. Young Ronald and Ginevra will be sent for intense therapy with mind-healers. It is most likely they would be sent to Muriel; Molly’s aunt for Mr. Weasley refuses to let him live at his home or pay for their Hogwarts tuition. The two no longer have the Weasley red-hair or freckles.

Sirius Black cousin to the Weasley family by marriage has offered Arthur Weasley his moral support and has welcomed them into the Black family. (Lucretia Black was married to Ignatius Prewett. She was the sister of Orion Black which makes her the aunt of Sirius Black. Ignatius Prewett was the brother of Romulus Prewett, father of the slain twins and Molly. Therefore, Lucretia is the aunt of Fabian and Gideon Prewett and Molly by marriage.)

SLYTHERIN’S DESCENDENT MASTER OF STOLEN PHOENIX – DUMBLEDORE PLANTS FALSE RUMOURS
Since 1956, students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry have often seen a ‘swan-sized’ bright red Phoenix flying around the school. The legendary bird, Fawkes was also popular as the familiar of the Headmaster of the School. However, during his recent confession Albus Dumbledore acknowledged that he stolen the bird from his former student, a Slytherin – Mr. Marvolo Riddle-Gaunt.

Dumbledore merely said he had stolen his former student’s familiar without much explanation. He also said he has destroyed all records of Mr. Riddle-Gaunt’s existence from the school. All professors were obliviated and he had tampered with ministry records using his fame as the defeater of Gellert Grindelwald. The former Chief Warlock had abused his position to banish the young man and had used an obscure curse on the young man to put in a magical coma. All this was done so that he could not claim his familiar.

Because of this magical coma, the debonair man hardly appears to be in his thirties (he is actually in his late-fifties). His aging process was unwittingly slowed by Dumbledore’s curse. He was kept in a remote shack in Ireland till he was awakened and rescued by Fawkes (Phoenix’s tears can heal all curses and potions accept the Killing Curse).

The other reason for this banishment was the ancestry of Mr. Riddle-Gaunt. This ‘young man’ is the last living descendent of Salazar Slytherin. Thus giving the man rights to question the Headmaster and Board of Governors; this was totally unacceptable to the tyrannical Dumbledore.

The Gaunt family has emerged from Slytherin himself while the Riddles are considered old money in the Muggle community in Little Hangleton. This inclusion of muggles in the Slytherin family tree effectively refutes the vicious rumours that state than Salazar Slytherin was a pureblood fanatic.

Mr. Riddle-Gaunt has informed this reporter that Dumbledore is a prejudiced man who spread such rumours about his ancestor for his own means. Dumbledore’s recent confession of killing muggles and muggleborns puts doubts on the so-called ‘dark, evil reputation’ of Salazar Slytherin. Dumbledore has accepted the responsibility for spreading foul and completely baseless gossip about Salazar Slytherin and the Slytherin House students.

The ‘young’ lord hopes to clean his ancestor’s reputation, improve the standard of Wizarding education and help muggleborn children and magical orphans abandoned in muggle orphanages.
A/N: I agree that Arthur does is being very harsh and irrational with regards to Ron and Ginny; but I want him to remain the same 'people pleaser'. Last time he agreed with all that molly had to say as he wanted to please her. This time he desperately needs to please the Ministry by becoming the 'ideal citizen'. This flaw is intrinsic of his persona.. Plus it may help in the sequel :D
Parents are proud of the accomplishments of their children. Many of them love to brag about it and even tell random strangers how their little one is such a wonderful student. Many love to show-off the recent ‘A+’ their child has received during family get-togethers. Parents are obsessed with the well-being of their children. All parents have a full-time job when raising a child. But things get very complicated when you have a child that is considered ‘gifted’. A gifted child often results in a variety of situations.

Their little one has an excellent memory. So every little deal made for trips to bookstores is never forgotten. Their little one loves to read fiction and non-fiction. Classical works of Austen, Dickens and Bronte sisters have been read more than twice and ‘Poetics’ and ‘Republic’ and ‘Communist Manifesto’ are read for fun! She likes rules. Things are sorted and organised and her room is cleaner than dentist’s clinic; even when she eats there are no crumbs! For a child of seven she knows the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party and she listens to the news bulletins. She wants to know learn arithmetic and the concept of a root-canal. She is curious about the World Wars. She is up at dawn even on weekends! She speaks French and the Queen’s Language with much fluency. Her first friend was the saleslady at the bookstore and she sits with her grandparents to ‘just chat about things’. She stays away from children her age for they detest the ‘Miss Know-it-all’.

Parents adore the imagination of their child and they always encourage it. But their little one said the broccoli had flown across the table because she was angry, and she made a flower blossom and the drapes change colours because she wanted to! This confused Mr. & Mrs. Granger. How gifted could a child be?

The Grangers were an upper-middle class family. They lived in the suburbs in Derby. The parents were both hard-working dentists; they wanted only the best for their child. Their child, a little girl, was the most unconventional one. They often felt they had given birth to an adult, not a baby. Little Hermione loved to read; she did not whine or pout or complain about going to Church. Yes, their little one was perfect except the unusual things that had been happening since a few days. They thought they would observe things for a few more days then plan to take some action. What would they do? They honestly did not know.
It had been a week since Hermione had changed the colour of the blinds in her room. She was reading something in the study room while her mother, Sophie was preparing lunch and her father, Edmund was setting the table. They were about to call their daughter when the doorbell rang. Edmund went to the door.

There stood two men and a tiny little boy. The three brunettes asked if they were at the residence of the Granger family. Edmund closely looked at them. They did not look like criminals. In fact they looked really well-off. The taller man had brown eyes on a very handsome face. His hair was stylishly sleeked on the side and he was wearing a designer overcoat. The other man had grey eyes and an attractive appearance. The child was adorable. His cheeks were a little chubby; he green eyes and his hair resemble an untidy mess standing in all directions. The tallest man asked if they could come in and have a discussion with regards to their daughter. Edmund let them in.

The two adults had very unusual name. The taller man that looked like the group leader of sorts called Marvolo Riddle-Gaunt and other man was Sirius Black. The child had a simple name, Harry. The three were seated on the couch when Hermione was asked to come downstairs. The little boy was on the edge of his seat. Marvolo wrapped the child in his arms, close to his chest.

Introductions were made, tea was served and Marvolo got straight to the point.

“Mr & Mrs. Granger, we have come to meet young Hermione and you both for a certain purpose. We have come to discuss the unusual things that have been happening since a few days in your household.”

Sophie asked them, “Whatever do you mean? There is nothing wrong with our baby.”

Sirius requested the lady to calm down and said he had something to show them. The tall man asked them to be patient and he began shrinking, his skin was turning black, his nose turned into a snout and he had tail! The man had changed into a big, scrappy dog.

The Grangers were stunned to say the least. Before they could speak, the dog turned into a man!

Hermione’s curiosity had been fuelled.

“Mr. Black is this some trick? Could you teach me as well? I mean your dog was impressive but what if I want to be something else.”

Harry grinned. This was the girl he knew very well.

“You can learn how to do this and many more things but you must remember this is a very advance level of transfiguration.”
“What is Transfiguration?”

“It is a complex kind of Magical subject”, Marvolo said.

“Magic?” Hermione and her parents squeaked.

“Hermione you have changed the colour of the blinds, made a flower blossom and many such things haven’t you? Don’t answer that, it was rhetorical. You, young lady are a witch and the three of us are wizards.” Marvolo explained.

Hermione was waiting for them to say it was all a joke but she knew it was not. This would explain a lot of things that have been happening. So she is a witch and there is a magical subject, so there will be a place where she can learn all these things. She looked at the three. They did not seem like lunatics. The little boy smiled at her.

“Hermione we have come here to tell you about your magical status and to ask you if you are being have been treated properly since your accidental magic,” Marvolo asked her.

“Of course I am treated properly. What do you mean by that?” Her parents loved her.

“Child, please do not be angry but many times non-magical folks do try to harm what they do not understand. We check this with all muggleborns if in case they would like to live with a magical family in case they are not treated properly by their own family.”

“Muggleborns? What is that?”

Sirius knew this girl would want all the information she could get.

“Hermione your parents are non-magical. They are called muggles in our world. Therefore, you child are a muggleborn.”

“So if a child is being harmed for being magical by their families then you place them with a
magical family?"

The two adults nodded.

“So you are the magical social service! That is amazing. So that means you people have a government and schools and all those things?”

Marvolo nodded and said: “We have come here to inform you that you have been accepted at ‘Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’. It is a boarding school in Scotland. You will be joining when you turn eleven.”

“If Hermione has been invited to your school when she is eleven then why have you come today? Please take this as an insult; we are glad you came so that we could understand things better. But why now?” Edmund asked. His wife and daughter both agreed.

Sirius spoke this time: “Since Hermione would join us in a few years we thought she would like to understand our world. It is a huge cultural shock for a muggleborn child when they directly come to Hogwarts without much knowledge about our world. Also if the child is being harmed for being magical we can take immediate action to protect the said child.”

“That seems reasonable,” Sophie said as she looked at her Hermione. She could seem the eagerness to learn and understand and belong in this new world.

Marvolo gave her a few books on Wizarding society and Wizarding culture. One of the books was on the ordinariness of same-sex families in their world and there was one about the house elves. He also gave her some elementary books on the subjects studied at Hogwarts, a copy of ‘Lies and Life of Albus Dumbledore’ and of course, Hogwarts: A History. He told Hermione these books would be give her good idea and explain lot of questions about their world.

The trio were about to take their leave when Hermione asked how could she contact them. ‘Could she send them a letter or something?’

This time it was Harry that spoke.

“We have the owl-post and the floo-calling system. You can buy an owl from Diagon Alley which is near Charing Cross Station. The Floo will be installed at your fireplace but that is done only after
you get your Hogwarts Letter. One of these books explains what Floo means. But you can call our home number for now till you get your owl.”

He gave her the telephone number at the Grimmauld Place.

Marvolo told the Grangers that a standard spell has been performed on them; ‘it is performed on the families of the muggleborns for the secrecy of the wizarding world'. They would not be able to talk or hint about this hidden world with any muggles relations or friends. He assured them that it a minor spell and it shall not affect them or their lives in any harmful manner. ‘It is done for the safety of the wizarding world.’

The parents understood the necessity for confidentiality. Marvolo smiled at the family and said one of them would come over to give Hermione her letter in a few years. The girl smiled broadly and hugged the books given to her.

Yes, sometimes an early education is exceedingly constructive.

-x-

A/N: Hermione, well, I kind of like her character. Since she was asked to 'keep an eye on Harry' by Dumbledore during the 4th year, I think I can get her a better deal than the jealous, insensitive moron and the obsessed fan-girl.
Ronald and Ginevra had been living with their Aunt Muriel for six years after their mummy was sent to jail. Their daddy had sent them to live their mother’s aunt. First Ginny detested Daddy. She detested that she had to sit with mind-healers and talk about what mummy had said. The healers kept saying that what mummy said was not true. They said her fairy tales books had lied. ‘They did not know what they were saying’, Ginny was sure. Mummy had promised her Harry Potter was meant for her. Even after Mummy was back from prison she said the same.

They said Azkaban changes people but Mummy had not. In fact now mummy said she should become very good friends with Harry for then only can she get the pretty dresses and presents. Mummy would read her the stories of Harry Potter rescuing their world from the evil You-Know-Who and bad Slytherins. Her mummy said the Prophet was lying about Dumbledore being a bad man; mummy had said it was a lie that Dumbledore had killed her Uncle Fabian and Uncle Gideon. She said it was just a scam, mummy said You-Know-Who is not dead and that he would be back. She was told by mummy to rescue Harry from the bad Malfoys and become friends with Harry.

Ginny detested Daddy for trying to tell her mummy was wrong. She had told Daddy she wanted to live with mummy and Aunt Muriel and Ron. She did not like her other brothers. They would always tell things about bad Dumbledore like those Mind-Healers. Mummy had said her daddy and other brothers had gone dark because they support the wicked Malfoy man.

Ronald often suspected mummy had gone nutters after she was back last year. She would talk to herself while she was cleaning the dishes. He wanted to go back to daddy after he had come to live with Aunt Muriel, but all his brothers at the Burrow were always talking about the cool things they did.

Bill was already working for those nasty goblins and Aunt Muriel said Bill was arrogant now that he had more money than them. Ron agreed, Bill was always telling him what to do. Charlie had
just left for Romania to study dragons. Aunt Muriel said they were dangerous and Charlie was just trying to show-off that he was better and braver than others. ‘Bill and Charlie are bragging for they were Prefects, Head Boy and quidditch captain – just like Percy who has become a Prefect’, Ron thought as he vowed to prove them wrong by becoming best mates with the Boy-Who-Lived. He would help Harry Potter defeat You-know-who and then he will become famous and rich like that little shrimp.

Ronald did want to believe Daddy that mummy was lying but she did not lie to them. He knew she had done nothing wrong when she was teaching them about the boy-who-lived. She said he could become legendary as the best friend of Harry Potter. She said Harry needed to be rescued from the Dark Families like Blacks and Malfoys and those blood-traitors Longbottoms. He knew she was right but still those bad Ministry people had taken mummy away.

He knew he will do what mummy says for daddy and his brothers have gone dark. He had heard Bill saying ‘Mr. Malfoy is doing good things’ and daddy and Charlie and Percy and even the twins had agreed.

Arthur Weasley was tired. He was exhausted. He felt guilty for abandoning Ron and Ginny. But he felt a lot of pressure from his colleagues and Rita at that time. He had to save his sons from the shame that had fallen on the family because of Molly’s foolishness.

The boys had tried to talk him out of disowning their younger siblings but those two kids would never listen. They kept vomiting sermons on the greatness of Dumbledore and how they needed to befriend and save the boy-who-lived. He had considered obliviating them but Glenn Connolly that it could destroy their young minds.

Arthur was just tired for his former wife and his former children. Taking Amelia’s advice he tried to help Ron and Ginny understand that Dumbledore was not a good person, he tried to explain that Molly was blinded by her religious faith in the old man but those refused to believe him. His boys had tried their best to make them believe; the boys had showed Ron and Ginny all proofs but they wound not listen.

Sometimes Ron would listen but after Molly was released the boy and his sister were simply and utterly lost cases. Molly’s stay Azkaban had made her an extremist and obsessed with the greatness of Albus and her need to rescue Harry Potter from dark wizards. Arthur had tried to reason with them but they would not budge. Arthur had finally washed his hands off them and severed all ties with the three.
Muriel had decided to support her ‘poor niece and the two lovely kids’. She was going to pay for their Hogwarts tuitions by selling the goblin-made tiara which she claimed had been in her family for centuries. The goblins had happily given the gossip-loving centenarian a lot of gold for the priceless artefact.

-x-

Hermione Granger was an excited girl. In another month she would be off to Hogwarts. She had already read ‘Hogwarts: A History’ more than a dozen times. She thought she’d make a good Ravenclaw or even a good Gryffindor. She loved the subjects; she thought Ravenclaw was the House for her.

She was eager about this new world that she was going to step into. Her wand core was dragon-heartstring. The wand maker Mr. Garrick Ollivander had said this core was ‘pretty common’ when she had begged him to tell her about the core’s uniqueness. She did not like being pretty common but she knew she would show the magical people that she was just as good as they are.

She was fascinated by their customs and culture and the House Elves. She had spoken to Harry when she found out was a major celebrity-hero in the Wizarding world. But he was so nice and simple and sweet. She wanted to know if being homosexual in their world was ordinary. He had said wizards did not care who you slept with since it was your private life.

She wanted to argue with him that being homosexual was immoral and unnatural and sinful and wrong – according to what they said on the telly news. The boy said ‘God knows love not hate’ and hung up on her.

She had cried a bit that day. Harry was her first friend and she had made him angry. Her mum had explained to her that ‘in today’s world discriminating anyone for any reason is not a good thing’. Her mum made her promise to be more accepting of different people and different situations. Mum and dad both said if she had an open mind then the magical world will accept her.

Hermione had since then dutifully read the books Mr. Riddle-Gaunt had given to her. She felt she understood this new world better but she needed time. She decided she would apologise to Harry but she will befriend more muggleborns like her, like mum had suggested. Maybe with them she would feel more at home till she got used to this new culture.

-x-
Every situation has two sides to it, the good and the bad or the positive and the not-so-positive. The duality in the nature of people, gifts, positions and events is the Law of Nature. It is up to the individual to decide which side he or she wants to embrace.

There are people like Alice Longbottom who are all for the positives. Alice was happy to be with her sons and friends, both old and new, and she was grateful to Harry for changing things radically. Then there people like her husband Frank who are afraid of what the negatives may bring. He was happy to be with his family but he feared the consequences and the unknown of this new time-line. Everything was unpredictable now. Frank feared the variable nature of people since the truth about Albus’ actions had hit him.

And finally there are people like Augusta who choose to embrace both the sides. She had her entire family with her. She had her children and ‘grandchildren’ and friends like Milli, Amelia, Minerva, Batty Bagshot, Lucius and Narcissa, Xeno and his wife, Sirius and Marvolo and Remus. She was thankful for Rita as well, the catty journalist was difficult to dislike at times. She did worry about the future of this new time-line but she cared less now for her Alice and Frank were back and that ‘dirty old liar’ was reduced to nothing.

Severus Snape, like Alice, had decided to look at the positives for they fulfilled one of his most intense desires. He was finally free to choose for himself. He was free from the Headmaster; he was free from the Dark Mark and he was somewhat free from the guilt. He was a free man. Most importantly, he was unshackled from the ‘bunch of dunderheads’1. The youngest Potions Master in a century loved potions but did not like teaching a group of children who had no aptitude or desire to learn. Albus had forced him to teach at Hogwarts for his ‘own safety’ but now he could do whatever he wanted. He could have a life beyond stuck-up children who thought they were too good to learn ‘the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses...’1.

Severus did teach his godson, the Lovegood girl, Amelia’s niece, that Hannah girl, the Greengrass sisters, the Zabini boy, Nott’s kid Theo, Alice’s kid and his favourite student, Lily’s son. Harry had Lily’s passion to learn which made him like the child even more. On Harry’s request he agreed to teach the Diggory boy and the Weasley troublemakers. Granted the twins were brilliant but they reminded him of the Marauders.

He was well-paid by the families of the younger children for the private lessons. He was finally able to work on his research. He worked as a freelance potions master for the Ministry and often went to Hogwarts as a visiting faculty on Horace Slughorn’s request.

Horace had agreed to join Hogwarts again now that he was assured that Voldemort is dead. Amelia Bones, Millicent Bagnold and Lucius Malfoy had to beg the man to return to Hogwarts. Lucius showed the lack of the Dark Mark on his arm. Marvolo gave him his word he did not have any Horcrux. Horace believed his former pupil because of Fawkes. He was aware a phoenix does not
bond with a person of ill-intent. It was bound to Albus by force and now Fawkes was back to his original master. The Slytherin House was reunited with its former Housemaster and the Slug Club was re-initiated.

Minerva McGonagall was now the Headmistress of Hogwarts. She did guide the O.W.Ls and N.E.W.Ts students if they needed extra guidance. Her replacement as the Transfiguration Professor and Head of Gryffindor House was Sirius Black. She had considered Sirius and James her star pupils. They had managed to become animagus when they were teenagers, which certified their proficiency at the craft. Sirius had completed his Mastery in the subject after he was done with his therapy sessions in 1987. His cousin Andromeda took over his duties as a member of the Wizengamot during his time at Hogwarts. She consulted with him about it on regular basis.

Professor Sprout, Head of Hufflepuff House, was elected as the Deputy Headmistress. Professor Flitwick and Professor Slughorn were happy being Heads of their respective Houses and enjoyed teaching without Dumbledore poking his nose in their job. The cursed position of Defence against Dark Arts was now firmly held by the resident werewolf, Remus Lupin, for over four years.

Professor Lupin now did not have to worry about the full moon since he could transform at will and on those nights he ran in the Forbidden Forest to ease the parents’ and the Ministry’s mind. After his acceptance of his wolf, Remus had changed. He was stronger, more peaceful and very handsome according to the female population of the school. Because of Moony and Remus’ peaceful co-existence he was seen as a perceptive teacher, with an uncanny ability to guess the thoughts of those around him. He was considered to be a very intelligent, calm, tolerant, fair-minded, gentle and good-natured professor with an excellent sense of humour by all his students.

The teachers loved the man for his active role against bullying in the school. The Board of Governors loved the man for his exceptional report card which was always between Outstanding to Acceptable. They loved the man for since his joining not a single student had failed in the subject.

- Marvolo Riddle-Gaunt, now popularly known as Lord Slytherin, was first a Junior Minister in the newly created Magical Orphans and Muggleborn Relations Department (M.O.M.R). His job was to integrate Magical orphans living in the muggle orphanages back into the wizarding world as soon as they performed accidental magic; in view of the fact that it was the only way to find them. His job also included meeting muggleborns and their families to analyse their living situations and introducing them to the magical world at an early age.

Lord Slytherin, a vastly wealthy man because of his muggle family and Slytherins vaults at Gringotts, was promoted to the post of Adviser to the Minister of Magic and Messenger to the Muggle Prime Minister after Lord Malfoy was elected in 1990. He also served as the Head of the
M.O.M.R Department since the promotion.

Lucius Malfoy had become an extremely popular politician after his heroic rescue of young Harry Potter and his subsequent efforts to unmask Albus Dumbledore’s crimes. After Millicent Bagnold’s retirement in 1990, Lord Malfoy was unanimously voted as the Minister of Magic. He took an Oath on his Magic to work for the betterment of the Magical population and magical children irrespective of their bloodlines.

Both Marvolo and Lucius had many more positives and hardly any negatives in this changed timeline. Marvolo was in a relationship of sorts with Sirius Black since Sirius and he were both the adoptive parents of Harry Potter-Black-Riddle. Harry grumbled about having so many names. Sirius had suggested that he and Neville have at least four children so that each of them could inherit one of the last names. Harry chose to remain Harry James Potter till time situation demands any change.

Now, Marvolo proudly wore his ancestor’s Locket and had gifted his formally adopted son the Ring which the child was oddly fascinated with. Harry and he had a heated discussion about the remaining objects. Marvolo wanted to keep them, ‘founders’ keepers, losers’ weepers’. But Harry strongly advocated returning them to the Heirs and Heiresses of the founders. Finally after days of arguing it was decided that the objects would be returned when the rightful owners when they are of age. The owners would have to swear on their life to pass them only to their heirs after the heir/heiress had taken a similar oath.

Hence after the potential Heirs of the Founders had taken the Ancestry Potion, it was confirmed that Luna was the Heiress of Rowena Ravenclaw and while Cedric Diggory was the direct descendant of Helga Hufflepuff. Harry knew that the boy valued hard work, patience, loyalty, and fair play – the four qualities of Helga herself. Like his ancestor, Cedric was impartial, modest about his accomplishments and he was cheerful and had a friendly demeanour. Neville had an interestingly indirect but equal ancestry of Hufflepuff and Gryffindor blood. Cedric and Neville had become good friends after this discovery.

Harry had come from a direct line of Slytherin and Gryffindor; Lily was not a Muggleborn but she came from a line of Squibs originating from Morfin Gaunt, maybe the crazy man did have an illicit liaison in his youth. Harry was directly related to the Peverell line as well. This revealed why Harry never lost his Parseltongue abilities back then. He was the Heir of Slytherin and Gryffindor and perhaps the wealthiest wizard of Europe!

Luna no longer needed to miss a year at school for her mother was alive this time. So she would be joining her three best friends at Hogwarts this year. She had asked Harry when she could run in the
garden again. Harry knew it was time for his friends to gain what was theirs as decided back then.

After many debates with the elders that included Frank and Alice, Remus, Sirius and Marvolo, Xeno, Lucius and Narcissa, Augusta and Severus – it was decided that Luna, Draco and Neville would be allowed to acquire their learnt talents and fully grown magical core from the Cube Memories. Each of them agreed that they would be allowed to do so after all of them turned eleven which was after July 31st.

Draco was really excited, it was Harry’s birthday.

They had a simple family dinner and cake as Harry had wished for. Everyone had come. Aunt Bella, Uncle Rudo and Uncle Rabastan, Aunt Andy and Uncle Ted and Cousin Dora, Mr. Lupin, Uncle Sirius and Uncle Marvolo and Severus and Neville’s family and Luna’s family. It was wonderful he thought.

He was really happy for he had bought his wand with along with his friends. His wand had a unicorn hair and he was getting a special gift from Harry. Luna had said so while she was reading to Dobby and made a new little vest for the elf. Draco seldom understood his favourite friend’s friendship with the elf. He did like the creature but Luna adored the little elf. She would sit with the elf when he ate, she would play with him and even ask him to tell her stories of the elves. Luna was his favourite person apart from his Mum, Father, Harry, Neville, Uncle Sirius, Uncle Severus, Cousin Dora and Uncle Marvolo and Aunt Alice. He was really afraid of Neville’s Gran after she had spanked him for being rude to Mr. Lupin.

His father had asked him to dip his head into a bowl that contained silver fluid. As he did so, Draco saw himself meeting Harry at Madam Malkins, he saw himself being rude to the half-giant who now works at Hogwarts. Draco wondered why he was rude to Mr. Hagrid. He liked the big man; he did not like his rock cakes.

As memories worth years were seen, Draco had realised what was going on after had reached the time when he was forced to take the Dark Mark. He saw fear in his own eyes. He saw his shaking hands as he stood with his wand pointed at that old liar, he saw his godfather killing that man and he saw Aunt Bella killing Dobby. The eleven year old started crying then. He did not know he was fond of the little fella.
He saw the Fiendfyre started by Crabbe and he saw the fire consuming the boy. He saw Harry testify for him and his family at the Wizengamot. He saw the day when Harry had come to his family for help on the advice of Uncle Severus’ ghost. He saw the training he had received from that day onwards. And he saw the most important part. He saw his affections for Luna.

As Draco stepped out of the Pensive, he could help but burst into tears. His Mummy and Daddy hugged him close to them. He was afraid of what had happened. He was feeling oddly energised. He realised his abilities were back and so was his core. He saw his past immature self and he remembered the day since he had met Harry and his friends for the first time after the Ritual. He had real friends. He had Harry, Neville, Blaise, Theodore and he had Luna. Draco’s thoughts stopped when he saw Neville in another corner of the room.

Neville was in a similar state but he did not have regrets. He was ecstatic. His Harry had done it. The plan had succeeded. His parents were back. His Gran was proud of him. Harry was happy and safe. Voldemort was vanquished and Marvolo had returned. Professor Snape was alive and kicking. Fred, Remus, Dora and even Cedric – all were alive. The meddling fool and the banshee were gone. The Know-it-all, the jealous oaf and that mad fan girl were far away from his Harry.

The Longbottom heir felt strong and powerful and content and very eager for the future. He could not wait to properly enjoy his time at Hogwarts with his best friends and his Harry.

Luna felt satisfied for she was with friends and family. She was itching to roam the gardens in animagus form again.

The four children promised not to show off their knowledge, power or skills for the sake of it. They were told not to hide it either. If anyone asked how they knew all that they knew they would have to say they were tutored as kids. It was Augusta’s idea to let the children use their abilities instead of hiding them.

During Harry’s birthday party, he was given the Oculus Potion which had a drop of Fawkes’ tears. Harry would never need to wear glasses. Harry was glad to gotten rid of the glasses. It was stupid to wait so long for the potion but Severus told him the potion could be taken only after the age of eleven.

Later that night four children had decided to meet in Harry’s room to check their various forms. Harry turned into a phoenix. He was named Vulcan. Luna turned into a hare. She insisted on the obvious name Ginger. Draco changed into a ferret much to his embarrassment. Luna called him
Casper. Neville changed into a chocolate coloured Labrador retriever. Harry named him Noel. As the four kids changed back into their human forms, Harry said he had a confession.

“The Phoenix is my second form. I was able to change into another animal but my mum’s spirit had kind of insisted on trying for another form. She thought I may be able to achieve to different forms. I had changed into this one right after Neville had discovered his. But this form is a bit embarrassing.”

Draco snorted, “Nothing could be more humiliating than a ferret!”

Luna looked at Draco with her first ever irate look. She chastised both the boys and told Draco he should be proud to be an animagus instead of wanting a ‘cooler inner animal.’ Draco realised he was just as whipped as his father and he was only eleven!

Neville touched Harry’s hand and encouraged him to change. Harry focused on this core and he began to change into a little dark skinned, green-eyed Labrador puppy. Draco could not stop himself and he burst into a hysterical fit of laughter. Luna smiled at Draco. She liked this boy who readily displayed his emotions in front of his friends. He could be an ‘Ice Price’ but he was her Prince. She knew she will wait for a few more years till the time was right.

Neville simply picked up the puppy-Harry and scratched his ear. He said he’d call this form Hansel. The puppy mewed. Luna rubbed Harry’s coat and said she likes this form a lot. Draco said he could play fetch with two dogs and a puppy! Harry changed back and sulked and pouted till the other three made him feel better about having two forms. Harry loved his friends.

Ginger, Casper, Noel and Hansel were already true friends and as far as Vulcan was concerned, that would be their own secret.

-x-


A/N: Next chapter - Epilogue
21. Sorting/Epilogue:

It was a few days before the re-opening of the School that Marvolo and Harry had gone to Hogwarts to meet the Headmistress. They wanted to talk about the broken Vanishing Cabinet and the Chamber of Secrets. Minerva had paled. The Chamber of Secrets was legend!

Lord Slytherin gave her the possession of the Cabinet and let her decide its fate. She decided to let the two have it on the condition to never let it return to Hogwarts. Harry was delighted. Now they could travel from Grimmauld Place to Longbottom Manor without the horrible floo.

Minerva was taken to the Chambers of Secret by the father-son duo. The Beast of Slytherin was a Basilisk named Ares! The King of Snakes made a promise to protect the school and all its students, without exceptions. Ares promised to keep his eyes shut while in presence of all students and teachers. It promised the Headmistress to never harm any students. She nervously allowed the Snake to go to the Forbidden Forest to hunt, only during the night. The Snake said he was kept in the school by Salazar Slytherin to protect the students if the school was attacked. She knew a Basilisk was the best protection the school could get. She knew it would be safe; Ares had made an Unbreakable Vow.

Lord Slytherin made her take a vow of secrecy to protect Ares. A similar vow would have to be taken by the successive Headmasters/Headmistresses of Hogwarts.

Harry had collected the shed snakeskin and a few vials of Ares’ venom while Marvolo made copies of his ancestor’s books – all written in Parseltongue. He got two sets; one for the vault at Gringotts and for the Black Library where he had kept his books. He promised Minerva a book on Transfigurations after he had translated one for her.

-x-

September 1st, 1991

The ride on the Hogwarts Express was familiar yet totally different. Harry had met the twins and made a deal that won them over. He offered them five hundred galleons for a certain map that was in their possession. The twins had already made a replica with the help of a certain Pretty-Boy they had met during their private lessons with Snape. They accepted the deal with little green-eyed boy.
Harry was glad the twins got along with Cedric.

This time Harry was not alone in his compartment. He accompanied by best friends and their familiars. Hedwig was reunited with Harry and the boy had silently wept when she flew on his shoulder and nipped on his ear. He had missed his ‘best girl’. His friends knew Harry had missed the Snowy Owl. Neville was gifted a Black Owl by Sirius on his birthday. The owl was named Hercules. Luna had purchased a half-Kneazle which she had lovingly named Juliet. Draco was a bit terrified of that very big cat who loved to sit on his lap. He had chosen not to buy an owl for most of his friends had one which he could borrow and he already had a puppy and dog; who needs pets?

They wanted to buy something off the Trolley but Dobby had dotingly made an entire meal for all of them. None of them had the heart to let the elf’s efforts go to waste. They had to called Susan, Hannah, Daphne, Blaise and Theodore to finish off the vast meal.

Harry was waiting for a bushy-haired girl to make an appearance. She did appear with a group of kids that he assumed were all Ravenclaws. He saw the Patil twins, Lisa Turpin, Cho Chang, Terry Boot and Michael Corner. It seemed like this time Hermione had chosen to associate with the Ravens. She asked if she could talk to him for a moment.

As they stepped out she apologized for what she had said about homosexual people. She said her mum had advised her not force her ideologies on others. The girl said, “To each his own, right? I mean maybe I should be more open-minded. Mum said that as well.”

Harry smiled at the girl. He had always liked her but it was her rude confession that had broken their friendship irrevocably. He thought he could be friendly with her but he could not be friends with her. Hermione had similar thoughts. She liked this boy but she knew their thinking was too different, like chalk and cheese. May be they could friendly and nice to one another. She had already made some really nice friends who were interested in studying like her. She liked the twins and Lisa and Terry and Cho; all of them were like her.

The two were discussing which house they would like to be in. Hermione was determined to be in Ravenclaw while Harry said did not mind any of the houses. But he did confess because of his dads he was a bit partial towards Gryffindor and Slytherin. Just as he uttered the name of the Slytherin House, they heard a loud whining voice behind them.

“So the great little Harry Potter has gone Dark? I knew you’d turn into a slimy snake since you live with those Dark Families and Blood traitors.”

It was the Harry’s least favourite redhead. Ronald had red hair but it not was the characteristic
Weasley red. He angrily looked at Harry who dressed in expensive looking red robes with a green border. He scowled at the boy’s dragon hide boots and wand holster. This was not fair, he thought.

Harry decided to play dumb to see the redhead’s reaction. It was obvious the boy was jealous already.

“Excuse me? Do I know you?”

Ron was angry now. How dare the little shrimp just look at him like he was better than everyone else?

“You have gone dark. Haven’t you? Being with those rich snobs has turned you against us.”

Hermione incredulously looked this redheaded boy who had dirt on his nose. The boy was obviously resentful of Harry. But what on earth was he grumbling about Harry Potter turning Dark, turning into a slimy snake since he lived with those Dark Families and Blood traitors and snobs? She had to retaliate for Harry was stuck on his spot.

“Slimy snakes? Snakes are not slimy. Do you even know what you are talking about?”

Ron looked this bucktoothed bushy haired girl. She looked like his know-it-all brother Percy.

“Yes, Snakes are slimy and Slytherins are evil. All bad and Dark Wizards are from that house. And now even our Saviour is one of them! The boy-who-lived is supposed to be a noble and brave Gryffindor.”

“Aren’t you being bit too preposterous? Slytherins being evil! These are just Houses in a school. An eleven year old, tiny boy is your Saviour! Grow a pair. And if you do want to make accusations, then from what I have read – that rat-man Pettigrew was a Gryffindor. What do you have to say about that? Even we muggleborns are aware of this.”

“You stay out this Know-it-all muggleborn. Slytherins are evil. My mum said so. Even Dumbledore had said so. You people just run into our world and try to make us look stupid.”
Hermione had had enough of this irrational idiot. She knew she had to shut him up.

“Well for someone so against ‘Dark, Evil Slytherins,’ you sure are a mighty prejudiced fella. And may I add I saw the way you looked at Harry. I see you are jealous of his clothes! Now isn’t that ridiculous!”

Ron was already halfway through saying, “MudBl-”, when the doors of the compartments nearby opened and all kids had their wands pointed at him. He saw a blond fellow with a pointy nose with a sneer on his face with a shiny new wand in his hand. He knew this was the Minister’s kid.

“Would you like to complete the word?”

Ron knew the voice. It was familiar and the one he was not happy to hear. He turned towards the voice. It was Percy. Percy was a Prefect. Damn.

Percy dragged his former brother away from the angry students gathered. He lectured Ronald about being a ginormous idiot even before he had reached the school.

As the other students had begun dispersing, the Weasley twins apologised to Hermione for Ron’s inappropriate and rude behaviour. The girl simply shrugged and said the ‘that boy’s the biggest imbecile she’s ever seen’. She left with her friends as did Susan, Hannah, Blaise and Theo along with the twins. The twins said sorry to Harry and left.

Meanwhile, Harry was still silent. He looked real upset. Luna took his hand and led him into the compartment. Neville gently rubbed his back while thinking ‘so now the Longbottoms are blood traitors’. Draco was furious and a bit revolted. Was he such a moron the last time?

All four of them were silent for a few minutes. Luna was staring at the passing meadows and while she thought of what ought to be done. She knew what was needed but she did not want to be so harsh. Even Harry was against this one but both Draco and Neville had said that things would boil down to this.

She looked at Harry and simply said: “It is time to acknowledge and demand the chosen payment for the Life Debts.”

Harry nodded. He wanted to avoid the whole issue of the Life Debts. He had hoped like Hermione, Ron would have changed. But he knew Molly and Dumbledore had penetrated Ron and Ginny’s mind. He knew he had to demand all the debts’ payment.
Neville hugged Harry and assured him he is not a bad person. Draco just nodded.

Harry pulled out his Holly and Phoenix Feather wand.

“I, Harry James Potter-Black-Riddle acknowledge the Life Debt placed on Hermione Jean Granger. I demand she never harbour or participate in any plot against me or the ones I call beloved, friends and family; should she chose that path, she would feel being extremely dim-witted till she rectifies her intents and ploys. So Mote Be It.”

A golden mist left Harry’s wand and flew into Hermione Granger’s heart even before anyone could notice. Luna assured him he was just being on the safer side with Hermione and this payment was neither harmful nor humiliating. It would merely work in Hermione’s head.

Harry had another two debts.

Ronald would feel the extreme necessity to strip all his clothing and sing bawdy songs of eternal lust for Dolorous Umbridge and Dumbledore at places with more than three people every time he thought, planned or participated in anything against Harry or his friends and family till he confessed his intents to every person within the premises.

Ginevra on the other hand shall never want to associate with Harry or any of his friends or family; should she even attempt to disregard this, she would shamelessly boast about her each and every physical urges and conquests (from the past and the present) to every person present till she terminated the association.

By the time he was done, Draco was giggling like school girl and Luna was glad to have chosen these payments for these would condition all three of them to never want to harm Harry. Neville thought their punishments were absurd but he knew Harry would not have stooped any lower than this.

The quartet had changed into their robes and were standing at Hogsmeade station platform when they heard Katie Bell and Angelina Johnson whispering about a redhead boy ‘singing about Umbridge’s sexy pink clothes and her arousing voice while he stripped into his tighty-whities’. The two girls giggled when Lee Jordan told them that the boy stopped his silly performance after he had confessed to Percy and all others that he wanted to push the ‘pointy-faced Malfoy’ into the lake.

Neville could not restrain himself. This was funny. ‘May be Harry had chosen some real cold humiliations’, he thought. He heard a familiar voice: ‘Firs' years! Firs' years over here! All right
Hagrid's big hairy face beamed over the sea of heads as he glanced at the four children who visited him very often. He was hurt by all the revelations of Dumbledore but after seeing Harry’s injuries he had lost all his faith in the former Headmaster. Hagrid had liked Minister Malfoy after he had saved Harry but the half-giant had burst into tears when Lucius had proved in the Wizengamot that Hagrid was innocent when he was expelled back in the 1940s. Now, Hagrid had nice long Oak wand with a drop of Aragog, the Acromantula’s venom. He was requested to continue working as the Keeper of Keys and Grounds of Hogwarts after he was given a hefty compensation. Hagrid loved his job and he loved the children.

“C'mon, follow me -- any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now! Firs' years follow me!”

Slipping and stumbling, the First Years followed Hagrid down what seemed to be a steep, narrow path. It was so dark on either side of them that Neville thought there must be thick trees there. Nobody spoke much. Ron sniffed once or twice.

“Ye' all get yer firs' sight o' Hogwarts in a sec,” Hagrid called over his shoulder, “jus' round this bend here.”

There was a loud “Ooooh!”

The narrow path had opened suddenly onto the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers.

"No more'n four to a boat!” Hagrid called, pointing to a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore. Neville, Harry, Draco and Luna sat together.

"Everyone in?" shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. “Right then -- FORWARD!”

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was as smooth as glass. Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. It towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood.

Just like the last time Hagrid knocked the castle door three times. As the door swung opened the
kids were greeted by a squat little witch with short, grey, wavy hair. Neville smiled at his favourite professor. She had nice clean hat instead of her patched and battered hat.

“The firs' years, Professor Sprout,” said Hagrid.

“Thank you, Hagrid. I will take them from here.”

Like always, Professor Sprout had a smile on her face as she welcomed and introduced the students. Like McGonagall, Sprout said the exact words as if it was well rehearsed but she did not scare the new students.

“Welcome to Hogwarts,” she said. “The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses... The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards...I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours...The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I suggest you all smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting.”

Her eyes lingered for a moment on Ron's smudged nose. Harry nervously tried to flatten his hair and Draco grinned at his own sleek appearance. Neville could not believe but he was happy to be back. Luna had a dreamy look on face. Yes, Loony Lovegood was back. Neville had missed this quirky side of hers.

“I shall return when we are ready for you,” said Professor Sprout.

It was like the last time. The ghosts appeared. The proud Sir Nicholas, the cheerful Fat Friar, the aloof yet observant Grey Lady who smiled at Luna and the brooding Bloody Baron – all of them flew with the other ghosts and Peeves. Professor Sprout was back. She asked the student to follow her in a line.

The four friends marvelled at the splendid place. The same thousands and thousands of candles were floating in midair over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting. At the top of the hall was another long table where the teachers were sitting. They saw Sirius grinning, Remus assessing the crowd, Horace looking for new recruits for the Slug-Club, Flitwick was looking for potential Ravens and Headmistress McGonagall was scrutinising them with a small smile.

Harry heard Hermione whisper, “It’s bewitched to look like the sky outside. I read about it in
Hogwarts: A History.” Padma Patil, the listener of that anecdote simply said, “I know, I read as well.”

He softly told Neville, “Somethings never change,” when he heard Draco grumbling about the patched and frayed and extremely dirty Sorting Hat spoiling his nicely styled hair.

The Hat burst into a familiar song:

"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,  
But don't judge on what you see,  
I'll eat myself if you can find  
A smarter hat than me.  
You can keep your bowlers black,  
Your top hats sleek and tall,  
For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat  
And I can cap them all.  
There's nothing hidden in your head  
The Sorting Hat can't see,  
So try me on and I will tell you  
Where you ought to be.  
You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart;  
You might belong in Hufflepuff,  
Where they are just and loyal,  
Those patient Hufflepuffis are true  
And unafraid of toil;  
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,  
if you've a ready mind,  
Where those of wit and learning,  
Will always find their kind;  
Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You'll make your real friends,  
Those cunning folk use any means  
To achieve their ends.  
So put me on! Don't be afraid!  
And don't get in a flap!  
You're in safe hands (though I have none)  
For I'm a Thinking Cap!"

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. It bowed to each of the four tables and then became quite still again.

Professor Sprout read their names aloud. Hannah and Susan promptly joined the Hufflepuff table. Terry was sent to Ravenclaw and Lavender ran to the Gryffindor table. Fred and George were still loud. Millicent Bulstrode sat on the Slytherin table. Michael was a Ravenclaw. Justin Finch-Fletchley became a Hufflepuff. Seamus was a Gryffindor. Anthony Goldstein joined the Ravens
with Hermione. She happily ran to sit next to Terry. Daphne was seated far away from Crabbe and Goyle on the Slytherin table. Neville was called next. Harry prayed for them to remain together.

As Neville put on the Hat, he heard a small voice. “Do lower your shields dear one.”

Neville obeyed the Hat and kept saying Gryffindor. He wanted to be Harry.

“Aha, the Helga and Godric’s indirect Heir. This must be my lucky day. So you favour Godric? No, you are just as unafraid of hard work and are fair like Helga herself but you are loyal to those whom you deem worthy. Young Heir you certainly are one of a kind to have both – the just Helga and the brave Godric. Better be – GRYFFINDOR.”

Neville smiled and confidently walked towards table. He sat next to Fred.

Luna was sent to her ancestor’s House after the Hat had welcomed her. Draco was next to Luna as he had requested, err begged the Hat. The boy was chanting ‘Ravenclaw, Ravenclaw, Ravenclaw’ since he walked towards Hat. It had heard his mental voice. The Hat had taken a minute to listen to his dedication. The professors were stunned. A Malfoy not in Slytherin! That was almost unheard of.

Luna was glad to have Draco around. He was smart and wise when he wanted to be. Theodore had been sent to the House of Snakes with Pansy Parkinson. The Patil twins were not split this time. Both the girls were seated next to Lavender. May be Hermione had managed to annoy Padma like Draco had done to Harry the previous time. Anyways the Gryffindors did need rational smart minds. Finally, Harry was called.

People gawked at him and stared but not as much as last time. People had seen him before thanks to Rita.

The Hat thought he was difficult for the blood of Godric and Salazar was running through his veins. The Hat wanted to send him to Slytherin since he was also the Magical Heir of Marvolo but Harry begged him to let him be with Neville. The Hat laughed and muttered ‘friendship and love – definitely Godric’s Heir’.

“GRYFFINDOR”

Percy shook hands with him and the twins yelled ‘We got Potter.’ Harry saw Cedric was smiling at their antics. Dean made it to Gryffindor and Lisa Turpin was seated next to Hermione. It was Ron’s turn.
The redhead sat with the Hat on his head.

“A disowned Weasley! Very devious and sly! Better be – SLYTHERIN.”

The announcement was sort of anticlimactic. None of the students clapped. The Snakes were not happy and the Gryffindors took sigh of relief. The twins were sad and glad since Ron had refused to listen to them or anyone; the boy was totally a mummy’s boy. After the embarrassing song and stripping in the train, Percy was glad not have his former brother with him. Meanwhile Ron simply refused to sit with the ‘Evil Slimy Snakes and Dark Wizards’. He demanded a re-sorting which was refused. He was told by an angry Professor Sprout to either accept the Hat’s decision or leave the castle. Pomona was furious at this boy to ‘insult the Hat and the prestigious Slytherin House’ like this. None of the students or teachers had ever her being angry.

The most relieved person was Draco Malfoy. ‘Had the Hat sent him to Slytherin with Weasel?’ the blond aristocrat shuddered at the thought. Luna giggled at his antics.

Blaise was sent next to Draco who let out a breath of relief. He had both Luna and Blaise. Harry had Neville and the twins. Susan had Hannah and even Cedric. Theo had Daphne, Thank Lord!

Minerva was observing all her students. She saw an obviously smitten Draco next to the dreamy Luna. Mr. Zabini was having an interesting conversation with Mr. Boot and Mr. Corner and Mr. Goldstein. Miss Granger was talking to Miss Turpin. Mr. Nott was chatting with Miss Greengrass and Miss Bulstrode. Miss Parkinson was enjoying her pudding while glaring at a furious Ronald who was about to start screaming but the big ones Crabbe and Goyle scared him to silence.

The Puffs were enjoying the feast. Miss Bones and Miss Abbot were talking with Mr. Finch-Fletchley. The senior students were laughing. Minerva saw Amos Diggory’s son looking the Weasley twins who were cracking some jokes to an amused audience consisting of Harry and Neville. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Finnigan were listening to Prefect Percy drone on about something totally uninteresting.

She looked at her colleagues. Pomona had taken a while to calm down. The happy woman was not easy to anger. Ronald was treading eggshells as far she was concerned. Pomona smiled at her and looked at her Puffs. Sirius was happy to have his son with him and Remus was happy to have his Godson around for the next seven years. Filius was looking forward to have a Malfoy and a Zabini
in his house. He knew the boys were bright. Severus had told them. Horace was delighted to have young Nott and Greengrass in his House but he was upset to have a student that had insulted the Slytherin House in a fashion like this.

Minerva was happy. She was delighted. Things had worked out amazingly. She had an ancient Guardian in the belly of her School. Her brilliant students were back. Her all children had received justice and her grandkids were back.

She had seen the Cube Memories in 1985 when she was summoned at the Ministry. After all, it was Pomona, Poppy, Filius, Horace and she that had trained her kids along with Lucius, Cissy, Augusta, Severus and Lily.
Four complete animagus’ with perfect skills in Duelling, Herbology, Potions and Healing, Transfiguration, Charms, Mind Arts, Non-Verbal and Wandless Magic, Magic Repair, Dark Arts and Defence. The kids were prepared for anything. All this within five years was an amazing feat. She was proud of all four of them. Each of them had lived up and grew beyond their potential. They had had enough time till the Ritual and they had used it to their advantage.

The Phoenix was Lily’s idea. ‘Vulcan’ was a perfect addition to their group. All but the Magical animagus were registered by Lucius in a rather classified manner after he was made Minister.

She had been there all along with Augusta and Xeno, Lucius and Cissy and the ghosts of Lily and Severus. It was Luna and she that had deciphered the Prophecy. It was their collective idea to change things so radically for none them wanted Albus to meddle any longer. It was a fluke on their part that Marvolo had chosen to let go of the Horcruxes and it was a miracle when he adopted Harry and got involved with Sirius. The Dark Mark was taken care of and Alice and Frank were back!

The Lestrange family had chosen to leave Britain to recover along with Barty. They visited for family events. Moody had washed his hands off Albus right from the beginning and had chosen to train some deserving Aurors like Dora. Flamel has left Harry the Philosopher’s Stone in his Will. Molly was Albus’ puppet. She has lost her influence after today’s Debt Payments as Luna had informed her. Ronald and Ginevra would be weeded out of their lives. And all this time Minerva played her role of the betrayed Deputy Headmistress for Alice and Frank, Sirius, Remus, Marvolo, Rita and the Wizarding World. Minerva did not mind or repent changing the timeline.

Albus should have listened to her when he had dumped Harry on that door step. He should have known to not meddle with a Lioness and her cubs. She smiled, ‘a mother is the most dangerous enemy to have and if there are several angry mothers; Lord save your soul!’
Yes, ‘Revenge is a dish served cold’, she thought as she ate her ice-cream.

-A/N: Many extracts have been taken from ‘Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone’ – Chapter 6.
Author's Note

Authors Note:

There will be a sequel in an Alternate Universe wherein Harry and Neville have graduated from Hogwarts with a series of Flashbacks that will include this story and the original canon.

In the sequel I want to explore their relationship with hopefully MPreg and a bit of heavy petting.

I will write after a while, and now I want to begin something new :D

Wish me luck.

J

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!