Harry Potter and the Shadowed Light

by Itshannieee

Summary

After the final battle Harry learns some unsettling truths about himself and those who he trusts the most. Forced to come to terms with the revelations, Harry decides to get even with those who've wronged him and embrace who he his by going back to when it all started.
The bonds that hold us

Grimmauld Place, 4th June 1998

Harry let out a soft groan as he stood, his body stretching in a way that made his back pop and crack in relief after sitting for so long in the same position. The book he had been reading, *Soul Magics and Bonds: The Lost Rituals*, hadn't had the answers he was looking for and he was almost at the point of losing hope that he would find any answers.

He was currently residing in the newly restored Grimmauld Place, more specifically the famous, or rather infamous, Black family library. When he had returned to the house for the first time days after the battle, Harry was surprised to see that the damage done by the war wasn't as excessive as he had imagined. Sure, it had been ransacked but most of the furniture was redeemable with a few scouring and repairing charms - and, with the help of Kreacher, the house was soon habitable. Luckily the library and a few other rooms had been spared completely thanks to the Black family’s previous paranoia: certain rooms required Black blood to open and allow people in.

Resigned that he wouldn't find what he was looking for tonight, Harry made his way to the kitchen. Kreacher popped into existence as soon as he reached his target.

"What can Kreacher do for great Master Harry?" The elf asked.

Exhausted, Harry sat down. "Can you heat me up whatever is left over? Oh, and a cup of tea, please."

Harry soon found himself smiling softly as Kreacher mumbled to himself about great masters and mighty wizards who were too stubborn. Chuckling under his breath, Harry waited for his food; he knew Kreacher would have prepared a meal for him earlier as the elf had come to recognize Harry's habit of forgetting to look after himself and had taken it upon himself to ensure his “Great Master” was properly cared for. Tucking in when the food appeared moments later, Harry thought back to what had led him here.

Ever since the final battle, when he had finally fulfilled his destiny and that damned prophecy, Harry had been feeling empty and devoid, like his life had lost its meaning. At first he put it down to survivor’s guilt, even if he did technically die. Yet, the feeling still remained, always there, subtly growing like a cancer in his mind.

In the days that followed the battle, Harry had found it hard to connect to the people around him. The few remaining Order members were all there, asking him question after question - watching him, wanting to know how he did it, and the public was the same. They all were wanting interviews with the newly dubbed saviour, the Light’s hero. Even Ron and Hermione had questioned him with something like suspicion after the battle.

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Hogwarts, 2nd May 1998

“Are you sure you're alright, mate?" Ron asked, staring at Harry intently.

"I'm fine, Ron," Harry assured firmly, tired of the questions and just wanting to go to sleep, as he looked around the destruction and carnage with sad eyes. “Maybe you should go be with your family,” he suggested gently, seeing the remaining Weasleys huddled together in their grief in a far
During this Ron and Hermione exchanged a glance that went unseen by Harry. “You know you're considered family right?” Ron asked. “Especially now.”

Harry nodded absently. “Yeah, I know,” he agreed, thinking about all the family had done for him. They had taken him in, fed him, and housed him in the summer; they had loved him like their own.

“And don’t forget about you and Ginny,” Hermione added, staring intently at the boy saviour.

Harry frowned at this slightly, thinking of his ex-girlfriend. He just didn’t feel the connection anymore, the excited nervousness in his stomach when he thought about the fiery redhead. “Me and Ginny? You know we broke up,” he said.

Ron frowned slightly before smiling. “Well yeah, but you did that for her protection! It’s obvious you love her, mate,” he said with conviction.

Hermione quickly jumped in before Harry could think. “Of course Harry, you’re perfect for each other!”

Harry shook his head slowly but didn’t say anything, and his silence was taken as agreement by them both. His two friends smiled and started to make their way towards the grieving remains of the Weasley family.

As the trio approached the crowds parted easily, people thanking Harry even in their grief.

“Oh, Harry dear!” Cried Mrs. Weasley as she pulled Harry into a tight hug.

Harry, still dazed by the recent events, felt himself stiffen at the contact. Feeling this, Mrs. Weasley let him go and looked him up and down.

“Oh look at you, are you hurt dear?” She asked, receiving a slow shake of his head from Harry.

Releasing him with a sigh Molly stepped back in time to avoid Ginny, who had launched herself at Harry and clung to him as she sobbed.

“Oh Harry, it’s so awful,” she wailed, grabbing him tightly and making Harry wince as he realised that, although he wasn’t seriously hurt, he was bruised and sore.

That’s when Harry realised who was missing. George was standing alone, well not standing, being held up by Bill and Arthur. The look on his face was void of life. Looking around with panic, Harry felt his throat tighten.

“Fred?” He asked, his voice coming out unrecognisable but still carried to those around him.

The only reply he got was a tightened grip and a fresh bout of crying. His eyes however were still locked on George, who looked as lost as he felt, like he had just lost half of his soul.

“I'm just so happy you’re alive,” Ginny said, drawing attention back to herself. “How did you survive, Harry? You were dead!” She asked, almost hysterically.

“I don’t know,” Harry said as he realised everybody had gone silent when she had spoken.

“It’s a miracle,” Ron said after the silence had grown awkward enough for even him to recognise.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed half heartedly, pulling away from Ginny to rub at his neck in a nervous
gesture. Looking around once again at the carnage, Harry closed his eyes, exhaustion making him sway slightly on his feat.

“Oh. look at you,” Molly spoke, once again pulling Harry into a hug, “you’re exhausted; we’re all exhausted. We should get out of here. There’s nothing more to be done.”

Nodding because he really wanted to leave this place, Harry barely noticed the walk to the gates or apparating away with the Weasleys.

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In the days that followed after Harry returned to the Burrow with the Weasleys, Harry found it hard to reconnect. Bill and Fleur left the day after the battle, taking with them George who they felt needed time to try and come to terms with his grief. Harry, however, barely noticed their absence as he just wasn’t there and with the amount of potions he was on from Mrs. Weasley to help him heal, he didn’t mind.

“How are you feeling harry?” Ginny asked a few days later, sitting down next to Harry in the living room. He had been alone for most of the day, simply sitting and trying to gather his thoughts.

Shrugging Harry tried to smile at her, determined to not make her grief worse. “I’ll be okay,” he said finally, not wanting to lie.

Ginny bit her lip at that, drawing Harry's attention to her mouth. He had kissed those lips countless times, yet he had no desire to do so again. He thought it strange, as he had had every intention of getting back with her after the war.

Ginny, noticing his stare, smirked internally and slowly leaned forward, pushing her full chest against Harry's firm one and brought her lips to his. The kiss did nothing for Harry who was about to pull away in apology when they got interrupted.

“Well, it’s about time!” Ron shouted as he entered the room.

“Ron!” Ginny squealed, snuggling up against Harry's chest in victory.

Harry, however, was lost in his daze. The kiss had shocked him; making him fully realise his feelings for her - the kiss had felt wrong, like kissing his sister or a friend.

“So you two finally back together, then?” Ron asked, sitting across from them with a massive smile.

“Of course,” Ginny said, not waiting or asking Harry, who was about to explain that they weren’t back together.

“Good, that's good, that's great even,” Ron said.

“What's great?” asked Hermione who entered the room then, smiling as she saw the position Harry and Ginny were in.

“Oh, I see you two are back together now. That's perfect, just in time for school to reopen in September.”

Harry, who had been lost in his thoughts, slowly blinked and was now focusing on the conversation around him. Finally he spoke up.

“School?” He asked. He wasn’t returning to school; sure he regretted missing his last year but he
couldn’t sit in a school now, not after all he had been through. He would just take his NEWTs at the ministry when it was time.

Hermione, who was now sitting with Ron, turned to look at him. “What about school, Harry?”

“I’m not going back to school,” Harry told them, surprised they thought he would want to return after everything.

“What?” screeched Ginny and Hermione simultaneously.

“But you must Harry!” Hermione added, trying to sound reasoning but coming across as pompous instead.

“Why?” Harry dully repeated. “After everything I’ve been through, I just can’t ‘Mione.”

“What about me?!” Demanded Ginny.

“What about you?” Asked Harry incredulously, confused as to what she had to do with anything.

“You’re just going to abandon me again, for an entire year?” She asked, trying to make her voice sound sad.

“What about your NEWTs, Harry? You can’t expect to get a job and provide for Ginny if you don’t have proper qualifications! You can’t expect to get a job just because you defeated Voldemort. I thought you were better than that,” Hermione said, sounding disappointed.

By this point Harry had had enough, pulling away from Ginny and standing. He looked around the room in anger and said, “I’m not going back to school and I don’t expect anything like that Hermione. I thought you knew that, knew me.”

“Oh Harry I'm sorry, it's just—”

“No!” Harry interrupted angrily, “I will take my NEWTs, but I’ll do it alone, at the ministry.”

Interrupting him again Hermione spoke, “But you can’t expect to do well then either, Harry! I mean I’m not saying you would fail but—”

“Enough!” Harry finally shouted. “It’s my decision, and I’ve made it. I'm not going back to Hogwarts in September. ”

Ron who had remained silent, finally developed a look of understanding. “You're going to become an auror instead then, right mate?”

Harry just shook his head. “No, Ron. I don’t think I even want to be an auror anymore.” He was tired, and the thought of spending his entire life fighting just didn’t appeal to him.

“But - that's what we’ve always dreamed about,” Ron said, his face becoming red.

“I'm tired Ron, I just want to take some time to myself,” Harry said, finally letting his voice calm and looked around the room, hoping they would understand.

“Oh, Harry,” Hermione said, nodding at Ginny slightly. They had been staring at each other as Ron spoke.

Ginny, who had caught Hermione's look, nodded her head. “We understand,” she said and stood before she made her way to hug Harry.
Stepping back before she could reach him, Harry ran his hand through his hair. This was the most he’d spoken since the battle and he felt exhausted now that his anger had faded.

“I’m going to go speak to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley,” he said. “I think it’s time I left.”

“You should call them mom and dad Harry,” Ginny said, before she fully took in what he had said. “Wait, what do you mean left? You can’t leave! Where would you go? You can’t want to go back to the muggles?”

Sighing again and rubbing his neck, Harry shrugged. “I just want some time alone,” he mumbled. “I think maybe I’ll go to Grimmauld—”

“But that’s not safe Harry,” Hermione said, interrupting him as she followed them into the kitchen.

“I’ll be fine,” Harry interrupted. “I’ll set up some wards or something.”

“What’s this about wards, my dear?” Mrs. Weasley asked.

“Tell him, mom!” Ginny practically shouted. “Harry wants to leave!”

Molly frowned at this. “Harry dear, why do you want to leave? Aren’t you happy here? I thought I heard that you and Ginny were back together.”

Sighing, Harry shook himself free of Ginny, who had once again attached herself to him. He said, “It’s not that, Mrs. Weasley—”

“Call me Molly dear, or mum.”

Shaking his head, Harry continued, “It’s not that. It’s just that, I think, I just need some time alone to deal with everything.” Harry shook his head as he struggled to word his need for space.

Frowning, Molly exchanged a glance with Ron and Hermione, who were standing behind Harry. “Well dear, are you sure that’s for the best? I mean, you’re still taking potions to help you recover,” she reasoned, not wanting Harry to leave.

“I’ll be fine,” Harry insisted, “I don’t need the potions anymore, I feel fine. I just really want some time to sort my head out.”

Molly frowned, “But all alone—”

“I wouldn’t be completely alone,” Harry interrupted as an idea hit him. “I would be with Kreacher.”

Upon saying his name the house elf appeared and jumped at Harry. “Master Harry where have you been?” The elf asked, clearly upset upon seeing Harry.

“Harry, how could you?!” Hermione’s indignant voice rang out, “You should release him at once - and keeping a slave I thought—!”

Kreacher froze at her words and sent Harry a horrified look, before interrupting her rant about SPEW. The house elf wailed, “No master please, Kreacher will be good!”

Harry sent Hermione a cold look that had her freezing. He knelt down to the elf to reassure him, “It’s okay Kreacher, I’m not going to send you away. I was just wondering if you’ve been back to Grimmauld Place?”

Calming down, the house elf nodded his head, his ears flying around. “Yes master, I returned there
after the big fight as I had no orders and master had vanished,’” the house elf said, sounding nervous.

“Good,” Harry again reassured the skittish elf, “that's good, Kreacher. How is the house, could I stay there?”

The house elf’s eyes grew wide at that point. “Master wants to return to master’s house?” the elf asked excitedly. Kreacher’s voice lowered and he began to mutter, “Yes, yes master should return at once. Kreacher has been busy, so busy making the house good for master but Kreacher didn’t know if master would return.”

Smiling, Harry stood up and looked around the room. “I'm going to collect my things and I'm going to Grimmauld place,” he said with a finality that had even Molly wary to argue with him.

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Grimmauld Place, 4th June 1998

In the days that followed his exit from the Burrow Harry was hounded by Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and even Mrs. Weasley. It got to the point that Harry had blocked the floo connection against them and warded the house to keep them out; he still accepted their owls, but only because he had written and asked them to allow him to have some time alone. Harry had been shocked when Kreacher told him that Harry could edit the house’s wards, he hadn’t even known he owned the house, inheriting it after Sirius’ death.

Standing now that he had finished his meal, Harry thanked Kreacher.

“I think I'm going to go visit the Burrow tomorrow,” Harry told the elf. Their letters had started to get almost demanding as they asked to see him because they were worried. Feeling bad for adding to their stress, Harry thought a visit would help reassure them he was fine.

Kreacher pulled a face at that but didn’t speak. He hated the blood traitor family and their pet mudblood for how they treated his master, but master had asked Kreacher not to speak badly about them or call them names, so he didn’t. But Kreacher knew that they were not worthy of his great master, no matter what his master said.

Just as Harry reached the kitchen door a soft knocking was heard. Turning toward the sound, Harry was surprised to see a large and rather terrifying looking eagle owl perched against the kitchen window.

Flicking his wrist so that his holly wand was in his hand, Harry opened the window with a wave of his wand. The bird swooped elegantly onto the kitchen table, its claws making a quiet click against the aged wood. Seeing as the bird was not moving, Harry approached it with caution. The wards should have blocked out anything with malicious content but Harry had no intention of becoming complacent. Moody would be proud, he thought. After running through his repertoire of detection spells, some of which he had only learnt since getting to Grimmauld, and getting nothing back, Harry carefully took the letter from the bird’s outstretched leg. If possible the owl looked at Harry with exasperation and took flight as soon as it was freed of its burden.

“Guess you’re not waiting for a reply then,” Harry mumbled under his breath before looking at the letter in his hand.

Harry noted the high quality of the envelope and was drawn in by the beautiful and elegant calligraphy on the front. Turning the envelope around, Harry was surprised to see the wax seal of Gringotts Bank. He hadn’t thought he would hear from the goblins any time soon due to the situation
with the dragon.

With a resigned sigh Harry found himself breaking the wax seal and pulling out the letter. Like the envelope, the parchment was high quality, and reading it Harry soon found himself intrigued.

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Mr. Harrison James Potter-Black

We the goblins at Gringotts Wizarding Bank require your presence due to matters of inheritance and reparations.

You should present yourself at Gringotts Wizarding Bank as soon as you're available to ensure that the situation is resolved in a timely manner.

Regards,

Gringotts Head Goblin of the London Branch, Ragnok

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“Harrison? Potter-Black?” Harry mumbled to himself in confusion before shaking his head. “Kreacher, change of plans, it seems like I'm going to Gringotts tomorrow instead.”

Diagon Alley, 5th June 1998

Making sure his glamour was in place, Harry made his way through the crowd at the Leaky Cauldron. Harry wanted to make sure he didn’t draw any attention to himself, even though he wouldn’t be recognised as Harry Potter. The glamour spell he had found in an old Black family grimoire was one of the best he had heard of, let alone performed. He had lengthened his unruly black hair to his shoulders, making it easier to hide his scar. His emerald green eyes paled to a light grey, his cheekbones and jawline sharpened, and the spell even added a few inches to his 5ft 8 frame making him 6ft. The changes were based on his own family features, making it easy to maintain.

When he arrived at the bank Harry greeted the goblin guards with a respectful nod to each of them, shocking the guards. Most wizards either ignored their presence completely or looked down on them as lesser creatures.

Walking up to the first free desk, Harry lowered the hood of his thick travelling cloak. The goblin serving him looked at Harry intently, as though he could see through the glamour, making Harry wonder about the extent of goblin magic.

“Greetings master goblin,” Harry began, “I recently received a missive from Gringotts Bank pertaining issues about my inheritance and reparations.”

The goblin stared for a moment before standing. He said, “If you would follow me, Harry Potter, Chief Ragnok would like to deal with this issue personally.”
Harry tried not to let his surprise at being recognised show, and followed the goblin as they lead him down intricate corridors further into the bank. He hoped that the goblins would not hold him alone responsible for the damage done by the dragon or for breaking into the bank. He knew they took pride in being impenetrable.

Coming to a stop outside a large door guarded by two goblins Harry let out a breath and steeled himself. The goblin leading him knocked once before turning to face Harry.

“I will be leaving you here, Mr. Potter,” he said before turning to leave.

“Wait,” Harry called out, making the goblin pause. “May I ask, what is your name, master goblin?”

Surprised, he replied, “My name is Bloodfang, Mr. Potter.”

Harry nodded his head in thanks, before speaking again, “Then I thank you Bloodfang, for your help today. May your gold continue to grow.”

The traditional goblin thank you surprised both Bloodfang and the surrounding guards. Harry hadn’t even known that there were traditional greetings and customs for dealing with goblins until recently and hoped that the goblin race wouldn’t hold his childhood ignorance against him.

Smiling toothily, Bloodfang nodded. “Thank you Mr. Potter and may your enemies cower at your name.” With that done Bloodfang disappeared in the direction they had travelled. Before Harry had a chance to say anything to the guards, the doors to the room opened.

“Enter, Mr. Potter,” a voice said.

Nodding to the guards in passing, Harry entered the office. Sitting behind a large desk was a richly dressed goblin who Harry had never before seen.

“Greetings Ragnok, chief of Gringotts,” Harry said as he bowed slightly to the head goblin

Looking over his desk Ragnok was surprised at the image the young wizard presented. He could see through the magical glamour, as all goblins could; it was only blood glamours and polyjuice potions that caused them difficulty. Underneath it he thought the wizard appeared tired and surprisingly small - not necessarily in stature, but in presence. Beckoning him to sit, Ragnok spoke, “Greetings, Mr. Potter.”

Sitting down in the chair, Harry waited for the goblin to speak. “It has recently come to our attention that you have yet to claim your lordship of both the Most Ancient and Noble houses of Potter and Black, alongside this you have not claimed the inheritances set away for you.”

Harry felt his eyes widen. “I’m sorry for my ignorance Chief Ragnok, but I was unaware of any lordships or inheritances,” Harry said. In a corner of his mind, Harry was extremely glad that the meeting didn’t appear to be about the dragon or the break in.

Ragnok stared hard at the young wizard. “You mean to tell me your magical guardian did not tell you of your standing in our society?”

Harry let is confusion show and asked, “Magical guardian? I’m sorry, but I’m not aware of ever having a magical guardian. My parents as well as my godfather are dead.”

“You’re correct, of course, Mr. Potter, however up until your 17th birthday Albus Dumbledore was your magical guardian,” Ragnok said.
“Dumbledore?” Harry questioned.

“Indeed,” Ragnok said, “you say you're unaware of your inheritance and lordships?”

“That’s correct,” Harry said in a daze.

“Right Mr. Potter, if you would just wait here I will be back momentarily,” Ragnok said, before he stood and made his way to the doors. Speaking in rapid gobbledegook, he ordered his guards to go and find a blood inheritance worker. Returning to his desk, he looked at the wizard.

“As you have had no counsel or preparation for your inheritance, I think it is best if you undergo a blood inheritance test, that way you can see proof of your station,” Ragnok said.

Harry nodded, remembering what he had read recently about such tests, but unsure about the particulars. “Forgive me if I’m wrong, but won’t such a test just show who I am?” Harry asked.

“Yes, that is indeed one of the tests qualities, however such a test will also show all inherited lordships or lordships gained through other means, any and all adoptions, magical qualities, abilities and bonds as well as vaults. It can also show any magical blocks, compulsions, and interferences such as potions as well as give the date any such potions or blocks were first administered,” the goblin explained.

“I see,” Harry said. Thinking about the potions Mrs. Weasley had given him for pain weeks ago, he decided that it wouldn’t matter if they showed up as they were generic pain potions, however before he could ask the doors opened and an ancient looking goblin entered holding a piece of golden parchment. The goblin approached Ragnok and bowed low before speaking in rapid gobbledegook. Ragnok and the ancient one spoke quickly to each other before turning to Harry.

“Would you consent to doing such a test Mr. Potter?” The ancient one asked.

“Of course,” Harry agreed.

“All you have to do is allow three drops of your blood to touch the parchment,” Ragnok said, producing an ornate dagger from a draw in his desk and handing it to Harry.

Gripping the daggers gilded handle, Harry steeled himself before placing the tip against his thumb. He watched in fascination as blood welled from the wound. Holding his thumb above the parchment on the desk he quickly moved it after three drops fell.

The ancient goblin chanted then, the air filling with such thick magic it was almost tangible. As quickly as it started it was over and the goblin fell silent.

Looking at the parchment that seemed to glow momentarily, Harry watched as words appeared. Ragnok was surprised at the ritual, usually such a test would not elicit such a magical reaction; therefore he waited with bated breath as the wizard picked up the parchment. He knew that whatever was on it would be interesting to say the least.

Harry stared at the parchment, shocked and enraged beyond reason as he read the surprisingly long list.

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Name:
Harrison James Potter-Black

Born:

July 31st 1980, Godric’s Hollow England

Parents:

James Fleamont Potter (Birth father)

Lily Juliana Potter nee Evans (Birth mother)

Sirius Orion Black (Blood adopted Father, August 1st 1980)

Titles:

Lord of the Ancient and Noble Family Potter (birth)

Lord of the Ancient and Noble Family Black (blood adoption)

Lord of the Ancient and Noble Family Gryffindor (birth)

Lord of the Ancient and Noble Family Peverell (birth)

Lord of the Ancient and Noble Family Slytherin (conquest)

Master of Death

Vaults:

Potter Trust Vault - 8,340 Galleons, 103 Sickles, 13 Knuts

Potter Family Vaults - 12,435,739 Galleons, 649 Sickles, 450 Knuts; 134 magical artefacts and 840 books

Black Family Vaults - 69,546,039 Galleons, 750 Sickles, 236 Knuts; 457 magical artefacts and 1476 books

Gryffindor Family Vaults - 9,346,013 Galleons, 648 Sickles, 18 Knuts; 1643 magical artefacts and 1734 books

Peverell Family Vaults - 81,746,301 Galleons, 134 Sickles, 298 Knuts; 1006 magical artefacts and 1920 books

Slytherin Family Vaults - 846,187 Galleons, 924 Sickles, 752 Knuts; 2457 magical artefacts and 3276 books

Mortemis Vault - 3 magical artefacts and 1 book

Magical abilities and blocks:

Core magic – Dark (70% blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Parseltongue (Failed Block, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Wandless magic (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)
Wordless magic (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Magic sensitivity (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Eidetic memory (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Hereditary blood magics (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Properties:

House Number 14, Gordrics Hollow, England

Potter Manor, Oxfordshire, England

Villa du Solei, St Tropez, France

Marauders Den, Devon, England

Hideaway Cottage, Edinburgh, Scotland

12 Grimmauld Place, London, England

Black Manor, Wiltshire, England

Castle Black, St. Petersburg, Russia

Eagles nest, Isle of Skye, Scotland

Magical bonds:

Soul bond - Tom Marvolo Riddle (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981; Twice Nullified, Tom Marvolo Riddle, October 31st 1981 and May 2nd 1998)

Godfather bond - (Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981; Nullified, June 18th 1996)

Magical compulsions:

Blood Glamour (Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Loyalty Keyed to Albus Dumbledore (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Loyalty Keyed to Gryffindor House (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Loyalty Keyed to the Order of the Phoenix (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Loyalty Keyed to Ronald Weasley (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Loyalty Keyed to Ginevra Weasley (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Loyalty Keyed to Molly Weasley (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Distrust Keyed to Slytherin House (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)

Distrust Keyed to Severus Snape (Albus Dumbledore, July 31st 1991)
Harry wasn’t sure how long he sat, staring at nothing, as he tried to process what the document in his hand said. Eventually he came to when Ragnok cleared his throat.

“All is in order I trust,” Ragnok stated, wondering what had caused such a reaction in the wizard as he had been sitting shock still for the last five minutes.

Harry blinked and nodded his head before shaking it. “I-I’m not sure,” he said eventually, before passing the parchment over to him. Tom Riddle, the man, no, the monster who killed his parents and tried to destroy the world was his soulmate and Dumbledore... Dumbledore had spent Harry's entire life drugging him. Harry didn’t even know who he was anymore.

Ragnok took the parchment from the shocked young wizard and read it quickly before swearing violently in gobbledygook. He ordered Elder Floki to go and get a healer as he placed the parchment on his desk.

“Mr. Potter, it would seem you're under the control of a number of charms, compulsions, and potions,” he stated. “I believe it would be best if you were to have them removed before we continue our business.”

Harry stared at the goblin with narrowed eyes, his shock addled brain finally deciding to focus on the situation at hand instead of what he had just read.

“I agree, however I know nothing in this world comes without a price. What's yours?”

Ragnok smiled toothily at the wizard, glad that he had pulled himself together. “100 galleons for a full body flush and unblocking of your magical core and abilities,” Ragnok stated.

“Deal.” Harry agreed with a nod, although the price was steep apparently he could afford it.

Just then the doors opened and a small female goblin walked in. Nodding her head before Ragnok, she spoke quickly to him before she turned to Harry and looked him up and down with considering eyes.
“I am healer Maeve,” she stated.

“Greetings healer Maeve,” Harry said, nodding his head in respect.

Pursing her lips at the young wizard, she once again nodded her head before walking out. “You will follow me,” she instructed.

Harry was surprised at her sudden exit and turned to look at Ragnok who didn’t seem bothered by her attitude.

“We will continue our business at a later date, Mr. Potter,” Ragnok said, dismissing Harry with a wave of his hand.

Harry turned and hurried after the healer, following her deep into the caves under Gringotts. Finally, after five minutes of walking they came to a stop and entered a large, open room. The walls were decorated with intricately carved runes, some of which Harry recognised but most were foreign to him. In the centre of the room was a raised table surrounded by a circle of runes and candles.

“My husband has told me what has been done to you, young lord,” Maeve said, directing Harry's attention to her. However before Harry could question her, she spoke again. “You will strip for me, including your magical glamours and lie on the table,” she instructed.

Harry found himself blushing at her no-nonsense attitude and fumbled with his cloak clasp. Maeve, watching this as she gathered the required ingredients, shook her head and found the young wizard a white sheet to wrap around his waist. Harry nodded his thanks and finally stripped off of his clothing quickly, wrapping the sheet around himself before sitting on the table. Concentrating on the spell threads holding his glamour in place, Harry felt a slight tingle along his face as they fell away.

“This process will be painful,” Maeve said, watching as the wizard finished the process of baring himself.

“I can handle pain,” he stated, looking her in the eye and thinking of all the pain he had gone through in his life - all of which had no purpose. Even if this was going to be painful, at least he would gain something from it.

“I will start by flushing your system of potions, before moving on to the charms and compulsions. This will not hurt too much but you will likely feel some discomfort. The blood glamour will then be removed and depending on how much has been changed will determine the level of pain you will experience. Finally, your magical blocks will be removed. This will hurt as your magic is an intrinsic part of you and as you have such a large proportion of your magic blocked this will take time. Thankfully I do not believe you will remain conscious for all of this,” she told him.

Harry found himself nodding. “Thank you healer Maeve, for explaining to me what you will do,” he said, trying to cover his fear.

With one final glance Maeve nodded. “I am ready to begin, you should lie back.”

Lying on the hard table Harry was surprised when he found himself bound by magic, unable to move.

“You will be bound for the procedure to ensure you do not cause damage to yourself or interrupt,” Maeve stated when she saw his eyes widen.

Harry, unable to nod, kept silent and closed his eyes. He didn’t want to risk his voice showing his fear, not that he thought the goblin would judge him but he wanted to embrace this, to try and control
as much as he was able to.

Chanting filled the air and Harry found himself drifting as the oddly musical sound passed through him. Suddenly, however, Harry felt a jolt in his mind. The sensation reminded him of when Snape had tried to teach him Occlumency; it was unpleasant but not unbearable. This sensation continued before it grew, the feeling of 100 bees took over his mind and Harry soon found it impossible to think. Finally the sensation passed and the chanting seemed to die out before it started up again. Harry, still unable to focus, soon felt his skin start to stretch and his bones grind together. Gritting his teeth against the pain Harry tried to breathe through it as his face shifted. His very hair started to ache and it felt like every cell in his body suddenly contracted and snapped. Finally letting out a scream Harry felt his back arch and reconnect with the table harshly. Throughout all of this the chanting never stopped, if anything it seemed to grow stronger. Harry, unable to think of anything but the pain that followed, felt like his blood had turned to acid. When he finally lost consciousness he welcomed the darkness that engulfed him with relish.

~
Unlocked potential

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Waking up, Harry felt lighter - like he had been carrying a heavy burden all his life and never realised it. Opening his eyes, Harry took in his surroundings: he was no longer in the healing chamber but what appeared to be a bedroom. Cavern walls were illuminated by torches and a fireplace in the corner made the naturally dark room light.

“Welcome back young wizard,” a voice Harry recognised as healer Maeve said, startling him.

“How long was I out?” Harry asked, his throat feeling raw and his voice coming out raspy.

“Only four hours,” the goblin replied, coming closer to Harry. “I'm surprised to see you awake to be honest, you're a lot stronger than you think.”

Harry found himself nodding slightly as he sat up slowly in bed. Running his hands through his shoulder length hair, Harry was startled after his brain suddenly processed this new information.

Maeve watched the wizard with faint humour as he seemed to jump awake and realise his physical changes. She also noted that he needed a throat soother.

“Would you like a mirror?” she asked, as she went through her supplies looking for the correct potion.

Harry nodded dumbly, taking the conjured mirror as it appeared. Looking at his reflection, he was shocked; the changes when looked at individually were not that great but on the whole? They made him look completely different. He was no longer a clone of James Potter - sure you could tell they were related, but it was not an overwhelming fact now like it once was.

His emerald green eyes were still a prominent feature, but they had lost their circular shape and were now more almond. His nose was smaller, more delicate, and his lips seemed to have filled out. His jawline lost some of its edge and his cheekbones were more pronounced. Most drastically gone was the famous Potter hair. Instead of a wild mane, his black hair fell to his shoulders in waves, still slightly wild but not unmanageable. He looked slightly feminine he idly thought as he traced his features with his hand before suddenly realising that he could see without his glasses.

Putting the mirror down after a few minutes of staring, Harry noticed healer Maeve had approached him, holding a potion in her hand. Wary because of all he had been put through Harry pondered if he would really need it, but decided to place his trust in the goblin that had healed him.

“For your throat,” she explained when she caught him looking.

With a nod Harry took the offered potion and threw it back, experience telling him that it was better to swallow quickly. After a few seconds of letting the potion work, Harry hesitantly opened his mouth.

“Why would Dumbledore want to change how I looked?” he asked softly, not really expecting an answer.
“I doubt we will ever get a clear answer,” a new voice answered. “At least, not in this life.”

Harry turned and saw Chief Ragnok entering the room.

“You’re looking much better now, Mr. Potter,” he said.

“Thank you Chief Ragnok,” Harry said honestly. “I feel much better.”

“You will most likely experience a significant shift in your magic over the next few hours as your core resettles,” Maeve said, shifting into healer mode, “you may experience difficulty controlling the level of power that you put into your spells until you get used to your new power levels. You should find that once all is settled you're able to cast more advanced spells without tiring and have greater amounts of magic to call upon.”

“I see,” Harry said.

“Do you feel able to continue our previous conversation Mr. Potter, or would you like time to get acquainted with your new body?” Ragnok asked after a pause.

Harry sighed and went to stand, surprised to find he was dressed in loose cotton trousers but immensely happy as he would have regretted flashing the goblin chief.

“I think it would be best to get everything out of the way as soon as possible. However, I would like a few moments to freshen myself up,” Harry said.

Ragnok nodded his head in agreement. “Join me in the parlour when you're finished, it is just through this door,” he said, indicating to said door.

Harry nodded and waited for the goblins to leave. Standing, Harry found that he had grown slightly and was now standing at around 5'9”. His body, which had always been painfully thin, was still malnourished but shaped more willowy, his slight muscles making him lithe. Making his way to what he thought would be a bathroom, Harry turned on a tap and splashed some water on his new face, still fascinated by the changes. His body felt foreign to him and it was only his innate grace that was keeping him from falling over his feet as he got used to the changes.

Once he had washed up and taken care of his business, Harry returned to the room and found his former clothes had been placed on a dresser. Putting them on, Harry found that the fit was okay but not perfect. Seeing his wand next to the pile, he picked it up and concentrated on changing his clothes to fit him, trying not to be surprised when the spell happened before he had a chance to say the incantation. Straightening his spine Harry walked with purpose towards the parlour, hoping that the next order of business would be more pleasant than the last.

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“I have taken the liberty of procuring a light meal for us,” Ragnok said as Harry made his way into the room.

Harry nodded his head and tried to wrap his mind around the situation. From what he remembered, and it was surprisingly a lot, goblins were notoriously formal with wizards, therefore Harry was having difficulty determining how to act around the goblin chief.

“Thank you,” he said simply, seating himself opposite Ragnok.

After a few moments of silence Harry decided to speak, foregoing the strict rules of propriety.
“Chief Ragnok, not that I am not grateful for your aid in ridding me of the numerous compulsions and charms placed on me, but I find myself lost as to what you gain from helping me. It is well known that the goblin race tries not to get involved with the affairs of wizards.”

“You are correct, Mr. Potter,” Ragnok said. “However, your situation is unique in that we both owe each other debts. The goblin nation owes you a debt for ridding this world of the insanity of Voldemort—”

At hearing this Harry's heart gave a painful twinge that he was barely able to mask.

“—and you yourself owe the goblin nation a debt for the release and destruction caused by the dragon Rian.”

Harry pondered at this. “So you helped free me because I destroyed Voldemort?” he asked, ignoring the ache that grew.

“Freeing you was not our initial goal, in your current state Mr. Potter you are unable to meet the reparations required to you by the goblin nation. It was our goal to aid you in claiming your lordships so that you may make the necessary payments and gain your rightful place in society. Therefore, both of us would be free of any debt: we by helping you and you by paying us,” Ragnok explained

“So what happened was merely a lucky coincidence?” Harry asked.

“I do not believe in luck, Mr. Potter,” Ragnok stated.

“Either way you have aided me immensely,” Harry said.

Ragnok nodded his head at this. Before they could continue a soft knock was heard coming from the door.

“Enter,” called out Ragnok.

The door opened and a young goblin entered, pushing a trolley covered in food. Placing the dishes on the table between Harry and Ragnok, the server disappeared quickly.

“We will continue our discussion after we have eaten,” Ragnok stated. “It would not do well for you to collapse from hunger just after being released from my wife’s clutches.”

Harry smiled slightly at that and looked at the food offered; he recognised most of it but found the presentation to be slightly different from what he was used to. Picking up a small bowl of what looked like a beef stew, Harry inhaled the aroma and found that he was surprisingly hungry.

“This looks delicious,” he said before they fell into a comfortable silence.

After they were both done eating and the meal was cleaned away with a flick of his wrist, Ragnok took a moment to look at the wizard opposite him. The young man looked better than when he had first appeared in his office only hours earlier, but he still had the same haunted look in his eyes.

“What do you understand from the test results?” Ragnok asked.

Harry thought about everything he had read. He began slowly, “I guess I understand some of the titles and the money, but….” Harry trailed off, the more he thought about it the more he found himself at a loss.

Ragnok nodded, not surprised. “For your titles, through your father you gain three lordships. The
Potter family is a direct descendant from the Peverells, which is a side branch of the Gryffindor family; all three come with votes on the Wizengamot, a seat on the Hogwarts Board of Directors, and a founder’s seat on the board. As the last heir to all three families, you can claim the lordship from them along with the three votes. Your blood adopted godfather named you his heir, and through him you gain the Black family lordship and the Black family vote in the Wizengamot. The Slytherin lordship is more complicated; you gained the lordship through the right of conquest when you defeated the self named Lord Voldemort - from this you gain his vote in the Wizengamot and his founders seat the Hogwarts Board of Directors. Your final title is something of a legend that even we, the goblins of Gringotts, never thought would come to pass. You, Harry Potter, are the Master of Death.”

Harry sat stunned, trying to take in what he had learnt. “What does that even mean?” he finally asked.

“It means, Mr. Potter, that you have done what was thought to be impossible. You have gained control of Death itself.”

Harry blinked twice as he took in Ragnok’s words. He opened his mouth to speak before closing it with a snap. He was speechless.

Ragnok let the silence fall before continuing, “What this entails even I do not know, but I would expect it to become clear to you in the coming days.”

Harry listened but kept his silence.

“What is next is for you to formally claim your lordships.”

“How would I go about doing that?” Harry asked. His voice coming out slightly higher than usual was the only indication of the strain he was feeling.

“The process is simple: all you have to do is place the lordship rings on your left hand. If they accept you they will bond to you and your magic, if not they will return to the lordship box held within the family vaults until such a time when they are claimed by the rightful heir.” After he spoke he appeared to reach under the table and produced five boxes, all of which varied in age and wear. “Do not worry about wearing multiple rings on the same hand, although never have we had a lord of so many titles, it is not so uncommon that somebody is the lord of two houses. Your rings, if they accept you, will combine into one when worn, creating a new design combined of the features from your houses. When needed, however, a specific family ring can show.”

Harry nodded his head understanding and slowly reached for the closest box. It was black and fairly plain looking. Opening it up, Harry felt his insides freeze in horror and he visibly recoiled. Sitting nestled innocently in the box was the ring that once contained one of Voldemort’s horcruxes.

“Wh-I mean-I don’t-how?” Harry finally managed to ask.

“You have seen this ring before?” Ragnok questioned.

“Yes, this ring was one of Voldemort's—” Harry cut himself off, not wanting to share what it was Voldemort did to his soul. “I mean, I know this ring was destroyed.”

“Ah,” Ragnok said in understanding. “A lordship ring cannot truly be destroyed unless the family is dissolved. If damaged, the rings will return to their rightful family vaults.”

“This ring was also once cursed,” Harry said, staring at the ring warily. He remembered seeing Dumbledore’s hand and the twisted, blackened flesh before another thought struck him and for a
moment he wondered if this meant that Voldemort wasn’t truly gone. A fluttering in his heart and a deep longing at that fleeting thought shocked him before he forced away those feelings. Voldemort was gone and the ring no longer had the overwhelming presence that Voldemort’s horcrux once had.

“Any curse by the previous owner would have been removed,” Ragnok said, “the ring’s only properties are, if I remember correctly, protection against mind assaults, potions, influencing charms, and low level magical attacks. There should be a parchment somewhere in the vault explaining them.”

Picking the box up again, Harry hesitantly picked up the ring. Placing it on his ring finger, he felt a sudden rush in his magic before it settled.

“Congratulations, Lord Slytherin,” Ragnok said, smiling toothily.

Harry then claimed the rest of the lordships with no extra hidden shocks, the rings merging together into one on Harry's finger.

“Now that that is done Lord Potter, I believe it is time for us to speak about your debt to the goblin nation,” Ragnok stated.

Harry drew his eyes away from his new ring and nodded his head in agreement. “You are correct, Chief Ragnok.”

“The damage caused by the release of the dragon was immense, not only did it cause a breach in our stronghold but eight goblins were injured and over 200 muggles had to be obliviated.”

Harry winced at the damage. “I know words are meaningless but I would like to apologise anyway before payment is given,” Harry said. “The situation was grave and although my actions caused great damage, at the time I felt they were justified.”

Ragnok narrowed his eyes. “Only at the time?” he questioned.

“I have now come to realise that my actions leading up to this day would scarcely count as being my own. Yes, it was me, but I had little control over myself with the amount of potions and charms I was under. Therefore I cannot say if they were justifiable. But what's done is done, and I will do my best to make reparations to you and your race.”

“You are correct and that will be taken into account,” Ragnok said sagely.

“My thanks,” Harry said.

“The debt will be considered fulfilled if the payment of 10 million galleons is given,” Ragnok said.

Harry felt his eyes widen slightly at the immense sum. He could afford it easily now, he knew that, but it was still a vast amount of money. However, considering the situation, Harry knew it would be in his best interest to accept. Yet, before he could agree, Ragnok spoke again.

“Alongside this, I, on behalf of the goblin nation, would like to offer you our hand in friendship.”

At this Harry didn't even try to mask his shock. Being named a goblin friend was a great honour not bestowed on many; Harry could hardly think of the last time it had happened. Only the most powerful and influential wizards or witches were ever named and even then only ones that the goblins respected.

“I thank you for such a great honour Chief Ragnok, and I accept the terms of fulfilling my debt,”
Harry said. “However, I must ask: why me?”

“Why you, Lord Potter?”

“Why am I being honoured in such a way? I have done nothing for you yet you are willing to name me a goblin friend.”

“It is not what you have done, Lord Potter, but what you will come to do.” Ragnok began to explain, “There are few people in this world that truly have a chance at shaping it, and I, alongside the other leaders of the goblin race, believe that you will be one of these people.”

Harry was stunned. He didn’t know how to reply to that, he didn’t feel worthy of such praise.

“If I might make a suggestion Lord Potter, now that our business is done,” Ragnok said after the silence had stretched a moment.

“Please, if I am to be a goblin friend, then call me Harry,” Harry said.

“Harry then, I would recommend that you take a few days to think about what it is you wish to do with your new found power - not just your magical power but your political influence as well. You have never had a chance to really be yourself, to think for yourself.”

Harry closed his eyes in pain when he realised that Ragnok was correct. If he believed the blood test, which he did, then Dumbledore and who knows who else had been controlling him and manipulating him for his entire life. He had forced himself not to think about it since the discovery, focusing on everything else but now that he was, he felt betrayed and angry. It wasn’t a fiery rage like he usually experienced but a quiet, white-hot rage.

Opening his eyes, Harry didn’t realise that they were almost glowing with power or that the very air around him seemed to vibrate with suppressed magic. “I think you are correct Ragnok,” Harry said, his voice coming out deceptively soft.

Ragnok suppressed a shiver at the amount of power the wizard before him possessed and stood. “You are free to use one of our floo systems to return to your current residence if you would prefer, instead of going through the alley.”

Harry considered this but decided the walk would help to clear his mind. “I thank you, but I require a few things,” he said, standing and following the goblin out through the maze of tunnels until they came to a set of doors.

“If you wish to put a glamour up, now would be the time,” Ragnok advised. “Though you do look quite different, your eyes are still rather well known in this world.”

Harry nodded, flicking his wrist so his wand appeared in hand. Concentrating on what he wanted to change, Harry felt a tingling over his eyes. Opening them, he looked at Ragnok and asked, “What do you think?”

“Although similar to the appearance you are known for, with the change in eye colour you should be able to go about your business easily as long as you keep the scar covered,” Ragnok said. With blue eyes and the removal of the blood glamour, the wizard did look different enough that people should let him pass without comment.

Harry smiled slightly, “I thank you for your aid, Ragnok. May your gold overflow and benefit you.”

“And may your enemies cower at your name, Harry,” Ragnok said, before opening the doors for
Harry to exit into the main floor of the bank.

With one last nod, Harry lifted his hood and made his way through the crowd, his walk becoming more graceful as he got used to his true form. He didn’t realise that every goblin at one point looked up and stared as he passed, that his aura even masked as it was still called out to them, warning them of his power. That to them, his graceful walk appeared almost magical, like a predator in the night.

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Chapter End Notes

Once again Big thank you to my Beta reader, miisticalwrites
The next update probably won’t be until next week sometime as I have so many deadline coming up!
Hope you enjoy the update!
~

Annie
Previously

With one last nod, Harry lifted his hood and made his way through the crowd, his walk becoming more graceful as he got used to his true form. He didn’t realise that every goblin at one point looked up and stared as he passed, that his aura even masked as it was still called out to them, warning them of his power. That to them, his graceful walk appeared almost magical, like a predator in the night.

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Diagon Alley, 5th June 1998

The ancient streets of Diagon Alley were practically empty, not that this was surprising. Many of the stores were boarded up, having closed during the war because of Voldemort and his attacks, then because of the control of the ministry. However, there were a few people milling about, cautiously trying to get on with their lives now that Voldemort was gone. Harry felt a twinge of sadness as he looked around at the derelict streets and destruction; he could still remember his feelings of wonder and excitement the first time he entered Diagon Alley with Hagrid all those years ago. Looking around now, he felt none of that; gone was the whimsical fantasy of the bright windows and displays, gone was the magic. Even Weasleys’ Wizarding Wheezes failed to add joy to the dark alley, the windows dark and lifeless. Thinking of the twins, Harry wondered if the shop would ever be able to really regain its former glory.

Thinking of the Weasleys, Harry once again felt his anger return. They knew, they had to have known, he thought. It would be far too much of a coincidence for Dumbledore to add loyalty charms to them. Thinking about this, Harry wondered how they had been added, before the realisation hit him. The first Hogwarts letter he received, that was the only explanation. Harry wouldn’t have noticed the feeling of such charms, back then he was completely oblivious.

Wondering about who in the Weasley family he could really trust, Harry continued towards Eeylops Owl Emporium, happy to see it was still in business. Although he would never be able to replace Hedwig, who was his first true friend and only real confidant, he was in need of an owl; he would be damned if he continued to use Pig. However, before he reached his destination, Harry was drawn out of his musing by a hissed whisper.

“Really Ronald, you need to learn to keep your mouth shut!” Came Hermione’s voice, the scathing tone carrying up from a dark side alley.

Thinking quickly, Harry stepped back into the shadow of a doorway and quickly cast a disillusionment charm on himself before they could see him.

“I don’t see what the big deal is,” Ron replied.

“Idiot,” hissed Hermione as they appeared, moving quickly. Deciding to follow them, Harry cast a silencing charm on himself.

“The big deal is that you almost gave away what we needed the ingredients for!”
“Please, like he would recognise that,” Ron said, “and even if he did, it wouldn’t matter - we’re heroes!” The arrogance in his voice made Harry wince, and he questioned how he had ever been friends with him, potions or not.

“Of course, he would recognise the ingredients to a love potion, you idiot! They're highly illegal and controlled,” Hermione's condescending voice rang out even though she was whispering.

“I don’t see why you couldn’t just keep using mum’s potion on him, it worked before,” Ron said mulishly as they entered the apothecary.

“It’s obviously lost its potency or else Harry’s become immune. If it was working correctly he would never have left Ginny at your house alone, or consider not going to school,” Hermione said matter-of-factly. At hearing his name Harry stiffened and hissed darkly, the almost animalistic sound luckily being covered by his silencing charm.

“I don’t see why he needs it,” Ron said and for a minute Harry hoped that maybe he did truly have a friend in the red headed boy. “We should just poison him and be done with it. Dumbledore said he would die in the battle. He's clearly evil, it’s the only way he could have survived; must have done some dark ritual.”

Harry couldn’t believe his ears. Not only were they were planning his death, openly in the streets, but they thought he was evil.

“If we just killed him we wouldn’t get his money or access to the books and artefacts in his vaults,” Hermione said. “He needs to marry Ginny so that we can get our hands on them. I mean, we deserve it after everything we’ve been through.” She had finished picking up ingredients, surprising Harry as he recognised everything she touched. He hadn’t realised he knew so much about potions.

“I still don’t like it,” Ron grumbled as they left the shop.

“Shut up Ronald! If we’re lucky it will only be a few more weeks before Harry has a tragic accident, leaving his new bride widowed and his lifelong friends alone to mourn his loss,” Hermione said.

“But the potion isn’t working,” Ron said, confused.

“That’s why we’re here; I found a new, stronger love potion to use, and it will completely wipe out Harry’s will, leaving him empty to Ginny’s. Then all we have to do is get them bonded before school and then Harry can have an accident. I'm thinking something quidditch related, he’s always falling off that thing.”

“It’s because he’s such a show off,” Ron said. “Always wanting to be the centre of attention. ‘Look at me, I’m Harry Potter and I’m so special, I killed You-Know-Who, everybody should pay attention —’”

“Shut up, Ron!” Hermione hissed quickly, as a group of witches appeared in the previously empty alley. “We need to go. Your mother is expecting us and I need a few days to brew this potion. We’re inviting Harry around for lunch on Sunday; once we’ve slipped it to him everything will be back on track.”

“Merlin, I hate having to pretend to be his friend. He’s so gullible to believe that we would actually like him,” Ron grumbled.

“I know, but soon it will be over and we will get everything Dumbledore promised us,” Hermione said in a sickly voice as she moved closer to Ron.
“Just think! We’ll be so rich,” Ron said, the glee evident in his voice.

“And access to all of those books,” Hermione added.

After that they remained silent and made their way into the Leaky Cauldron, Harry leaving them as they reached the floo.

Turning, Harry quickly strode to the apparition point and made his way back to Grimmauld Place, his plans for an owl forgotten in his rage. They wanted to kill him. After everything he had done for them, those traitorous bastards!

Not realising that his magic was growing and lashing out, Harry let out a scream of rage as he fought to gain control of himself. At this point, his eyes were glowing and his hair seemed to float around his face because of unsee power.

Kreacher, feeling the disturbance in the magic levels, popped into the drawing room just in time to see his master collapse, the resulting explosion of power only sparing him harm as it recognised his intentions to help his master.

“I’ll kill them,” Harry said darkly, his soft vow barely audible.

Kreacher stood for a moment, shocked to see his great master in such a state before he jumped into action. With a click he restored the room, removing all traces of damage before he approached Harry. He looked different, but Kreacher knew that this was his master - but that wasn’t the only thing different: his master had changed. He had been powerful before, but now Kreacher could feel the power coming off him in waves. It made Kreacher want to weep and celebrate; he was so powerful and he was all Kreacher’s to look after.

“Great master mustn’t sit on the floor, no, if great master be needing to rest Kreacher will help him to bed, yes he will,” Kreacher muttered, staring in awe at his master.

Harry, drawn out of his dark thoughts of revenge by the muttered words, looked up to see Kreacher standing next to him with a look of worship on his face. The old house elf was practically vibrating in his excitement. Startled by the behaviour of his elf, it took Harry a moment to realise what had been said and that he had collapsed on the floor.

“Thank you Kreacher, but that will not be necessary,” Harry said, standing gracefully.

Kreacher nodded, still awed by the changes in his master.

Harry took a moment to breathe deeply before slowly releasing the breath. He had a lot to think about and decide. Moving from the drawing room, he made his way up to the library, preferring to use the desk in there over the one in the formal office. Entering the library, Harry saw the book he had previously been reading laid down next to his favourite chair. Soul Magics and Bonds: The Lost Rituals had not held the answers he had previously been looking for, but now the book had potential. Thinking about the bond he shared with Tom, he was unwilling to think about sharing such a bond with Voldemort, made Harry almost weak-kneed. The longing in his soul grew the dangerously the more he thought about the bond; it was nearly unbearable the longer he stood there.

Shaking off the longing with renewed vigour, Harry picked up the book and began to read. Hours later, he almost threw the book into the fire. He had been correct - it did hold answers, none of which filled Harry with any hope. Soul bonds were rare and those who have them are considered to be the luckiest people alive for they truly had a perfect mate out there. Interfering with a soul bond was inconceivable to most as they were considered sacrosanct; to interfere with one deliberately was to
challenge magic herself.

It was only with their bonded that could somebody with a soul bond ever have real happiness, and nine times out of ten, if one of the bonded pair dies the other immediately follows. In the rare cases, like Harry's, that one of the bonded dies before the bond is fulfilled and the person lives, they usually die after a few years. Without their bonded they lose the will to live, their very magic is torn in half and the loneliness and ache they feel from the broken bond will drive them to an early death. The longest recorded life after a broken soul bond, according to the book, was 12 years, and that was in the 1600's when a four year old boy died in an accident and his soul bonded committed suicide at the age of sixteen.

With this information, Harry tried to calm himself. Dumbledore would have known this, he had wanted Harry to kill his soul mate. With that in mind he wanted to raise Dumbledore from the dead to kill him, repeatedly. And the Weasleys, he wanted to destroy them. He just wasn’t sure how yet.

He wasn’t happy to think of Tom Riddle as his soul mate, in fact the more he thought about it the more he tried to hate it, but there was something stopping him from achieving his anger. He remembered meeting Riddle when he was twelve in the chamber of secrets; that boy had so much potential. Such potential that gradually became warped and twisted by Dumbledore and the insanity caused by the horcruxes no doubt.

Standing, Harry decided to rest and think more on the situation the next day. He would no doubt be better equipped to deal with his thoughts after a few hours of sleep.

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The next few days passed by in a blur for Harry. He scoured the Black library, reading anything he thought would help him but found all books said the same; without Tom, Harry would eventually die, and sooner rather than later. He had also found more information on soul bonds that had him thinking more into it. It was written soulmates could not deliberately kill one another; this made Harry wonder about what had really happened that night when Voldemort had come for him and killed his parents. Dumbledore had claimed that it was the power of his mother’s love that had saved Harry - he had preached this fact ever since Harry had met him, using it as an example of the power of light magic. Yet, now Harry wondered if his supposed defeat of the Dark Lord was really down to his attempt on Harry's life. By trying to deliberately kill his bonded, Voldemort ended up killing himself. That would also explain the last battle, in that final duel Voldemort died after their wands had locked and his own killing curse reverted in on itself. Harry didn’t think anybody really understood that, and he wasn’t exactly waiting to tell them.

This also made Harry wonder about how it was possible for Tom to not realise just who Harry was, unless, of course, he had his bond blocked like Harry had. This created more questions for Harry, as never before had somebody deliberately blocked a soul bond, Harry was unsure about how to find out if Tom had had his blocked. It would possibly be one explanation for his behaviour Harry mused; it couldn’t have been easy having the bond blocked for so long; having such a vital part locked away, it was no wonder he went insane. Add to the fact his horcruxes would have continued to rip away at his already blocked soul? Harry thought, retrospectively, that it was surprising how sane Voldemort was by then end, which was saying something as he was completely nuts.

Even with these realisations, Harry was still lost on what to do now. Honestly, he was tired. He now knew it was probably his broken bond making him feel like this, but he just couldn’t bring himself to care. The only thing that was keeping him going was his desire for revenge; revenge for himself and for the boy Tom Riddle had once been. It was Dumbledore he wished he could make pay, but with him already dead he would settle for his pawns - he just had to find them.
On the day Pig arrived, carrying a letter Harry easily identified to be from Ron judging by the chicken scratch writing, Harry felt a slight maniacal glee. He hadn’t yet planned out his revenge but he wanted to test the waters so to speak. He knew that Ron, Ginny, Hermione, and Mrs. Weasley were a part of Dumbledore’s plans, and he planned on finding out if they acted alone today.

During the week he had Kreacher help him measure his new body and had sent off for some new clothing. The rich clothes made Harry look every inch the lord he was and Harry couldn’t wait to see the reaction they had on the Weasley family.

“Hello, Pig,” Harry said, taking the letter from the small bird. He couldn’t bring himself to hurt the poor creature, no matter whom he belonged to. “Why don’t you go have a rest while I get ready? There’s no rush for you to get back,” he instructed. Although not as smart as Hedwig, the bird seemed to understand and, with a quick nuzzle to Harry’s hand, he took flight to an owl perch Harry had conjured with a wave of his hand.

Over the week, Harry had found his magic settling and he found it easy to perform magic non-verbally and sometimes wandlessly.

The letter, like Harry knew it would be, was asking for Harry to come round for lunch today. Setting it on fire without a thought after he had finished reading, Harry smirked and stood with a stretch.

Going upstairs, Harry put on a pair of black dragonhide trousers and a white shirt, over which he wore a dark emerald green robe. Wearing his robe open, Harry looked in the mirror; although simple enough, the outfit was a far cry away from what he used to wear. The clothes fit him like a glove and were obviously high quality without being overly fancy. Looking in the mirror, Harry decided to glamour his facial features to match the ones that Dumbledore’s glamour gave him and changed his hair back to the bird’s nest it used to be; there was no point in letting on that he knew anything about Dumbledore’s manipulations too early.

“Kreacher,” Harry summoned, waiting for the elf to appear. “I will be going to the Weasleys for lunch.”

Kreacher nodded his head in understanding, withholding his comments like his master had asked; although, he did get the impression his master no longer liked the blood traitors.

Harry, finally ready, stepped into the floo and called out, “The Burrow.”

~

The Burrow, 9th June 1998

Stepping out of the floo with as much grace as he was able, which was not much, Harry's arrival was met with immediate silence.

“Bloody hell mate, why are you dressed like some fancy pureblood tosser for?” Ron’s voice rang out after a few seconds.

Smirking internally Harry used his wand to clean the dust from himself as Mrs. Weasley let out a squawk before bellowing, “Ronald Weasley!”

“What Ron means to say,” Hermione said, shooting Ron an obvious look that had Harry wondering if part of his compulsion spells had him being oblivious to their blatant lies, “is that you look very different, Harry.”

Ron, who was staring at Harry like he had grown another head, nodded, “Yeah, I mean your
“Well, you look very nice dear,” Mrs. Weasley said eventually.

“Yes, Harry,” agreed Ginny, who suddenly plastered herself to his arm. ‘He really does look great,’ she thought.

Trying not to snarl at her touch, Harry smiled tightly. “How have you all been?” he asked, trying to surreptitiously remove himself from Ginny’s clutches.

Listening as they spoke about how hard it was without Fred, Harry felt a pang of guilt - not towards them, but to George. He was sure the twins were not in on Dumbledore’s plans and he felt bad for not checking in on him. Harry had been surprised when he had read a book on Wizarding customs and gotten to the death chapter; in traditional Wizarding customs, a family usually held a funeral within days, yet he had heard nothing about a funeral for Fred.

Realising that they had moved into the kitchen while he had been lost in his thought, Harry took a moment to look at the clock and saw that Arthur, George, Percy, Fleur, and Bill all pointed to Shell Cottage. Not surprised, Harry refocused on the conversation.

“So Harry,” Hermione eventually began, “what prompted the new look?” Although her tone was light, Harry could feel the tension in the room suddenly skyrocket.

“Well, ‘Mione,” Harry said, making sure to use her nickname, “I recently got a letter from Gringotts.”

As soon as the word left his mouth they all froze and sent each other panicked looks. Ron seemed to choke on his own tongue and ended up gagging slightly. Pretending to be concerned Harry feigned worry and asked, “Ron, are you alright?”

Coughing slightly, Ron turned red. “Yeah, sorry about that, mate,” he said, his voice strained.

“It’s fine, as long as you’re okay,” Harry said in a concerned tone. His act seemed to ease everybody around him as they exchanged more covert glances before smiling.

“Anyway, as I was saying, I got a letter from Gringotts asking me to go in. Imagine my surprise when I went in and found out I was apparently named Sirius’s heir and also that I was apparently Lord Potter. Apparently Dumbledore should have told me, but I’m guessing because he died—” at this point Harry made his voice break, taking a moment to suppress his real emotions. Harry made his voice waver slightly when he continued, “Because he died he didn’t get a chance to tell me.”

After he had finished speaking Harry looked up surreptitiously. Seeing their panicked glances, he suppressed his chuckles.

“What’s that got to do with you looking different?” Ron asked.

Harry let out a sad sigh. “Well, after I found out I had money, not just what was in my trust vault, I decided to buy a few things. I mean, I’ve always worn Dudley’s old clothes and now that I can afford not to, I indulged a little.”

“Right,” Ron said, sounding annoyed.
“What else was in the vaults?” Hermione asked, her eyes gleaming in a way Harry had never noticed before.

“Just money mainly, some old books and stuff I’m guessing,” Harry said, making sure to sound disinterested.

“You know Harry, I would be happy to help you sort through them,” she said. “I mean, it’s important you document what you have.”

Harry tried not to snort dismissively; as if he would ever let her near his vaults. “That’s a good idea, ‘Mione,” Harry said. And it was - maybe he should check out his vaults and see if one of them holds an answer for him.

Mrs. Weasley took that moment to announce it was time for lunch. Plating up, she handed Harry his and took a seat. Harry, knowing he would be protected from any love potions by his lordship rings, still took a moment to send a nullifier at the plate before taking a bite.

Harry moaned in pleasure, even knowing that it was poisoned he had to admit that Mrs. Weasley did know how to cook.

“This is great Mrs Weasley,” he said, again pretending not to notice their scheming smiles.

After lunch was over, everybody at the table seemed to go quiet as Ginny stood up. “Harry, don’t you think you should come upstairs with me?” she asked, smirking.

Harry turned to her and said in a dazed voice, “Ginny?”

Thinking the potion had worked the Weasleys and Hermione barely contained their triumph. Ginny’s smirk of victory was particularly vicious.

Deciding he couldn’t be bothered to drag out the act, Harry continued, “Why would I want to do that, Ginny? I need to get going soon.”

Harry barely contained his laughter when Ginny’s face fell, going red then white in her anger.

“What?!” she demanded.

“I said I need to get going; I have business at Gringotts,” Harry said, deciding to do as Hermione suggested and take a look in his vaults.

“But-but—” Ron spluttered, turning to Hermione in his confusion. Hermione looked like an angry cat; her hair was practically standing on end and her anger almost palpable.

Standing, Harry barely concealed his glee. Turning to Mrs. Weasley, who was doing a better job at hiding her frustration, Harry smiled.

“I’m going to apparate, thank you so much for the lovely meal Mrs. Weasley.” Harry said before turning to the others. “I’ll see you guys soon.” Without waiting for them to say goodbye, Harry turned and left through the backdoor. However, instead of leaving, Harry cast a wordless disillusionment spell and snuck back inside before the door had fully closed.

Almost instantly, Harry had to cast a silencing charm as his glee quickly overcame him.

“I thought you said the potion would make him a mindless drone!” Ron shouted at Hermione, his face red.
“It was supposed to!”

“Well, it obviously didn’t work!” screeched Ginny.

“I don’t understand why it didn’t!” Hermione wailed, “I know I brewed it right, I followed the notes out of Dumbledore’s book perfectly!”

“Well, obviously, you made a mistake dear,” Mrs. Weasley said, the only one not screaming. “It’s not the end of the world, maybe next time I’ll help you.”

“But I want him now!” Ginny whined.

“Ginevra!” Molly’s voice turned sharp before smoothing out again, “You know that Harry is sullied by dark magic; he’s a taint on this world like Dumbledore said. The only reason you should ever want him is for his money, the fact you even have to pretend sickens me but it’s for the greater good.”

Harry, having heard enough to cement his belief, left at that point, silently exiting the house via the front door and apparating just outside the Leakey Cauldron in order to take off his glamours and change his eyes.

Entering the Wizarding pub, Harry noted that it was slightly busier than it had been days previously, as was Diagon Alley. Moving with purpose, Harry noticed the crowd seemed to part for him easily.

Once he reached the bank, Harry greeted the guards and made his way to a teller.

“Greetings master goblin,” he said, not knowing this goblin’s name.

The goblin looked up in shock before bowing his body slightly to Harry. “Greeting Lord Potter, what can we at Gringotts do for you on this day?” he asked.

Harry smiled lightly at the personal use of ‘we’; that collective showed his place as a goblin friend.

“I was wondering if I might take inventory of my vaults and maybe have them audited,” Harry said.

The goblin’s eyes widened before he nodded his head and said, “That is indeed possible; Chief Ragnok has taken it on himself to oversee you, Lord Potter.” Standing, the goblin beckoned Harry to follow. “If you would follow me, I shall take you to his office,”

“Thank you, master goblin,” Harry said, following the goblin down the familiar path. Since the blocks had been removed, Harry had found that he was able to recall much more information with a phenomenal accuracy. Often things he didn’t even realise that he knew, such as the dates of particular goblin battles and all twelve uses of dragon’s blood.

Reaching the doors, Harry turned to his guide. “I thank you for your help, my friend,” Harry said, “may your gold overflow.”

The goblin smiled toothily at Harry before bowing slightly. “And may your enemies quake in fear.”

Smirking, Harry said darkly, “Oh, they will.”

After knocking the door, Harry was beckoned inside.

“I was wondering when I would see you again, Harry,” Ragnok said.

Sitting on the chair opposite, Harry nodded his head in greeting before speaking, “Indeed, it has
taken me a few days to embrace all of the information thrust upon me during our last meeting.”

“I trust you have embraced it all now?” Ragnok asked.

“Yes,” Harry acknowledged, “that is why I am here. I was wondering if you have had a chance to overlook my vaults. I wish for them to be audited. I’m more interested in the Potter and Black vaults to be honest, but information on the others would be useful.”

Ragnok smirked in pride, “I have indeed had a chance, and in fact I was just about to send you a summons. It seems as though Mr. Dumbledore was more scheming than we first thought.”

Hearing this Harry’s eyes narrowed. “How so?” he asked, suspicions already forming in his mind.

“He has been taking money from the Potter vaults annually since November 1st, 1981. These payments include a large sum going to the Weasley family in what was named a Scholarship Fund, as well as individual payments to himself, Mrs. Molly Weasley nee Prewett, Mr. Ronald Weasley, Ms. Ginevra Weasley, Ms. Hermione Granger, and Mrs. Petunia Dursley nee Evans.”

Hearing this Harry hissed, and his magic flared dangerously. He tried not to think about his aunt and uncle; how they treated him was truly diabolical and Harry had to wonder if Dumbledore had something to do with the abuse never being notice by the authorities or Madam Pomfrey.

“These payments have been stopped correct?” Harry asked, once he had finally calmed down.

Ragnok nodded, shocked at the amount of control Harry had gained in such a short amount of time.

“If you would like we should be able to reclaim some of what was taken and impose sanctions until their debts to you have been cleared,” Ragnok said.

“If this can be done without their knowledge, do so. If not, then leave it, I do not what them knowing I am aware of their deceptions just yet,” Harry said.

“The sanctions can be put in place without their knowledge,” Ragnok said.

“Then do so,” Harry replied.

After taking a moment to gather his thoughts, which had been scattered by his anger, Harry remembered his other area of business. “I would like to visit some of my vaults today, to see what they contain.”

“A wise decision,” Ragnok said. “If I may, I would recommend going to the Mortemis vault; it should hold information very important to you.”

Nodding his head in understanding Harry thanked Ragnok and left the office, going with a teller who seemed to materialise out of the shadows to the vault carts.

“Vault number one,” the teller intoned when Harry stated his destination. A flicker of thought had Harry pausing; the lower the vault numbers usually meant older vaults, but the sudden jerk of the cart sent his apprehension of visiting the oldest vault in Gringotts flying in the wind.

~

Chapter End Notes
Thanks to my Beta miisticalwrites
Hope you're enjoying the story so far!
Remember to leave a comment & Kudos if you've liked it
~
Annie
The master of 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

“Vault number one,” the teller intoned when Harry stated his destination. A flicker of thought had Harry pausing; the lower the vault numbers usually meant older vaults, but the sudden jerk of the cart sent his apprehension of visiting the oldest vault in Gringotts flying in the wind.

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After what seemed like forever, the cart finally came to a stop and Harry slowly exited from it. They were in the deepest part of the bank, far below anywhere Harry had ever been before; above them, Harry could hear other carts moving far in the distance. Shaking himself to try and gather his bearings, Harry approached the doors to the vault. After a moment of consideration, Harry placed his hand on the doors and felt his magic surge before they unlocked with a soft click. Harry had expected an eerie creak, but not a sound came as he pushed open the vault doors.

Entering the nearly empty cavern, Harry noted that the vault was surprisingly clear and well lit. Approaching the table in the middle of the room, Harry's eyes were drawn to the book stand which displayed a very old looking, small book. Next to it, Harry noted something which made his eyes widen in shock: his invisibility cloak was on the table neatly folded, as well as Dumbledore's old wand. Harry had been wondering where the wand had vanished to, but in all the excitement the thought had been easily buried. His cloak too had disappeared, but Harry had assumed it would turn up; apparently, he was right. The next object was another thing that he recognised, having seen it only days before: it was the box for the Slytherin family ring. Opening the box, just to confirm it, Harry noted with little surprise that it was empty, and wondered if, when he died, it would appear here or in the Slytherin vault.

Looking at the three items, Harry realised that, apparently, the story of the three brothers was true. Picking up the wand, Harry felt his magic surge yet again; the feeling was similar to how he had felt when he had first picked up this holly wand at eleven, but it was more natural. Before, if asked, he would have said that his holly wand was the perfect fit for him, but now having felt his magic blend with this wand he realised how untrue that statement would have been. Summoning a spare wand holder, Harry placed the wand in it before turning to his cloak. Shrugging his shoulders, Harry put it on over his robe.

Finally done, Harry turned to the book and picked it up. Opening it, Harry began to read with fascination.

~

Congratulations, dear reader, on doing the impossible,

If you are reading this, then you have done what thousands before you have tried to do but failed. You have collected and mastered the three Deathly Hallows. Items forged by Death himself.

This, I know, means little to you at present, but once you truly comprehend the notion of how much power you now wield, you will understand what an honour and blessing this is to have befallen you.

There are however a few limitations.
But, they are best explained by the maker Himself. To summon Him, all you must do is try. You will find He always hears your call, He just doesn’t always answer.

Hello, farewell, and good luck.

Closing the book, Harry stood blankly for a moment, confused and thoroughly baffled.

“How the hell do I try to summon Death?” he mumbled, running through countless ideas and dismissing them completely before they fully formed.

“You must merely wish for my presence, Master,” spoke a deep voice from in front of Harry.

Looking up sharply, Harry let out a high squeak that he didn’t think would be biologically possible under normal circumstances. The being before him, as it was no man or creature, was easily 7ft tall and appeared to be draped in shadows.

“Y-you-you’re Death?” Harry stuttered out eventually, once his voice decided to return to him.

“I am known as many things but yes, I answer to Death,” said the voice.

“Oh, okay,” Harry said lightly, feeling suddenly very light headed.

Standing in silence, which seemed to stretch for hours rather than seconds, Harry tried not to squirm. Although he could make out no eyes under the shadowed cloak, Harry could almost feel the being’s gaze raking over him. Eventually, Harry dared to open his mouth again.

“The book said I had mastered you,” he said, his words sounding stupid to him now he had been in Death’s presence; nobody could master such a being.

“You have collected all three of my hollows, mastered them,” Death said.

Harry nodded before speaking, “And what does that mean for me?”

“It means that I will help you, teach you, and aid you in whatever you wish. You are my master, but I am no slave. I will keep you alive until such a time you no longer desire to be; you will be my companion,” Death said, His voice giving no indication about what He thought of this.

Harry considered Death’s words, and after a few moments he asked the question that had been haunting him. “Could you bring somebody back to life? My soulmate—” he said, breaking off his softly spoken words. He wanted the bond complete as he didn’t want to die, but bringing Voldemort back? Harry was torn.

Death was silent for a moment. “Even I have limits,” he said, “though it would be possible, bringing somebody back from the dead is never without cost. Once somebody is dead, it is better for them to stay that way. To take them from their peace is not something that should be done.”

Harry let out a breath of air that he didn’t even realise he had been holding and sagged at His words. “Oh,” he said, his disappointment tangible. Even though he was torn to hear it was better left impossible, it still made the ache in his chest grow.

Silence fell then before Death spoke again, “However, I can offer you something else.”

Harry perked up at this, wondering what Death would have to say.
“I can feel your broken bond and it sings out in agony. I can send you back to a time it was not broken,” Death said.

Harry stilled at his words and thought about the implications. “You can send me back in time?” he asked, just to clarify.

“Yes,” Death verified.

Harry thought about the possibilities and asked, “If I was sent back, would I still be me?”

“You would merge with your younger self unless you went back to a time before you existed. Though not impossible, I do not recommend that path. It opens up endless loopholes and paradoxes that give me headaches to fix,” Death said.

Harry almost laughed at how put out Death managed to sound, while still being utterly terrifying. “By merge, do you mean that I would take over my younger self? Would I keep my memories?”

“Indeed,” Death confirmed.

Harry nodded as he thought, an idea blooming in his mind. “What about my magic? It was bound when I was younger, if I returned would it be bound still?” he asked.

“I would never allow such a thing,” Death said scathingly.

“So I would return how I am now basically, but in my younger body?”

“Yes,” Death said.

“What about the Hallows? Back then they’re still around, but I don’t have them, or at least I don’t have the wand or the stone. Would I still be your master?” Harry asked.

“You would still be my master unless somebody else gains all three of them. However, you will obviously not have access to the wand or the stone. I am unsure, but I would think the wand would not work against you - it would know you are its true master. I would suggest you work on collecting all three once you have returned,” Death said.

Harry thought about this and nodded his head. “I don’t have to take you up on this right away, do I? It’s not like a onetime deal?” Harry questioned.

“No. You may summon me and ask for this at any point, though I am busy, so I may not always answer you the moment you call,” Death said.

Harry nodded. “I think that’s all I needed to know. Thank you,” he said before awkwardly adding, “Erm, you can go now?”

Death seemed to chuckle slightly, alarming Harry, before He simple vanished back into the shadows.

Harry stood for a moment, standing in shock, before the realisation of how surreal his life was hit him. Laughing manically, Harry barely kept himself from falling to the floor in his state. Finally, after gaining a small semblance of control, Harry stood and straightened himself out. Deciding it was best not to wear his invisibility cloak, Harry focused on banishing it to his room in Grimmauld Place, trusting his magic to send it there. Finally, he returned to the cart outside and asked to be taken back to the surface, ignoring the goblin’s curious look.

Instead of going back into the main bank, Harry instead followed the paths towards Ragnok’s office.
Nodding to the guards, Harry knocked on the door and waited to be called in.

“I see you have returned,” Ragnok said once Harry had seated himself.

“Did you know?” Harry questioned.

Ragnok withheld his smirk. “I know many things, but even I cannot take a guess as to what you mean.”

Harry narrowed his eyes and clarified, “Did you know what being the Master of Death meant for me?”

Ragnok sighed, “It has never been done before, so I did not know for certain, but I had an idea.” Silence fell after he spoke.

“Death said I could go back,” Harry said after a few moments.

“Go back?” Ragnok asked.

“I would be able to relive my life, taking the place of my younger self. I would have my memories and my powers; I would literally have a chance to do it all again, but better,” Harry said.

“I see,” Ragnok said. “I take it you are considering this?”

“I think I want to do it,” Harry confided, “the only thing that is currently keeping me going is the thought of revenge, and even that doesn’t block out my longing for long. It’s always there. If I went back, I could change everything.”

“No - yes - I don’t know,” Harry admitted. “I would try to fix him. His goals before they became so twisted with insanity were good; I refuse to believe the one person magic fated to be perfect for me was an insane snake-faced megalomaniac.”

Ragnok smiled at that. “Good.”

Harry was shocked. “You want me to side with Voldemort?” he asked.

“No, I want you to fix Voldemort, to build on what he started when he first began. I want you, Harry Potter, to change the world,” Ragnok said.

Harry looked at Ragnok who, in just a few short days, had come to be a true friend. “You know if I go back, you won’t remember me,” he said.

Ragnok smirked at that. “I wouldn’t be so sure, Harry.”

“What do you mean?”

“Goblin magic is different from that which wizard’s wield,” Ragnok said. “When you return, you may find yourself surprised with just how much we remember.”

Harry smirked at this, glad he would have a confidant when he went back.

“You have made your decision then,” Ragnok said, seeing the look on Harry’s face.

“Yes, I think so. There is just one thing I need to do first.”
After leaving the bank, Harry made his way to Grimmauld Place. One of the only regrets he had about his decision to go back was Kreacher. He had really bonded to the elf in the weeks he had been at Grimmauld, however he knew that if all went to plan he would be seeing the elf a lot earlier than he had in this life when he returned.

Going up to his room, Harry opened his trunk and summoned the object he had come home for: the Marauder’s Map. Opening it up, he placed his wand again it and intoned, “I solemnly swear that I’m up to no good.” Watching as the map came to life, Harry looked to the headmaster’s office and saw it empty; searching the surrounding areas, Harry saw that, although not completely empty, the school was practically deserted.

Putting on his invisibility cloak and tucking the map into his pocket, Harry returned to the receiving room and apparated to Hogsmeade. The walk to the castle filled Harry with regret; there were vast areas of destruction and Harry could see that it would take time to fix the damage. Hopefully things would be better after he returned; he never wanted to see Hogwarts in such a state ever again. Even if he hated that his memories of the place were tainted by Dumbledore and his manipulations, Harry just couldn’t bring himself to hate the castle and all it represented for him.

Once he got close enough to enter the castle’s wards, Harry felt a shift in his magic. Breaching them, Harry had a baffling sensation of peace, almost like he was coming home.

Making his way quickly towards the office, Harry withdrew the map. Even under his cloak with scent blocking and silencing charms, Harry didn’t want to risk running into anyone. Seeing that the way was clear, Harry kept his pace and finally made it the gargoyle guardian blocking the way to the headmaster’s - well, he supposed it would be headmistress’ now - office.

Harry considered his next move before a thought came to him. Remembering what he had once read in a book years ago, Harry decided to try something. He said, “I, Harrison James Potter-Black, Lord of Slytherin and Gryffindor, do demand entrance to this room.”

At first he thought it had not worked, as nothing seemed to happen, but slowly the gargoyle moved. Quickly casting a secrecy charm on the guardian so it could not be questioned about how he gained entrance should Harry be found, Harry continued his journey and climbed the stairs to the office. Standing, Harry let out a breath. Withdrawing his new wand Harry set about casting warning wards, as well as silencing charms and secrecy charms. Once he felt them settle, Harry removed his cloak, causing the many paintings of previous headmasters and headmistresses to splutter in shock.

“You, boy, how did you get in here?” one male portrait asked. Harry believed him to be Walter Gagsworth, the headmaster from 1640 to 1679.

Harry, however, chose to ignore him as he focused on the portrait of the man he had once worshiped and loved like a father.

“What?!” the portrait of Albus Dumbledore asked, his voice sounding as mild and grandfatherly as ever.

Unable to control himself at the benign tone, Harry felt the room shake slightly as his magic tried to rip free.

The portrait of Dumbledore seemed shocked for a moment, then those twinkling eyes narrowed.

“I see you have found out about yourself then,” he said sagely, as though he had not manipulated Harry’s entire life.
Harry gritted his teeth. “Indeed,” Harry said in an icy tone that promised pain. At this point the other portraits went silent, fearing the look in the eyes of the dark hair teen before them.

The portrait of Albus sighed, “It really was for the greater good.”

Harry, having had enough, barely kept his voice from breaking the sound barrier as he bellowed, "The greater good?! How is stealing from me, drugging me, and manipulating me for the greater good?!!"

“It was better this way,” Albus said before being cut off. Harry was not done ranting.

“Tell me, how is blocking my soul bond for the greater good? Tell me that, Albus!” Harry demanded.

Hearing Harry's shout, the other portraits seemed to forget their fear and let out cries of shock and horror.

“You didn’t!”

“How could you?!”

“Who do you think you are?!”

And to Harry's great amusement, the portrait of Phineas Nigellus Black began ranting and swearing in such a creative and colourful way that Harry was sure even a seasoned sailor would have blushed.

Eventually Albus was forced to shout, “Enough!”

Once the room had quieted down, although mutinous mutterings could still be heard, Dumbledore continued to speak, staring at Harry with a look of betrayal that made him want to laugh. “You needed to destroy Voldemort, you needed to support the light and follow in your parent’s footsteps. You know the prophecy, it had to be you.”

Harry growled and took a step forward. “Follow in their footsteps. Die, you mean?” Harry said in a deadly tone.

With narrowed eyes the portrait of Dumbledore seemed to puff himself up before speaking, “For the greater good, my boy, some sacrifices must be made.”

“How is my death for the greater good?!” Harry screamed, before he took a breath. “And don’t you even think to use my parents against me! I doubt my parents would have wanted me to sacrifice my life after they lost their own lives saving mine!”

“They believed in the light! The prophecy!”

“The prophecy,” Harry spit the word out, “it’s always been about the prophecy. But tell me Albus, was there ever a prophecy, or did you just make that up to fit your desires?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore seemed to vibrate in anger in his portrait, before he once again put on his sagely persona. “How could you ask me that, my boy? Your parents died for that prophecy.”

“They died for me!” Harry shouted, “They died sacrificing their lives so that I could live mine!”

“They were great people, true light followers! They knew that some sacrifices had to be made. Just look at you now, Harry, you practically ooze darkness - you're turning into Tom!” Dumbledore said, his voice comically rising in pretend concern.
"I'm exactly who I've always been Albus, just without your manipulations,” Harry said.

“This is why you had to die, Harry. You're just like Tom, just as dark,” Albus finally said, losing his grandfatherly persona.

“Dark does not mean evil!” Phineas Black’s portrait shouted, interrupting the conversation with the support of the other former headmasters and headmistresses.

“He’s right,” Harry said, drawing the conversation back to himself. “Dark does not mean evil. Something you have never understood.”

Albus huffed arrogantly, “You think to tell me anything? I am Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, and you are just a boy!”

Harry shook his head condescendingly. “No, you're the portrait of a dead man,” Harry said icily.

Albus huffed again, “And you’re a dead man walking, Harry. Or did you forget? You killed your soulmate.” Albus’ taunt made Harry’s heart twinge momentarily and once again the other portraits exploded in anger.

Harry, however, started to chuckle softly after the moment passed, eventually gaining the attention of the room when his guffaws became loud enough to notice.

“You think this is funny?!” Albus demanded, wanting to know why Harry was not crying because of his words.

Harry eventually calmed down and shot Albus a hard look. “Yes,” Harry said to everybody’s confusion.

“There is no bringing him back this time, Harry. I made sure of that,” Albus taunted. “You will die just like him.”

Harry, however, just smirked. “Ah, that, Albus, is where you are wrong,” he said.

The portrait of Albus jumped to his feet and pushed his face closer to the frame. “What have you done?!” he demanded.

“Tell me Albus, what do you know about the Deathly Hallows?” Harry taunted.

The portrait seemed to lose colour, something Harry didn’t know was possible.

“Impossible,” he whispered.

“Oh no, dear Albus, imagine my surprise when I did my blood inheritance test and I found myself to be the lord of five families and the Master of Death,” Harry said.

The other portraits all froze at his words, shocked whispers running rampant.

“So you're going to bring him back.” Albus said with disgust, looking at Harry with pure unadulterated hatred.

Harry laughed again. “Oh no, where’s the fun in that? Even Death doesn’t like to bring back those who have passed. No, what I’m planning is much more fun, dear Albie,” Harry continued to taunt.

“What, you demented boy?!”
“Why, I'm going to go back,” Harry said.

His words caused all the noise to stop before finally soft chuckling then full blown belly laughs were heard. Unsurprisingly, it was once again Phineas Black’s portrait.

“You can’t!” Albus screamed.

“Oh, but I can, and it will be glorious,” Harry replied, his dark smirk promising revenge. “I will have my revenge and save Tom,” he promised.

“He can’t be saved!” Albus tried to reason in vain, hoping to regain control of Harry.

“I refuse to believe that!” Harry replied, before his warning wards gave a twinge. Pulling out the map Harry saw McGonagall walking toward the office. With a smile Harry tucked it away and faced the portrait of Albus for the last time. “It seems our time together has come to an end, so I will just say this: I cannot wait to see you again, professor.”

With that Harry turned and made his way to the door, ignoring Dumbledore’s cries and threats and Phineas’ laughs.

Harry had to let out a small chuckle as he heard Black shout, “please come and visit us when you return boy, I simply cannot wait to see who you become,”

Exiting the office in time, Harry caught McGonagall just as she turned the corner.

“Mr. Potter, what are you doing here?” she asked.

Harry schooled his features and smiled at her. “I came to talk to you actually, professor,” he said.

“Well then, why don’t we take this up to Albus’ office?” she asked.

“No,” Harry said quickly. “I mean, I would like to see the progress that's been made fixing the damage, if that's alright with you.”

McGonagall nodded after looking at Harry with surprise at his quick rejection. “That’s fine with me, Mr. Potter,” she said, leading the way away from the office.

“Now, what is it you wished to speak to me about?” she asked.

“I was wondering if you had heard about my decision to not return to Hogwarts in September?” he asked, gaining pursed lips from McGonagall before she replied.

“I had heard, and I cannot say I blame you, but I do wish you would reconsider,” she said.

Harry felt a moment of anger well up in him as he wondered if she was in on Dumbledore’s schemes. She was his deputy after all, and they always seemed close.

“Oh professor?” Harry said hoping for her to elaborate so he could watch her response.

“I cannot even imagine all you had to go through in order to defeat Voldemort, but I will be honest with you Harry; you have a unique ability. You inspire those around you and I had hoped that, if you returned, maybe others would as well. However, I do understand why you would choose not to. I suppose it would seem silly to return to being a student when you have gone through so much,” she said.

Harry's relief at her words was immense. Although it was not definite proof, Harry felt he could trust
that she was not in on Dumbledore's schemes.

They continued to make small talk as they view the grounds. The castle’s damage was still extensive, but Minerva, as she now insisted on being called as she was no longer his teacher, assured Harry the school would be operational by September.

Walking him to the gates so he could apparate, Minerva smiled at Harry. “You will visit?” she asked, although it sounded more like a demand.

Harry smiled. “I will be back before you know it,” Harry promised.

~

Grimmauld Place, 9th June 1998

Returning to Grimmauld Place for the last time, in this lifetime at least, had Harry looking about in nostalgia. He was ready now, he thought.

Sitting down at the kitchen table, Harry, with a cup of tea Kreacher made, thought about Death to summon Him.

After a few minutes, Harry noticed the shadows growing before a voice asked, “You’re ready now?”

Harry swallowed the last of his tea before he turned and looked at Death.

“Yes,” he said. “I want to go back to just before I received my letter to Hogwarts.”

Death seemed to nod, “Very well.”

Harry sat, wondering how this would all work, before suddenly he felt like his body was being forced through a blender. If he thought portkeys were bad, they were nothing compared to this; Harry felt like his very atoms were being ripped apart and rearranged. His last thought was that he was probably correct.

~

Chapter End Notes

The scene between Harry and Albus' portrait is Literally my favourite to date. I loved writing it.
Hope you enjoy, if so remember to comment & leave kudos
~

Annie
Hello old world, I'm back

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

*Harry sat wondering how this would all work, before suddenly he felt like his body was being forced through a blender. If he thought portkeys were bad, they were nothing compared to this. Harry felt like his very atoms were being ripped apart and rearranged. His last thought was that he was probably correct.*

~

*4 Privet Drive, July 31st 1991*

Harry sat up with a groan. His head was killing him and he felt like he had bruised every inch of his skin, twice. Looking around, Harry tried to make sense of his surroundings when he suddenly remembered what he had done. With a maniacal cackle, Harry looked around the dusty confines of his cupboard; it was as bad as he remembered he thought to himself.

“It worked,” he whispered to himself.

“Did you doubt me?” asked Death’s deep, rumbling voice, making Harry jump as he had thought he was alone.

“No, it’s just shocking really being here.” Harry said, his prepubescent voice shocking him as he was used to his more mature rumble.

Death seemed to accept that. “I will leave you here,” he said, “try not to call on me unless you have dire need as I am not an errand boy for your amusement. I will check in from time to time.”

Harry nodded his head, still lost in the surrealism of the situation.

“Very well,” Death said before promptly vanishing.

Harry sat for a moment gathering his thoughts before deciding to test his magic; it wasn’t that he didn’t trust Death, it was just that he wanted to verify.

Focusing on his magic, Harry held out his hand. With one thought of the lighting charm, Harry was happy to see his cupboard light up. Smiling, Harry’s thoughts soon turned sour when he heard movement. In his joy he had forgotten about the *muggles*.

As Vernon moved above him, coming down the stairs, the ceiling let out puffs of dust making Harry cough and splutter. Harry’s eyes narrowed as he remembered everything he had been forced to live through at the hands of his so called caretakers. He would be damned if he would sit back and take it again. When his cupboard door was finally yanked open and Vernon’s bellowing voice rang out, Harry had already decided what to do.

“You had better be awake, boy! I want breakfast on the table in ten minutes or so help me God, you will rue the day your good for nothing mother whelped you!” Vernon roared, his face an unhealthy
puce colour.

Harry stood gracefully and moved out of the cupboard. He didn’t know if the blood glamour had been removed, but he guessed it had as Vernon soon started spluttering at Harry.

“What did you do you little freak?!” he demanded, advancing on Harry with his fist raised. Normally this would have caused Harry to drop and cower in fear, but now Harry just smirked and tightened his fist, watching in fascination as Vernon froze, unable to move. The spell was one he had read about in the Black library - it would bind the victim and the more they struggled the tighter the bindings got. It was based on devil’s snare, interestingly enough.

Harry took a step forward and, with flourish, dropped his fist down, causing Vernon to drop painfully to his knees. “Now uncle, let’s not do anything we’ll regret now,” Harry said, his voice mockingly soft.

“F-freak! Release me at once!” Vernon ordered, his voice not as loud as it had once been and his face taking on a distinctly fearful look. Harry watched in glee as he struggled, knowing he was causing himself further pain; and although he didn’t like torture, he was suddenly gaining an understanding for it.

Sighing in mock sympathy, Harry took another step forward so that now he was only a foot away from Vernon before he spoke again, “I think it’s time we established some new rules. Don’t you agree?”

“S-stop it,” Vernon said.

“I asked you a question, uncle,” Harry said.

“What is it you want, boy?” Vernon spat out eventually.

“I want to be left alone,” Harry said. “No cooking, no cleaning, you will pretend like I don’t exist and I will do the same for you and your family.”

“Fine,” Vernon growled the word out.

Stepping back, Harry released the spell. Vernon sank even further down before surging forward. Expecting this, Harry raised his hand and stupefied him before turning his eyes to his real audience. Petunia stood at the top of the stairs white faced and shaking, her hand covering her mouth in terror.

“Like I said, I no longer exist,” Harry said to his aunt, who quickly nodded her head.

“Is-is he d-dead?” Petunia whispered.

Harry rolled his eyes. “No, not this time. However, I do think it would be wise of you to explain how our arrangement works, to both him and Dudley. It would be a shame if any unpleasant accidents happened because they forgot the new rules.”

Petunia nodded again, her beady eyes darting between Harry and Vernon’s prone form. “Yes, yes of course,” she said, practically vibrating in her fear.

Happy, Harry turned and made his way towards the kitchen to make himself something to eat before he stopped just shy of the door. “Oh and aunty, I will be receiving my letter today, you know the one. So don’t expect me back until tonight.”

Harry’s words made her pale even further and for a moment he thought she would actually faint.
Bemused, Harry continued on his way before he froze and practically ran back to the hallway. Grabbing Petunia by the arm, Harry looked into her eyes and placed a secrecy jinx. She would be unable to tell anybody what she now knew apart from whoever Harry wished. This way she would be unable to tell Dumbledore or anybody else if they ever came sniffing about for answers - it would even work against Legilimens. He would do the same to Vernon once he woke up.

Happy with what he had accomplished in just a few short minutes, Harry returned to his previous task and went about cooking his breakfast. Just as he was about to plate up, Dudley came running into the kitchen. Seeing Harry, he turned and made his way towards him. Sighing, as it was clear Petunia hadn’t had a chance to talk to her oversized son, Harry wondered for a fleeting second if he could get away with just killing them. Harry didn’t really condone casual murder, but when he thought about everything his family had done to him, every beating and nights left starving, he really considered just ending them now. Harry couldn’t believe how passive the potions had made him, how they had made him ignore the beatings and be forgiving about the abuse.

“Stop,” Harry said, the chilling tone making Dudley do just that, almost comically freezing.

However, like his father, Dudley would never be considered smart. After a second, he narrowed his eyes and took a step forward. The look on his face, Harry decided, was supposed to be menacing, but looked vaguely like he was constipated.

Turning back to the stove, Harry turned off the hob before turning back to Dudley. It was clear the boy was confused by Harry's actions and was wavering on what to do. Luckily for him, he picked the smarter option.

“Mum!” he wailed, smirking when he thought about the trouble Harry would be in.

Petunia appeared like a bat out of hell, almost panting in her effort to get to her son. Harry watched in amusement as she looked between them and grabbed Dudley. “What is it, diddums?” she asked shakily.

“The freak was cooking,” he said, sending a glare at Harry, who at this point had his omelette on his plate and was considering if he wanted to add sauce.

Petunia squeaked in terror and looked at Harry, who just raised an eyebrow, smirking, before taking a bite of his omelette.

“Diddy-kins, I need you to come with me. We need to have a chat about how we treat Harry,” Petunia said, practically dragging him from the room as he protested.

With that over, Harry made his way upstairs and into Dudley’s second bedroom. Looking around in disgust at the broken toys and rubbish cluttering the floor, Harry waved his hands and watched as it was banished. Next, he used a liberal about of scouring and repairing charms on the walls, floors, and door. Looking at the furniture, Harry attempted a few simple transfigurations, not anything too fancy as, even with his power increase, he was still working without a wand and with his limited knowledge of transfiguration. Whilst he had been practically living in the Black library, he hadn’t studied up on it, focusing more on darker arts and soul magic in the hope of finding an answer to his problems. However, even with his limited knowledge, Harry was able to create a comfortable looking bed, with matching side table, desk, and wardrobe as well as a desk chair. Happy with the sparsely furnished room, Harry turned to leave, adding a muggle repelling ward to the doorway as an afterthought.

Entering the living room, Harry noted how the Dursleys sat together and watched him warily. It would seem that Petunia had finally got around to warning Dudley. Making eye contact with Vernon
and then Dudley Harry set the jinx, happy when he felt his magic settle, letting him know it was in place.

“I will be moving into Dudley’s second bedroom,” Harry stated, watching in fascination as both Dudley and Vernon recoiled as though struck.

Dudley let out a horrified squawk, but before he could protest Petunia nodded. “Yes, of course,” she said quickly, sending both the male Dursleys a fearful look.

Waiting, Harry was almost bouncing with excitement when he heard the mail come. Walking to the door, Harry easily saw the letter that was for him, the parchment standing out against the muggle envelopes. Picking the letter up, Harry immediately felt the charms and compulsions on it try to take effect and smirked when his magic reacted and tore them apart. Taking the letter upstairs, Harry opened it after reading the address, gleefully ripping apart the purple wax seal bearing the school’s coat of arms.

~

Mr. H. Potter

The Cupboard under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey

~

HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on September 1. We await your owl by no later than July 31.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall,

Deputy Headmistress

~
Equipment list

First-year students will require:

Uniform:

Three Sets of Plain Work Robes (black)
One Plain Pointed Hat (black)
One Pair of Protective Gloves (dragon hide or similar)
One Winter Cloak (black, silver fastenings)

Please note that all student's clothes should carry name-tags at all times.

Books:

The Standard Book of Spells, Grade 1 by Miranda Goshawk
A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot
Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling
A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch
One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore
Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger
Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander
The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble

Other Equipment:

1 Wand
1 Cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)
1 set of glass or crystal phials
1 telescope
1 set of brass scales

Students may also bring an Owl, Cat, or Toad.

PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS

~

Reading the list, Harry thought about Hedwig for a moment; he could buy her again in this life he thought happily, pleading that his first friend would hopefully be with him again soon.

 Summoning a biro and some paper, Harry quickly penned his reply to McGonagall. It wouldn’t do
for him to use ink and a quill and gain any unwanted attention.

~

Professor McGonagall,

Thank you for the letter, I accept my place at Hogwarts school as a first year student.

Gratefully,

Harry J Potter

~

With that done, Harry spent a moment and concentrated on his clothes, transfiguring his oversized t-shirt into a short day robe in a dark blue colour with pale green accents and his jeans into a pair of grey trousers. Harry then focused on his shoes, looking in disgust at the barely held together trainers, and transfigured them into shiny black ankle boots. Happy that his clothing would last until he managed to buy himself a proper wardrobe, Harry made his way down the stairs, glad to see the Dursleys going out of their way to ignore him. Even Vernon, who clenched his teeth and shook as he stared at Harry, but he still let him pass without challenge.

Walking out of the door, Harry took a moment to observe the wards surrounding the property and felt his anger towards Dumbledore surge. There were no blood wards surrounding the house. The wards consisted of a simple protection ward, an anti-apparition ward, and an owl redirection ward. Luckily the old man hadn’t thought to place any magical detection wards, or Harry would have some explaining to do. ‘I will make him pay’, Harry vowed to himself.

With a growl, Harry continued his journey and passed through the wards fully before spinning on his heel and apperating to just outside of the Leaky Cauldron. Entering the pub, Harry made sure to walk quickly and keep his scar covered. The Wizarding world hadn’t yet met him and didn’t know what he looked like, therefore he hoped that dressed in wizarding fashion and without Dumbledore’s blasted blood glamour, he would go undetected.

Going up to the bar, Harry gained Tom’s attention. “Excuse me, could you open the passage to Diagon Alley please?” he asked.

“Certainly, young sir,” Tom said.

Nodding his in thanks as the entry way opened, Harry slipped into the bustling crowd. He remembered only days ago reminiscing about the magic of Diagon Alley, but now he felt he had exaggerated it as he struggled to get through the crowd without knocking into people. Like before, the crowd parted easily for him subconsciously but still, with the number of people milling about, the journey through wasn’t without difficulty.

Finally reaching the other end of the alley, Harry slipped into Gringotts, giving the guards a nod in greeting and happy to see he got one in return.

After waiting in the small queue, Harry finally reached a free teller. Barely able to see up over the desk, Harry nodded in greeting and spoke, “Greetings, master goblin. I wish to enquire about the state of my family’s estate and my inheritance.”

Nodding, the goblin stood. “Greetings, Mr. Potter, we at Gringotts welcome you on this day. If you would follow me, I will take you to Chief Ragnok, who is personally overseeing your accounts.”
Harry let out a breath in relief when he heard this and hoped that Ragnok hadn’t been wrong when he assured Harry he would remember. Taking the familiar route to Ragnok’s office, Harry greeted the guards and bid his escort goodbye before entering the office.

Seeing Ragnok behind his desk, Harry approached before stopping to glare at the chair he usually sat in. Although he could get into it, it wouldn’t be easy as his eleven year old body was disturbingly small.

Ragnok, who was watching, chuckled at seeing his friend, although he hadn’t met him yet officially, struggle with the limitations of his new body.

Harry, giving up on trying to sit down, simply focused his magic on the chair, using a slight shrinking charm. Harry watched happily as the chair reduced enough in size that he would be comfortable yet still able to see over the desk. Once he was settled, he looked up to see Ragnok smirking at him.

“It is good to see you again, my friend,” the goblin said, “although this is our first time meeting for me.”

Harry let out a breath. “I am glad to see you again as well,” he said.

“I take it you are here to withdraw money from your vaults?” Ragnok asked.

“Please,” Harry said, before he added, “would it also be possible to make it so that only I can take money from my accounts?”

“Sadly, you cannot ban Dumbledore from your vaults as he is your magical guardian, however you can make it so that only he can access your vaults and only in person,” Ragnok said.

“Please do, and could you possibly recall all of my vault keys?” Harry asked, remembering that Hagrid had one in his last life.

“Recalling your keys is easy, just say your full name and that you wish to recall your keys belonging to your name and they will appear,” Ragnok instructed.

“I, Harrison James Potter-Black, recall any and all vault keys belonging to my name.”

Within seconds several keys appeared, shocking Harry. “What do I do with them now?” Harry asked.

“They will be disposed of for you if you wish,” Ragnok said. At Harry’s nod he preceded, flicking his wrist so the keys were banished.

“Without a key nobody else apart from Dumbledore can gain access to my vaults, right?” Harry checked.

“Correct. Even with a written statement from Dumbledore, they would be unable to get in,” Ragnok confirmed.

“Can you make it so no new keys are given out? Perhaps, lie to Dumbledore, saying that it’s a new policy or something? Maybe say that they can only be given out with the family or heirs permission?” Harry asked.

Ragnok considered the request before giving a sharp nod. “It can be done,” he said.
“Thank you,” Harry said, before he frowned. “I need to get into my trust vault, but I was wondering if there was anything other than a key that I could use,” Harry said.

“Wearing the heir ring of your house will grant you access to your vault. As like a lordship ring, an heir ring can only be worn by the rightful heir, it cannot be fooled by potions or glamours,” Ragnok said.

“I see, do I have heir rings?” Harry asked as he had not had one last time, or at least he didn’t know about them.

“You do, however you only have two heir rings although you are still the heir of four houses. Heir rings are a newer trend, coming about around 150 years ago, therefore only the Potter and Black families had heir rings made,” Ragnok explained.

Harry nodded his understanding and picked up the two boxes Ragnok produced. Putting on the heir rings, Harry felt the same tug he experienced when he claimed his lordships in his past life.

“These rings have the same protections as their lordship counterparts and can work as a payment seal when making purchases. However, as there is no Black heir vault set up for you, only the Potter seal will work for payment; just think of that when placing the ring and it will show up,” Ragnok continued to say.

“Thank you,” Harry said after his magic had settled. Being able to use his ring to buy things would make it easier for him to make large purchases.

“It is no problem,” Ragnok dismissed. “If that is everything, I will have somebody take you down to your trust vault.”

“It is,” Harry said, saying goodbye as he exited the office.

Greeting his new escort, Harry asked about getting a money pouch attached to his trust vault, much like he had seen many purebloods using in his last life. After haggling the price down, Harry agreed with the goblin and accepted the pouch. This way he wouldn’t need to take copious amounts of money out to buy everything he needed and the pouches were magical signature locked, so there was no worry about his money even if it was stolen.

Entering his vault, Harry was greeted by the sight of piles of gold; he remembered being overwhelmed by the picture the first time around when he came in with Hagrid and snorted thinking about how he would have reacted to the sight of the Black family vaults. Grabbing a couple of coins just to keep on him, Harry was in and out of his vault quickly as he no longer needed to spend time counting out money now he had his pouch.

Greeting the goblin who was waiting back at the cart, Harry soon left the bank.

Shopping quickly and trying to be efficient about collecting his first year supplies from the various stores, Harry aimed to keep a low profile. The only time he deviated from the equipment list was when he was in a apothecary - he collected his own ingredients instead of buying the ready made up first year kit in order to have higher quality ingredients; he also added a few extra in case he found himself needing to brew anything. Harry also diverted from his list when in Flourish and Blotts, as he bought books on everything that fascinated him as well as his required texts. When looking at the books, Harry was reminded of the Black family library and cursed his own stupidity. Buying the books quickly, Harry practically ran back to Gringotts.

When he re-entered the bank Harry did not go to a teller. Instead, he nodded greetings as he passed
and made his way straight to Ragnok’s office. Harry barely even waited to be called in when he bound through the doors.

“Sirius Black!” he practically shouted to the startled Goblin chief.

Ragnok blinked at the state Harry was in and wondered what Sirius Black had to do with anything. “Mass murderer, placed in Azkaban prison on November 4th 1981 for the murder of twelve muggles and one wizard, Peter Pettigrew, reported Death Eater, and betrayer of the Potter family,” Ragnok recited.

“No, he's innocent and he’s my godfather,” Harry said.

“Innocent?” Ragnok questioned, “You’re sure?”

“Yes. In my third year it was confirmed, Pettigrew is alive; he’s an animagus living with the Weasleys. He was Ron's pet rat while we were at Hogwarts. He’s the real traitor.”

“I see,” Ragnok said. “What do you wish to do with this information?”

“I want him freed,” Harry said. “He never had a trial, he was just locked away. If he is freed I gain a new magical guardian, which solves my Dumbledore problem, and I will have access to the Black family library again.”

Ragnok frowned. “No trial? That's unheard of, especially as he was the heir of an Ancient and Noble House,” Ragnok muttered, more to himself than Harry.

“Can it be done?” Harry asked.

“I can make inquiries,” Ragnok said. “However, it will be a slow process; this screams of a cover up and the ministry will want this to remain buried. It would not look good on them to have locked up a noble heir without a trial for almost ten years.”

Harry smiled in relief and asked, “Would it help for me to acquire Pettigrew?”

“Yes, but not immediately,” Ragnok said. “If, like you say, Pettigrew was at Hogwarts, then it’s not unreasonable to believe Dumbledore knows. If he is to just disappear before we have sorted out a trial, Dumbledore may grow suspicious.”

Harry frowned but nodded, pleased that Ragnok would start to work on getting Sirius a trial.

“I will make a contract for you with a reliable law wizard,” Ragnok said, “that way, once the gears are moving, we can use them as an intermediary, thus keeping the nature of our relationship hidden from the world.”

“Brilliant,” Harry said, awed by the goblin’s cunning.

Ragnok smiled toothily. “Now, if that is all, it would seem I suddenly have a lot of work to do.”

With that dismissal, Harry once again left the bank, making sure to say goodbye to the guards as he had rushed passed them when he had entered.

Returning to his school shopping, Harry realised it was almost dusk and the shops were either closing or closed. With that in mind, Harry decided to get a room for the night at the Leaky Cauldron instead of returning to Surrey as he was still in need of his uniform and wand.
Entering the pub, Harry once again gained Tom’s attention, asking for a single room for the night and paying. Harry was happy to hand over the small cost as it included both dinner and breakfast and he was starving. He was determined to try and reverse some of the damage done to his body because of his relative's care.

Going up to his room, Harry looked around and added a few extra wards before removing the few bits he had brought from his robe. Returning downstairs, Harry ordered the Sheppard’s pie as well as a pot of tea and tucked in. Leaving a small tip when he was finished, Harry thanked Tom and returned to his room, trying to think of everything that happened in his last life and how he could change it for the better.

It only took a moment for Harry to recall exactly what else had happened the day he had gone to Diagon Alley and he cursed his stupidity. The stone! Thinking back, however, Harry thoughts soon turned to suspicion. Why was it that Hagrid was sent for the stone on the day he had to pick up Harry? Surely the better option for Dumbledore would have been to send somebody who could actually do magic? If not pick it up himself….

Thinking on the situation, Harry cursed his own stupidity and had to hand it to Dumbledore; he had well and truly played Harry. The entire situation was a setup - he was testing Harry and Harry had fallen for it every single time. Laughing in spite of himself, Harry wondered how Dumbledore would try to get Harry after the stone this time.

 Barely able to stay awake, Harry wondered why he was so tired but figured time travel probably left one sleepy and quickly stripped from his clothes and slipped into the bed.

The next day Harry looked at his transfigured clothes. They were still usable but looked rather lacklustre; that was the problem with transfiguring clothing when you were not a professional: the charms faded quickly. Sighing, Harry transfigured them again, and vowed his first order of business after getting a wand would be clothes.

After a breakfast of pancakes and bacon, Harry quietly joined the crowds of Diagon Alley, making his way straight to Ollivander’s.

Unlike in his first life, the shop was not empty, and much to Harry's chagrin the person was none other than an eleven year old Hermione Granger. Narrowing his eyes in distaste, Harry barely stopped himself from cursing her just to get it over with; this was the first time he had seen somebody on his hit-list and he was not feeling magnanimous. He was surprised to see that she didn’t have a school escort but was with her parents, who were standing looking shell shocked in the corner.

Hearing the bell chime over the door as he stepped through, she had turned to look at him. Her brown eyes narrowing as she ran her eyes over him, looking at his casual wizarding clothing with distaste.

Just then Ollivander spoke, “Ah, Mr. P—”

Harry quickly cut the peculiar man off before he could say Harry's last name, “Please sir, call me Harrison.”

“That’s rude you know,” said Hermione in a matter of fact tone that had Harry clenching his fist to stop himself from lashing out. “You shouldn’t interrupt people when they’re talking.”

Harry just looked at her with distaste. “Indeed,” he said, unconsciously mimicking Lucius Malfoy, “if you’re done Miss....” he let himself trail off.
Hermione seemed to puff up at his tone with indignation. “Yes, actually, I am finished,” she said contemptuously. “And my name is Hermione Granger,” she added.

Harry hummed, “Granger, I’ve never heard of that family before.” He really didn’t have a problem with muggleborns, not at all, but he hated how Hermione treated the Wizarding world. She thought their customs were outdated and scorned their culture just because it was different from the muggle world. She didn’t try to understand them, she just ignored them and complained.

“That’s because I’m the first witch in my family,” Hermione replied, looking at Harry challengingly. Making sure to put as much distaste behind his words as possible, Harry said, “I see.”

Turning then, as though to dismiss her, Harry only had to wait a second before she exploded in self righteous indignation, “What? You think you’re better than me because you have a magical family?” she demanded.

Harry hummed again, “No, I never said that. That belief is all yours, Miss Granger.”

Just as Harry was sure she was about to explode, her parents seemed to pull themselves out of their fearful state and noticed she was done.

“Oh, come on Hermione, we’ve got to get going,” Mrs. Granger said, practically making a run for the door.

Watching them leave, Harry let a small smirk form on his face when he saw Hermione struggle and glare at him.

“Well, that was interesting,” said Ollivander voice, drawing Harry’s attention to the man who had been silently watching his interaction with Hermione.

Harry shrugged. “I really don’t have a problem with muggleborns,” Harry said. “I just hate people like her who come into this world and try to change it into a replica of the muggle one.”

Ollivander hummed again and nodded, “Well then, let’s see what the wands make of you, Harrison.”

Stepping forward, Harry watched as Ollivander seemed to lose focus before looking at Harry intently. “Your wand arm, if you please,” he instructed.

Handing out his right arm, Harry considered just telling him what wand was his but decided to go with the process. Maybe his wand would have changed.

Eventually Harry decided that his wand hadn’t changed as, like last time, after testing dozens of wands, Ollivander finally produced a familiar dusty old box.

Picking up his holly wand, Harry felt his magic sing. Although he was now more than capable of wandless magic, the feeling of unity between a wand and its wizard was something special.

“Ah, interesting,” Ollivander said, almost mirroring his speech from Harry’s last life. “Eleven inches from the wood of a holly tree and containing the tail feather of a phoenix.”

Nodding his head, Harry didn’t ask what was interesting, instead he asked, “Could I also buy a wand holder for my wrist, in black dragonhide if possible?”

Ollivander nodded when Harry spoke and went to find the holster. After placing it on the till he looked at Harry. “I will be expecting great things to come from you with that wand, Mr. Potter,” he
Harry smiled slightly. “I hope to achieve great things,” he said.

“That will be twelve galleons and eighteen knuts in total,” Ollivander said eventually.

Reaching into his money pouch, Harry thought of the amount of money he needed and withdrew his hand, the correct sum now in it. Passing it over, Harry attached his wand holster to his wrist and placed his wand in it before leaving the shop.

Next, Harry headed for Madam Malkin’s. Entering the shop, Harry was glad to find it empty.

“First year robes?” asked Madam Malkin herself as she appeared from behind a clothing display.

“Yes please, could I also get a few day robes and—” Harry cut himself off with a sheepish rub of his neck. “Well, actually, I need an entire wardrobe really,” he admitted.

“Right then dear, why don’t you step up on the platform and I’ll measure you up,” Madam Malkin said.

Standing up on the raised platform, Harry soon had his measurements taken.

“Right dear, I can have the school robes done in a few moments,” she said, indicating for Harry to get down. “We can pick out the rest and I can modify the fit for you.”

“Thank you,” Harry said, going to look through the racks.

Picking out a few pieces, Harry soon found his arms full with day robes, shirts, trousers, jumpers, underwear, and pajamas. All of it got added to the pile growing on the table - he even picked out shoes and a few accessories. Eventually, between himself and Madam Malkin, who had returned, Harry had a decent variety of clothing which Madam Malkin promised to charm to grow a few inches so it would last even if he had a growth spurt.

“I can have these modified and charmed by the end of lunch. Why don’t you come back and pick them up at, say, around one o’clock? If that’s convenient, of course. If not, I can have them owled to you,” she said.

“I can pick them up,” Harry said. It was almost lunch now and he still had to go to the Eeylops Owl Emporium to buy Hedwig.

“Would you like to pay now or on collection?” she asked.

“I will pay now,” Harry said.

Malkin nodded and tapped her wand to the till. “Your total will be 126 galleons and six sickles,” she said. Harry nodded at the price, soothing the lady’s nerves as she worried the child wouldn’t be able to pay such a large sum.

“Can I use my heir ring to pay?” Harry asked.

Producing the payment sheet, Madam Malkin handed it over. Focusing on the Potter crest, Harry placed his ring in the designated space and watched as the Potter seal appeared. Handing it back, Harry watched as Madam Malkin’s eyes widened and then darted to Harry's forehead. Seeing this, Harry looked around the shop before carefully moving his fringe to show the famous scar.

“I would appreciate if you kept it quiet that I am shopping today,” Harry said.
“O-of course, Mr. Potter, anything,” she stuttered suddenly, making Harry want to sigh. He hated when people suddenly realised who he was and started to treat him like a celebrity.

“Right then Madam, I will see you after lunch,” Harry said, nodding his head politely in goodbye.

Leaving the shop and ignoring the seamstresses stuttered farewells, Harry headed to Eeylops. Seeing Hedwig still outside in her cage, Harry smiled brightly. Approaching her large, knowing eyes Harry hoped that she would bond with him like she had in his last life. Seeing his interest, a shop assistant appeared as though summoned and asked if he wanted to buy her. Harry nodded and barely drew his eyes away from his old friend.

“She’s a temperamental one, doesn’t seem to like anybody. Always takes a nip at whoever has to feed her,” the shop assistant warned as he looked at Hedwig in her cage.

“She’s perfect,” Harry said. “Can I also get a large cage and some owl treats?”

“Certainly,” the assistant said before gathering the items and telling Harry the total. Shrinking them down, the assistant handed them over to Harry, who handed over the required gold in response.

Carefully opening the cage Hedwig had been kept in, Harry watched as she looked at him with interest before she walked onto his arm.

“Hello, beautiful,” he said softly, scratchy her in the way he knew she loved.

“Well, I’ll be damned, you must have a lucky touch,” the shop assistant said, watching Harry interact with the bird in awe.

Nuzzling against his hand, Hedwig have a contented trill.

“My name’s Harry and you and me? We’re going to be great friends,” Harry told the bird. “I’m going to call you Hedwig,” Harry continued, and watched as her intelligent eyes seemed to accept her new name.

“Right then,” Harry said after a moment, “why don’t you go and catch yourself some food and stretch your wings for a few hours? I’m currently living at 4 Privet Drive in Surrey so, when you’re done, you can return there,” Harry instructed the bird. He watched happily as she flew up in the air.

Happy now that he had finished all of his shopping, Harry found a small cafe to have lunch before returning to collect his clothing. Glad he was done, Harry wandered through the Leaky Cauldron and apperated back to Surrey.

He didn’t want to risk forgetting anything about his first year again like he almost did with the stone, so he was going to make a list of everything that had happened. Thinking back as he wrote, Harry couldn’t believe at the amount of things he had done that played into Dumbledore’s hands; but then again, that was probably exactly what he had wanted. Vowing things would be different, Harry started to plot.

~

Chapter End Notes

So there it is, he's back!
Hope you're enjoying the story so far, as always comments and Kudos welcomed!
An update should be available in the next few days.
It may take slightly longer than you've become used to as I will be very busy over the next week
~ Annie
Previously

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~

4 Privet Drive, September 1st 1991

On the morning of September 1st, Harry could hardly contain his impatience and resentment. He had spent the last month reviewing everything that had happened in his last life, and he honestly feared that he would curse Dumbledore the moment he saw him. So much had been manipulated that Harry truly feared he had never once had a chance to act like himself, to be his own person.

Doing one final check of his room, Harry was happy to see that he had not forgotten anything. When he had been packing his trunk, Harry had been careful to ward each compartment individually - especially his book compartment. Harry had returned to London a few times since his first visit in order to buy a variety of books; books that would not be approved of by many. He had travelled to Knockturn Alley a few times in his past life, but never extensively, so Harry had been anxious this time around, however, his presence was soon ignored.

Harry had also been to a private healer and, after making him swear a privacy vow, had him perform an in depth scan. Harry had been pleased when he had learnt that, without the glamour, he had no need for his glasses, but he still wanted to be checked out. The healer had been horrified after the scans were done and had tried to get Harry to report the damage to the ministry. Many of his bones had breaks that had healed incorrectly and he had numerous scars. Harry had been given potions to fix the damage as well as an ointment to wear while sleeping. The healer had also worried for Harry’s growth and development and given Harry potions to combat the damage, though he would never be tall, Harry hope to gain another inch or two.

With a final glance around, Harry cast a tempus charm that said it was half 10. Deciding to get to the platform early and find a compartment, Harry released Hedwig from her cage.

“You can fly to Hogwarts from here,” he said, not wanting her to be cooped up for the long journey. Stretching her wings, Hedwig swooped over to Harry and landed on his shoulder, pecking his ear affectionately before taking flight out of the open window.

Walking down the stairs, Harry was not surprised when he saw Petunia standing awkwardly by the front door. He had had few interactions with the Dursleys in the last month; they had taken his warnings to heart after Harry had once again cursed Vernon, this time with Dudley watching, when
the man had tried to hit Harry once he had returned from Diagon Alley the first time.

“You’re going then,” she said.

“Yes, I won’t be back until the summer. If I return at all,” Harry told her.

Petunia swallowed again. “Right then, good.”

Walking past her with his school supplies shrunk down in his pocket, Harry walked a short distance before apparating onto the platform.

**Kings Cross Station, September 1st 1991**

Arriving at the station, Harry walked quickly. There were a few families milling about that Harry chose to ignore in favour of getting onto the train.

Finding an empty compartment, Harry entered and un-shrunk his trunk, levitating it above him before he sat down and conjured the book he had been reading: *Mind Magics, Shields, and Webs*. Even with his mind protected by his heir ring, Harry wanted to learn occlumency, if only so he would have better control of his emotions. He had so far developed the beginnings of a mindscape and was trying to meditate for at least an hour a day before bed. It was hard going, but he was positive he would have mastered it by the end of the year.

Eventually Harry's solitude was disturbed by knocking on the door to his compartment. Looking up in time, Harry saw a young Susan Bones enter alongside Hannah Abbott.

“Do you mind if we join you?” Susan asked, standing just inside the door.

Smiling Harry nodded. “Of course,” he said. He had liked both of these girls in his last life, although they hadn’t really been friends. He had known them and worked with them as part of the DA. He also knew they would never be part of Dumbledore's schemes; Susan in particular, as her aunt was the head of the DMLE.

Sitting down opposite him, both girls exchanged a look before Susan held out her hand. “I'm Susan Bones,” she introduced herself.

Taking her hand and kissing the air above it, Harry smiled slightly at her blushed cheeks. “A pleasure, Miss Bones. My name is Harrison Potter.”

When they heard his name both girls instantly looked at his forehead and to the place his fringe was covering.

Hannah gulped before holding out her hand. “I'm honoured to meet you Harry - I mean, Harrison. I'm Hannah Abbott.”

Doing the same to Hannah, Harry kissed her hand before looking at both girls. They were staring at him with fascination that made Harry want to sigh.

“I understand that you’ve grown up with stories about me, but honestly, I would rather you treat me like every other student. I’m really not that interesting, and please feel free to call me Harrison or Harry. I really don’t like it when people act weird around me or treat me special for something I have no memory of doing.”

Susan seemed to come to a decision then and smiled at him. “So, Harry,” she started, “are you excited to start Hogwarts?”
Happy that he would not be putting up with fangirls for the entire trip, Harry relaxed slightly in his chair. “I am, I’ve read all about it,” Harry said, letting himself act as a soundboard to the two girls, who seemed to explode talking about all they had heard about Hogwarts.

Just as the train started to pull away, another knock was heard. Turning, Harry saw that this time a very timid looking Neville Longbottom had entered and was now standing awkwardly, clutching his toad in his hands.

“D-do you m-m-mind if I sit with you?” he stuttered out.

Without sparing the girls a glance, Harry agreed, indicating for Neville to sit next to him as he moved his satchel out of the way.

“Hello,” Harry greeted, knowing that at this age Neville was a walking bag of nerves. It wasn’t until 5th year that the Neville he knew gained any confidence. “Who’ve you got there?” Harry asked, indicating to the toad.

Neville seemed to calm down when Harry started to speak to him. “T-Trevor. His name is Trevor, and my name is Neville, Neville Longbottom,” he said, looking around the compartment.

Looking up, Harry gave the girls encouraging smiles, which they seemed to pick up on. Sitting forward, Hannah and Susan both introduced themselves.

Once they had done, Harry smiled and introduced himself, “Pleased to meet you, Neville, my name’s Harrison Potter.”

Neville spluttered and tried to say something, but no words came out. Deciding to save him, Harry smiled and said, “I know, I know - Boy-Who-Lived and all that rubbish, but really? I'm just Harry.”

Susan, who had watched this, laughed, “I see what you mean, Harry. I bet it does get tiring being treated like that all the time.”

Neville seemed to shrink in on himself for a moment before he realised they were not laughing at him, sending Harry a hesitant smile.

“Do you have the scar?” Neville asked hesitantly, reminding Harry that Neville was a true Gryffindor. The girls instantly stopped their quiet conversation to look at Harry with interest.

Sighing, Harry moved his fringe and showed them before brushing his hair back into place.

“Does it hurt?” Hannah asked tentatively.

Harry smiled at the girl. “No, not usually. However, sometimes it can ache after I have dreams.”

Susan frowned. “Dreams?” she asked.

“I think they’re of that night,” Harry paused to shrug, “I’m really not sure, and sometimes it just aches in general,” he said, wanting to spread this story for when his scar ached in Quirrell’s presence, if it did this time around.

“Oh,” was the quiet reply he got.

“Well, that was depressing,” Harry said, trying to brighten the mood. “Before you got here Neville, we were talking out the four houses. Do you know which house you want?”
Neville seemed to shake himself before he smiled. “My gran thinks I destined for Hufflepuff,” he said sadly.

“And what's wrong with Hufflepuff?” the girls demanded simultaneously before they giggled.

“N-nothing,” Neville said, scared for a moment he had insulted them.

Harry laughed. “Ignore them Nev, they’re both proud descendants of mighty ‘puffs,” Harry said.

“What about you, Harry?” Neville asked.

“Honestly there's a chance I’ll be in Slytherin I think, but I want Ravenclaw,” Harry said, shocking them.

“S-S-Slytherin?” Neville squeaked.

“Sure,” Harry said happily, ignoring their horrified looks.

“Do you really think that's possible?” asked Susan.

“It’s the house of ambition and cunning,” Harry said, “and I think that I'm ambitious.”

“But, well, You-Know-Who....” Hannah trailed off.

“I don’t think that an entire house should be judged just because of what happened in the last war. I mean, not all dark wizards are in Slytherin, there are dark wizards in any house, just like there are light wizards in any house, including Slytherin,” Harry said.

Susan nodded. “You're right, Harry.”

“Anyway, I think I would prefer Ravenclaw, so I'm going to ask the hat for that.”

“Ask the hat?” Neville asked.

Harry realised his mistake, remembering how wizards all tried to keep it a secret how you were sorted. “Oops,” he said sheepishly, looking around the compartment.

Hannah and Susan shared a look and laughed.

“It’s okay Harry, we know how it works,” Hannah said.

“Yeah, my aunt Amelia told us because we were worried,” Susan continued, whispering conspiratorially.

Neville just looked confused. “I don’t get it,” he said making them all laugh again.

“It’s okay Nev, don’t worry,” Harry said.

“You never did say where you wanted to be placed, Neville,” Hannah said after she finished laughing.

“Oh, well, I think I want to go to Gryffindor,” Neville said. “My parents were in Gryffindor, but, well, I doubt I’ll get in....”

“Don’t be silly, Neville,” Harry said. “I think you would do great in Gryffindor.”

“Really?” Neville asked eagerly.
Just then the door to their compartment opened, causing them all to turn and look.

“Can we help you?” Susan asked.

“Can I - oh, it's you,” came the derisive voice of Hermione Granger.

Seeing her look, Neville turned to Harry. “Do you know her, Harry?” he asked.

“We met briefly in Ollivander’s. Miss Granger, yes?” Harry said, saying her name as a question.

“He was very rude to me actually,” Hermione said. “Didn’t your parents teach you not to be rude to people?” she added snidely. Harry couldn’t believe his luck - with that comment she had doomed herself, not just to him, but to everybody who heard it.

The silence that followed was consuming. Harry had to bite his lip to keep from laughing, which made the situation for Hermione worse as it looked like he was trying to contain his sadness, not his laughter.

“Get out,” said Neville, his voice so soft and deadly that even Harry was shocked for a moment.

“I beg your pardon?” Hermione said, shocked by his tone.

“I said leave,” Neville said, standing.

“But—”

“You heard him,” Susan added, also standing and giving Hermione a withering stare.

Looking around, Hermione stuck her nose up and turned, slamming the door in her haste to retreat.

Silence fell before Hannah hesitantly spoke. “Are you okay, Harry?” she asked.

Taking another moment as he feared if he opened his mouth he would break out in laughter, Harry shut his eyes and centred himself. “Yes,” he said softly.

Turning to Neville, he smiled at the boy, who was still standing and looking shocked. “Thank you, Neville,” Harry said. “Thank you all,” he added to the girls.

“It’s okay Harry, that's what friends are for.” His hesitant use of the word friend made Harry sad; Neville never seemed to have real friends until he was older and, thinking back on it, that made Harry feel guilty as Neville was a true friend when given a chance. “She had no right to say that to you about your parents,” Neville added after seeing Harry's smile.

“I don’t know what I did to her - in the shop, I mean. She just seemed to hate me as soon as she saw me; when I entered she made a snide comment and when I ignored her she started to argue with me,” Harry said, adopting a confused expression.

Susan sat back and shook her head. “She's probably muggleborn,” she said before quickly adding, “Not that I have a problem with muggleborns or think purebloods are better or anything, no, it’s just that sometimes when they first enter our world they feel like they have something to prove. Then again, she could just be a terrible person.”

Harry laughed. “I think it’s a combination of all of that, to be honest,” he said, easing Susan’s fears that she would upset Harry when she mentioned muggleborns.

Seeing the tension slowly ease, Harry sat back happily. He had worried when he thought about
coming back to Hogwarts that he wouldn’t be able to cope with being 11 again and surrounded by children, but now he had more confidence that he would manage. At least he hoped he would.

“And to think, Neville,” Harry said, “you didn’t think you were Gryffindor material. What you just did was brave.,”

Neville perked up. “It was, wasn’t it?” he said, his excitement making the girls smile.

Eventually Harry started to tune out the conversation and picked up his book again. Reading, Harry would add the occasional comment, but for the next hour or so he devoured the chapter in his book.

“Are you interested in mind magic?” Susan asked when Harry closed the book, having finished the chapter he had been on.

“Yes, I find it to be quite fascinating,” Harry said.

“My aunt has told me a little about it,” Susan said. “It’s really hard to master, but she promised to try and teach me some basic occlumency next summer; she said it would help me study.”

Harry was not surprised by this, a lot of purebloods and halfbloods taught their children occlumency if they could.

“You’ve heard of occlumency, right?” Susan asked.

“Yes, I find it fascinating. I read about it over the summer, which is what lead me to reading this book. I’ve started to do some of the exercises and think I’ve got a good starting base,” Harry said.

“That’s cool. You know, I’m sure my aunt wouldn’t mind answering any questions if you have any. She’s a Master Occlumens because of her job,” Susan said happily.

“Thank you, I will remember that,” Harry promised. Once again the conversation drifted and Harry found his thoughts wandering. He joined in, adding comments in places, but he was more than happy to sit back and observe.

~

This time when the trolley lady got to their compartment, Harry once again bought a large amount of food and, like last time, he shared his treats before putting half away in his trunk.

“I heard it’s a smart idea to buy a load now so they can last, we’re not allowed to go to Hogsmeade until 3rd year and well... in my case, I don’t really have anyone to send me sweets,” Harry said at their curious looks.

“Is it true then? The rumours?” Neville asked.

“What rumours would those be? I've heard a lot recently.”

“Well... that you were raised by muggles?” Neville said.

“Oh, that rumour,” Harry said, his voice losing some of its warmth, “yes. My aunt and uncle.”

“Do you not like them?” Susan asked, picking up on Harry's tone.

Harry was suddenly glad that she and Hannah had decided to sit with him; the odds are that she would tell her aunt anything he said. “Well it’s not that, it's just that, well.... They don’t like anything not normal, not muggle, and me, well, I'm not normal to them,” Harry said in a quiet voice.
Hannah gasped quietly. “They don’t like you?” she said, shocked.

Harry just shrugged.

“They don’t, you know….” Susan asked hesitantly.

Harry just looked up. “It’s not so bad now, since I got my letter,” is all he said.

After letting that sink in and a silence fall, Harry had to congratulate himself. He doubted that it would change anything but it certainly wouldn’t hurt.

“Could you not say anything to anybody about that?” Harry asked. “I don’t want people looking at me with pity or anything.”

“Sure, Harry,” Neville said, “it that's what you want.”

Smiling, Harry couldn’t wait to see what planting the seeds in Susan’s mind would do. It helped that he really wasn’t lying.

~

Arriving at Hogsmeade station, Harry joined the crowd of growing first years and looked out for the famous red hair of the Weasley family.

Getting to the boats Harry, Hannah, Susan, and Neville got on together. Harry watched with amusement as Neville struggled with Trevor; at least he hadn’t lost him on the train this time, he thought fleetingly.

As the boats took off, Harry looked up to see with amusement that Ron had somehow managed to get himself trapped on a boat with Draco Malfoy and his two goons, Crabbe and Goyle. Making sure not to use his wand as he didn’t want anybody to see him, Harry focused on his magic and sent a push towards the redhead.

Harry barely contained his mirth when Ron fell, landing with a splash in the Black Lake. Some people screamed whilst others laughed; Harry thought for a moment Malfoy would join Ron with the amount he was laughing.

“Easy now,” shouted Hagrid from the first boat. “He’ll be fine, the squid will rescue him.”

His words seemed to incite more fear and people huddle close into the boats. Eventually Ron resurfaced with a tentacle around his waist and was plopped back in his boat. His white face made his freckles stand out even more.

Harry had to bite his lip as he heard Malfoy taunt, “Bet that's the first bath you’ve taken all year, weasel.”

Eventually the boats reached the castle and Harry found himself reaching out with his magic instinctively. He felt the castle’s magic sing within him and felt an overwhelming peace.

Seeing his enraptured look the girls giggled. “It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” Susan asked.

Harry, dazed from the magical connection, merely nodded. “Yeah.”

The crowd follow Hagrid into the entrance hall with Ron standing at the front next him, dripping lake water on the floor. The doors opened and Professor McGonagall entered.
“Good heavens, what happened?” she asked, indicating to Ron.

“He fell in the lake,” Hagrid said.

“No, I didn’t!” Ron shouted, “I was pushed! I bet Malfoy did it!”

Draco snorted. “Please, like I would want to touch you,” he drawled, getting laughs from some people, including a small one from Harry.

McGonagall sighed and withdrew her wand. “Stand still, Mr. Weasley - you are a Weasley, I presume?” she asked.

Ron’s grumbled reply was lost when Harry heard Draco mutter, “Red hair, hand-me-down clothes? He’s obviously a Weasley.”

After Ron had been dried, McGonagall gave the students two minutes to prepare themselves and left, promising to be back.

Alone again, the students milled out slightly. The girls and Neville chose to stay close to Harry, who had wandered towards Draco and Ron to watch their argument.

“I know it was you, you dirty Death Eater!” Ron snarled, red faced.

Draco narrowed his eyes. “You know nothing, weasel,” he hissed.

“Oh, yeah? Just wait, me and Harry will get you and your little Slytherin friends,” Ron threatened, shocking Harry as he had yet to meet the redhead in this life.

“I doubt you even know the great Boy-Who-Lived,” Draco said.

“Me and Harry will be great friends, you’ll see. We’ll be in Gryffindor together and—” Ron started before cutting off when Harry snorted.

“Why are you laughing?” Ron demanded.

“I just think it’s funny is all,” Harry drawled. Behind him, Neville, Susan, and Hannah were all snickering slightly as they knew who Harry was.

“Oh yeah,” Ron challenged.

“Yes,” Harry said calmly.

“Well, who asked you anyway?” Ron said, dismissing Harry as he turned back to Draco. Looking up, Harry saw the blond giving him an appraising look. Draco, seeing he had been noticed, nodded his head in greeting. Harry, seeing this, nodded back and smirked slightly.

Before Ron could continue his argument McGonagall returned. “If you would, line up in twos and follow me,” she instructed. Not waiting, she began striding through the entrance doors.

~

The sorting happened as Harry remembered, however, this time when Harry's name was called out, there was a gasp of indignation heard coming from Ronald Weasley as he realized who he had argued with and a wide smirk on the face of Draco Malfoy. Walking with grace up to the stool, Harry sat down and waited for the hat to be placed on his head.
‘Hello again,’ Harry thought as the hat settled on his head.

‘Oh, you are interesting Lord Potter - or should I say Heir Potter? You’re not a lord yet. Such a fascinating mind you have, so many secrets; oh, you would do very well in Slytherin, but I can see you don’t want to go there. Why not, Harry? You could achieve so much greatness,’ the hat questioned.

‘You've seen my mind, you know exactly who I face; if I go into Slytherin I stand the chance of being discovered that much earlier. Dumbledore’s suspicious already now that he's seen I don’t have a glamour; if I go to the snake pit he’ll never leave me alone.’ Harry hoped his reasoning would persuade the hat, he was lucky the hat was bound to Hogwarts and could not reveal what it found in people’s heads and held no loyalty to the headmaster - just to Hogwarts itself.

‘Mmm yes, I see. Then it better be—’

“RAVENCLAW!” The final word was shouted out loud and, for a moment, the hall froze in shock before erupting into cheers, the eagle house jumping up and down. Looking around before he moved, Harry noticed Draco Malfoy staring at him again, and nodded his head as he went to sit.

Sitting down at his table, Harry was greeted by members, some of which he knew from his past, mainly the ones close to him in age but some he had never met before. Beside him was Padma Patil, who Harry knew through the DA and from the disaster that was the Yule Ball, when he took her twin Parvati. Terry Boot and Sue Li where opposite him, with Anthony Goldstein and Michael Corner slightly further up. Lisa Turpin was finally sorted and she took the space next to Harry.

“Do you really have the scar?” asked Terry, staring at Harry intently as though he was trying to see through his hair.

Sighing, Harry looked around. “I understand that as Ravenclaws you all love mysteries and knowledge, but please, can you not stare at me like I'm something special? I'm really not,” Harry said.

“How can you say that? You defeated You-Know-Who!” asked one of the older students listening in.

“I didn’t actually,” Harry said causing silence to fall around him.

“What?” asked multiple people in shock.

“I very much doubt what happened had anything to do with me. I was most likely a mistake on Voldemort's end or something done by my mum,” Harry said.

At that a lot of people shrank back and developed looks of consideration.

“Anyway, like I was saying, I do understand that you may have questions, but honestly, a lot of what you’ve been told about me is utter rubbish. I'm just a normal boy, a normal student, I'm really not all that interesting, so please treat me like you would anybody else,” Harry said. With that he started to fill his plate with the food that had appeared.

The students around him shared some looks and followed his example, most even happier now that Harry was in their house as he seemed like a good person as well as being the Boy-Who-Lived.

~

**Meanwhile at the staff table**
Albus Dumbledore almost choked on his lemon drop as Harry Potter stepped forward. The boy looked nothing like James, which worried him as he himself had placed the blood glamour. Watching with trepidation as Harry walked forward with an unusual amount of grace for a muggle raised boy, Albus leaned forward. The sorting took a few minutes, the longest of the students so far, making Albus’ heart rate skyrocket; he should have gone straight to Gryffindor! Eventually, when the hat shouted Ravenclaw, Albus almost wept in relief. Although not Gryffindor, the boy obviously had some redeeming qualities keeping him out of Slytherin. However, the fact that it appeared that some of his charms had failed worried him. He needed Harry to be his perfect little light warrior, his plans counted on that fact.

Severus Snape, however, had the opposite reaction to Harry Potter’s appearance; he had dreaded the day that Potter’s spawn would arrive at Hogwarts, expecting a pampered prince, a clone of James and the embodiment of everything he hated. Therefore, he was surprised when the longhaired, delicate looking boy walked forward with his head down at first. The boy was small for his age and walked with an innate grace that had Severus scowling. That scowl, however, soon died when the boy looked up; his features were soft - small nose, slightly pouted lips, and high cheekbones, but most shockingly were the vivid emerald eyes. Eyes Severus had once loved, that had belonged to the sister of his heart. The boy looked like a male version of Lily; sure, there were traces of Potter, but they were well hidden. The boy had even somehow managed to avoid the dreaded Potter hair; his hair falling in waves and curls to his shoulders, not perfectly in place, but a far cry from the untamable mane his sire had.

Severus watched with baited breath as the boy sat boy to be sorted and he wondered if maybe he would be a snake, but dismissed that thought. No Potter had ever been in Slytherin as far as he knew. The hat seemed to be taking his time and Severus wondered if maybe the boy would break the pattern before it called out for Ravenclaw. Clapping politely, Severus almost missed the nod Potter had sent to Draco Malfoy. Wondering what it was about, Severus tuned out the rest of the sorting, clapping whenever he heard Slytherin shouted out.

~

After the feast was finished and Dumbledore gave his warnings and spoke nonsense, Harry followed the other Ravenclaws up to their tower, being lead by Penelope Clearwater who Harry had never met, but remembered getting petrified in his second year and for dating Percy Weasley. The other prefect, Jason Samuels, Harry had never heard of.

Making the first years wait while the rest of the house entered, Penelope waited for the door to close before beckoning them all closer.

“Right then, are we ready?” Jason asked.

Harry, alongside his year mates, nodded and waited for the guardian to speak.

“You will always find me in the past. I can be created in the present, but the future can never taint me. What am I?
Harry thought about it and failed to reach a conclusion straight away; he had first thought about memories but he knew from his own that they could be tainted quite easily, however, after a moment, a new idea hit him.

Sue Li seemed to have worked it out as well as she bounced slightly. “History,” she said.

The others all nodded and realised the answer after she spoke.

“Correct,” the guardian said, opening the door.

Leading them up the spiral staircase and into the circular common room where the rest of the house was waiting, Penelope walked forward and led the group into the room. Harry remembered coming in here once in his last life when he was looking for Tom’s horcruxes; at the time he hadn’t really taken in the beauty of the room. It was very different from the Gryffindor common room. The white walls were broken up by tapestries of famous events and the ceiling was covered in stars, perfect renditions of the solar system. Against most of the walls were massive bookcases, which were filled to the brim. Unlike the stone floor that covered Gryffindor common room, the eagles nest had navy carpet and there were more singular love seats over couches and sofas. There was also a lot more desks and notice boards dotted around, which Harry saw had specific subjects engraved underneath.

After Harry had finished his appraisal, he noticed that Penelope had taken a step back and that a new older prefect had stepped forward. “Welcome and congratulations on being sorted into Ravenclaw, the house of wit, learning, and wisdom. My name is Maria Delphine and I'm your seventh year female prefect. Now, like I said, we eagles do strive for knowledge but you should remember that's not what we’re all about. Unlike what some people will say, we do know how to have fun and, between us, we do throw the wildest parties. However, as you can probably tell from looking around, we take our learning seriously. You’ll see that each subject has a notice board in the common room; if you're ever struggling and want help, or simply want to talk about a specific subject, you can put a note on the board. I recommend that you check them regularly as often people will post study sessions on them and they're a great way to advance your studies and have fun.”

Harry was impressed by the system and wished that Gryffindor had had something similar - that notice board had been covered in junk. This seemed like a great idea.

Maria continued her speech, “For first years, you’ll see that some of the subjects don’t apply to you. This does not mean you can’t ask questions; deciding what options to take in your third year is important and asking questions to make an informed decision is the smart thing to do. However, you should know that 5th and 7th years may not always take the time to indulge you as they are exam years. Moving on, in Ravenclaw we have unofficial rules, you won’t find them written down but we all know them and we all abide to them. The rules are simple: never leave a fellow raven alone in danger - If you see a raven alone being attacked or bullied, you help them. If that means getting involved, distracting the perpetrator, or getting a teacher it doesn’t matter. You help. The next rule is similar to the first: you never deliberately get a fellow raven into trouble. If you have a problem, you keep it in the common room, you don’t risk house points to get even. The last rule: never be afraid to push the boundaries of knowledge or conform to what is expected, we all have our strengths and weaknesses. Never feel that you have to back down, chase the knowledge you desire if that's your passion.”

Maria’s speech left the first years nodding in agreement. A second seventh year stepped forward, this one a wiry Asian male. “Like Maria said, we are Ravenclaws and we stick together. I'm Tomas Li, your male seventh year prefect. During this first week many of you will most likely begin to see which areas of magic you excel in, however don’t be disheartened if what you get isn’t what you expected. Some of you will be great at charms, some at potions, and some at transfiguration, so don’t
worry if you seem to struggle in some areas - work together and help each other. Building on that, for the first few days there will be an upperclassman escorting you to and from your lessons until you get a general feeling for the route. You will also be given a map of the school. Study it and learn it, after the first few days tardiness will not be accepted.

“Now then, Professor Flitwick is our head of house. He tends to favour us slightly, but, in general, he’s a fair teacher; all the heads of houses do that, so we’re at no real advantage. The only teachers to be wary of would be Professor Snape in the dungeons. He teaches potions and he is not to be messed about with. If you do your work to the best of your ability and don’t mess around, he should treat you fairly even if you’re not naturally gifted in brewing. The other teacher to watch would be Professor Trelawney, though you shouldn’t really come into contact with her until 3rd year. She teaches divination and tends to be a bit... free with her death predictions. It’s best to take whatever she says with a pinch of salt. The defence professors should usually be treated carefully in the first week until you can get a feel for them; they change every year, so no insight can usually be given. However, Quirrell once taught muggle studies, therefore we can safely say you should be fine with him.”

Harry barely contained his snort at that; he doubted that woman had ever given a true prediction and being safe with Quirrell? That was laughable.

“Now that’s everything. Tomorrow morning be down at seven so that we can get to breakfast early as a group. Professor Flitwick will be giving out timetables, you’ll find most of your lessons are with the Puffs, but Defence is shared across all four houses along with Herbology and Astronomy.”

With the introduction finished, the boys were shown to their dorm by Li and told to get an early night. Quickly seeing his trunk by the bed closest to the bathroom, Harry placed some of his things around before he removed his pajamas and the ointment given to him by his healer. Entering the bathroom, Harry washed up before applying the cream and dressing. He noticed that the cream was running low and wondered if he should visit Madam Pomfrey for some more; he should probably tell her about his treatment regime anyway as he was taking potions every morning and every other evening.

Settling in to the bed, Harry said goodnight to his new roommates and closed the midnight blue curtains on his bed. Setting a wakeup charm as well as privacy and silencing charms, Harry closed his eyes and allowed himself to fall into his mindscape.

The next day, Harry was the first of his roommates up and, after showering and dressing, he decided he should probably wake them. Decision made, Harry sent very low powered tickling jinxes at each bed and waited. They took a moment to work, but eventually the boys woke up giggling. Seeing them awake, Harry cancelled the jinx.

“It’s half six, if you want to be ready in time, I thought it best to wake you,” he said.

The boys, still giddy, smiled. “Thanks, mate,” said Terry as he passed Harry while carrying his shower things.

Anthony, who was the furthest away, was staring at Harry. “How did you do that?” he asked.

“I read a lot,” Harry said, hoping he wouldn’t be questioned too much. He would have to look at what spells first years could do if he didn’t want to stand out too much - at least, not straight away. He could maybe pull off being a humble prodigy though, if not.

Anthony seemed to accept his answer and went about getting ready. Eventually all four boys were dressed and had their bags packed and together they went down to the common room. Walking as a
group to the great hall, Harry wondered how Hermione and Ron were faring, especially Ron after the confrontation outside. He had the beginnings of an idea with how to deal with Hermione and he couldn’t wait to put it into practice.

Sitting down to eat breakfast with the rest of Ravenclaw, Harry saw that the other house tables were still mostly empty. Looking up at the head table, Harry felt his scar flutter, startling him as it had never done that before. Harry felt only a slight pull towards Quirrell and he wondered if being only part of his soul meant that the bond was weaker. Lost in his thoughts, Harry barely contained his surprise when the doors to the great hall slammed open and a green skinned Ron stormed in followed by the rest of the Gryffindors.

Not even trying to hold in his laughter, Harry wondered who Ron had upset before he caught Neville's eye and saw the blond haired boy smiling secretly. Harry was shocked, but happily so as he realised that this time Neville would learn to roar early.

~

Chapter End Notes

The next update wont come until Tuesday most likely as I wont have internet access until then
Hope you're enjoying the story
~ Annie
Previously

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After receiving his timetable, Harry saw that, like Li had said, the majority of his lessons would be with Hufflepuff this time around, making Harry wonder if that would change anything. Harry also noticed that, instead of having Transfiguration first, he was instead graced with Potions. He wondered idly if Snape would treat him with the same scorn in this life that he had in the last; Harry had a suspicion that some of the hate last time had been because of his looks.

Pulling out his nutrition potion, which he had to take every morning after breakfast, Harry downed it with a small frown before swallowing the last of his pumpkin juice, hoping to wash out the taste. Harry didn't realise at that moment dark eyes had been watching him with interest, focusing in on the vial in his hand.

Standing, Harry slipped his timetable into his pocket and grabbed his bag from the floor. He was planning on visiting Madam Pomfrey before his first lesson and would have to hurry now if he wanted to avoid being late - the dungeons were a fair walk from the infirmary.

“Where are you going?” asked Terry as Harry passed him.

“I need to go to the infirmary,” Harry said, making those who heard frown.

“Are you okay, Harry? Have you hurt yourself?” asked Lisa as she looked him up and down, looking for any injury, the others doing the same.

Harry was surprised by their worry as he had not really interacted with his new housemates. “I'm fine,” he assured.

“Then why are you going to the infirmary?” Sue questioned.

“I've almost run out of the ointment my healer gave me and I haven’t got any extra. I hadn’t realised how low it had gotten, so I'm hoping she can help me,” Harry explained.

“Oh, well then, that's fine. As long as you're okay,” said Mandy.

“Do you want me to come with you?” offered Terry. “In case you get lost?”
Harry smiled again. “That's okay, you finish your breakfast, I'm sure I'll be fine. I looked at the map,” Harry said. He would have to be careful for the first few days to hide how well he knew the castle. With that, he walked from the Great Hall and took the familiar route to the infirmary.

Entering, Harry looked around at the place he had spent so much time in during his last life and wondered if he would escape such a fate this time.

“And, Mr. Potter, what can I do for you this morning?” asked the aged healer when she spotted Harry. She couldn’t see anything obviously wrong but knew that sometimes that didn’t matter.

Harry smiled at Madam Pomfrey and walked closer. “A few days after I received my Hogwarts letter I visited a healer who placed me under a rather strict potions regime. I thought it would be wise to let you know in case I ever landed in here and you needed to know if I was on something,” Harry said.

Poppy Pomfrey was shocked by the slight boy’s words. “I see. What potions for what purposes?” she asked. Seeing his frown, she added, “All of this information is private, Mr. Potter. As a healer I had to take oaths to ensure I never betrayed my patients’ trust.”

“Oh,” Harry said. “Well, the potions are to help minimise the damage done by my relatives,” Harry said, not looking up and hoping to portray the image of an embarrassed child. He was not embarrassed about the situation, but rather furious when he thought about what he had endured at the hand of this family before he had stood up for himself.

Poppy nodded her head once, understanding the situation. “Do you know which potions in particular you were taking?”

Harry frowned. He had become used to his memory recall being perfect, so being unsure was annoying, but he honestly didn’t know the specific names, just their purpose and perhaps a few ingredients based on the taste. “I'm sorry, I'm not sure. I know that the potion I take each morning is a nutrient potion to help me gain weight - it tastes like burnt sage and is pale purple. The other potion I take every other night is to help my bones heal and strengthen them; it’s not skel-e-gro, I know that much. It smells like copper and tastes like old blood - oh! And it’s dark green, almost black,” Harry said.

Poppy nodded, impressed with his description. “Right, it sounds like you're taking Helga’s Fortune and Kosti-recovery.”

Harry just shrugged. He had never heard the names before, but he was admittedly no expert in potions and when the healer had prescribed them the names were not given, just the purpose and dosage.

“I’m also using an ointment to help my scars fade, which I'm running low on,” Harry said. “It’s pale blue and smells like mint and coffee.”

Poppy frowned. “I can't seem to recall any ointments which fit that description. I shall have to ask our resident potions master,” she said, racking her brain.

Harry tilted his head to the side. “I have Potions first thing, I can ask him if he knows,” Harry offered.

“That would be helpful dear,” Poppy said. “Now, if it’s Potions you have, you had better pop off. Professor Snape doesn’t tolerate tardiness - unless you have any other matters to discuss?” she asked.

“No ma’am,” Harry said, turning to leave.
“Mr. Potter, I would like to give you a health scan in a few weeks to check the progress of your potions,” she said. “I will send you an owl when it’s time.”

Nodding, Harry continued and quickly made his way to the dungeons, entering and taking his place just as Snape walked in.

Harry decided he must give the same speech at the start of each year.

“You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion making. As there is little foolish wand waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don’t expect you will really understand 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…. I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, and even put a stopper in death—that is, if you aren’t as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach.”

Harry kept his head down and wondered if Snape would call upon him again like he had last time, letting out a breath when he started the roll call. He did seem to pause on Harry's name slightly, making Harry look up in question. However, he soon recovered and continued down the list.

After waving his wand and putting the directions on the board, Snape told them to brew the potion so he could assess their natural talents. Calling randomly on students to ask them questions, he eventually targeted Harry.

“Mr. Potter, what is the best way to prepare pixie wings?” he asked.

Harry frowned for a moment in thought, making sure not to stop stirring his potion. “I suppose, sir, that it depends on the purpose of the potion they’re being used in. If they’re being used in a stimulus potion, such a Pepper-Up, then they’re best powdered as this would increase the surface area and speed up the reaction time. However, if they’re being used in a glamour potion like Polyjuice, they’re best chopped as this would make the effect longer lasting,” Harry said, remembering the information he had read in Snape’s old textbook he borrowed in his 6th year.

Severus barely kept his shock from showing. Not only had the boy given a perfect answer to a trick question, but he had understood the effects of ingredient preparation to a level some 7th years had yet to grasp. Perhaps he should have a chat with the boy and see if he had prior tutoring; although he doubted it as Albus had told the staff in their meeting this morning that the boy was muggle raised and new to their world, making Severus wonder just where the boy had grown up.

Meanwhile, the other students, unlike Severus, didn’t mask their shock. The other Ravenclaws looked a combination of proud and wary.

“Five points to Ravenclaw, Mr. Potter, for such a well thought out answer,” Snape said, shocking Harry into forgetting to add his counter-clockwise stir. Harry didn’t think he had ever received points in Potions until Slughorn had taken over. “Please stay behind at the end of class,” he instructed.

After the lesson ended, Harry told the other Ravenclaws to go ahead of him and to let Flitwick know where he was.

“If you’re sure, Harry,” Padma said, leading the others out of the classroom.

Turning to Snape, who had watched the interaction in silence, Harry hoped his face didn’t reveal anything. He was glad he had been asked as he needed to question the man about his ointment, but he was curious enough to see what Snape wanted.
“You wished to see me, sir?” Harry asked.

“Yes, we were lead to believe that you had been muggle raised, Mr. Potter, yet you showed a surprising level of knowledge and ability for that,” Snape said.

Harry internally cringed. “Thank you, sir,” he said. “I like to read and I have an almost perfect recall. I’m also very good at muggle cooking.”

Severus hummed in consideration as he looked at the boy. He was tempted to look into his mind but knew such an action would be frowned on. “You do a lot of cooking?” he asked.

Harry flinched, knowing Snape would pick up on it. “Yes, sir,” he said.

Severus wondered why his question would elicit such a reaction. “Very well. I will keep an eye on you in class and if I feel you’re not being challenged enough, I will aim to rectify the situation.”

Harry was floored by the offer; he hadn’t considered Snape to be the type of teacher to go out of his way to actually help students achieve more.

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said.

“You may leave now,” Severus said, wondering about the mystery boy who refused to meet his preconceived expectations.

“Actually sir, there was something I needed to talk to you about,” Harry said.

Intrigued, Snape raised an eyebrow in question, “Yes?”

“This morning I visited the infirmary and while there, I mentioned that my scar ointment was running low. I’m not sure about the name of the ointment and when I mentioned its properties, Madam Pomfrey couldn’t place it,” Harry said.

“I see. Tell me the properties,” Severus said.

“I don’t know much about it, to be honest. It’s pale blue and smells like mint and coffee; there are no fragments in it and the consistency is like melted wax - it also makes the area where applied tingle slightly for a minute. I was told to apply it every night for six months at which point my healer would check the progress and, if need be, change the dose,” Harry recited.

Severus let out a hum in thought. He had a good idea, but it was a more obscure ointment usually used for old scars that were not medically treated. It didn’t often get used in Britain because of this reason and it made Severus wonder about Harry's life before Hogwarts.

“I believe you are using Apollo’s Tears,” he said.

“Thank you,” Harry replied eventually, unsure what to say. “I think that Madam Pomfrey will probably ask you to brew some for me later today, so I'm sorry for adding to your work.” Harry didn’t want the man to start resenting him again; he hoped to keep this new civility for as long as possible, even if it was suspicious.

“Most likely, Mr. Potter, but it is no bother,” Snape said dismissively, letting a silence fall.

Harry stood for a moment, unsure what to do. “Should I leave now...?” he asked, waiting to be dismissed.

“Yes, you may go,” Severus said, conjuring a piece of parchment and writing a note. “Give this to
Harry accepted the note and left, making his way to Charms. Snape’s behaviour was baffling to him and Harry wondered if this was another ploy by Dumbledore to influence him. He wasn’t sure yet which staff members he could trust aside from McGonagall and Pomfrey - and Madam Pomfrey had only been cleared after Harry had realised that her healer’s oaths wouldn’t allow her to ignore abuse if she found it. In her last life she had no cause to look as Harry had hid the abuse very well in his shame.

Harry was unsure about Snape though, as last time he had been so loyal to Dumbledore yet not. His true loyalty had been to Harry's mother and, through her, to Harry. Pondering this, Harry knocked and entered his Charms lesson, giving Flitwick Snape’s note as he slip into a spare seat next to Hannah.

“Hello, Hannah,” he whispered as the lesson continued, happy to see a friendly face.

“Hey, Harry,” she replied pleasantly before focusing back on the small professor.

Harry, however, barely paid attention to the rest of the class after that as he could do the simple charm in his sleep. Instead, he focused on what he would do next. Harry slightly regretted not planning his actions more before he had returned to this time as he had so much to do and so few solid plans; he still needed to find a way to help Tom, who at this moment was less Tom and more Quirrellmort. He had an unknown number of enemies as he couldn’t be sure who worked for Dumbledore; if it was just the Weasleys, he doubted Hermione would be in on the plan in this life, but Harry still wanted revenge - it was petty as she was technically innocent, but Harry was feeling vindictive. He had the aforementioned revenge against the Weasleys, Granger, and the old coot. At this point, Harry was just waiting for the old man to strike and call him up to his office. Hell, Harry was surprised that he hadn’t been dragged up there last night and forced into a red and gold tie.

Snorting at the image his mind produced of Dumbledore jumping him in the hallway and throwing red and gold glitter on him and demanding he roar, Harry ignored the curious looks sent at him by his classmates as he plotted and schemed.

~

After a week of classes, a note from Dumbledore finally appeared during breakfast on the Friday of his first week. Harry, who was sitting with Neville at the Gryffindor table, fought to roll his eyes at the phrasing.

~

Mr. Potter,

My dear boy, I was wondering if you might join me for a spot of tea this afternoon after your lessons have finished.

Professor Albus Dumbledore

P.S. I do so enjoy Ice Mice

~

Seeing Harry's look and remembering what he had said about his family, Neville asked, “Who’s it from?”
Harry, handing the note over, resumed eating. He was prepared for this, he told himself.

“What do you think the headmaster wants with you?” Neville asked after he had read the note, his voice slightly worried for his friend.

Harry pretended to be confused and shrugged his shoulders. “I have no idea,” he replied.

“Well, I wouldn’t worry, you haven’t done anything,” Neville said, before he cringed. “Well, not anything too bad - you don’t think it’s about your argument with Ron, do you?”

Harry smirked when he thought about his confrontation with Ron just yesterday.

~

Due to the way September 1st fell in the week, school had started on a Tuesday and it hadn’t been until Thursday that Harry had shared a lesson with the Gryffindors. Entering Herbology, Harry had immediately gone over to Neville, asking how he was settling in and what he had done to Ron while they waited for Professor Sprout to appear. It was during their conversation when Ron had pushed his way over to Harry, his skin still slightly green.

“Harry, mate, why didn’t you say anything before the sorting?” Ron asked in an overly friendly voice. The class seemed to go silent when they saw what was happening.

Harry spared Neville a look of exasperation before turning to Ron. “Who are you?” he asked.

Ron seemed to puff his chest up slightly before holding his hand out. “The name’s Ronald Weasley, but you can call me Ron, all my friends do.”


The crowd seemed to pick up on Harry's tone and all took a step forward, wanting to get a better look at the pair of them.

Ron seemed slightly confused for a second before he smiled overly confidently again. “Well mate, I thought I would come over and rescue you from Longbottom; you can’t want to hang out with him, he’s not even a proper Gryffindor. You need friends like me, being who you are,” Ron said.

Harry felt more than saw Neville cringe at Ron's words and narrowed his eyes at the red head. “Wait, you thought you would come over here and rudely interrupt my conversation with a friend, just to insult said friend and - what? I would suddenly leave Neville and want to hang out with you?” Harry said incredulously.

Ron stood stupidly, his mouth slightly open before he said, “Well, yeah.”

Harry shook his head. “Unbelievable,” he said, truly shocked at Ron's stupidity. “Why would I want to hang out with you? I don’t even like you, you're rude and obviously only want to be my friend because of some silly title the media gave me for something I don’t even remember doing.”

“But-but, I'm a Gryffindor and you’re the Boy-Who-Lived—”

Harry cut Ron off, “Why would I care what house you're in? *Especially* if it’s Gryffindor when I'm in Ravenclaw!”

“Well, you were *supposed* to be in *Gryffindor*!” Ron shouted.
“Supposed to be?” Harry repeated, looking around and seeing the whole class was now silently watching their argument.

“Yes!” Ron shouted. “You may as well be a slimy snake now; everyone knows that all the other houses are full of dark wizards! You were supposed to be in Gryffindor with me! We were supposed to be best friends and go on adventures and be heroes!”

Harry felt his eyes widen in disbelief as the class started muttering, all with looks of disbelief and anger on their faces. “There’s nothing wrong with being in Slytherin! I would have been happy to be put in that house or any house - however, even if for some reason I had been put into Gryffindor, I would never be friends with somebody like you,” Harry said, barely keeping from laughing out loud at Ron's hot headed announcements. How Harry had fallen for his act last time he would never now.

“Merlin, you’re ruining everything!” Ron screamed. Harry almost laughed at that and he wondered idly if Ron was actually stupid enough to blurt out all of Dumbledore’s plans right now in front of their entire year group.

“Why? Because I was sorted into a different house from you, a boy I have never even met? Because I don’t want to be friends with somebody who only wants to latch themselves onto me like a leech for something I don’t even remember doing? Because I’m not the perfect little Boy-Who-Lived you were told stories about growing up - the little light wizard hero? Well, I will never be that. I’m just Harry, I’m not some special super powered Gryffindor hero!”

Ron seemed to vibrate before he actually let out a roar and actually launched himself at Harry. Harry, who saw the attack coming, simply sidestepped the redhead and watched as he fell, landing in a heap on the ground. The rest of the class stared in disbelief as Ron sat up and glared at Harry.

“Urg, I hate you!” he shouted.

Just then the greenhouse door opened and Professor Sprout appeared. Looking around at the shocked faces of her students and finally seeing Ron on the ground, clearly worked up, she bumbled over.

“What’s the meaning of all this?” she asked, looking around.

Harry, who was busy staring at Ron, masked his internal glee as there was no way Dumbledore could expect to recover from this and turned to look at the small Herbology teacher.

“Honestly professor, I don’t even know,” Harry said with an incredulous voice.

“Yeah, Ron just went mental,” Neville said, sticking up for Harry.

The rest of the class nodded and muttered about the redhead’s outburst.

Sprout seemed to think for a minute before she shook her head and smiled at the class, “Right then, moving on. Hello, my name....”

~

Thinking about the argument, Harry smirked.

“You never did say, Neville, what did you do to his skin the first night?” Harry asked, remembering the green with glee.

Neville smiled lightly. “Well, he was being so... you know....”
“Ronald?” Harry prompted.

“Yeah,” Neville agreed with a light laugh. “He kept going on about Slytherins and becoming your best friend and a hero and well, I just....”

“Turned his skin green,” Harry said, laughing.

“He really is a git, you know,” Neville said.

“I'm just glad I don’t have to live with him for the next seven years,” Harry replied.

Neville groaned. “Please don’t remind me,” he whined.

“Just think, seven whole years of him and his Gryffindor light speeches,” Harry added gleefully.

“Why weren’t you put into Slytherin again?” Neville asked jokily.

“Why, the house of snakes couldn’t handle my glory,” Harry said loftily before both boys started laughing.

“Well, hopefully Ron will leave his speeches behind. He can’t honestly believe such rubbish,” Neville said.

“You never know, some people will believe anything,” Harry muttered darkly, before he added in a normal voice, “Well, I don’t care as long as he leaves me alone.”

“We’ve got Defence together now,” Neville reminded Harry.

“Hopefully he’ll stay as far away from me as possible,” Harry said, his mind now on Defence.

Harry had been both longing for and dreading having his first Defence lesson with Quirrellmort. He had yet to find an answer about how exactly he was going to save Tom. Harry was not even sure if Tom was even saveable - Harry knew he needed Tom to be alive and, that without him, he would never achieve true happiness, never be whole. Yet, he also knew that even before Tom created his first horcrux he wasn’t a sweet innocent person; Tom had always been ruthless, cut throat, and determined. Harry was torn. Until he had found a way to return Tom’s sanity, as much as he was able to, he didn’t want to focus too much on how he felt about Tom Riddle.

~

Like it had whenever Harry had seen Quirrellmort in this life, Harry's scar fluttered as he entered the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom. Picking to sit in the middle, Harry, along with Neville, Hannah, and Susan, all slipped into place without any trouble. Quirrell was sitting at the front of the class waiting for them all to arrive.

Seeing as they had time, Harry leaned to his friends. “So ladies, are you excited for Defence?” he asked.

“I'm not sure, I heard from some of the older year badgers that Quirrell’s got an awful speech impediment,” Hannah whispered. “Everybody is talking about it - apparently it’s because he upset some vampires.”

Neville looked slightly fearful after hearing the word vampire. “Really? Do you think it’s true?” he whispered, looking at them.

“Yeah, apparently he never had it before he left on his sabbatical,” Susan said.
Harry leaned in conspiratorially, deciding to add some to the rumours. “I heard that's why his turban smells like garlic, it's to keep the vampires away.”

Neville looked at them all with wide eyes. “You're joking,” he said desperately.

Harry just shrugged. “Maybe, who knows?”

Neville looked slightly white and Harry decided to take pity on his friend. “I wouldn't worry Nev, even if he did annoy a group of vicious vampires, you're safe at Hogwarts.”

Neville looked slightly calmer and smiled gratefully. “Yeah, thanks.”

“R-right then class, my n-n-n-name is Professor Q-Quirrell....” After five minutes, Harry decided that when he finally fixed Tom, he would hit the man; the speech impediments were not funny and this was just too much.

By the end of the lesson, Harry was no closer to figuring out what to do about Quirrellmort. The man had not been obvious about observing Harry and, had it not been for Moody's teachings in Harry's last life, he probably would have missed the man's observations; he was smart about it.

After leaving Neville, who had his first Potions lesson, Harry and the girls walked to Transfiguration by following the waiting prefects. Harry had decided to sit with Terry as he didn't want to isolate his housemates and he had never really gotten to know the boy in his last life.

“So, what did you think of Quirrell?” Terry asked as they waited outside the classroom door.

“Well, he's a good enough teacher, it's just....” Harry trailed off.

“Yeah, I know what you mean. Maybe we should put a study group together in the common room for Defence this year,” Terry suggested.

“Maybe, but I think we should ask the rest of our year,” Harry said and, after seeing Terry frown, he added, “I'm sure some of them would love a chance to study, and if it doesn’t work out we can always cancel it and stick to fellow ravens.”

Terry looked conflicted but agreed, “I suppose. I mean, some of them have to at least want to pass.”

Harry was glad Terry agreed as he wanted to try and unite his classmates - at least, the ones he knew weren't part of Dumbledore's schemes, and a study group would be a great idea. It would be like a junior DA, he mused.

~

After Transfiguration, Harry made his way to lunch, his meeting with Dumbledore in the forefront of his mind.

“What's got your face looking like that, Harry?” Susan asked him. Hannah and, surprisingly, Terry had joined Harry at the Gryffindor table with Neville.

“I've got a meeting with Dumbledore after lunch,” he replied.

“Why?” Terry asked, the look of horror on his face as he probably thought of all the house points Harry would be about to lose.

“I'm not sure, really,” Harry said.
“Do you think it’s got anything to do with what happened yesterday?” Susan asked.

“Oh yeah, I forgot about that,” Hannah said.

“Probably,” Harry agreed.

“Well, that’s not your fault,” Terry said, indignant on Harry’s behalf. “That Weasley fellow was way out of line.”

“I know that, I’m sure the headmaster just wants a chat or something,” Harry said.

“He was a bit mental,” Hannah said after looking around to make sure he wasn’t within earshot.

“Totally,” Susan agreed.

Having finished his food, Harry stood, “Well, I guess I’ll see you guys later then,” he said.

“We can wait for you if you like,” Neville offered. “In the library, maybe?”

Nodding, Harry agreed, “Thanks, that would be great.”

~

After giving the ridiculous password to the gargoyle guarding the headmaster’s office, Harry walked up the familiar steps and knocked, not entering until he heard Dumbledore call out.

“Headmaster,” Harry greeted as he entered.

“Harry, my boy, welcome, do take a seat,” Albus said, his voice affectionate and grandfatherly. Had Harry not know what a manipulative old coot he was, he could have easily believed that he really was just a kind old man.

Sitting, Harry looked at the headmaster. “You wanted to see me, sir?” he said, making sure his voice sounded slightly unsure.

“Yes, nothing to worry about though, my boy,” Dumbledore replied. “I just wanted to have a chat with you, see how you were fairing.”

Harry fought not to roll his eyes. “I'm fine, thank you, sir,” Harry said softly.

“Good, good, I know it must have been a shock for you, all of this.” Dumbledore said, his eyes searching Harry’s for any indication of deceit.

“It was, but I had the summer to prepare,” Harry lied easily.

“Yes. I must say, I was rather surprised that you replied to our owl. I had thought that I would need to send a member of staff for you,” Albus said, his voice slightly inquisitive.

“Thank you, professor, but as you say, it wasn’t necessary. I would have hated to be a bother for anybody,” Harry said, making sure to make his voice small.

“It wouldn’t have been a bother, my dear boy. I had to send Hagrid to Diagon Alley anyway, he needed to collect something for me from Gringotts. It’s lucky I did as you probably saw, they had a break in the very same day, in that very vault,” Albus said, his blue eyes twinkling as he spoke about his good fortune.
‘Well, that answers one of my questions,’ Harry thought. He had been wondering how Dumbledore would try to get Harry to go after the stone this time around.

“You’re lucky then, professor, I had heard that Gringotts was the safest place on earth - after Hogwarts, that is,” Harry said, seeing if Dumbledore would add another hint.

“Yes, Hogwarts is the safest place around,” Dumbledore agreed his eyes twinkling merrily as he thought his plan was working.

After a moment of silence Dumbledore spoke again, “Anyway, my boy, we seemed to have fallen off track. I also asked you up here as I hear you had a little incident yesterday with a fellow student, a Mister Ron Weasley.”

Harry feared he would cause permanent damage to his eye nerves with how much he was straining to keep them in his head.

“Yes, sir,” he agreed lightly, making sure to sound sorry.

“I’ve known Ronald since he was a young boy. He’s grown up hearing stories about you and has always wished to befriend you. I'm sure meeting you he just got over excited. You can forgive him can’t you, Harry?” Albus said, in a tone which would have made Harry feel guilty had he not remembered exactly who was speaking.

Harry made sure to squirm slightly before he spoke, his voice childlike, “I would forgive him, sir, but he was mean to Neville as well.”

“Ah yes, you're friends with young Mister Longbottom.”

Harry nodded his head in feigned excitement. “Oh yes, Neville's my best friend. We met on the train.”

“That’s nice, my dear boy. But I'm sure you would like some more friends, and Ronald has such a large family. I'm sure they would all love you,” Albus said.

“I do have some more friends,” Harry said in slight childish protest.

“I'm sure you do,” Albus said in a placating voice. “I just worry, I knew your parents you see, and if I'm honest, I look at you like I would a grandson.”

Harry couldn’t believe the man and clenched his fists to keep his magic from lashing out, focusing all his might on his occlumency shields. Harry hoped they held up as he feared, if they fell, his magic would rip apart the room and give him away. After a moment, once Harry was sure he wouldn’t cause a magical tsunami, he braved replying.

“Really sir, you knew my parents?” Harry said with awe.

“Oh yes, my dear boy, quite well actually,” Albus said. “In fact, I have something that belongs to you.” He then pulled out Harry's invisibility cloak from a drawer in his desk.

Harry was surprised that Albus was giving him his cloak now, but he rationalised it as Albus’ way of drawing Harry in.

Taking the cloak, Harry put it on his lap, still folded. Making sure to stroke it in what he hoped looked like wonder, he said, his voice tinged with faux emotion, “Thank you, sir.” Harry was glad the cloak was back in his possession, now he just needed the wand and the ring.
“It’s no bother, I had borrowed it from your father just before he died,” Albus said. “You will find it quite interesting when you put it on,” he hinted.

Taking the hint, Harry stood and put on the cloak. Looking down Harry made sure to jump and say in shock, “I’m invisible!”

Dumbledore laughed, “Yes, this cloak has been in your family for years. I felt it only right to give it back to you, however you must not use it for mischief or sneaking around.”

Taking off the cloak but making sure to keep his expression of surprise, Harry sat back down. “Oh, I wouldn’t do that,” Harry said.

Albus let out another little laugh. “Oh, I’m sure,” he said with friendly sarcasm. “You would never guess how many times I heard your father say those exact words. In fact, I bet I would have caught him twice already trying to sneak onto the 3rd floor corridor. He was always looking for an adventure.”

Harry couldn’t believe the audacity of the man to try and use his parents to manipulate him in such an obvious way. Schooling his features to one of interest to mask his frustration, Harry asked, “My father was adventurous?”

Albus beamed. “Oh yes, he would always be trying to solve a mystery and cause a little mischief. Why, he and his friends in Gryffindor were well known for it.”

“He was in Gryffindor, then?” Harry asked, as though he didn’t know.

“Yes, both of your parent were in fact. That’s why I was shocked when you were sorted into Ravenclaw,” he said.

“I didn’t know that, sir,” Harry said in feigned sadness. “The hat did consider Gryffindor, but it said that Ravenclaw would suit me better. I like reading.”

“It’s okay Harry, I’m sure you can still honour your parents’ memories even from Ravenclaw.”

Harry barely concealed his snarl at how Dumbledore phrased his last sentence. “Well, my best friend is in Gryffindor,” Harry said instead.

“Yes, that brings us back to the topic of friends. I’m sure your parents would agree with me, that forgiving young Ron for his mistake would be the right thing to do. He really is a very nice boy once you take the time to get to know him. He’s like all young Gryffindors, they sometimes act before thinking.”

Harry couldn’t believe the audacity of the man. He was so obvious that Harry was honestly unsure whether he was even supposed to not notice.

“I suppose you’re right,” Harry mumbled. “And if my parents would want me to,” he added.

Dumbledore smiled widely, his blue eyes twinkling. He was pleased that the boy had been easily convinced. He had hated having to give up the cloak, but he supposed he would have to make sacrifices for the greater good; it helped that he would get it back once the boy had fulfilled his purpose.

“Very good. Right, I believe that is everything. Why don’t you pop off and enjoy the rest of your afternoon, Harry?” Dumbledore said.
“Thank you, sir,” Harry said, standing.

Just as he was about to reach the door, Dumbledore called out to him, “Oh, and Harry? Do remember that if you ever need somebody to talk to, I’m always here. I wasn’t lying when I said I saw you as family.” The genial grandfatherly tone sold the act perfectly.

Harry actually felt slightly sick; this man had the whole world so fooled. He had them believing his act.

Nodding his head, Harry beamed. “Thank you, sir, I’ll remember that,” he promised.

“Off you go, then,” Dumbledore replied, twinkling eyes shining with victory.

~

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the slower update, was away! Should be back to regular updates now.
Big congratulations to my Cousin on getting married!
Hope you enjoyed the chapter!
~ Annie
Previously

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“Off you go, then,” Dumbledore replied, twinkling eyes shining with victory.

Walking the long way to Ravenclaw tower to put his cloak away, Harry tried to dispel his anger - for Dumbledore, he would gladly get over his view on torture.

Lost as he was in his dark thoughts, Harry barely stopped himself from colliding with a dark figure. Looking up, Harry nervously met the eyes of Professor Snape.

“I’m sorry, sir,” he said. “I was not paying attention to where I was going.”

“Clearly,” Snape said, his drawling voice reminding Harry of his last life. “You should take care to pay attention, Mr. Potter.”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said, standing awkwardly in front of the man.

“It is, however, fortunate for you that I had need of your presence,” Snape said. “I have almost finished brewing your scar ointment. If you come by my office after dinner tonight, it shall be ready for collection.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry replied.

“It is of no matter,” Snape said before he continued down the corridor, his black robes billowing.

Harry, reeling that his conversation had calmed him, quickly made his way to his common room and deposited his cloak in his trunk. Reuniting with his friends, Harry spent the afternoon in the library, covertly looking for any sign of a spell or ritual that could help him to reunite Tom with his sanity.

Like arranged, Harry made his way to the dungeons after dinner, Neville bravely offering to go with him. However, like in his last life, Neville was truly abysmal at Potions and feared Snape terribly, so when he offered Harry had waved him off. Harry had received a note during dinner with directions to Snape’s office. Reaching it, Harry was fascinated to see that the portrait guarding it was of a young man sitting on a basilisk; after checking it out, he eventually asked the portrait to inform the professor he was here.
“You may enter,” the portrait said, opening the door for Harry.

Deciding to take a chance, Harry quietly slipped into Parseltongue, “Thank you.” The portrait started and stared at Harry intently as he passed.

Entering the office, Harry looked around in mild curiosity. He had never been inside it in his previous life, not even for his disastrous Occlumency lessons, and was enjoying the look into his professor’s life.

“Surprised at the lack of coffins and blood?” came Snape’s drawling voice. There was a slight challenge in there that Harry picked up on; though what he was challenging, Harry didn’t know.

Harry turned to the sound and smiled slightly. “No sir, everybody knows that you keep the coffins and blood in your personal rooms. It’s the chains and whips you keep here,” Harry risked joking.

Snape seemed to freeze before his mouth twitched slightly. “And I thought I had hid that so well,” he drawled.

Harry smiled and, after a beat of silence, said, “Thank you, sir, for making my ointment.”

“As I have said, Mr. Potter, it is of no consequence,” he said, reaching into his robes and pulling out a metal vial. “When you are running low, inform me and I shall make more before you run out.”

Harry nodded and considered offering the man some money, but thought better of it; he knew Severus was a proud man and would probably take it as an insult.

“Have you an idea of how long this vial will last?” Snape asked after a moment.

Harry considered his words and wondered if this was Snape’s way of asking how bad his scars were. Thinking, Harry considered how long his current vial had lasted and gave the date he thought about right, “I should last until mid October, maybe Halloween.”

Severus was slightly surprised by this, but hid it well. “And you are using it correctly?” he questioned.

“Yes sir, I’ve been applying a small amount to each scar every night before bed,” Harry told him. He was sure now that Snape was trying to find out about his home life surreptitiously.

Continuing to probe, Severus enquired, “And it is working?”

Harry, making the decision to plant more seeds of doubt in Dumbledore, nodded, “Yes sir, at least from what I can tell. It’s harder for me to see the scars on my back, but the ones I can see seemed to have faded,” he said.

Harry watched as Snape seemed to come to a conclusion, his face betraying nothing, but his eyes - his eyes showed his understanding at the implications and his anger.

“I see,” is all he said before handing the ointment over.

Severus was shocked. If what the boy was implying was true, he had to wonder if Albus was aware; the man had insisted consistently throughout the years that the golden boy of the light was well looked and loved. He had even hinted that he was spoiled and went as far as to say that he could barely tell the difference between Harry and his father. Yet, here he was, hinting to a life that Severus himself could relate to. It made him wonder - the boy was nothing like Albus had said; had Albus lied? Which begged the question: if he had lied about this, what else was he lying about?
Taking the ointment, Harry placed it carefully in his pocket. “Thank you, sir,” he said.

“You may go now,” Severus dismissed, lost in his troubling thoughts.

~

The great hall, 31st October 1991

The next few weeks passed quickly for Harry. Unlike in his first life, Harry's flying lesson had been uneventful. Harry followed the crowd, making sure that, although it showed he was a good flyer, he didn’t stand out too much. He pondered if he would even try out for the quidditch team; he did enjoy flying and the rush, but the game had lost some of its power over him. It had been a long time since had had been able to play.

Unsurprisingly, the Gryffindor and Slytherin flying lesson had not been as smooth of the ‘Puffs and ‘Claws. Neville, who really hadn’t changed much from the boy Harry had known in his first life, baring his new found confidence, was still awful on a broom and had once again fallen. Yet, this time, Malfoy had not stolen his remembrall and tossed it; instead, he had appeared in the infirmary when Harry was visiting and returned it without comment, sending Harry a nod as he did. Apparently, he had stopped Ron from throwing it and caused the redhead to get two weeks detention.

Harry was curious about Draco's attitude this time around; he had yet to really speak to the boy, however he felt like they had an unspoken truce. Harry was glad for it, even though in his last life they had been rivals, Harry could see the blond had great potential. He was, Harry admitted, a smart wizard who had great influence and power.

After that incident, nothing seemed to happen for Harry; his lessons were extremely tedious and Harry bemoaned his fate at having to sit through another seven years of them. By the time Halloween rolled around, Harry was practically begging for something to happen. He had planned his revenge for Hermione perfectly, counting on Ron's arrogance and ignorance to once again put her in the troll's path; however, he did have a backup plan he was prepared to use if need be. With his cloak ready, Harry had spent the previous day practically praying for events to play out as they had before. Therefore, when he noticed that Hermione was absent during the Halloween feast, he had almost wept. He really was fond of his original plan.

Harry kept his eyes practically glued to the doors of the great hall, barely managing to keep his glee hidden when Quirrell came crashing in screaming about a troll.

“...I thought you ought to know,” his finished with the weak statement and faked faint, happening almost exactly as they had in Harry's memories.

Like last time, the students all panicked and people started screaming.

“A troll!”

“Oh, Merlin!”

After retaining control, Dumbledore ordered the prefects to take them all back to their common rooms.

Harry, making sure to move without suspicion, used their panic to slip from the crowd, casting a silencing charm spell as he did. Once he was clear of the crowd, he quickly donned his cloak and made his way to the bathroom he knew the troll would be in. Reaching his target, Harry entered the
bathroom just in time to see the troll bring its club down on the sinks. The commotion finally startled Hermione, who opened the door to her cubicle and let out an ear-splitting scream when she saw the troll. The troll turned its attention to the noise and Harry watched as she closed the door of the cubicle, locking it. Harry snorted at that and thought, ‘As if a lock would help.’

In his last life, Harry had, at this point, already burst in with Ron in his attempt to save her. Now however, he sat back as the troll swung its club, watching as it easily demolished three cubicles. Hermione seemed to escape relatively unharmed and crawled from the wreckage, Harry watching as her brown eyes darted around. He moved silently to the far corner, out of view of the door just to be on the safe side as, even though he was under his cloak, he didn’t want to risk being found. Turning back to the action, Harry watched Hermione’s panic grow.

“Somebody, please! Help!” she screamed, once again gaining the troll’s attention.

It swung again, Hermione throwing herself out of its path at the last minute. She landed heavily, a cut opening up on her forehead as a piece of broken porcelain smacked into her. Whimpering pathetically, Hermione crawled away. Reaching the corner, she turned and watched with wide eyes as the troll approached her, dragging its club menacingly. Reaching for her wand, which she suddenly seemed to remember, she stuttered out a spell that Harry recognised as being a second year tripping jinx.

Harry watched as the spell bounced off the troll harmlessly and he recalled, how like giant skin, troll skin was notoriously resilient to spells. To bring one down you should focus on their eyes, unless you have a large enough magical core. Hermione, however, didn’t seem to know this and kept sending an array of first year spells, which had no effect on the troll.

Harry watched as it grew closer to its target and finally brought down its club before he turned away. He didn’t see the impact, but he hurt a sickening crunch which left him feeling distinctly sick.

The doors slammed open at that point as Professors McGonagall, Snape, and Quirrell appeared.

“Oh, dear god,” McGonagall whispered, seeing the carnage.

Harry picked that moment to slip out, their distraction at the scene allowing him to pass unnoticed. Making his way as quickly as he could to the tower, Harry slipped off his cloak and removed the silencing charm when he reached the tower’s guardian.

“The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?”

Thinking for a moment, Harry answered, “Footsteps.”

“Correct.”

Rushing up the stairs, Harry entered the common room, slipping into place with the other first years.

“Where have you been?” asked Padma, who was closest to him.

“Sorry,” Harry replied. “I got lost, the stairs changed,” he explained.

“Well, as long as you're okay,” she said, relieved he had returned unharmed.

“I'm fine,” Harry assured.

“Are you sure? You're looking a bit green,” she commented, looking at him with concern.

Padma developed a look of understanding before she nodded. “Of course, I'm sorry I didn’t realise,” she said.

After the commotion calmed down, the Ravenclaws continued the feast in their common room, the house elves providing food and drinks for them. Harry, however, left, saying he wasn’t feeling well, and, taking one look at his pale, drawn out face, the rest let him go to bed without much fuss.

Getting upstairs, Harry quickly stripped out of his clothes and entered the bathroom. He stood under the shower for a long time, his skin eventually wrinkling. Although he was glad he had gotten his revenge, Harry felt off. He kept hearing the crunch, over and over again. Eventually exiting the water, unable to feel truly cleansed, he wrapped a towel around his waist and walked to the mirrors, glad for the charms that kept them from becoming steamed up. Looking at his reflection, Harry didn’t see anything different from what he had seen just that morning, yet he felt like a stranger. Sighing, Harry looked away and, after a quick drying charm, dressed himself in his pajamas. Getting into bed, Harry set his customary wards and spells before he slipped into his mindscape.

~

Harry would always remember the days that followed that fateful Halloween. Hermione had not died in the troll accident, although she would probably wish she had. Harry, however, was selfishly relieved about this fact; she was instead going to be the next resident of the Janus Thickey ward at St. Mungo's. Apparently, in a fit to survive, her magic had reacted accidentally, causing massive damage to her already broken body. If she ever recovered, it would be a miracle on the scale of Merlin. Harry didn’t care that it was selfish of him to be happy about her fate; he had finally come to terms with his actions when he thought about how her eyes had filled with greed and glee when talking about his death in his last life.

The teachers had deemed the whole affair a tragic accident and offered counselling to the students if they needed it. Many were shocked, but not really overly affected by the event as Hermione had had no friends and, as a first year, had yet to make an impact on the student population as anything other than a rude muggleborn. Ron, however, was effected as he was now being ostracized by the majority of the school as it had come out that he was the reason she had been in the bathroom in the first place. Even though the students were not traumatised by the accident, that didn’t mean they would simply ignore the fact that Ron was to blame.

~

Another break in the repetitive dullness that was Harry's life came when he received a note from Hagrid. Harry was shocked at this as he had yet to even talk to the half-giant in this life. Taking Neville with him, they had visited Hagrid together.

“’Ello, Harry,” Hagrid greeted him when he knocked on the wooden door.

“Hello, Mr. Hagrid,” Harry said in a neutral but friendly tone. He wanted to believe that the half giant was innocent to Dumbledore's schemes, but he couldn’t. It had been Hagrid who preached light propaganda to him in his first life, who had praised Dumbledore as the greatest wizard in the world. Harry also realised that it had been during his first tea visit with Hagrid in his first life that he had been set on the path to play boy hero. Realising that, with a barely covered growl, Harry added another name to his list of people he would have revenge against.

“Call me Hagrid, none of that mister stuff with me,” Hagrid said joyfully. Seeing Neville, he asked,
“Now, who’ve you got here, then?”

Harry watched as Neville seemed to stare at the half-giant with a mixture of awe and horror. “N-Neville. My name’s Neville Longbottom.”

“Good t’mee, Neville,” Hagrid said, showing them inside his hut. Showing them to his table, he produced a large tea pot. “Now then, who’s for a spot of tea?”

Harry spared Neville a look of slight trepidation and accepted, “Please.”

“So then Harry, I bet you're wondering why I called you down ‘ere?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said, taking a sip of his tea before carefully putting the toxic liquid down on the table. Shooting Neville a look of warning, the other boy quickly fumbled his cup in his haste to put it down.

“Well ya’ see, originally I was going to come ‘nd pick ya up for your school shoppin’, but ya obviously didn’t need it, so I just wanted to meet ya, really,” the half giant said.

“Oh, that's nice of you,” Harry replied.

A silence fell then, with Neville awkwardly patting Fang, who had come over and rested his giant head on his lap. Harry continued to pretend to drink his tea.

“So anyway, Harry, ‘ow’s school goin’ for ya?” Hagrid asked.

“It’s great, really,” Harry said enthusiastically.

“I see you’ve obviously made friends,” Hagrid said with a nod to Neville.

“Oh yeah, Neville's great,” Harry said, happy to see Neville smile.

“Good, good, an’ yer teachers?”

“Oh, they're all fine,” Harry said. “I mean, sometimes Professor Snape can be a bit strict, but apart from that there's nothing to complain about.”

“Professor Snape, eh? He’s a funny one, good man, mind, but ya should watch yourself - I mean, with ‘ow much he hated yer father n’all.”

Harry couldn’t believe Hagrid's warning. In his last life, the giant had preached Snape’s innocence when Harry had suspected him about going for the stone. Yet, maybe the ploy was to get Harry suspicious so he would think about the stone?

“He’s been rather nice to me, really,” Harry said.

“Yeah, you even manage to get points; it’s me he hates,” Neville said morosely.

“Ah, well, never mind, then,” Hagrid said, looking slightly confused.

Another silence fell. “So, ya managed to get all yer shoppin’ done okay anyway?” he asked. “I was lookin’ forward to helpin’ ya, to be honest with ya.”

“Oh, yes. I wouldn’t have wanted you to come out of your way for me anyway,” Harry said.

“No bother, I had to go to Gringotts on the 31st anyway - secret Hogwarts business,” Hagrid said,
Neville picked up on that. “That's the day the break in happened.”

Harry could have kissed the boy; he had been wondering about how Dumbledore would reintroduce the stone. After their talk in the first week, Harry had done nothing about going after the stone, so he wasn’t yet sure what he should do about it.

Hagrid started to shift as though suddenly uneasy. “Yes, well, I wouldn’t know nothin’ about that,” he said, overly suspiciously. “Oh, would you look at the time, you boys best head off,” he added hurriedly, practically throwing the boys out.

Walking back towards the castle, Neville looked at Harry with confusion. “That was odd,” he commented.

“Very,” Harry agreed.

~

Hogwarts, November 1991

The following weeks passed without much note for Harry, until the morning of November 6th. Harry was sitting at the Ravenclaw table talking to his housemates and Neville, who had decided to join him for once. He had become closer to his fellow Ravenclaws over the term; he wasn’t friends as much as just friendly with the group. Sitting there, talking about the homework they had due, Harry felt more than heard somebody approach. Turning, Harry saw that Ron was standing behind him shifting slightly, obviously uncomfortable.

“Hey, mate,” the redhead said.

“Ronald,” Harry greeted, his voice neutral.

“I was wondering if you wanted to come to have breakfast at the Gryffindor table?” Ron asked hesitantly, a hopeful look on his face.

Harry had to applaud the redhead’s skill; he really was selling the image of a boy who just wanted a friend. However, before Harry could answer, the owl post came and, with it, a small brown owl that Harry didn’t recognise. The owl landed in front of him, holding out its leg. Harry quickly broke apart some toast and held it out as he took the letter.

“Who’s it from?” came Ron's voice, suddenly suspicious as he stared at the letter in Harry's hand.

Harry was almost glad to see that his act had failed. “I don’t know yet,” Harry said as he opened the letter.

Reading it, Harry fought to keep his smile from forming.

~

Mr. Potter,

I am writing to you on behalf of our mutual friend about the issue of your godfather.

I have taken the liberty of bringing to light his lack of trial and have started the process of getting him exonerated. This process will not be a quick or an easy one as much of my work shall have to be
in secret to avoid certain outside sources interfering. Yet, I am certain I shall be successful.

It has come to my attention that you have, within your grasp, a vital piece of evidence. If you where to obtain such a piece of evidence by the end of the school year, then I foresee our chances of success increasing exponentially.

Sincerely,

Edgar Dodge Jr

Law Wizard, Dodge E & Dodge E’r

~

Slipping the note into his inside pocket, Harry felt a thrill go through him at the thought of having Sirius freed. If there was one person Harry trusted in his life, it was his godfather. Sirius had always tried to be there for Harry; had argued his inclusion in meeting, slipped him notes about them, given him access to books and training guides. He had fought for Harry until the day he died, even with all the restrictions he had been under.

“So?” Ron demanded, his voice coming out quite harsh.

The others shot the redhead various looks of confusion and disgust. Harry just shook his head. “I don’t see what it’s got to do with you,” he said.

“I bet it was a fan letter,” Ron said nastily. “What, Potter? Too stuck up to reply to your fans?”

Harry was confused to that leap of logic. “No, I’ve never received a fan letter, and I honestly don’t know what I would do with one.”

Ron, however, continued as though Harry had never spoken, “I bet you think you're so great sitting there with all your fans and your fame. Is that why you keep ignoring me? Because you think you're too good for me? I bet that's it!”

Harry looked around and shared incredulous looks with the rest of his year mates. “I would never think that, Ronald,” Harry said, keeping his voice placating.

“My name’s Ron! You're supposed to call me Ron! We’re supposed to be friends!” Ron screamed, reminding Harry of the argument from their first week of school.

Neville, in a fit of bravery, stood. “Listen Ron, I think it’s best if you just go,” he said.

Ron seemed to make another leap in logic and suddenly turned to Neville, his red face matching his hair.

“You! This is all your fault! If you hadn’t stolen Harry from me, he would be in Gryffindor!” Ron shouted.

Neville took a step back at the menacing tone Ron used. “That doesn’t make any sense,” the blond boy said, adopting a look of confusion.

“Yes, it does! This is all your fault!” Ron shouted, the look on his face turning from rage to triumph. “I challenge you to a wizard’s duel - midnight in the trophy room!”

Before Neville could even reply, the redhead stalked off.
The rest of the table sat in silence before sudden whispers broke out.

“You’re not going to go, are you?”

“A wizard’s duel, how exciting!”

“He’s a menace, that one.”

Neville turned to face Harry, the look on his face full of anxious confusion. “What just happened?” he said.

Harry held back his laugh at how fate seemed to be determined for events to repeat themselves. “I don’t know, mate,” he replied.

“I don’t have to go, do I? I mean, I don’t even know how to duel!” Neville asked, looking slightly pathetic.

“No, you don’t have to go,” Harry assured.

Neville seemed to perk up at that. “He really is a git,” he mumbled.

“I would just love to know what his problem with me is,” Harry lied.

“Maybe you should go,” Terry piped up, “teach him a lesson.”

Neville looked miserable at the thought. “I don’t know,” Harry said.

“If you do, make sure you don’t get caught,” Lisa said. “We’re doing quite well this year. If you got caught, we would lose so many points.”

Harry just shrugged as Neville let out the barest of whimpers, an idea forming in his mind.

“Don’t worry Neville, you didn’t agree so you don’t have to go,” Harry assured once again.

~

That night, walking alone under his cloak, Harry approached the door on the 3rd floor corridor that he knew hid the entrance to the trials. Reaching out with his magic, Harry was not surprised when he felt the ward on the door. ‘So Dumbledore had known,’ he thought. The ward would alert the caster about whoever passed through it. Dumbledore had known, in his last life, that Harry and his friends had seen the cerberus. Harry searched the ward for any breaks and found a small one that he knew he would be able to manipulate if need be. However, for now, he wanted Dumbledore to think his plan had worked, that Harry was looking for the stone.

Stepping into the room, Harry watched as all three heads turned to him and sniffed before whining in confusion. Harry had taken to using scent and sound blocking charms whenever he used his cloak.

Stepping back out, Harry returned to Ravenclaw tower, making sure to detour passed the trophy room. He watched with amusement as Filch dragged a howling Ron through the corridors, muttering about dungeons and chains.

The next morning, Harry felt somebody staring at him. Looking up, Harry caught Dumbledore’s blue eyes twinkling at him. Making sure to look like he was slightly nervous, Harry spent breakfast acting like a child who had seen a monster; hopefully, now Dumbledore would leave him alone as he believed Harry to be on the trail of the stone.
Hogwarts, December 1991

The next few weeks of school passed quickly. Harry continued to meet up with his friends in the library to study Defence, the group growing to include Harry, Neville, Hannah, Susan, Padma and Parvati, Anthony, Michael, Lisa, and Sue. While they worked, Harry would surreptitiously search for any hints about rejoining souls. Harry had been trying to work out a way to get a note for the restricted section, but he didn’t have any teachers he could go to. Yes, his relationship with Snape was better in this life, the man even going out of his way to ask if Harry required extra ointments or potions, but Harry didn’t want to ask and then suddenly find the man tracing his every movement. He couldn’t risk that until he was sure of Snape’s loyalties.

He had noticed that, like in his last life, Snape was suspicious of Quirrell; he had seen the man’s dark eyes following the turban wearing professor with deep interest. Harry was torn; he didn’t think Snape had any deep loyalty to Dumbledore any longer as he had seen the suspicion build in his eyes when he spoke to Harry, but he wasn’t sure about the man’s views on Tom, not Voldemort, but Tom, who had wanted to change the Wizarding world.

Harry was also torn about what to do about the stone. He had noticed recently that Dumbledore had started to watch him again, and suspected that the twingly eyed old coot was about to make a move to ensure Harry was on the right path, so to speak. Unsure what to do, as Harry had no loyalty to Quirrell in his current form, Harry thought about his options.

Harry was reluctant to let him reach the stone unless he could find a way for his sanity to be returned. Having Voldemort back now, how he was last time, would be disastrous. However, Harry's going after the stone last time had resulted in Quirrell’s death at Harry’s hands. ‘Quite literally,’ Harry thought, cringing slightly.

Tuning back into the conversation around him, Harry realised he was the centre of attention.

“Hey Harry, what are you doing for Yule? Or do you celebrate Christmas?” Hannah asked.

Shrugging, Harry shut his book and put it in his bag, making sure the cover wasn’t shown. “I’ll be staying here,” Harry said. “And, honestly? I haven’t really ever celebrated either.”

“Oh, don’t you want to go home?” Anthony said curiously.

Harry made sure to cringe slightly before he answered, “No, I think I would enjoy it better here.”

“Really? Well, I can’t wait to go home. My parents and I are going to Aspen to see my cousins…,” Anthony went on to tell them all about his Yule plans.

“Hey Harry, if you wanted, I’m sure I could owl my gran and ask if you could come back to the manor with me,” Neville offered quietly.

Harry smiled lightly at that. Harry knew that Neville spent most of day visiting his parents and that he cherished that time. “Thank you Neville, but I think I want to stay here. Maybe next year or something?” Harry said. He was looking forward to having some alone time; not that he didn’t like the friends he had made, it was just that they were still children. Yes, he was now eleven again, but he was also eighteen. He wanted some time to himself.

Neville looked slightly concerned but nodded. “If you’re sure,” he said reluctantly.

“I do really mean it, thank you, Neville,” Harry said.
“Are you sure, Harry? My aunt would happily have you,” Susan offered, having heard their whispered conversation.

Sending her a smile, Harry nodded. “Yeah, I'm sure.”

“Okay, then, but you had better owl me every other day to let me know you're okay,” she said.

Laughing, Harry replied, “I promise.”

~

A few days later, the castle emptied out as people returned home for the holidays and Harry was left alone with the few others who had remained. Like last time, this included the Weasleys. Harry was startled to realise he hadn’t even spoken to the twins yet in this life and felt guilty for a moment before he realised that feeling bad was silly - they didn’t even know him in this life. During breakfast on the first day, Harry, who was sitting with a 4th year Ravenclaw and two 7th years, was not remotely surprised when Ron appeared.

“Hey mate, you want to hang out?” he asked.

Harry, keeping his displeasure masked, said, “Sure, maybe. I just need to head up to the common room.”

Ron gaped at Harry for a moment; clearly he had been expecting him to say no. “Really?” he asked incredulously. “Great!”

Harry kept from rolling his eyes. “Sure, there’s no one else our age here,” Harry said. He wondered what Dumbledore was up to; Harry had almost hoped he would stop sending Ron as, each time he had, Ron had ended up either in trouble or causing an argument.

Ron happily ignored Harry's comment. “We could play chess or go and explore the castle; I bet there’s loads of things hidden here,” Ron said.


“We could go check out the dungeons now that the slimy snakes are gone,” Ron said.

Harry didn’t even hide his displeasure. “There's nothing wrong with Slytherins,” he said.

Ron just snorted. “Right, it’s okay, Harry. You stick with me and I’ll show you, you just need to learn that they're evil,” he said. His certainty actually made Harry feel almost sorry for him.

~

Harry was exhausted after finally ditching Ron after a day of the boy trailing after Harry, telling him how evil Slytherins are, how Harry really should have been in Gryffindor, and how ‘don’t you think Snape’s been acting suspicious?’. It was like he was hiding something or going after something; at least he had figured out Ron’s purpose, though. Dumbledore obviously didn’t want his boy hero to forget about the stone and had sent the redhead to make sure Harry was suspicious of Slytherins and thinking about who was after it.

Thinking about the stone, Harry had come to a conclusion. He couldn’t let Quirrellmort get it. Letting Voldemort return now would be disastrous, as he would return insane like he had in Harry's fourth year, and Harry refused to allow that to happen. He would rather Tom be forced to wait, wandering as a spirit, than return as an insane Voldemort. However, Harry didn’t really want
Dumbledore to have the stone either; he didn’t want to rescue it and go through all of the trials he had last time just to have the old coot destroy it. Instead, Harry had a better idea. He would take the stone and hide it away secretly. Then, after he had fixed Tom, which he would do, he could give it to him as a peace offering for delaying his return.

With that in mind, Harry started to plan; he couldn’t have to old coot growing too suspicious of him, now.

~

Chapter End Notes

Here’s the latest chapter!
Hope you’re enjoying the story & remember Comments & Kudos!
~ Annie
Previously

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Finding ways to ditch Ron was becoming tiresome for Harry as Christmas approached. The redhead just would not take the hint that Harry had no desire for his presence. His persistence would have been commendable, if not for the fact he was ultimately trying to befriend Harry in the hopes of stealing from him and killing him.

With the lack of students, Harry had taken to literally running everywhere he needed to go and checking around the corners. He would have just worn his invisibility cloak, but he didn’t want people to become worried and therefore pay closer attention to him if they realised he hadn’t been seen for hours on end. So, instead, he dodged and checked as if he was a criminal on the run.

Harry had taken to trying to ignore him after a few days as it seemed that whenever he left his common room, Ron would appear. If it wasn’t for the fact that Harry had checked twice, he would have thought he had a tracker on him, alerting the redhead of his movements.

“Come on, mate, stop being so boring. All you seem to do is want to read books and hang out in the library,” Ron whined as Harry continued to walk towards the library. He needed to check one final thing before he could go after the stone.

“Well, I am a Ravenclaw - and there's nothing wrong with the library,” Harry said. He almost cringed as he mimicked Hermione and then internally cringed again as he remembered her broken body.

“The library, really?” Ron asked skeptically, before he developed a slightly odd look. “Why are you in there so much anyway? Are you researching something - a mystery?”

Harry considered what to say for a moment before he concluded that putting Ron on the case would help him in the end. Dumbledore would once again be sure of Harry's path and Ron would hopefully leave Harry alone.

“Well, I have this theory,” Harry said, “that whatever was stolen from Gringotts is now in the school, I just don’t know what. It’s probably on the 3rd floor, I saw a three headed dog there.”
Harry watched as Ron's eyes lit up with glee. “I can help you, Harry!” he practically shouted. “This can be our adventure.”

Harry fought his eye roll and instead smiled. “Great, why don’t you go look up animal books for me? That would really help,” Harry lied, relieved when the redhead ran off with an air of triumph.

After that day, Ron became easier to distract; all Harry had to do was mention their so-called adventure and the redhead would run off and look up books on animals.

**Morning - December 25th 1991 Hogwarts**

Eventually Christmas morning came and Harry woke up to find he had a larger pile of presents than he had been expecting. He had sent Hedwig off earlier in the week to deliver Neville, Hannah, and Susan’s presents and he had decided to send everyone in his study group a box of candy from Honeydukes. For Neville, he had ordered a book on rare and exotic plants and gotten him the clipping from one of the more obscure ones; for Hannah, Harry had got some silver hair pins with butterflies on it; and for, Susan, he bought gold hairpins with flowers.

Looking at his pile, Harry was surprised to see the familiar sight of a Weasley present. Picking it up, Harry felt a compulsion charm attempt to take hold before it was nullified by his rings. With a snarl, Harry barely kept himself from destroying the package. After taking a few moments to collect his feelings and strengthen his Occlumency shields, Harry finally opened the package. Inside, there was an obviously handmade green jumper and a box of homemade fudge. Flicking his wand, Harry ran through his repertoire of detection spells and saw that the fudge set them all off. With a scowl, he nullified them before banishing the box. There was also a note resting innocently on the jumper. Picking it up, Harry just about contained his snort.

~

**Harry,**

*Ron mentioned that you were spending Christmas at Hogwarts, so I thought I would send you something to help keep your spirits up.*

*I can’t tell you how happy it makes me that Ron's finally found himself such a wonderful friend.*

**Happy Christmas dear,**

**Mrs. Weasley**

~

Harry was impressed with the note; had he not known their motives, he would have felt truly guilty. Instead, he was offended by the not-so-subtle manipulations.

Discarding the present, Harry looked with interest at the rest. There were no presents from Hagrid or Dumbledore this year, or even a card with 50p from the Dursley’s. Picking up a package wrapped in silver, Harry opened it and found that inside was a pair of soft black leather gloves with HJP embroidered in the corner of the wrist. The gloves were very nice and Harry picked up the card inside to see who they were from. Reading the note, Harry was surprised to see they were from Terry, making him feel slightly bad about his lacklustre present to the boy. Moving on, Harry opened his present from Neville and saw the boy had given Harry a kit to start his own small herb garden, and had written his own instructions on what to do to get successful results. Next, Harry opened a present from Susan and saw she had gotten him a book on mind magic, he had not heard of; flicking
through it briefly, he saw that it was an old publishing and Harry concluded it was probably no longer in print. Opening his gift from Hannah, Harry saw that she had bought him a beautifully illustrated copy of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. Opening it, Harry saw she had placed a note inside.

~

*Happy Yule, Harry!*

*I know it’s a children’s book, but I thought you would enjoy reading some of the stories, especially as you didn’t grow up in our world!*

*See you after the holidays!*

*X, Hannah*

~

After putting away his gifts, Harry picked his clothing for the day, trying to decide if he wanted to endure the itchy jumper from Mrs. Weasley. Eventually, Harry chose to go without as he really didn’t care.

Walking downstairs for breakfast, Harry was quick to take a seat close to the teachers and hoped that somebody would sit next to him before Ron appeared. To Harry's surprise, Snape took the seat, sitting down and ignoring everybody's presence as he poured himself coffee.

“Happy Yule, sir,” Harry said, pouring his own coffee. He hadn’t really drunk the beverage since returning to his preteen body, but Harry had plans for a long night and thought it would probably help.

Severus inclined his head as he drank. “Indeed, Mr. Potter, happy Yule.”

Silence fell then as they started to eat, Harry glad that he was free from Ron's presence as the redhead appeared, looking mutinous between Fred and George. Snorting softly, Harry watched as they forced him to sit down away from Harry, smirking when he saw Ron's scowl.

Severus watched at the dark haired boy snorted and smirked. “Why, Mr. Potter, one would think you don’t want to spend your Yule with the youngest Mr. Weasley,” he said quietly

Harry, not feeling the need to hide, shrugged subtly, knowing Snape would pick up on it. “I don’t,” he said.

Severus smirked lightly at the curt reply. “Oh, and here I thought you two had become the best of friends,” he drawled.

“Please,” Harry said dismissively, “I would never befriend such an idiotic bigot.”

“Indeed,” Severus commented. “Yet you have spent the holiday with him.”

“I could hardly avoid him, I would think he was stalking me with how he keeps popping up,” Harry said in quiet exasperation.

Severus hid his humour at the put-out tone of the eleven year old. “He has certainly been persistent,” he acknowledged.

“Tell me about it,” Harry grumbled.
Evening- December 25th Hogwarts  

After having managed to avoid Ron for the entire day, excluding meals, Harry was finally ready to enact the first part of his plan. Putting his cloak on, Harry wandered the halls, eventually coming to the room he knew the Mirror of Erised was being kept. Entering, Harry knew that Dumbledore was watching, hidden in the shadows; keeping that in mind, Harry looked up to the mirror.

Harry remembered how the mirror had shown him his parents for the first time. Yet, now when Harry looked, he saw himself aged around 20 in the arms of a slightly older man who he recognised from his meeting with Tom Riddle. He was tall, with dark brown hair shorter than Harry's, and styled. This was the man Tom could have been and Harry vowed that he would try to make that happen. Around the pair stood Sirius, Neville, and Harry's other friends. They all looked happy.

Knowing he was being watched, Harry removed his cloak and sat down, repeating his actions from his former life. “Mom... Dad...?” he said longingly.

This time when Dumbledore appeared, Harry wasn’t shocked.

“Do you know what this mirror shows us harry?” he asked.

Making sure to jump, Harry turned to look at the scheming old man. “I'm sorry sir, I didn’t see you there,” Harry stuttered out.

“It’s okay, my dear boy. Many a man are drawn to the mirror,” Dumbledore said sagely.

“I don’t know, sir;” Harry said, in reply to his earlier question.

“Really, you have no idea?” Dumbledore asked.

“Well, I guess it shows what we want?” Harry replied, making sure to sound uncertain.

“Take a closer look, Harry,” Dumbledore prompted.

Walking to the mirror, Harry pretended to observe it before ‘finding’ the inscription. "Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi," Harry mumbled before pretending to figure it out. “I show not your face, but your heart’s desire!” he exclaimed happily.

“Very good, Harry,” Dumbledore said, his tone just shying away from patronising but still setting Harry's teeth on edge.

“So, I see my parents because they’re what I want most?” Harry asked.

“Yes, my dear boy,” Albus said, happy that his plans for the boy where falling into place even with the boy in Ravenclaw. He would still get his hero.

“What do you see, professor?” Harry asked.

“Why, I see myself with a warm pair of socks,” Albus lied.

“Do you think I could come back here, professor? It’s just... I've never seen my parents before,” Harry made sure to mumble shyly.

“Oh, my dear boy, you must not despair. You will see your parents again someday,” Dumbledore said, making Harry think about how Dumbledore was actively planning on reuniting them sooner
rather than later.

“You must remember though, Harry, the images the mirror shows are not real. It does not do well to dwell on them,” he warned.

“Oh, professor,” Harry said, conveying disappointment.

~

After that night, Harry had been busy preparing what was needed for him to work his plan. Ron had finally taken the hint and, although he would still come up to Harry to ask about their adventure, Harry was quick to tell him he hadn’t found anything new. This left Harry with enough free time to finish his preparations.

Harry pulled out a plain crystal he had ordered alongside his Christmas presents and placed it in the centre of a circle of runes he had spent an hour drawing. The ritual he was using was an old one used by conmen and thieves that had been banned by the ministry in the 1700’s, yet it suited Harry’s purpose perfectly.

Centring his magic, Harry started the chant he had been researching all week, making sure his pronunciation was as perfect as any mistake could have drastic effects. Once the ritual took hold, Harry watched in fascination as the crystal shimmered and took on the physical properties of the philosopher’s stone. It wouldn’t work as one, but it would fool anybody up until the moment they went to use it. It even had the same magical signature and presence.

Feeling drained, Harry quickly hid the evidence of his ritual and placed the stone in his trunk, warding it with the strongest protections he could.

The next day, Harry was still slightly exhausted and barely kept from snarling at Ron, who was trailing after him like a puppy. There were only two days left until the other students returned and Harry wanted to get the stone before then.

“You sure you're alright, mate? You're looking kind of pale,” the redhead commented.

Harry seeing his opening, he jumped at the chance. “Actually, I'm not feeling great, I think I'm just going to go back to bed,” he said.

Ron looked disappointed. “Oh, yeah,” he grumbled, “I suppose you should.”

“Bye, then!” Harry said, practically racing away.

Having spent the rest of the day resting, Harry soon found himself mentally and magically restored. Putting on a pair of black trousers and a dark grey jumper, Harry gathered up his invisibility cloak and his imposter stone.

Putting the cloak on, Harry set his silencing and scent blocking charms before he made his way out of Ravenclaw tower and to the 3rd floor. Walking to the door, Harry once again observed the wards. Working carefully, Harry took his time manipulating them; he didn’t want to break them as that would alert Dumbledore. Eventually, Harry found what he was looking for and managed to slip past them and into the room. Upon hearing the door open, all three of Fluffy’s massive heads turned and let out growls. Lifting his wand, Harry flicked it and listened as a soft tune started to play. After a few minutes, the dog fell asleep, leaving Harry free to start his mission.

Dropping into the pit of Devil’s Snare, Harry kept his body loose and dropped through to the next level. Next, he came to the keys; reaching out, Harry tried a simple *accio* and watched as the key
sailed through the air to him. Smirking, Harry unlocked the door before the other keys could embed themselves in him.

Next, Harry approached the chess set and tried to move around without playing. However, it seemed like McGonagall actually anticipated this and Harry found his movements blocked. Sighing, Harry had to play his way across. Although not a chess master, Harry could actually hold his own in a game after years of watching Ron play. Harry managed to win the game without having to nobly sacrifice himself like the redhead had in his last life.

Coming to the next room, Harry was hit with a foul odour. Knowing he couldn’t kill or really harm the troll, Harry instead sent an overpowered sleeping charm, knowing that, with it’s magical resistance, it should make the troll sleep for the next few hours.

Snape’s task, Harry noted this time, was actually very clever and Harry wondered if the hat had considered Ravenclaw for the resident potions master. Picking up the solution that would allow him to pass through the flames, Harry entered the chamber.

Approaching the mirror, Harry reached out and observed the carefully erected wards surrounding it. Stopping to find a way in, Harry eventually slipped passed without alerting them. The next part of his plan would be the hardest; Dumbledore’s enchantments on the mirror where both subtle and in depth. Standing in front of the mirror, Harry thought about how he wanted the stone and didn’t want to use it. Which was technically true - he didn’t want to use the stone. Feeling the weight of it in his pocket, Harry took out his imposter stone and carefully manipulated the enchantments on the mirror. This was the hard part. After what seemed like hours, Harry’s imposter stone finally disappeared, accepted by the enchantments. Going back over them, Harry spent time modifying the charms to perfectly mirror how he had found them. Eventually, Harry’s task was done and he stood, exhausted.

“I see you are not wasting your new life being idle,” a deep voice said, startling Harry, who span, wand raised and ready to curse whoever had caught him.

Seeing exactly who, or rather what, had snuck up on him, Harry let out a breath. “Death,” he greeted.

“Master,” Death said, His grave voice seeming to fill the room without being loud.

Harry stood and wondered why the powerful being was here; he knew he hadn’t summoned Him.

“I am here as I said I would be. I did say I would check in from time to time,” Death said, making Harry wonder if the being could hear his thoughts even through his rings and Occlumency shields.

“Oh,” Harry said, before he thought of a question to ask. “Do you know of any way I can return Tom’s sanity to him?” he asked. He had yet to find a solution.

Death was silent, making Harry want to squirm as being in His presence was always overwhelming.

“The magic he used to gain his immortality—” Death managed to put an astonishing level of disdain behind the word, “—is a magic I abhor. It splits the caster’s very self, not just their soul, but their mind, magic, and emotion. To fix him, you must find a way to reconnect the pieces he cast off.”

Harry withheld his sigh - he already knew that. “Yes, but do you know how to do that specifically?” he asked, barely stopping himself from sounding like he was whining.

“I do,” Death said. The silent ‘but’ easily heard.

“Yet...?” Harry asked.
“I think that it would be best for you to work for the results,” Death said, making Harry want to cry with frustration. He was magically exhausted and Death was taunting him. “I am not fond of those who use such magics. I think that your soulmate can suffer however long it takes you to find the solution.”

“But there is a solution,” Harry wanted verified.

“Yes,” Death confirmed.

“Fine then, I will find it,” Harry vowed. He didn't blame Death for His decision, he just wasn’t pleased.

“I have no doubt, master,” Death said.

“What about the stone?” Harry asked, thinking about Death’s words about those who sought immortality.

Death seemed to come closer without really moving. “Ah, the famed Philosopher’s Stone, you really have been quite busy, master. That stone I actually do like; Nicholas did spend such a long time working on it,” Death answered.

“So, you wouldn't be angry if I used it one day? Or gave it to Tom?” Harry asked.

“No,” Death said. “I doubt you would wish to stay my master if your soulmate passed, and I would prefer him to use the stone over his other solution.”

Harry smiled in relief. “Thank you.”

“I have done nothing,” Death said. “I shall go now; I have seen you are not in need of me. Remember, you can call if need, but know I shall not always answer.” Like before, He disappeared into the shadows once again.

Harry stood for a moment before crashing; he really was exhausted and the conversation hadn’t helped. Barely able to stay awake, Harry just about managed to make his way back to Ravenclaw tower. Getting to his trunk, Harry pulled out the stone and observed it. For such a small item, it really had caused a lot of bother. Unlocking his trunk, Harry placed it in the most protected part and added numerous charms and even a few dark hexes to keep people out. At this point, Harry was barely awake, his magical energy was distinctly low and he struggled to undress before falling into a deep and dreamless sleep.

The next day, Harry didn’t wake up until well into the afternoon. Stretching, Harry felt refreshed; he was surprised at how drained he had been, but considering he never had need to do so much magic at once, he summarised that he shouldn’t have been so shocked. Magic was like a muscle: it needed to be used and stretched. Yes, his magical core was large, but as he never had need to use much of it, especially as an eleven year old, it shouldn’t surprise him that completing two such powerful rituals in just over 24 hours left him drained.

Thinking about that, Harry considered ways of training up his magical stamina; it would be hard to do it undetected, but he thought the benefits would be worth it. He had gained control over his new power levels, no longer having bursts of magic when he was angry, but he had yet to really explore them. Harry had kept his power masked pretty much constantly; stretching it would probably do his a world of good.

Making sure not to act suspicious when he finally went down to lunch, Harry made sure to casually look around and observed the staff. He didn’t notice anything off and concluded that his plan had
worked. He had gotten away with taking the stone.

Thinking back on his conversation with Death, Harry almost wondered if he had imagined it in his sleep deprived state, before he flicked the thought away.

~

Chapter End Notes

Shorter than usual but the next one is much longer,
Hope you enjoy!
~ Annie
Previously

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~

January 1992 Hogwarts

When the students returned the next day, Harry was pleased to find himself back in the company of Neville and the girls.

“So, how was your holiday? Did you do anything interesting?” Hannah asked.

Harry smirked internally when he thought about all he had accomplished, but outwardly he remained passive. “Not really, I mainly just tried to ignore Ronald,” Harry replied.

“Well, next time you will just have to take us up on our offers to have you over,” Susan said.

“I’ll think about it, I promise,” Harry replied.

“You had better,” she said before smiling. “Oh, and I wanted to thank you again for the hair pins. They really are beautiful.”

“It’s okay, Sues, I'm glad you like them. The book you got me was amazing as well,” Harry said. He had started to read it just that morning and found that it gave clear instructions and suggestions about how to advance in creating mind shields and protections.

After that, the group went on to talk about presents and their holidays, as though they hadn’t already told each other through owls. Harry didn’t mind as he sat silently and observed his friends.

~

Harry had been called up to Flitwick’s office just after Christmas to have a chat with him; the meetings were for all first years to see how they were settling. Harry had been nervous about Flitwick as he wasn’t sure if his goblin heritage would make him pick up on Harry's abnormalities. However, the diminutive professor hadn’t, or, at least, he hadn’t made it known he sensed anything different.
“Hello, Harry,” the Charms professor had greeted jovially.

“Good afternoon, sir,” Harry replied. He hadn’t really ever interacted with the part-goblin in his last life and was surprised to see how proactive he was in managing his house compared to McGonagall. He always spent the morning of every other Sunday in the common room, making himself available to help his students.

“Why don’t you take a seat for me, Harry?” Flitwick suggested.

Sitting in the offered chair, Harry looked up and waited.

“Well Harry, from looking at your scores from this past term, I have to say: I am extremely proud of you. You’re at the top of all of your classes and you're producing results that are well beyond the normal capabilities of a first year student.”

Harry contained his scowl. He had tried to bring his work level down, but even with that he outclassed his peers by a considerable margin. “Thank you, sir,” he said. He didn’t mind being thought of as a prodigy, but he felt bad for his peers competing against him.

“Now, from looking at your results, I can clearly see you're not having any problem with the work. However, I wouldn’t be doing my job if I didn’t ask; is there any area you feel you need help or support in?”

“No, sir,” Harry said honestly. “That could obviously change, but at the moment I find the work load and classes to be fine.”

“Good, good,” Flitwick said before a slightly darker look appeared on his face.

“Now Harry, I know that you and I haven’t really had a chance to talk much this year; however, I do want you to know that I will always stand by my students and fight for them,” he said seriously.

Harry was confused by the sudden turn and let it show in this voice. “Thank you, sir?” he said questioningly.

“Over the holidays I received a note from Madam Pomfrey - now, before you get upset, she did not in any way betray your trust. She simply asked for me to keep an eye on you as she had not had a chance to run her check up. Knowing she would not be able to give any insight, I took it upon myself to write to your family asking if they knew about any health concerns as I doubted you would want to talk to me yourself as you hadn’t do so. The note I received back shocked me, and I am honestly unsure what to do with the information.”

Harry was surprised by the man’s actions as it showed how dedicated he was to his students. Handing over the piece of paper, Harry read the note with interest.

~

Professor Flittle,

If the freak is ill, then it's not our fault! We wanted nothing to do with him from the start! Let the cretin die for all we care!

We were promised that if we took him in, your lot would leave us alone. We do not appreciate you and your freakish owls being sent to our NORMAL home.

You forced him on us, that old man promised he would be normal if we worked him hard enough!
He's your problem now!

Leave us alone in the future; we do not care what happens to the boy.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Dursley.

~

Harry couldn’t help but be thankful for his relatives’ stupidity. They had just gained him another potential ally.

Harry, making sure to turn in on himself, handed the letter back, before letting out a quiet sigh, “Oh.”

“Now Harry, the abuse of a minor is a serious matter in our world. Magical children are to be cherished. This letter indicates that your home life is less than ideal,” Flitwick said with concern.

Shuffling in his seat, as though uncomfortable, Harry spoke, “Well, my family... they don’t like anything they consider abnormal, and magic is just that. They're muggles you see, and they hated it if I ever did accidental magic. They would treat me... worse... when it happened. They’ve always said that they didn’t want me and that they were forced to take me in.”

Flitwick swore in gobbledygook, much to Harry's hidden amusement. “Harry, I would like you to be honest with me: do they abuse you?” he asked softly.

Harry squirmed. “I wouldn’t say that... they just....” Harry trailed off as though scared and confused.

“Have they ever hit you?” he asked.

Harry nodded softly and whispered, “Yes.”

“What else, Harry...?” Flitwick asked, his rage hidden on his face but his eyes dark and stormy.

“They wouldn’t feed me,” Harry whispered.

“Is there anything else?” Flitwick asked almost fearfully. Harry could image the horrors that some teachers were forced to see and was suddenly glad that his abuse had only been physical.

“No,” Harry said. “They would just beat me and lock me up without food sometimes.”

Nodding, Flitwick let out a long breath. “Mr. Potter, thank you, I know that must have been very hard for you to admit,” he said.

Harry sat silently, making sure to keep his head down, an idea forming in his mind.

“Who did they mean, professor? In the letter, I mean. They said ‘that old man’ forced them to take me,” Harry asked.

Flitwick kept his face carefully blank. “I'm not sure, Harry. I have my suspicions, but I can’t truthfully answer you.” He was positive he knew, but he couldn’t work out why. What did Dumbledore gain from forcing Harry on people who didn’t want him? He couldn’t imagine it was because of their family bond, as obviously Harry's family didn’t feel it. Filius was confused and concerned as he ran through his list of thoughts.

“What’s going to happen now?” Harry asked.

“Well Harry, I can’t promise anything yet, but I promise you this: I will find out what has been going
on,” he vowed. He would have to make some subtle inquiries to check and see if Albus was aware of Harry's home situation. He didn’t want to believe that he knew, but he remembered the man talking about Harry growing up. He had said the boy was loved and cared for. What had changed?

Harry considered his head of house for a moment and weighed his words and actions against what he knew about the man from the past. Coming to a decision, Harry smiled lightly.

“Professor, if I told you something, would you keep it to secret? Even from, say, your boss or somebody?” Harry asked.

Flitwick considered the boy’s words. “Well Harry, I would, depending on the secret. If I thought you would be in danger I would have to tell somebody if it meant helping you,” he said honestly, wondering what the boy wanted to say.

“Well then, professor, you should know that with the help of Chief Ragnok and a law wizard, I'm currently in the process of getting Sirius Black freed.”

Flitwick’s eyes had widened at hearing Ragnok’s name; with his being part goblin, he knew the importance of having the head goblin’s personal help. However, at hearing Sirius’ name, he actually spluttered.

“Why, Harry?!” he asked, shocked.

“As you have probably realised sir, my memory is rather exceptional. I have memories from when I was very young. I remember things about that night and I know Sirius is innocent. When I returned to this world and I realised what had happened to him, I started the process of getting him freed. How he ended up in Azkaban without a trial, I will never know,” Harry said. He was, of course, lying about how he knew, but he didn’t want go into detail about being the Master of Death.

Flitwick sat for a few moments, his face contorting as he processed all the information Harry had just given him.

“How did you come to know the head of Gringotts’ London branch?” he finally asked. Having Ragnok’s personal help... well, he was blown away.

“When I re-entered this world, I was told he was personally overseeing my accounts,” Harry said. “Why? Is it a big deal?” He wanted to come across as naive.

“Yes, actually, it is. As the head of Gringotts bank, Ragnok has the power to act on behalf of the goblin nation. By taking in interest in you and supporting you, he is declaring the support of all the goblins in England,” Flitwick said, astonished. He had heard whisperings about a new goblin friend being named and he had to wonder: if it was the small boy in front of him, why?

“Oh, I didn’t know that,” Harry said, making sure to seem shocked.

“You are sure that Sirius Black is innocent?” Flitwick asked, going back to Harry's statement.

“Yes. I know he didn’t betray my parents - it was Peter, and I doubt he would have killed twelve innocent people. He just needs a trial, he never had one, I asked,” Harry said earnestly.

“Peter? Peter Pettigrew?” Flitwick repeated.

“Yes, he brought Voldemort to the house. I remember,” Harry lied.

“Oh, I see....” Flitwick said, his face full of concern at the thought of Harry remembering such tragic
events. He had realised that Harry possessed a rare magical ability with his eidetic memory, but he had never considered this possibility.

“I just want Sirius to have a trial. He’s my godfather, you see. If he gets cleared, I will be able to live with him and not have to worry about going back to the Dursleys,” Harry explained softly.

Flitwick gained an understanding look. “You don’t have to worry about that, Harry. I will do everything in my power to make sure you never have to return to a home where you're hurt. And, if what you say about Mr. Black is true, then I will do everything I can to support you both,” he vowed.

Harry smiled. “Thank you, sir, I really didn’t want to return to them. I don’t know why I was placed there to begin with,” Harry said, looking up and watching as the seeds were planted. His work was slow going, but he would have the world questioning Dumbledore; so far, he had Amelia Bones, Madam Pomfrey, and Severus. Adding the goblins and Flitwick, Harry was happy to see his web spreading. The sooner he started to chip away at the old coot’s fan base, the sooner he could get his revenge.

Flitwick looked pensive as he hummed. “No, I don’t know the reason either, Harry. But I will look into it,” he swore. “Now, why don’t you run along? Oh, and Harry? Do try not to worry.”

Harry stood and sent him a small smile. “Okay sir, and thank you,” he said.

“No, Mr. Potter, thank you. You have given me a lot to think about.”

With that, Harry left, happy with what he had accomplished.

~

The next few weeks seemed to rush by and before Harry knew it, March was turning into April and the older year Ravenclaws seemed to go mental. They wrote out study and exam timetables and Harry was practically hogtied to a chair and forced to sit through Maria’s speech on proper preparation for tests. It had become common knowledge that Harry was gifted and, at first, his fellow Ravenclaws had been hostile about this fact, but they had quickly stopped when they saw he was willing to help them.

The rumours that he was a prodigy had Harry wanting to laugh; he was only considered such as he had already done all of the lessons. In truth, during his last life, Harry thought himself to be an average student. Yes, his Defence work had been strong but, other than that, he had been level with the rest of this group. Although, when he thought about it, without the blocks Harry did have a large amount of knowledge to draw from, yet that only helped him so much. He would never be a Potions master; he simply didn’t have the intrinsic skill in brewing or the patience for long term brews. Nor would he ever be great at Herbology, he didn’t have the touch. The same could be said about Divination, Harry simply lacked the ability. Yes, he could give endless facts and spout obscure knowledge, but he would never master the subjects.

Since his talk with Flitwick, the part goblin had made sure to check in on Harry during his biweekly stops in the common room. Harry had noticed how he seemed to now watch the headmaster more, with looks of consideration on his face. Harry barely stopped himself from cackling the first time he had noticed this during dinner.

Harry had also finally gotten around to having his checkup with Pomfrey and was happy to have his potions reduced to three times a week for his bones and every other day for his weight. His scar ointment was still being used daily, but they had faded considerably and would probably only need
to be used for another three months or so; not all of his scars would fade, but Harry was pleased to note that they would be faint.

After being released from the speech about preparations, Harry made his way to lunch.

“Are you prepared for the exams, Harry?” asked Terry. He had taken to hanging around Harry and his friends more.

“What are you asking about exams for? They’re ages away!” came Ron’s distinctive voice as he appeared. He had been trying to worm his way into their group and had taken to just appearing and inserting himself into conversations.

Terry looked aghast. “They’re not! We only have a few more weeks!”

“Whatever. Like Harry needs to worry about stupid exams being who he is,” Ron said arrogantly, making Harry wince and the group stare at the redhead.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” piped up Hannah, who had joined them along with Susan. Usually the girls would just ignore Ron, especially as he had taken to going on about the faults of the other houses compared to Gryffindor - they really were proud ‘Puffs.

“Well, it’s obvious: he's the Boy-Who-Lived. Why should he worry about exams? Heroes don’t need tests.”

Harry rolled his eyes at his friends. “Listen Ronald, I do not care about any silly titles. Exams are important,” he said slowly.

Ron huffed, “I don’t understand why you’re being like this, Harry. Over Christmas I thought I had gotten you to understand.”

“Understand what?”

“That you are destined for greater things. You're a hero!” Ron said.

Harry snorted. “I'm no hero,” he said decisively.

“But what about the three headed dog? You were so close to uncovering a mystery - to being a hero!” Ron whined.

“What three headed dog, Harry?” Susan asked.

Harry thought for a moment and had a moment of brilliance. “There’s a Cerberus on the 3rd floor,” he said.

“A-a Cerberus?” she squeaked.

“Really? They're very rare! An XXXX level beast...” Terry, extremely excited by the prospect, began to recite facts about them.

“You saw it?” Susan asked after she had calmed down.

“Yeah. During Christmas I accidently wandered to the third floor when I wasn’t paying attention; I just walked right into the room with it,” Harry said.

“Wait. There’s no protections or wards stopping people from going near it?” Susan asked quickly.
Harry, glad that she had picked some traits from her aunt, replied, “No, nothing. I was shocked. I wonder what Dumbledore's up to - keeping such a dangerous beast in a school with children? With no protections stopping them from stumbling into it? It's all very strange.”

Susan’s eyes had narrowed. “I agree. I think my aunt would as well,” she mumbled.

“What the hell, Harry?! How dare you question Dumbledore?! He's the greatest wizard since Merlin!” Ron shouted.

“I was just wondering what he was thinking not even warding the door against entry,” Harry said.

“I can’t believe you!” Ron screamed. “You’re supposed to be a hero! Not questioning Dumbledore like some dark wizard!”

“How does me thinking the headmaster made a mistake make me a dark wizard?” Harry asked.

“If it does, then I must be a dark witch,” Susan said, standing next to Harry and glaring at Ron.

“Me too,” said Hannah.

Ron stood there, face turning red, before he span on his heel and stormed off, knocking into Neville who had just turned the corner and causing the blond boy to fall to the ground.

Helping him up, Harry said, “Sorry about that.”

“It’s not your fault, Harry,” Neville said, dusting himself off. “What happened this time?” he asked.

“Well, according to Ron, we’re all dark wizards for thinking the headmaster is wrong to keep a level XXXX beast inside the castle without even setting wards around it,” Harry said.

Neville let out a squeak, “A-a level—?”

“—Yeah, there's a Cerberus on the 3rd floor! Harry saw it,” Terry interrupted excitedly. Harry hadn’t known he was a creature enthusiast.

“I see,” Neville said faintly. Harry was almost worried he would pass out.

“Are you really going to tell your aunt?” Harry asked Susan as the group made their way down to the lake.

“Yes. I think she would like to know; she's not been happy with Dumbledore since I told her—” Susan cut herself off and looked at Harry quickly.

“It’s okay if you told her about my family. I should have expected it,” Harry said, internally cheering. Slowly, but surely, he would ruin Dumbledore's carefully crafted image.

Susan smiled softly. “I'm sorry, Harry. I didn’t mean to betray you or anything, I just couldn’t not tell her - she could help. With her job, I thought it would be okay,” she explained, rambling in her fear.

“It’s okay Susie, I'm not angry,” Harry said, soothing her nerves. “But I don’t understand why your aunt would be mad at Dumbledore for how my family treats me,” he said, pretending to be confused.

“Well, when I wrote to her, she apparently went to work and looked up your file. Dumbledore has classified it and it took her some time to get a copy. Apparently, he’s your magical guardian and he should have been checking up on you. That he didn’t is bad as you're a known wizard, without even mentioning your status in our world,” Susan explained. “She spoke to me about it over Christmas
and told me it was strange. She promised to look into it more.”

“Thank you,” Harry said.

“It is strange, when you think about it,” Neville commented.

“Oh?” Harry asked, wondering what the blond thought about this. He was hoping to convert them all to him and he worried that, with Neville's history with Death Eaters, he would never accept Harry once he learnt the truth.

“Yeah. I mean, I know they’re your closest family, but usually when a magical child is orphaned, they’re kept in our world. It’s just easier on them to adjust. I’ve never heard of a magical child being given to muggles.”

“Closest family? I thought they were my only family,” Harry said.

“Well, they’re your direct family, but you should know that all pure blooded families are related. Hell, I think me and you share a great aunt or something, so really placing you with a magical family wouldn’t have been hard,” Neville explained.

Harry was slightly surprised. He knew that purebloods all intermarried, but he hadn’t thought he had any relation to the Longbottom's. Then again, he had never really seen the Potter family tree. “I didn’t know that,” he said honestly before he smiled. “So, we’re related then?” he asked.

“Distantly,” Neville said.

A silence fell then before Hannah voiced what they had all been thinking. “It’s also strange how Dumbledore didn’t check on you,” she said. “You would think he would want to keep a close eye on you after everything.”

“Yeah, well, I guess we’ll never know,” Harry said.

Seeing their doubtful faces, Harry hid his glee and instead distracted them, talking about the up and coming quidditch match. Harry hadn’t been bothered about the game since he had come back, but he was grateful for it now as he distracted his friends.

~

Meanwhile, Dumbledore was not pleased. He had thought he had the boy under his control when, over Christmas, he had started going after the clues left to him about the stone. Yet, for the last few months, there was nothing! The boy had gone back to ignoring Ronald and stopped acting how he was supposed to. Albus was not happy; and to make things worse, he was sure that Harry had said something to Filius as the part goblin had been wary around him recently when he had been asking for reports on his pawn. Even Severus had nothing to say when he asked - which would not do! He had spent decades planning this and he would be damned if an eleven year old would destroy all he had worked for!

Sitting down to worry at his lemon drop, Albus thought of how he could get Harry back on the correct path.

~

July 9th 1992 Hogwarts

It was the day before exams before anything interesting happened to Harry. He had been waiting for
Neville by the doors to the great hall when he had accidentally overheard a secret conversation between Dumbledore and Hagrid. Their obvious set up was sickening to Harry as he listened.

“Now Hagrid, you must be watchful. With me gone for a few days, the stone will be unguarded.” Harry heard Albus say in a grave voice, barely keeping his eyes from rolling.

“I will headmaster, but I doubt anybody would be able to get past Fluffy. Nobody knows that it takes music to put him to sleep,” Hagrid said.

“I pray you’re right, my old friend. As you know, I suspect Voldemort is after the stone....”

Harry wondered if they honestly thought he was that stupid and walked away from them, moving to wait slightly away from the doors. The two continued to have their super secret meeting without their audience; Harry really didn’t feel like playing their game.

“You alright, mate?” Neville asked when he arrived and saw the mutinous scowl on Harry's face.

“Yes, sorry,” Harry said, trying to cover his dark expression. “Just worried about exams,” he lied. Neville laughed. “Why? You know that you’re going to have the best marks in our year,” he said. Harry smiled slightly. “Maybe, but still, it’s normal to be nervous.”

“Let’s head to breakfast,” Neville suggested.

Walking in, Harry directed Neville to the Hufflepuff table. He wanted to avoid his fellow ravens as exam fever had hit them hard and he really didn’t fancy having Ron pop up. Joining the girls, Harry sat down and made a plate for himself.

“Morning guys,” Hannah greeted.

“Good morning,” they said, before they fell into conversation about the upcoming exams and holidays.

“What are you going to do about the holidays?” Susan asked, concerned about her friend.

“I’m not sure,” Harry said honestly. “Flitwick wants to meet me after our exams are over.”

“You told him then?” Susan asked.

“Yeah, after Christmas he found out,” Harry told them.

“Good,” Neville said.

“Yeah, hopefully he will sort it out. My aunt’s still looking into it, but she said it’s hard as your files are locked,” Susan told them.

“You are welcome to spend the summer with me,” Neville offered.

“Oh, and you should definitely visit us, we live next to each other,” Hannah added.

“I’ll try to see you all,” Harry promised.

The owl mail arrived then and Harry saw a familiar small brown owl that he knew belonged to Edgar Dodge. Cutting up his bacon fat, Harry placed it in a small dish and gave it to the owl as he took the letter.
Mr. Potter,

I believe now would be a good time for you to acquire that piece of evidence.

I have managed to secure an emergency trial for the innocent party, which will be taking place in two weeks. I believe with the evidence you supply and his own testimony, you will soon be reunited with your godfather.

If you would bring the evidence to Gringotts at your earliest convenience, I will arrange for it to be found by a reliable Auror.

Sincerely,

Edgar Dodge Jr

Law Wizard, Dodge E & Dodge E’r

Reading the letter, Harry let out a relieved breath: he wouldn’t have to spend the entire summer at the Dursleys. Now, all he had to do was capture that rat.

“Good news?” Neville asked, seeing Harry's smile.

“Oh yeah, great,” Harry said absently as he planned - and he knew just the way to get into Gryffindor tower. Looking up and seeing that the hall was full, Harry decided to collect his evidence now.

“Hey guys, I've just remembered I've left my Charms work in my room. I’ll meet you all later,” he said.

“Okay, Harry,” they agreed.

Sneaking into the lion’s den was ridiculously easy with his cloak. All Harry had to do was wait for somebody to say the password and he slipped in with them undetected.

Making his way up to the first year dorms, Harry saw the mess that was Ron's bed. With a grimace of disgust, he approached the cage that Pettigrew was sleeping in. Stunning the already sleeping rat, Harry reached in and grabbed him. Returning to his dorm, Harry transfigured a shoe into a cage and set about warding it. Placing the rat inside, Harry revived him and sent a stinging hex. Seeing the rat suddenly jerk awake, Harry smiled, not realising how sadistic he looked in that moment.

“Hello, Peter,” he said, enjoying how the rat panicked and let out a pained squeak as he obviously tried to transform and found himself unable.

“Now, now Peter, you wouldn’t want to do that. This cage is special. You won’t be able to transform or escape from it,” Harry said.

Harry flicked his wand so that a small food and water dispenser appeared; it wouldn’t be good for the rat to die before he had gotten Sirius free. Placing the cage in his trunk, Harry barely kept from dancing in celebration.

Things were working out perfectly.
July 15th 1992 – Hogwarts

He should have known that he would jinx himself he thought as he was called up to Dumbledore's office after his final exam later that week. Quirrell had vanished two days ago, most likely with the fake stone, and Dumbledore had been looking grave and resentful whenever Harry had seen him.

Entering the office, Harry saw that it was in shambles; the headmaster had obviously lost hold of his temper.

“Ah, Harry, my boy, do come in,” Dumbledore said, his voice strained as he obviously forced himself to act like a benevolent old man.

“You wanted to see me, headmaster?” Harry said, his voice light and inquisitive.

“Yes, my boy, I was just wondering if you had noticed anything strange recently?” he asked.

“Strange, sir?” Harry replied, sounding confused.

“Yes, with your scar?” Dumbledore said, his eyes gleaming.

“No, sir,” Harry said.

Dumbledore seemed to deflate. “I see,” he said, his voice void of emotion.

“Why, sir?” Harry asked, keeping his voice childlike.

“I have reason to believe Voldemort will likely return,” Dumbledore said, his voice suddenly going dramatically grave.

Harry made his eyes widen in shock. “V-Voldemort, sir?! Why would you think that? I thought he was gone,” Harry said fearfully.

“Oh no, my dear boy, he’s out there waiting,” Dumbledore said darkly.

“I'm sorry professor, but what has this got to do with my scar?” Harry asked, wondering what the old man would say.

“I believe, Harry, that your scar connects the two of you, and I had thought you would feel it if something had happened or if he was close,” Dumbledore said, his shrewd eyes scanning Harry.

Harry just contained his snort. Yes, the *scar* connected them, not the fact they were soulmates. “I'm sorry sir, but I've felt nothing,” he said.

Dumbledore's eyes narrowed with suspicion, the twinkle disappearing. “I see. You may go then, Harry,” he dismissed, forgetting to act like a kind old man in his anger.

As Harry walked to the door, he called out, “Oh, and Harry? Don’t mention this to anybody, it wouldn’t do to worry them. Perhaps I am wrong about my fears,” he said.

Harry nodded his head and left the office. He had his meeting with Flitwick as well before the feast, and would have to hurry to get to his office.

After Harry left, Albus picked up a paper weight from his desk and launched it at the door.
“Damn him!” he screamed.

“Temper, temper, Albus,” mocked the portrait of Phineas Black.

“Silence, or so help me, I will find a way to have you removed!” Albus seethed.

He couldn’t work out how Voldemort had taken the stone; he didn’t even know how long it had been missing! His protections around the mirror itself had been *infallible*! He should have felt it the moment the stone vanished but he had felt nothing! And Harry, that damn boy! He refused to take the bait, this was *his* fault! If he had just gone after the stone, then everything would be alright now! But no, the boy refused to take the bait, refused to be what Albus had planned for. This would not do!

~

Reaching Flitwick’s office just in time, Harry knocked and entered, seeing Snape and Pomfrey in there as well.

“Hello sirs, ma’am,” he said.

“Harry, take a seat,” Flitwick said, indicating to the chair left free.

Sitting, Harry turned to the three adults. “You wanted to see me, sir?” he asked.

“Yes. We all here in this room are aware of your situation at home,” Flitwick began. Harry made sure to dart his eyes to Snape, hoping it would be picked up on.

“Yes Potter, I am aware,” the dark eyed man said. “I recognised the signs and, based on the potions I have observed you taking and the ointment you require, I pieced the facts together.”

“Oh,” Harry said, trying to act ashamed.

“Anyway, both Madam Pomfrey and Professor Snape have approached me to ask about your summer plans, and I felt it would be best if you answered their questions as I promised the information you told me last time would be secret,” Flitwick explained.

Harry was surprised at that. Not that Flitwick had kept his promise, but that Snape had worried about him enough to ask. He was also surprised that Madam Pomfrey had gone to Flitwick instead of Dumbledore; he hadn’t considered what he would have done if she had gone to the old coot.

“I see,” Severus replied. He was impressed the boy had discovered that much, but his answer also worried him. *Why did Potter not trust Dumbledore?*
“You will be safe, dear?” Pomfrey asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry replied.

“I don’t like this, but I’ve known Albus for years. He never listens to me when I tell him about children I fear come from bad homes. It’s the reason I go to the head of houses now,” she said, sighing. Harry was shocked by this and wondered how Dumbledore maintained his great image if his staff knew he ignored abuse.

Severus looked at Filius and saw that the man’s eyes were hard. “You are aware of Mr. Potter’s plans?” he asked.

“I’m aware of some of them,” Flitwick replied.

“You trust he will be alright?” Severus asked. He respected Filius as the man would always go out of his way for his students.

Filius looked at the boy sitting in front of him and considered all he knew about Harry Potter. He was a mystery; he had friends within the goblin race and his abilities were beyond that of his age. He also knew a lot about this world for somebody who had apparently just entered it. However, he trusted the boy. He had seen him spend hours teaching wand movements to his fellow first years, watched as he united the houses.

“I trust Mr. Potter knows what he is doing,” Flitwick said.

Harry contained his smile.

Severus, who had been watching Filius as he thought about his answer, nodded his head. “Very well, then. However, Mr. Potter, I will expect you to owl me if you find yourself in trouble or in need of assistance,” he said, looking at the boy who reminded him so much of Lily.

“Yes, sir,” Harry said.

~

After that, Harry was allowed to go to the feast. Sitting down with his housemates, Harry smiled at them as they celebrated their first year being complete. Unlike in his last life, when the house cup was awarded, it went to Slytherin. Harry received no unexpected points. Clapping politely for the snake house, Harry returned to his dorm with his roommates and started to pack.

Getting on the train the next day, Harry shared his compartment with the same people he had arrived at Hogwarts with.

“You look happy, Harry,” Susan commented, surprised as she thought the boy would be upset about returning to his family.

“I am happy,” Harry said. “It’s been a great year.” He thought about what he had accomplished. He had gotten his revenge on Hermione, though his gut still churned sometimes at the thought of what happened, started to plant the seeds needed to destroy Dumbledore’s reputation, gained the stone, and gotten Sirius a trial. A very good year, indeed.

“It has been great,” Neville agreed.

Eventually the journey was underway and they all made plans to meet up, Harry promising to try. He knew he would be busy, though, what with Sirius’ trial and everything.
Pulling into the station hours later, Harry left his friends, promising to write and visit. Susan had been against letting him leave as she had wanted her aunt to meet his relatives, but Harry had persuaded her to let him go. It wasn’t like he was actually going home to Surrey. Finding a secluded spot, Harry shrunk down his trunk and let Hedwig free, telling her to head to the Leaky Cauldron, before he apparated there.

Walking out into Diagon Alley, Harry headed straight to Gringotts. He had to see a goblin about a rat.

Chapter End Notes

Guess who's laptop has decided to commit suicide?
The next update should be on Monday...
Hope you're enjoying the story! Like always Comments & kudos are encouraged!
~ Annie
Previously

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~

Entering Gringotts, Harry no longer felt the need to approach a teller. Instead, he greeted those he passed as he made his way straight into the back and towards Ragnok’s office.

After being called inside, Harry sat down and pulled out his trunk, unshrinking it and releasing the wards.

“You have the traitor, then?” Ragnok asked as he watched Harry.

“Of course,” Harry said, pulling out the cage with the rat.

Peter let out distressed squeaks and cowered in the enchanted cage.

Ragnok could feel the enchantments and let out a sadistic laugh when he realised their purpose.

“I take it you were not fond of Mr. Pettigrew in your past life?” he asked.

Harry stunned the rat. “That would be an understatement. Not only did he betray my parents and get them killed, he assisted in Voldemort's return, using my blood - which he took unwillingly,” Harry hissed.

“Unfortunate,” Ragnok commented, his expression showing his amusement.

"It was actually quite traumatic at the time; I was still the light’s golden boy. And it left quite a large scar, both physically and mentally," Harry said his pretend offence making Ragnok’s smirk widen.

"Yes, I’m sure you're very traumatised," Ragnok said.

Harry laughed lightly. "So, what's going to happen to him now?" he asked.

"Mr. Dodge will come and collect him. If you wish to meet him, he should be arriving soon," Ragnok said.

Harry considered this and decided it was a smart decision to meet the man acting as his law wizard.
"I'll wait here," he said.

"Very good. Shall I send for some tea and a light snack?" Ragnok offered.

"Please, that would be appreciated. The train from Hogwarts does leave much to be desired in terms of real food," Harry said, thinking about all of the sweets he had eaten. That was one of the only benefits of having such a young body - Harry had re-found his sweet tooth.

~

When Edgar Dodge arrived an hour later, Harry was happily full. The man was visually deceptive in his mind; he looked to be in his mid 30's, light brown hair that was thinning slightly, and blue-grey eyes that looked small in his thin face. He did not look like a man who would be trusted by the goblin race or a man who was famous for his cut throat tactics and high success rate.

"Mr. Potter, I presume?" Dodge said, surprising Harry with his rich voice. He could suddenly see why he had such high success rates.

"Indeed. It's a pleasure, Mr. Dodge," Harry said, standing and offering his hand. Even in his eleven year old body, Harry was still technically his employer and wanted to act like it.

Taking the offered hand, Dodge shook once before taking a seat. He immediately picked up the cage and observed it.

"You had no trouble obtaining him?" he asked, inspecting the stunned animagus.

"Not at all, I managed it the day I received your note," Harry said.

"Good - and nobody suspects you?" Edgar questioned.

"What's to suspect? The rat simply escaped his cage," Harry said, sharing a smirk with the man as Ragnok sat back and watched.

"Excellent, this will help increase the chances of success exponentially. Now, moving on from the rat; after I have seen to the release of Mr. Black, I imagine you will wish for me to represent him in his custody suit," Edgar said, pulling out a few files and a self-inking quill.

Harry nodded. "Yes, though I do not know how much Ragnok had told you," Harry said, sending the goblin a look of question.

"Mr. Dodge is aware of your home situation and of the fact that Dumbledore attempted to block and manipulate your magic and life. He had also been briefed about the money embezzlement and his station as your magical guardian," Ragnok clarified.

"Right, then you're up to date," Harry said to the law wizard. He was happy with the information Ragnok had shared - he didn't want it known he was from the future or such.

"Mr. Black has a strong case for you as, not only is he your godfather, I am told your parents also did the blood adoption ritual. Meaning he is legally, magically, and biologically 1/3 your parent, as the ritual will have given you both Black and Potter blood and traits. However, the opposition will make their case based on his mental stability. Ten years in Azkaban will have caused both physical and mental damage. They may also claim that uprooting you from your current family would cause you problems - that you have a steady life and changing that could affect your health.

"The first problem is difficult to argue. However, if given immediate and in-depth treatment, I'm sure
Mr. Black could make a quick and thorough recovery. This should be highlighted, and with the resources at his call if he claims the Black lordship, then your godfather will easily be able to afford the best treatment. The latter claim can be easily fought depending on you: do you wish for your treatment at the hands of your relatives to become known?”

Harry sat still and listened while Dodge spoke. He was impressed with the man having already started to plan for the custody battle. Harry himself had made some mental notes, but he had yet to write anything down or plan so in-depth.

“You can use the Dursley’s abuse to make Sirius’ claim stronger,” Harry said decisively. “This will also help with my plan for Dumbledore; it will weaken his support as he allowed it and encouraged it to happen. If you need evidence, then you can probably call on Amelia Bones, Severus Snape, Filius Flitwick, and Poppy Pomfrey. There was also a private healer, Jordan Theon, who examined me last summer,” Harry said, causing eyebrows to rise. Having the head of the DMLE backing him would really turn heads. Madam Bones was notorious in the Wizengamot for being incorruptible and exceptionally fair. She would always follow the law and see to it that justice was served.

"And when did you make the acquaintance of Madam Bones?" Ragnok asked, curiously raising a bushy eyebrow.

Harry smirked. "I'm rather close with her niece, Susan, lovely girl. She couldn't help but feel the need to tell her aunt about my relatives once she found out," Harry said, raising his eyebrows in faux innocence.

Dodge let out a low chuckle. "Oh, Mr. Potter, I think I shall like working with you," he said, his quill moving quickly as he made notes.

~

After that, the meeting continued and Harry found he had four days before the trial was due to start. The plan was for Dumbledore not to find out about the trial until the day it was scheduled, therefore he wouldn't be able to use his influence to get it tossed or to hide certain pieces of evidence. However, there was still a risk as Dumbledore was still Chief Warlock. Even if he only finds out on the day of, his influence of the light and neutral sects of the Wizengamot was immense.

Remembering what else he possessed in his trunk, Harry made a detour before leaving the bank. Although he couldn’t keep Dumbledore out of his family vaults, the man would be unable to enter the Mortemis vault. After the long journey to the lowest and oldest vault, Harry stepped out of the cart. The vault was as deceptive in its appearance as Harry remembered. Placing his hands on the doors, Harry felt his magic surge before the doors clicked and opened silently. Walking in, Harry saw that the table which once held the three Hallows was empty at this time; just the book remained on its stand. Walking towards the table, Harry reached into his pocket and withdrew the stone. Looking at it, Harry watched as it seemed to glow in an internal fire, the reds and golds burning. He had no plans for using the stone, at least not until he had Tom back and was at a suitable age himself.

After leaving the bank, Harry went to the Leaky Cauldron and asked to hire a room for the week. Harry had no desire to return to the Dursleys and he hoped that their elation at his not returning home would stop them from contacting Dumbledore or Hogwarts. Harry didn’t want to be dragged back by the old coot before he had a chance to get Sirius freed and bring to light his treatment at the Dursleys.

Thinking about Sirius led Harry to thinking about Remus; he had always liked the werewolf but his relationship with him has never been as close as Harry's had been with Sirius. The werewolf had been too wary of letting him in and then he had been too caught up in his grief over Sirius and his
relationship with Tonks.

Harry thought that Remus would probably benefit from a letter, warning him about what was to come. Harry also wondered what the wolf was up to now; as far as Harry knew, he had been abandoned by the light and Dumbledore after the last war and left to flounder up until he had been hired in Harry's 3rd year. If Harry played it right, he had a theory about the wolf and how he could gain another potential ally.

~

Mr. Lupin,

I know you will probably be wondering why I am writing to you, but I would prefer not to talk about such matters through parchment.

I would very much like to meet you and, if you're agreeable, be at the Leaky Cauldron at noon tomorrow. I will know you.

Sincerely,

Harry J Potter.

~

Harry sat, waiting for the wolf to appear. He had asked for a table near the back, but he planned on taking Remus up to his room to ensure that they had privacy for their conversation.

Harry watched as people came in and out of the bar and at exactly noon, Remus walked in. The wolf looked tired, his robes patched and faded. Harry walked up to him slowly, making sure Remus saw his approach.

“Harry?” Remus asked, his voice full of shock and awe.

“Mr. Lupin,” Harry greeted warmly. A beat of silence fell, then Harry said, “I'm staying upstairs. Please follow me so that we might talk in privacy.”

Remus nodded mutely. He had been blown away by the boy’s appearance: his emerald green eyes seemed to glow in his delicate face. He looked a lot like Lily, but he had traditional pureblood features mixed in.

Leading the way, Harry walked up the stairs and entered his temporary accommodation.

Remus followed him, looking around the room and taking in the mountain of books. “You like to read, then?” he asked awkwardly.

“Yes - it's sort of a requirement, being a Ravenclaw,” Harry said.

Remus seemed to startle slightly. “You're a Ravenclaw?” he asked.

“Yes,” Harry said.

Remus seemed to nod slightly. “I see. I did always think Lily would have done well as a ‘Claw,” Remus said.

Harry smiled, Remus always did try to see the best in everything. “I heard she was quite good at Charms.”
“So Harry, not that I am not pleased - exceptionally so, at that - to see you, but your letter said you wanted to speak to me,” Remus said. “I didn’t even think you knew I existed, let alone have reason to speak to me.”

“Mr. Lupin—”

“Please, call me Remus or Moony,” Remus interrupted.

“Remus, then. I thought you should find out from me, rather than the papers or somebody else, that I have been working alongside a law wizard in order to have Sirius Black freed,” Harry said.

Remus seemed to startle at the name and his eyes flashed momentarily. “Why, Harry?” he asked, anguished.

Harry felt for the man; that night, not only did he lose his only friends, but he thought he had been betrayed - and he had, just not by Sirius.

Harry gently led the shocked man to a chair and, flicking his wand against the sign on the door, asked for tea to be brought up.

“Remus, I would like you to listen to me while I talk,” Harry explained, going into detail about finding Peter and how he ‘remembered that night’.

“So he was innocent?” Remus asked in an anguished voice, thinking about how Sirius had been forced to suffer for ten years as an innocent.

“Yes, Remus. Sirius is innocent,” Harry said.

“Oh, God,” Remus said, literally collapsing into himself. “I just abandoned him, how could I just abandon him? And you, Harry, I let you be taken, my cub, I just left,” Remus said, mumbling as he spilled his guilt.

As he spoke, Harry felt something in him click. The situation had always made him feel off in his past life, yet it took Remus’ words to actually shift something in Harry, making it easy for him to connect the dots. Making sure to keep his voice even, Harry asked, “Remus, after that night, did you try to find me or talk to Sirius?”

Harry watched as Remus shook his head. “No, I-I don’t know. Why, Harry? I have no excuses,” he said. “I would have never abandoned you, you were my cub. But I did and I don’t know why!” he practically wailed.

Harry felt his anger build as his suspicions mounted. “Remus, I think it would be really beneficial for you to see a healer,” Harry said slowly.

Remus cringed. “Harry, most healers won’t even look at me—”

“This healer will not care you're a werewolf, Moony,” Harry interrupted.

“How did you know?” Remus asked.

“My memory is amazing, remember?” Harry lied, using that excuse. Knocking interrupted them.

Before the door opened and a server brought in the tea Harry had ordered, reaching into his pocket, Harry gave the young man a few sickles before pouring himself and Remus a cup each.

“Oh, yes, I had forgotten. But, either way Harry, I don’t see why I need to see a healer,” Remus said,
Harry sighed. “I know this will be hard to hear, but I think it will be beneficial for you to listen to me before you speak,” Harry said.

Remus looked at the small boy. The ominous words had been spoken so softly and with such a serious tone that he felt like crying again. He wondered at the life the boy had that made his emerald eyes look so old.

“Okay, Harry,” he said.

Harry considered his words before he spoke; he had prepared a speech of sorts to give to people if and when they wondered about his life.

“Everything started the night my parents died. As you know, that’s when Sirius found out Peter had betrayed them and he went after him, leaving me with Hagrid who took me to Dumbledore. When Dumbledore had me, he placed on me a series of magical blocks. These blocks were removed last summer when I found out about the magical world,” Harry said, stopping when he saw Moony’s eyes flash at the mention of magical blocks. Placing such blocks on children in particular can cause serious problems to both their physical and magic growth; to place them on a baby is not only cruel but dangerous.

After a few seconds, Remus seemed to calm down and Harry continued. “I don’t know why he placed these blocks on me or what his purpose was, but afterwards Dumbledore placed me with my mother’s sister and her husband. I grew up with my muggle aunt and uncle despising anything different, abnormal. I was a freak to them and they begrudged being forced to take me in,” Harry explained softly.

Remus watched as Harry spoke, his feelings of guilt, anger, and sadness all threatening to overwhelm him. He felt awful about abandoning his cub and he easily picked up on what Harry was not saying about his relatives’ treatment of him, which made Moony want to rip free of his control and find the muggles who would dare to harm his cub.

“I grew up unloved, but it could have been worse. When I re-entered this world, I had no idea magic was real. I replied to my Hogwarts letter, but I honestly wasn’t sure if it was real or just a joke. The first thing I did was go to Gringotts as I had overheard people talking about me and my parents and I wondered if they had left me anything. When I was there they performed a blood inheritance ritual and they found the blocks and compulsions Dumbledore had placed on me; my Hogwarts letter was doused with them. I paid to have them lifted and claimed my heirships. I also found out that Dumbledore had been taking money from the Potter family vault as he named himself my magical guardian,” Harry finished.

Remus sat stone still as he fought control - never before had Moony felt so close to ripping free. With shaky hands, he placed his cup down and breathed deeply. “...And you think he’s placed me under some of these compulsions?” he asked.

Harry nodded slightly. “Yes, the out of character actions after that night make me think that it’s possible. Like you said, you wouldn’t have abandoned me or Sirius normally.”

Remus exhaled loudly. “Merlin! I just-I can’t-why?”

“I have no clue. Dumbledore seems to like games - this year he tried to draw me in for something. What his goals are and why, I couldn’t guess to, but I do know this he is a master manipulator and he’s got the whole world fooled,” Harry said.
“I can’t believe this,” Remus said, causing Harry to stiffen as he thought the man was doubting him.

Seeing this reaction, Remus went on to explain, “No, I believe you. I just can’t wrap my head around how that man’s fooled the world. Why would he do this?”

“I don’t know and I doubt we will ever truly find out - but I will try anyway,” Harry said.

“Merlin, Harry, I don’t even know what to say,” Remus said, running his hand through his hair shakily.

“It’s okay, Remmy,” Harry said, walking closer to the man and resting his hand on his knee, offering comfort.

“Of course I will go to the goblins and look for compulsions,” Remus said after a few moments of collecting himself.

“Good. I can come with you if you like,” Harry offered.

“I - yes, please,” Remus said, his voice still shaking as he thought about all the implications this would have - if Dumbledore really was manipulating the entire world.

Harry stood and offered the wolf a small smile before he went and grabbed a cloak for himself.

Walking, Harry didn’t speak as they made their way through the summer crowds. Once they reached the bank, Remus looked around slightly, and Harry remembered how biased the creature laws were. Remus was not even permitted to have a proper vault here due to ministry legislation.

Remus looked at Harry with shocked eyes when he saw how the boy walked with confidence through the bank, nodding his head at the goblins before slipping out of a side door. Following Harry, Remus nodded his head warily at the goblins.

“You do know what you're doing, right, Harry?” Remus whispered as they walked further into the bank.

Harry smiled. “Yes, don’t worry - I promise everything will be fine,” Harry assured.

Remus nodded and kept walking until they finally came to Ragnok’s office. Harry nodded to the guards and knocked. Entering, Harry motioned for Remus to follow.

“Harry, you’ve brought a friend to see me,” Ragnok commented, looking Remus up and down once quickly.

“Ragnok, this is a Remus Lupin. He was friends with my parents and a good friend to my godfather. I thought it would be beneficial for him to learn about Sirius from me before the trial so he might offer Sirius support,” Harry said.

Ragnok sent the wolf another look. “Indeed,” he said, before turning back to Harry, “and he will keep this information to himself? You know the risks if certain parties find out before the date.”

Remus was shocked by the interaction between the two; the goblin was being practically polite to Harry by their standards. He wondered what Harry had done to earn their respect.

“Remus will not tell anybody. In fact, I brought him here in order for you to have him checked for compulsions,” Harry said.

“I see,” Ragnok said before turning Remus again. “Tell me, Mr. Lupin, what will you do if it’s found
“I honestly do not know. Part of me wants to rip Dumbledore apart for what he’s done to Harry and another part of me wants to take him and run. He is a powerful adversary to have and, even though Harry has shown me in the short time I've seen him that he is a strong and resilient boy, he is just that, a boy, a child. I just want what's best for him - and for Sirius to be freed,” Remus said.

Ragnok considered the wolf. “And if you have no compulsions? If your actions have been your own wolf? What then?”

“I will still want those things. If my actions are my own, I want to make up for them. I will make up for them even if Dumbledore hasn’t compelled me,” Remus said.

Ragnok nodded. “Very well, let us discuss price.”

Harry watched with interest as Ragnok spoke and he could practically see Remus’ magic swirling as guilt rolled off him in waves. “50 galleons,” Harry said.

Remus flinched slightly at the price, but Harry ignored it. He would pay for the wolf as he knew how much he struggled and, really, the compulsions were because of Harry.

Ragnok smiled toothily. “Not a knut under 80.”

“60,” Harry haggled.

“65 and we will call it even,” Ragnok said.

Harry nodded. “Take it from my account,” he instructed.

Remus opened his mouth to protest at this. But before he could speak, Harry cut him off. “Really, Remus? This entire thing is because of me. You will let me pay,” he said.

“But Harry—” the wolf started.

“No. You can pay me back by helping me with Sirius,” he said.

Ragnok clicked his fingers and sent for a healer.

Harry turned to Remus. “The process isn’t that painful, and hopefully will not take you long. If you like, I can wait for you or you can go home and meet me tomorrow at the Leaky Cauldron. I'll be staying there until Sirius' trial,” Harry said.

Remus considered this and spoke, “I’ll see you tomorrow. I can sort out some things and get a room at the Leaky Cauldron until the trial. Then we can spend some time getting to know each other and I will feel better about you being without adult supervision.”

“Okay,” Harry agreed as healer Mauve walked in. Harry wasn’t surprised to see her as it had been her who had cleansed him in his last life.

Remus left with the goblin healer quickly after that, leaving Harry alone with Ragnok.

“You trust the wolf,” Ragnok said, making it a statement rather than a question.

“Yes,” Harry said. “In my last life we were never overly close, but I always respected and cared for him. I trust he will do what I need for himself and Sirius.”
“It could be good for Sirius’ custody case - having another adult around for stability. However, wizards are nothing if not cruel. His being a werewolf will be an issue. You must be prepared for that,” Ragnok said.

“I know,” Harry agreed. “But it will also send a sign: it will show the world that I don’t agree with the way they treat werewolves. Remus is one of the best people I know and knew in the past. Having it clear now that I don’t agree will work well in the future; I plan to make things better and getting it out there now will be beneficial for building bridges later. Although his influence in the werewolf community is small, it could be useful.”

“I see, you’ve thought about this,” Ragnok acknowledged.

“I’m trying to plan ahead,” Harry said in a wry voice. “He should also be a calming influence on Sirius, which is a benefit.”

“And if the critics use his creature status to weaken Sirius’ claim?” Ragnok asked.

“Then they show their hand and lose Remus’ support; they come out of this looking like the bad guys,” Harry smirked.

“I’m impressed,” Ragnok said as the door opened. Healer Maeve opened the door then and entered.

“Mr. Lupin is asleep. His results left him upset and I gave him something to calm himself. He is currently sleeping,” Maeve said.

“So he was dosed?” Harry asked.

Maeve gave him a look. “I cannot discuss a patient’s health with you, Little Lord.”

“I understand,” Harry said. “Thank you for helping him.”

“It is my duty and honour to help those who need it,” Maeve said.

Eventually Harry left after passing a few more minutes talking to the couple. He told them of his plans for Sirius and bringing him in for a medical scan as soon as he could. Seeing how he had to wait for Remus, Harry wandered back to the Leaky Cauldron, making sure to keep his hood up as he strolled.

Wandering past Flourish and Blotts, Harry saw something that made him do a double take. Two weeks today, apparently ‘The Great’ Gilderoy Lockhart would be in store, signing his latest book. Harry snorted - he had forgotten about that peacock. He wondered if he would still be hired before another stray thought hit - Tom’s diary. The expletives Harry let out would have made Phineas Black proud.

Returning to his room, Harry knew he needed to be in Diagon Alley in two weeks. He needed that book.

Sitting there, Harry was drawn out of his thoughts by the tapping of an owl. Letting in the fluffy bird, Harry watched as Hedwig puffed up in response before they greeted each other. Harry had felt bad for his old friend; this year he had no reason for the bird, however he did try to visit her when he could.

Taking the letter from the delivery bird, Harry gave him a few treats and saw that Neville had written
to him.

~

Hey Harry,

So how’s your summer so far? My gran has been trying to get me some tutors for Charms and Transfiguration.

She said that you’re welcome to come over whenever you want, for as long as you like. I think she’s proud of the fact I’m your friend, to be honest.

I don’t think she can actually believe the fact that I have three whole friends; she always did think I was “a bit soft”.

But she’s been nicer this summer. So please come soon!

And remember, if you need anything this summer, just write.

Neville

~

Harry smiled at the letter; Neville really was a good friend. Grabbing a piece of parchment, Harry wrote a reply.

~

Hey Neville,

I’m glad your summer is going okay. Mine has been interesting; I promise that I will tell you all about it soon - in person!

It probably won’t be until next week, but I will see you soon.

And take your own advice; I’m always here if you want to talk.

Harry

~

Waiting for Remus the next day, Harry was anxious to see the changes in the wolf. What he got was not what he expected. Remus looked healthy; at least, he looked healthier than Harry had ever seen. His normally wan skin looked healthy, his scars were less pronounced, his hair was thicker, and the grey dramatically reduced.

“So I take it your health visit revealed some things?” Harry said after Remus followed him up to his room.

Remus looked at the small boy and snorted. “You have your mother’s gift for the understatement, Harrison,” Remus said, sitting down.

“You know my name?” Harry asked, shocked. Nobody had ever called him Harrison.

“I helped your mother pick it. Your father wanted Harold, but she was determined not to settle you with ‘an old man name’,” Remus said.
I’ve never been called anything but Harry. Well, for a few years I was Freak or Boy, but never Harrison,” Harry admitted. He liked his name, but it was foreign to him. Even after everything he had done since coming back, he still felt like Harry. He wasn’t yet Harrison - then again, Harry thought with a flinch, would Harry have really turned Hermione into the shell she was now?

Remus flinched. “Your relatives - Petunia?” he asked, mistaking Harry's flinch about Hermione for one about his relatives.

“A rather unpleasant woman,” Harry said, focusing back on Remus.

“You’re a peculiar eleven year old,” Remus said. Harry's scent was full of mixed emotions, unusual for a child.

“So what happened with your results?” Harry eventually asked.

Remus held in his flinch and closed his eyes; Moony has been more active in the last 24 hours than he had ever been before. Seeing his reaction, Harry moved closer and offered Remus a half hug.

“Mine were bad,” Harry said, “we can swap one for one.”

Remus pulled Harry into the hug and breathed in his scent to calm his wolf. Harry stiffened slightly at the contact. He hadn’t been hugged by an adult like this, not in this life and not in his last. Every hug back then had a motive; this one was purely for them.

“The test said that the compulsions started back when I was eleven,” Remus said. “He wanted me to be submissive, to keep my wolf down and to trust him - always.”

“He wanted me to be just like my dad - he even placed a glamour on me. He wanted somebody he could mould and manipulate.”

“I had a slow acting poison in my system. I would have died,” Remus admitted.

“I think that's what he wanted me to do. He wants me for something, all year he was hinting at something....” Harry said, making sure his voice sounded confused.

Remus smelt the emotions. Harry didn’t smell confused; he wasn’t lying, but there was a slight scent of deception.

After a few minutes, Remus released Harry from the half hug. “What are we going to do about him? What if he’s done this to everybody? If it’s been going on for 20 years why not longer?”

Harry sighed. He didn’t want to talk about everything yet, so he settled with, “Then we will deal with it, but first we need to help Sirius. He’s innocent and without him, I haven’t got a chance at getting away from Dumbledore or the Dursleys.”

“They hurt you,” Remus said, the low growl in his voice alerting Harry to how much anger he felt.

“I'm okay, Remmy, I will never go back to them - not without a fight,” Harry said.

“How bad?” he asked faintly.

“A few scars, broken bones, missed meals,” Harry said.

“Never again,” Remus promised. “Even if we have to run, I will never let you go through that again.”

Harry smiled at the softly spoken vow. He believed the wolf; his sincerity. For the first time in both
lives, Harry fully believed.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoy the update
Comment & kudos are appreciated like usual
~ Annie
Previously

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~

The next few days leading up to the trial, Harry distracted Remus by having him make plans for Sirius’ trial and then demanding the wolf borrow some money to buy some new clothes for himself and Sirius.

Harry, however, was distracted himself by his search; he hadn’t interacted with Quirrellmort all year. Excluding their Defence lessons, he had avoided the man. He didn’t want to be around him, not when he was still so... scattered. The parasite he was while attached to Quirrell wasn’t Tom or even the Voldemort he knew; he was a small, insane part of him. Sure, Harry had felt the slight pull, but he had been able to ignore it. He had thought about him, but Harry didn’t want to meet the person who he now knew was his soulmate for the first time on the back of his Defence teacher’s head.

Instead, Harry used his time in the Leaky Cauldron to visit Knockturn Alley in secret. The shadowy alley offered more in terms of the obscure, as well as the illegal, which suited Harry’s needs as he had yet to find something with potential, let alone conclusive results. After spending the afternoon hidden in the aisles of a less than commendable back alley shop, Harry sighed in defeat. He had promised Remus he would be back early so they could go through everything again, before tomorrow. The wolf was anxious and believed Sirius would never forgive him.

Walking out of the shop after leaving a few coins on the counter for the shopkeeper - to show his appreciation in secrecy - Harry walked out with his hood up and head down.

“Buy any books today?” Remus asked when Harry entered the room.

Harry smiled slightly. “No, they didn’t have what I was looking for,” he said. He had told Remus he was searching Diagon Alley for books, saying he liked ritual magic and found it interesting.

“Well, I am always willing to look around for you,” Remus offered.

“Thank you, but I think it will be one of those ‘know it when I see it’ books,” Harry said.

Remus laughed lightly at how put out Harry managed to sound. “I still can’t believe Prongs produced a little raven, he was adamant you would be a lion,” Remus said. He had been more willing to talk about Harry’s parents as the week had gone on, opening up to Harry more than he had in his last life. “But your mother, she would have loved this. James would have as well, after he had
gotten over the shock.”

“Do you want to get food here or downstairs?” Harry said after a few moments.

Remus considered for a few minutes before he smiled. “How about we go out to muggle London? I know a nice Chinese place. Have you ever had Chinese?” he asked.

Harry shook his head. “No. The Dursleys would have it occasionally, but I’ve never tried it.” He thought it was strange that this was actually true; he was 18 years old mentally and he had never tried a lot of things.

Remus frowned at the mention of the Dursleys. “Well, put on some muggle clothes and we’ll get going.” He would never say it out loud, but Harry could tell that he felt guilty about the Dursleys treatment of him. He wanted Harry to experience what a real family was, and was trying to subtly act like a parent - or at least like a guardian. It was nice, if a little annoying; Harry was not used to parental figures butting in and, even though he looked like a child, he was not one - at least mentally.

Harry smiled at the meaning though; Remus really was trying. Opening his trunk, he found a pair of grey trousers and a dark green jumper. It was summer, but the English summer evenings were cool.

Walking through the door into muggle London, Remus lead Harry through the streets, pointing out places he had either visited or worked and adding little anecdotes. After around 20 minutes they came to a small Chinese restaurant decorated with traditional lanterns and streamers. Entering, they were greeted and seated quickly.

“So, what should I order?” Harry asked, looking at the menu, unsure about what to get as he had never even heard of half of the stuff.

Remus smiled as he watched Harry frown at the menu, probably annoyed that he was unsure. He had noticed how Harry revelled in his independence and ability to survive.

“Why don’t I just order a variety and we can pick and choose?” Remus offered.

“That sounds good, thank you,” Harry said.

After they had ordered, Remus and Harry sat chatting about inconsequential things, however eventually this stopped.

“Are you worried?” Remus asked.

“Worried?” Harry queried.

“About the trial? About what you will do if Sirius gets custody of you eventually?” Remus asked.

“I don’t think the trial will be a problem, not anymore. Dumbledore and the ministry can’t do much to derail it now. He is innocent and that will come out,” Harry said. “And as for the custody, I’m not worried - just cautious. I’ve never had a real family or guardian; I don’t think I would cope well with suddenly having my independence taken away, so I hope Sirius doesn’t try that. Other than that, no, I’m not worried.”

“And if Sirius cannot get custody?” Remus asked.

Harry felt his eyes darken; that would most likely only happen if Dumbledore intervened. “Then I doubt I’ll go back to my family - I won’t allow myself go back to them. How they treated me was wrong and I severely doubt that the Wizarding world would allow it once it becomes known and I
will let it be known if it keeps me from them. At worst, it will be a mad dash about who could take in the precious Boy-Who-Lived,” Harry said, using the title he hated to show Remus what he thought about the situation.

~

Once they had eaten, the two returned to the Leaky Cauldron and turned in for the night. They had to be up early for the trial and Harry wanted to go to Gringotts before that to talk to Ragnok.

The robes they had for the trial where formal, but not fancy; Harry work dark green, almost black, robes over a white shirt and black trousers and Remus had a deep mahogany robe over a cream shirt and black trousers.

Entering Gringotts early, Harry, with Remus trailing behind him, made their way to Ragnok’s office. Entering, they saw the chief goblin was sitting, surrounded by papers. Their visit was just a preliminary to make sure nothing had gone wrong; Harry doubted anything would have as the goblin would have summoned him, but still it was better to check.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” Ragnok greeted.

“Chief Ragnok,” Remus said, bowing slightly.

“You’re ready for today?” Ragnok asked, looking at Harry.

“Yes. I doubt that the opposition will be able to do anything with the evidence we supplied,” Harry said.

“And if they manage the impossible?” Ragnok asked, more out of interest than real concern.

“I have a few ideas,” Harry said, thinking about the breakouts Voldemort caused in his last life. He didn’t want to have to use such barbaric tactics, but he would if it meant Sirius was freed. Then again, Sirius could just break himself out again.

Ragnok looked at Harry. “Do these ideas have anything to do with your friend Tom?” he asked. Harry had yet to tell Remus anything about his bond mate. He didn’t want to risk losing the wolf before he had Sirius free and stable.

“Something like that,” Harry agreed with a smirk.

Remus interrupted then, “Harry, we should get going if we want to get there early.”

Ragnok looked at the wolf and nodded. “Mr. Lupin is correct. Do come and visit me when it is over though, Harry,” he said.

“Of course, Ragnok.”

~

Harry and Remus entered the ministry early and headed to the courtroom. A few people were milling about but, as far as they could tell, nobody actually knew whose trial it was. Harry, however, was surprised when he saw Lucius Malfoy heading towards them. Subtly signalling Remus, Harry turned to the blond aristocrat.

In his last life he had loathed Malfoy Sr.; he had been tortured by him and held hostage in his house. He knew that the man was ruthless, but he had also felt sorry for him in the end - he had done all he
had in order to protect and save his family from the madman Tom had became. However, in this life, he had yet to meet him and his rivalry with Draco wasn’t around.

Looking the man in the eye as he approached, Harry watched as Lucius took him in. He noted how Lucius’ eyes took in his heir ring.

“Heir Potter,” Malfoy greeted.

“Lord Malfoy,” Harry said formally, inclining his head in acknowledgement of his status above him as a lord to his heir.

Harry watched as Lucius’ eyes flashed with surprise, probably at his respectful tone and knowledge. Lucius then turned to Remus.

“Remus Lupin, I believe,” he said, not offering his hand.

Remus didn’t show any sign of annoyance at the subtle slight. “Indeed, Lord Malfoy,” he greeted.

“I must say Heir Potter, I am surprised to see you here today,” Lucius said, turning back to Harry and digging for a hint.

Harry smirked slightly, knowing the Slytherin would pick up on it. “I wouldn’t have missed this for the world, Lord Malfoy.”

Lucius looked both annoyed and pleased by the answer. “I see, so you are one of the few who are blessed with the knowledge of what this trial is about,” Lucius said.

Harry just smirked again. “I could not say. However, I can say this: you will be very intrigued, I believe, about the trial.”

Lucius bowed his head slightly to Harry. “I see. Well then, Heir Potter, I look forward to it.”

Harry nodded in return. “It has been a pleasure to meet you, Lord Malfoy.”

“No, the pleasure has been mine. I must admit, when Draco wrote to me in September saying the Heir to the Potter House had been sorted into Ravenclaw, I was intrigued. And now meeting you, I can see he did not overplay your qualities. You really are quite a mystery, nothing like I expected,” Lucius said.

“Oh, I hadn’t known I had made such an impression on Draco. Do please say hello to him for me, Lord Malfoy. And as to your expectations, I am sorry if I have not met them; however, I am simply who I am. Who the world wants me to be has very little influence on who I am, Lord Malfoy - after all, I grew up not knowing who I was to this world,” Harry said.

“I will extend your greeting Heir Potter - and please, I would like for you to call me Lucius,” Lucius said, a look of interest on his face.

“Then you must call me Harrison or Harry,” Harry said.

“Of course, Harrison,” Lucius said.

After a few seconds the doors opened and Lucius straightened his already immaculate posture. “Mr. Lupin, Harrison,” he said in lieu of goodbye before turning and making his way in.

Remus, who had watched their play in silence, looked at Harry with consideration after Lucius had left. “Are you sure you’re not in Slytherin?” he joked.
“No, but the hat did consider it,” Harry said.

Remus looked slightly pensive and Harry wondered about his Slytherin prejudice. “Harry, I know you are smart, but please be careful around him. He was a Death Eater,” he warned, leaning in to whisper.

Harry was relieved that’s what his look was about. “Don’t worry Remmy, I know what I’m doing,” Harry promised.

Remus looked at him again before he sighed in defeat. “Okay, I will trust you, but please remember that, no matter what, I will always be here if you want to talk.”

Harry smiled and nodded, leading Remus into the public stands. Lucius and the other Lords were in the Wizengamot section as they would be voting on the outcome of the trial.

Sitting, Harry watched as the stands filled, seeing the moment Dumbledore entered as he wore bright yellow robes with pink stars. He didn’t see Harry as he made his way down to the floor; as Chief Warlock he would be down there with whoever was overseeing the trial and the defenders and opposition.

Harry eyed him and was glad to note the tightness in his expression and the dark look in his blue eyes.

Eventually, Amelia Bones entered and walked down. Harry was glad to see it would be her overseeing the trial as she really was a fair woman.

The court turned silent when she sat down.

“We are gathered here today to review evidence that an injustice was overlooked ten years ago. New evidence has come to light that Sirius Black was falsely and unjustly sentenced to Azkaban prison without trial and innocent of the crimes he was accused,” she read out.

Hearing the reason why they were here, the court exploded with people refusing to believe Sirius was innocent as they had condemned him.

Harry felt eyes on him and looked up to see Lucius was looking at him with inquisitive grey eyes. Harry nodded his head slightly to show he supported Sirius and watched as Lucius looked slightly shocked before his eyes blanked and he sat back, calming down those around him with a simple look.

Banging the gavel, Madam Bones called for order as Sirius was brought out. He looked bad, worse than Harry remembered, but not as bad as the first time Harry had seen him. His skin was white and shallow, hanging of his skeletal frame. His hair was long and ragged and he had a scruffy beard, which looked almost patchy in places. The striped Azkaban robes hung of his frame and dragged slightly as he was walked to the stand. Harry felt awful for him; however, he had gotten him out as quickly as he could.

“Sirius Black, you are accused of the betrayal of James and Lily Potter to the Dark Lord V-Voldemort, who you assumedly served, resulting in their deaths and the murder of twelve muggles and Peter Pettigrew,” Amelia said, slightly wavering in her naming Voldemort.

Sirius opened his mouth, but Edgar nudged him and sent him a look which Harry could read from where he sat which clearly said ‘shut up’.

Edgar stepped forward. “My client was wrongly imprisoned without a trial, and is innocent of all
crimes here accused. He has agreed to be placed under veritaserum for the duration of his trial to prove his innocence.”

The courtroom broke out in whispers again and Harry saw how Dumbledore stiffened slightly.

“Very well. Bailiffs, please administer the serum,” Amelia said.

Watching as Sirius took the potion without complaint, Harry was relieved. He knew how hot-headed Pads could be.

“I will ask a few basic questions to ascertain the potion is working correctly. Please state your full name,” she asked Sirius.

“Sirius Orion Black,” Sirius said, his voice raspy but holding the obvious daze associated with veritaserum.

Madam Bones sighed. “Please provide the defendant with some water,” she said.

Sirius looked grateful and took a sip when the glass materialised.

“Mr. Black, what is the date of your birth?” she asked.

“3rd of November, 1959,” Sirius said, his voice still raspy but much clearer.

“And what is your blood status?” she asked.

“Pureblood,” Sirius said.

“I believe the serum is working,” Amelia said. “Therefore, I shall begin the questioning.”

“Mr. Black, on the night of October 31st 1980, did you reveal the location of the Potter’s address to the Dark Lord?”

“No.” Sirius said.

“Did you give this location to him on another date?” Amelia asked.

“No, I never betrayed them,” Sirius answered.

“You were found screaming ‘It was my fault!’ Why were you shouting this if you never betrayed them?” Amelia questioned.

“It was my fault—” Sirius said.

The courtroom broke out in shouts again.

“—because I told them to use Peter Pettigrew as their secret keeper. I thought they would be safe! I made them switch to him and he betrayed them. It’s my fault!” he cried.

Amelia brought the gavel down and called for order.

“So you were never the secret keeper for the Potter family?” she asked.

“No. James wanted me to be, but I thought it would be obvious. I persuaded him to use Peter.” Sirius said, his voice anguished.
“You had no idea Peter Pettigrew would betray them?” she asked.

“No, never! I would have died for James and Lily; I would never have betrayed them!”

“Have you ever been a supporter of Lord Voldemort, marked or otherwise?” Amelia asked.


“Very well. I believe we should move on.”

The courtroom was whispering madly at this.

“Mr. Black, can you talk us through what happened on the night of October 31st 1980, in your own words” Amelia asked.

“I went to see James and Lily; I wanted to see little Harry. When I got there the door was blasted open and James-James was just - he was laying there, his wand just by his hand. He was dead. I ran to him but there was nothing I could do. He was just gone. I could hear something upstairs, so I ran up. I found Lily then, in the nursery. The room was trashed, it looked like magical backlash. She was lying in front of Harry's crib. She was dead, too. There was a scorch mark next to her and Harry was in his crib. He was crying, trying to get out and get to Lily. I ran to him. He had a cut on his forehead - I couldn’t believe he was alive. I was so grateful, but I heard something then.

“I grabbed Harry and his blanket and I ran downstairs. It was Hagrid. He saw me with Harry and he charged before I stopped him; he thought I had done it, but I convinced him it wasn’t me. He said he would take Harry for me to Hogwarts, so Madam Pomfrey could look at him and he told me to go after Peter. I agreed - the cut wasn’t bleeding badly, but I couldn’t heal it and I knew I needed to stop Peter. I told Hagrid to take my bike and get Harry to Hogwarts - but I went after Peter. I found him a few hours later and we fought in the street. He cried out that he knew how I had killed them, before he blasted off his own finger and sent a spell at me, which misfired and caused a muggle electric box to explode. He then turned into his animagus form and escaped just as the aurors came then and I was arrested. I went a bit mad at that point I think - James and Lily were dead and Peter had gotten away. By the time I had regained my senses, I was already in Azkaban.”

The room was silent, then everything exploded - everyone was demanding questions. After a few minutes, Amelia called for silence.

“When you say Hagrid came, are you talking about Rubeus Hagrid, the groundskeeper at Hogwarts?” Amelia asked, for clarification.

“Yes,” Sirius said.

“You say he told you to go after Peter?” she asked.

“Yes. I thought at the time, the plan sounded like a good idea,” Sirius confirmed.

“You trusted him?” she asked.

“Yes. He worked with Dumbledore,” Sirius said.

“I see. So, you never sent the spell which killed twelve muggles?” she clarified.

“No, I just sent spells at Peter. None of my spells went off course,” Sirius said.

“What animagus form does Peter possess?”
“He’s and unregistered brown rat,” Sirius said.

“How do you know this?” Amelia questioned.

“James and I are also - were also - unregistered animagus. We became them in our 5th year at Hogwarts. I’m a big black dog and James was a stag,” Sirius said.

“You are aware that being unregistered is illegal?” Amelia asked, bemused.

“Yes, but we planned on registering after the war,” Sirius said.

“Very well, that is all I need. Bailiffs, please administer the antidote while I will confer with the members of the Wizengamot. After which your sentence will be given,” she said.

Harry watched as the seats holding the voting members of the Wizengamot seemed to blur and he took Remus’ hand in a show of support.

He also watched as Dumbledore stood and moved towards Sirius. Harry concentrated on the old man: he didn’t trust him. Luckily Dodge was aware and he stood, blocking Dumbledore. Harry could just about make out his words.

“...away from my client, Chief Warlock.”

~

After a few moments, the seats refocused and Amelia retook her chair. Harry sensed eyes on him and looked up. Lucius inclined his head towards Harry slightly before he refocused on Amelia. Harry was pleased and intrigued by the new dynamic in his relationship with the Malfoys.

“Mr. Black, we, the members of the Wizengamot, do hereby find you not guilty of all the charges laid against you. You will be immediately released from Azkaban prison and are also to be given two million galleons in compensation. Any medical treatment you also require will be covered by the ministry for the gross injustice you have faced. I know nothing can be done to recover the time you have lost, but the ministry will do its best to compensate you in any way we can,” Madam Bones said. “There will also be a trial for Peter Pettigrew, who is now in ministry holding cells, which you are invited to attend to ensure that justice is done correctly this time.”

Harry watched as Sirius sagged in relief. “Thank you,” he whispered.

Harry and Remus shared a relieved look and stood when the court was adjourned. Instead of going back out the way they came though, they went down to where Sirius was standing with Dodge and Madam Bones. Dumbledore was also there, but he was off to the side, most likely trying to gain some composure.

“Mr. Black, might I introduce the young man who attained me for you and brought to light the injustice of your sentence,” Mr. Dodge said, moving so that Sirius and Amelia would see him approach.

“Harry?” Sirius whispered, shocked at the boys appearance and his involvement.

Hearing Harry's name, Dumbledore turned sharply and Harry saw his face tighten and eyes grow hard. Dumbledore moved quickly, jumping in front of Harry with surprising amount of agility for a man of his advanced years.

“Harry, my dear boy, what are you doing here?” he asked, full of grandfatherly concern.
Harry narrowed his eyes and barely stopped them from rolling. “As Mr. Dodge said, I hired him for my godfather. I would not have missed the trial for anything.”

“But my boy, what about your relatives? Surely they wouldn’t have allowed you to come,” Dumbledore said.

“I’m not staying with my relatives,” Harry said.

“What?!” Dumbledore barely managed not to shout. “Harry, my boy, you must. I really do insist you return to them immediately.”

“Why, headmaster?” Harry asked innocently.

“It is not safe. You need to go back to them for your own protection. I insist.”

“I’m sorry headmaster, but I feel a lot safer now than I have ever before and, anyway, where I spend my summers or any holidays really doesn’t have anything to do with you,” Harry said.

“That is enough. Harry, you will come with me and I will return you to your aunt,” Dumbledore said, taking a step towards Harry and making him step back.

At this point, Amelia, who had been watching, took a step forwards. “Albus, like Mr. Potter has said, where he lives during the summer is not your concern. If you fear for his welfare, then it is a ministry issue.” She then turned to Harry and said, “Good morning, Mr. Potter. My name is Amelia Bones, I think my niece Susan has told you about me.” She offered him her hand.

Harry smiled, taking her offered hand and kissing the air above it. “Good morning, Madam Bones. And, please, call me Harry or Harrison,” he said.

Amelia smiled lightly. “Susan did say you were charming, Harry. Now, may I ask why you are not staying with your relatives?”

Harry frowned slightly. “I’m sure Susan has told you about them and their treatment of me. I fear how they would react taking me in after I had been away to school,” Harry said.

Amelia’s expression turned dark. “So you decided not to return to them?” she asked.

“No. I feared what they would do. I sent them a letter telling them I would not return and got a note back telling me good,” Harry explained.

Dumbledore interrupted at that. “Come now, Harry. I’m sure they’re missing you. They are the last of your family, after all.”

Harry frowned. “Blood does not make family, sir. I consider my friends family: Neville, Hannah, Susan. I consider Remus family and most likely Sirius once I get to know him. The Dursleys are not my family.”

“But my boy, they are your family. They looked after you for ten years,” he tried again.

Harry sent Remus a look. “No, they abused me for ten years,” Harry said firmly, making Sirius, who had been silent up to this point, gasp.

“What?!” he said, anguished.

“It’s okay, it’s over. I’m okay now,” Harry said, looking into his eyes for the first time.
“Mr. Potter, Harry, those claims are serious. I had hoped to talk to you when you visited in the summer about them; however, if you are willing and able to provide evidence, I can take your statement now,” Amelia said, her face sad but supportive.

“Now see here, is that really necessary? Harry, do you really want to get your relatives into trouble?” Dumbledore asked, staring at Harry intently and ignoring the outrage on the faces of the other adults present. A few of the members of the Wizengamot had, at this point, returned and were listening in - including Lucius, who was staring with disbelief and anger at Dumbledore.

“I would be happy to talk to you, Madam Bones - however, could we perhaps get Sirius sorted first? I'm sure he is not comfortable in those robes and he could probably do with a meal or two,” Harry said.

“That would be fine, Harry. Why don’t you come in tomorrow, with Mr. Lupin? You're staying with him, I gather?” she asked.

“We’re staying at the Leaky Cauldron,” Harry said.

“Now, see here. Harry really must return home,” Dumbledore said indignantly.

Amelia seemed to have had enough and turned to the old man. “Albus, if what Harry says is true, you are insisting he return home to his abusers. He is perfectly safe with Mr. Lupin, who I know to have been friends with his parents; however, if you are that worried I will have them return to my home tonight. I'm sure Susan would love that, anyway,” Amelia said.

Dumbledore opened his mouth again, but closed it. “Very well,” he said, before turning and dramatically walking to the doors.

Harry turned and looked at Remus and shrugged lightly before turning to look at Sirius and Amelia.

“Sorry about that,” he said softly. “I don’t know why he takes such an interest in me.”

“It’s quite alright, Mr. Potter. Now, the offer does stand if you would like to come back to Bones Manor; you’re more than welcome,” she said.

Harry thought about it before he spoke, “That's okay. Though I would love to see Susie, I fear if I turned up now she would beat me for keeping all of this from her.”

Amelia smiled, “Want me to warm her up for you?”

“Please? Maybe mention how much she would miss me if she killed me for keeping secrets?” Harry added.

Amelia smiled and approached Harry. “You are always welcome at our home, Harry. And about our conversation tomorrow, I will expect you at noon in my office,” she said.

“Thank you, Madam Bones,” Harry said.

“Oh, and please, call me Amelia when it’s nothing official,” Amelia said.

Amelia turned then and walked out of the doors Albus had vacated from. Harry walked closer to Sirius and offered the man a smile. Sirius launched himself at Harry and pulled the boy into a tight hug, mumbling “thank you’s and I’m sorry’s” in between kisses to Harry’s head.

“It’s okay, Siri - you're okay, I'm okay,” Harry reassured the man.
Remus cleared his throat after a few minutes, pulling Sirius out of his mind and back to the real world.

“It’s good to see you, Pads,” he said hesitantly, before Sirius pulled him down into the hug.

Eventually, Harry wormed his way out and saw that the room had been cleared.

“I think we should probably leave,” he said to the two men.

Remus pulled himself up and offered Sirius a hand.

“You’re staying at the Leaky,” Sirius said, his voice still a bit croaky. Harry watched as Sirius stood and looked down at himself, reminding Harry of what he was wearing. Seeing this, Harry nudged Remus and smiled as the wolf stumbled to pull out the robe he had brought for Sirius.

Sirius smiled and pulled the robe on over his prison clothes; it was dark grey and slightly too big, but it was clean and new.

“Come on,” Harry said, “I think we still have to sign some things before we can leave.”

~

After eventually getting free from the ministry, with Sirius barely managing to worm his way out of being admitted to Saint Mungo’s for 24 hour care (instead promising to attend daily sessions), the three of them returned to their rooms at the Leaky Cauldron. They made sure to keep their hoods up as the public wouldn’t know about the trial until tomorrow’s papers.

Entering the rooms, Harry insisted Sirius go bathe and ordered food for them all. It was only just after 12, but still he felt drained. They had a lot to sort out before the week was out and Harry wanted to get started on it right away.

After he bathed, Sirius decided to cut his hair and his beard before he re-joined them. Eating the food quickly and savouring every bite, the three didn’t talk until Sirius slowed down.

“So…,” Sirius said, eventually looking up at the faces surrounding him.

“Hi,” Harry said sheepishly. Now that the drama had calmed down, Harry didn’t want to upset Sirius again.

Sirius smiled. “You’re just like your father, he always had to break the ice,” he said.

“He sounds like a great man,” Harry said.

Sirius’s smile faded. “He was.”

“I don’t even know where to start,” Harry admitted.

Sirius frowned slightly. “Maybe with why I ended up in there in the first place. Dumbledore knew I was innocent - he was the binder for the spell. Hagrid had seen me,” he said, his voice stronger but still raspy.

Remus cringed. “I’m so sorry, Sirius. By the time I got back to England you were already in jail. Harry was just gone and everybody said it was you, your fault. Dumbledore, the papers, everybody. I just couldn’t cope…,” Remus said, his voice fading as he looked away.

Harry, knowing that the wolf had been controlled, placed a hand on his knee in support.
“I think I should start,” Harry said, interrupting Sirius, who looked angry. “When I reentered this world, I visited the goblins. They performed a blood inheritance test on me as I had grown up ignorant of magic with my muggle aunt and uncle - well, mostly ignorant. The test revealed magical blocks and compulsions; Dumbledore placed them on me. There was even a blood glamour on me to make me look like my father. After I had them removed, I didn’t know what to do; my memory has always been exceptional, that’s why I say mostly ignorant. I can remember you Pads, giving me lifts on your back when I was a baby - that’s the only real thing I remember about my life before that night. I asked about you, thinking you had just abandoned me like everybody else seemed to have, when I was told about your imprisonment. That’s when I hired Dodge through the goblins.”

“Wait, you remember that far back?” Sirius asked, shocked.

“Yes - my memories are vague, but I remember that night clearly. Anyway, after I hired Dodge, I went to Hogwarts. It was my first year, obviously, and I was sorted into Ravenclaw. Dumbledore was weird all year and was overly interested in me. I made friends with Neville Longbottom, Hannah Abbott, and Susan Bones, and even they noticed Dumbledore was weird with me. I also then found out he is my magical guardian. However, until the day I saw him at the opening feast, I had never met him. I grew up with my magic hating muggle relatives; abused, beaten, and starved. I had no idea about being the Boy-Who-Lived or any other nonsense. He left me alone, unchecked.”

Sirius looked angry and confused, reminding Harry he would have to be cleansed of magic as he probably had compulsions making him want to remain loyal to Dumbledore.

“I met Remus last week; I wrote to him and told him about your trial. I made him get checked out and, like me, he had compulsions on him. Dumbledore has done this before,” Harry said.

Sirius was shaking and Harry watched as he seemed to fight with himself.

“They hurt you?” he asked eventually. His voice was abnormally calm.

“It wasn’t that bad. This year I had help! Madame Pomfrey and Professor Snape really cared and supplied me with great healing ointments and potions,” Harry said.

“They hurt my pup on purpose. Dumbledore abandoned you! He locked me up and abandoned you to be hurt!” Sirius continued.

“Sirius, calm down,” Harry said, moving to hug him.

Sirius latched onto the small boy and held him tightly. “I will kill them,” he promised.

Harry shook his head. “Killing the ones who hurt you doesn’t work automatically,” he said, thinking about Hermione for a moment. “Or, at least, it doesn’t make you feel instantly better. However, I won’t stop you. I will even help,” Harry promised, making Remus laugh as he thought Harry was joking.

Sirius smiled lightly as well, however he picked up the slight tension in Harry’s body as he promised. “I think I need to visit the goblins,” he said.

“I think that’s a good idea,” Harry agreed, still in his arms.

~

Chapter End Notes
This may be the only update until Monday - Apologies
However either way I hope you're enjoying the story & even though i'm no replying to all the comment I really do appreciate them & read them all.
Comments & kudos
~ Annie
Then there were three

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

Getting Sirius to the bank was easy as the man was willing to do anything for Harry. Borrowing a cloak with a hood, the two of them managed the summer crowds easily, keeping their identities hidden.

“So, how did you become so well respected by the goblins?” Sirius asked after seeing the door guards nod to Harry.

Harry considered telling the truth, but knew now wasn’t the time, so he retold the same lie which he had told Remus. About re-entering the world and having Ragnok already dealing with the Potter accounts - not a technical lie, just not the truth. He added, “I think my respect for them helps. I didn’t grow up thinking less of them like a lot of wizarding children and, unlike the muggleborns, I do not fear things that are different as I know what it’s like to be hated and feared for being different.”

Sirius nodded. “How bad was your treatment, really? Are you talking the odd slap or real beatings?” he whispered as they walked past the crowds at the bank and through the side door leading to Ragnok’s office.

“Beatings. My uncle was of the belief that, if he hit me hard enough, my magic would disappear - or so I believe,” Harry said.

Sirius seemed to freeze for a second after hearing that and growled slightly, reminding harry of his animagus form.

“You will explain everything to me after this is done,” he told Harry.

Harry nodded his head, not annoyed with the demand as he knew how confused and overwhelmed the man must be. Hell, he was surprised Sirius had managed to come to Gringotts today; Harry had expected him to eat and sleep for a few days after the ordeal of being in Azkaban.

Harry reached Ragnok’s door and knocked.

Sirius followed him as he entered and watched as Harry and Ragnok greeted each other.
“Mr. Black, it is a pleasure to meet you,” Ragnok said.

Sirius startled slightly as he had never been greeted so politely by a goblin. “Chief Ragnok, the honour is mine,” he recited, his mind and body remembering the manners his parents had instilled in him years ago.

“Harry has told me a lot about you,” Ragnok continued.

“He speaks fondly of you also,” Sirius said.

Turning to Harry, Ragnok spoke, “He knows about the compulsions?”

“Yes, I informed him about everything I told Remus. Sirius is here to be cleansed - and maybe healed, if you’re willing,” Harry said.

Ragnok nodded, acknowledging the limitations of Sirius’ knowledge. “The damage for dementor exposure is extensive, but we should be able to help - for a price, of course.”

“Of course,” Harry acknowledged.

“And any compulsions will be removed, along with blocks and potions,” Ragnok said.

“And the price?” Harry asked.

“90 galleons,” Ragnok said.

Harry smirked at the higher price. Ragnok had obviously enjoyed their last haggling match.

“60.”

“75.”

“70,” Harry said.

“Deal,” Ragnok replied.

Sirius watched this in shocked silence; he didn’t know people argued money with goblins and had been worried when Harry had started to bargain.

Ragnok clicked his fingers, sending for Mauve Harry assumed, before he turned to Sirius.

“Mr. Black. Are you aware that your Lordship is currently unclaimed?” he asked, not beating around the bush.

Sirius was confused. He had thought being a convict would strip him of his title.

“No,” he said honestly. “But I thought…?”

“The old conviction laws were overturned at the end of the last war. You are still able to claim your title and I would recommend you do so,” Ragnok informed him.

Sirius nodded his head. “Okay. I just need to put on the ring and see if it accepts me, right?” he asked more than stated.

“Correct,” Ragnok said.

“Should I do it now or after?” he asked.
Just then Healer Mauve entered. Seeing Harry, she smirked. “Are you going to be bringing every wizard in Britain to me to be cleansed, Little Lord?” she asked.

“My lady, I shall only bring those who deserve the best,” he said, bowing slightly to the female goblin.

Mauve let out a low chuckle before she looked at Sirius. “The dementors have been having a feast from you,” she said.

Sirius nodded. “Ten years,” he said.

Mauve tsked and shook her head. “I can’t make you perfect in one go, but I can make you better. You will follow me,” she said.

Sirius looked bewildered as the female moved towards the door.

Harry smiled. “She does that - you should follow her. I will be here waiting when you’re done. I’ll have your ring brought up,” Harry said.

Sirius nodded and walked to Harry, kissing his head before he darted after the healer.

~

After Sirius had gone, Harry turned to Ragnok.

He recited everything that happened in during and after the trial and watched as the goblin took in the information. Ragnok sat in silence as he spoke, digesting the words and thinking about the actions of all those involved.

“Did you actually send a letter?” he asked Harry.

Harry smirked. “Yes, I sent it after I left Remus here. I thought it would be a good thing to have if I was ever questioned.”

~

**July 18th 1992, The Leaky Cauldron**

Harry picked up a piece of parchment and grabbed an ink pot. Placing them on the table, he began to write.

~

**Dear Aunt Petunia,**

*I know you asked to never be written to or bothered by the wizarding world again, but I thought I should inform you that I planned on staying in the wizarding world for the summer with friends of my parents and my own school friends.*

*If you are worried, I can be reached by owl if it is addressed to me.*

**Yours,**

*Harry Potter*
The letter he received back, Harry had opened with glee. He had the letter in his trunk, waiting to be used as evidence.

~

*Stop using such a barbaric means of communication!*

*We do not care what you do, just leave us alone. You can get hit by lightning for all we care.*

*Do not contact us again! We are good, normal people.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Vernon and Petunia Dursley*

~

**July 23rd 1992, Gringotts London**

“You have the letter?” Ragnok asked after Harry had told him what it said.

“Yes, in my trunk,” Harry confirmed.

“Excellent. Now, what are you going to do about the meeting tomorrow?” Ragnok asked.

Harry considered what to do for a few moments before speaking. “Sirius will be at St. Mungo’s, so I’ll take Remus. I want to report my relatives for abuse. Amelia knows about it anyway, so really it’s just providing evidence now. She is also looking into Dumbledore for me, according to Susan.”

“Speaking of your young friends, have you spoken to them?” Ragnok asked.

Harry winced. They would not be pleased when they found out Harry had been hiding Sirius. “No, I plan on asking them to meet me in the Alley the day Lockhart has his book signing. I have business that day,” Harry said.

“Very good,” Ragnok said. “What about your other plans?”

“I have ideas, but nothing yet solid. I need to destroy Dumbledore’s fan base - people need to see him for what he is….” As Harry spoke, an idea hit him and his smile turned devious.

“You have an idea,” Ragnok said rather than asked.

“I do. Tell me, what do you know about a reporter named Rita Skeeter?” Harry asked.

Ragnok’s eyes widened at the thought of using the famous gossip journalist. “Her stories never say what you want them to - she’s unreliable.”

“Ah, but I know how to make her do exactly what I want,” Harry said, smirking.

“Blackmail?” Ragnok asked, a smirk curling his own mouth.

“I’d prefer ‘persuasive handling’,” Harry said.

“If you can get her under control, then you’re in business. She has the largest and widest following in the UK. You will just have to be careful; some will discount her because she usually just sprouts gossip.”

“But her gossip is always surprisingly true, if not just twisted,” Harry said.
“You want to use her to spread your web of disheartenment about Dumbledore.”

“Yes,” Harry said. “With her, I can gain a control of the media. Not total, but enough to keep what I want in the cycle.”

Ragnok smiled toothily. “And have you had any other success with your bonded?”

Harry felt his smile fade slightly. “No. I know there is an answer out there, but I have yet to find it,” he said.

Ragnok nodded his head in a show of support. “I can ask around in discrete circles,” he offered.

“That would be appreciated. I plan on scouring the Black library once Sirius reclaims his homes,” Harry admitted.

“A wise idea,” Ragnok said.

A knock at the door sounded then and Harry felt an odd, familial pull as Sirius entered. The sensation was completely new to him.

Seeing Harry’s face, Healer Mauve explained to him, “Your godfather bond is now open. The bond being blocked on either side makes it impossible for the other to feel it, as it’s not an overwhelming bond like, say, a soul bond as it is created, not intrinsic.”

“Oh,” Harry said dumbly. “Will it always feel like this?”

“It should fade and settle; it’s just pronounced now as it had been blocked,” Mauve said.

Seeing Sirius pacing in the doorway, Harry stood and approached him. Trying to send a sense of calm through the bond, something he had never tried before, but had read about in his mind magic books.

“Siri, calm down. I need you to be calm right now,” Harry pleaded, hoping Sirius’ need to be there for Harry would get through to him.

It worked immediately: Sirius paused and grabbed Harry, pulling the small boy into his arms and hugging him. Harry noticed Sirius looked a lot better, more like the man he remembered. His hair and skin looked healthier and his magic, although agitated, felt stronger.

Pulling free from the hug, Harry pulled Sirius down to the chairs and made him sit.

Ragnok nodded at them. “First, I believe you should claim your Lordship, Mr. Black, before we discuss your healers report. As a Lord, you have more power and protection,” the goblin said.

Sirius let out a breath. “I agree,” he said formally, surprising Harry. A formal Sirius was something completely new and a little foreign to the younger man.

Ragnok seemed to reach under his desk and pulled out a box Harry recognised from when he claimed his Lordships in his last life. “If the magic accepts you, the ring will remain and provide you with protections. If your Lordship doesn’t take, it will return to the Black family vault for Heir Black to claim it,” Ragnok said.

Sirius turned to Harry when Ragnok said Heir Black and Harry nodded, letting him know he was said Heir Black. “I understand,” Sirius said, picking up the ring box and opening it.

Harry watched as he placed the ring on his finger and waited to see if it would accept him. His Sirius
had never claimed the Lordship once he had escaped. Reaching out with his magic, Harry felt the moment Sirius became Lord Black; the magic seemed to hum in harmony and Harry felt a moment of bliss.

“Lord Black,” Ragnok said, inclining his head to Sirius, who smirked.

“Thank you,” Sirius said.

“The next area of business we have to discuss is Dumbledore. As you saw earlier today, he has taken an unusual amount of interest in Harry,” Ragnok said.

Harry saw Sirius clench his fists. “I had compulsions and charms all over me, making me reject my family and hate Slytherins and Dark magic - to act reckless and disregard rules,” Sirius said in a controlled voice. “I also had my bond with you blocked, Harry, and compulsions placed the night your parents died to make me irrational.”

Harry wasn’t surprised and he realised a lot of the adults in his life probably had compulsions of some kind on them. Remus, being a werewolf, Dumbledore would have wanted to control and manipulate and Sirius, being from a well-known Dark family.

Harry held Sirius’ hand in a show of support. “He’s my magical guardian; he named himself such when you went to Azkaban. He then placed his blocks on me and left me with the Dursleys to be abused. They have hinted that he told them to abuse me to ‘make me normal’. He’s also been stealing from my family vaults,” Harry said.

Sirius stood up and swore, making Harry wonder if it was a Black family trait.

“How-how can we stop him?!” Sirius asked when he finally calmed enough to sit.

Harry shared a look with Ragnok. “We first have to get me away from him - not out of school obviously, as I have no desire to go to Beauxbatons or Durmstrang - but no longer his ward. Then we can start to dissolve his image,” Harry said.

Sirius looked at the innocent looking boy with surprise. “Maybe you got a few more Black family traits, that sounds practically Slytherin, pup,” he said.

Harry smirked. “I do a very good impersonation of a Slytherin. I can also do a disturbingly good Gryffindor if I have to,” Harry joked, making Ragnok snort.

“How do we get custody? I mean, would I even get it?” Sirius asked.

“Lord Black, we have been preparing for this since Harry told us of his plans to free you,” Ragnok said. “With your new status, you are one of the richest wizards in Britain. Although the Black family was not a prestigious one in recent generations, your ancestors were not foolish. If you pick a suitable home and prove that you’re retaining your former health, then your claim would be without any real concern,” Ragnok said.

“What properties do I have that would be suitable?” Sirius asked. He didn’t want to return to Grimmauld Place as he had bad memories tied to each room in the house.

Harry knew why he was asking and sent Ragnok a look, hoping he would answer how Harry wanted. The goblin apparently picked up on the look and spoke, “Although the Blacks do own a number of establishments, the most suitable would be the London town house. It is the most recently vacated, therefore in the best condition. It can be cleansed and redecorated quickly for the right price.”
Sirius nodded. “That’s fine,” he said, hoping the refurbishment would help him bury his anger.

“If you would like, I could send a team of young goblins not yet suitable for other work over and they can begin the cleaning process now,” Ragnok said.

“Yes,” Sirius immediately agreed.

Harry shook his head slightly. “For what price?” Harry asked

“A galleon each,” Ragnok said.

“A galleon for three workers, with each gaining an extra two sickles when the job is done,” Harry bargained.

“A galleon for two and three sickles,” Ragnok replied.

“Agreed.”

Ragnok smirked and turned to the new Lord. “You should always know what price is being asked before you agree,” he warned.

Sirius nodded his head. “I shall try to remember that,” he acknowledged.

“Anyway, Harry, have you thought more on how much you’re willing to use the abuse in order to win the custody case?” Ragnok asked. Harry knew he already had the answer, so he was guessing the goblin wanted Sirius to know

“Dodge can use it all. I’m officially reporting them tomorrow with Remus, so it will all come out anyway. Therefore, I don’t mind,” Harry said.

Sirius squeezed Harry’s hand. “Pup, you don’t have to do that,” he offered.

“I don’t mind, Siri, I’m not ashamed. I think I could also help us if we did an interview tomorrow afternoon. When we’re both free,” Harry said, shocking Sirius as he hadn’t realised how much Harry had planned or how mature and independent the boy was.

“An interview?” he asked.

Harry nodded. “I have a contact: Rita Skeeter. She’ll write whatever we tell her,” Harry said.

Sirius snorted and spoke with disdain, “Even I know that she writes whatever she wants and I’ve been in jail for ten years.”

Harry smirked. “Trust me, she will do what I want,” he promised, slightly darkly.

Sirius looked at that smirk and shook his head. “Sometimes I see so much of your mother in you and sometimes it’s your father - but that right there? That was pure Black family.”

Harry smirked even wider. “What can I say? I like variety.”

~

**July 23rd 1992, The Leaky Cauldron.**

After leaving the bank, Sirius and Harry returned to the pub and went upstairs. Remus was waiting anxiously for them to return and practically pounced when they closed the door.
“How did it go?” he asked.

“You’re looking at the new Lord Black,” Sirius said, holding out his arms and spinning on the spot so that his robes billowed slightly.

Harry shook his head at his antics but smiled. “It was as we expected. Dumbledore had him dosed, but they’ve been removed. By becoming Lord Black, Sirius is protected - we should look at getting you something for that,” he said to Remus.

“The goblins also think I should be able to get custody of Harry easily, I just have to move back to Grimmauld,” Sirius said.

“And get treatment,” Harry reminded the animagus.

Remus smiled at their easy dynamic. “You look better, Pads,” he said.

Sirius smiled. “I’m not, but I will be,” he said.

Harry sighed. “Right, tomorrow we will have a busy day. Sirius, you need to go to your appointment at St. Mungo’s; I don’t really want you going alone, but Remus and I are needed at the DMLE. Afterwards, we should meet back here for the interview I’m about to set up. It’s best if we get out ahead of this and tell the world the truth in our own words,” Harry said to the men.

Remus chuckled at Sirius’ bewildered face. “Yeah, he does that,” he told his friend.

“He’s not a normal child, is he?” the animagus asked the wolf.

“No, not at all,” the wolf whispered back, “but he’s Harry.”

“He can also hear you,” Harry said back to the men. “I don’t think I’m missing anything, so does anybody have anything to add?”

“Who’s interviewing you?” Remus asked, making Harry groan as he had had to explain the situation twice.

~

After they had all made their solid plans, Harry went about writing several letters. First to Rita Skeeter, getting her to come tomorrow. Harry knew he would have to entice her.

~

Miss Skeeter,

My name is Harrison Potter, I am writing to you as I believe I have a story that you would be perfect for.

I’m offering you the exclusive as well as a chance to interview myself and another influential member of our society.

If you’re interested, please be at the Leaky Cauldron at 3 o’clock tomorrow.

Yours,

Harrison J Potter
Next, Harry had to write to his friends; he started with Susan, who he knew was probably writing to him already.

Dear Susan,

Now, before you plan where to bury my body, please know the only reason I didn’t tell you guys was because I was worried and didn’t even know if Sirius would get a trial.

So, please, don’t be mad. I didn’t want to involve you if Dumbledore got involved and made things difficult.

Ask your aunt if you don’t believe me - Dumbledore has a very unhealthy interest in me. However, I am seeing her tomorrow about my relatives, so you don’t have to worry about them anymore.

I promise I will explain everything properly when I see you! Which will be soon! I want us all to meet up in Diagon Alley on the 1st.

We can do our school shopping as our school list should be here later this week.

Please forgive me, Susie!

Your loving and very worthy of forgiveness friend,

Harry

Harry’s letter to Hannah was slightly less pleading, but still followed a similar pattern as he knew the girls were neighbours and what one knew, the other was bound to find out.

Dear Hannah,

I’m sure you’ve been told but, if not, here goes: I helped get Sirius Black freed from Azkaban. Now, before you freak out, he’s innocent. He never had a trial.

The only reason I didn’t tell you guys was because I didn’t want you all to worry and get involved, especially if Dumbledore got involved. I’m sorry!

I promise I will explain properly when I see you! Which will be soon! I want us all to meet up in Diagon Alley on the 1st.

We can do our school shopping as our school list should be here later this week.

Your loving and very worthy of forgiveness friend,

Harry
Neville’s letter was less begging as Harry felt his relationship with the other boy was, not necessarily stronger, but Neville seemed to always understand why Harry did things. However, he didn’t want to risk it so he did ask for forgiveness.

~

Nev,

You probably won’t find out until tomorrow’s papers, but I thought you should hear it from me first.

I helped get Sirius Black freed from Azkaban. Now, before you freak out, he’s innocent. He never had a trial. He’s my godfather and I wanted to help him.

The only reason I didn’t tell you guys was because I didn’t want you all to worry and get involved, especially if Dumbledore got involved. I’m sorry!

The girls will probably already know because Susie’s aunt Amelia oversaw the trial, but I wanted you to know, too.

I promise I will explain properly when I see you! Which will be soon! I want us all to meet up in Diagon Alley on the 1st.

We can do our school shopping as our school list should be here later this week.

Your loving and very worthy of forgiveness friend,

Harry

~

With the letters written, Harry attached them to Hedwig, making sure to tell her to deliver Rita’s letter last as he wouldn’t put it past her to look through the rest. The white bird was excited for her task and jumped on Harry’s shoulder for a moment to nuzzle his hair, before she took flight.

“She’s a sweet bird,” Sirius commented.

“Hedwig is great - she was my first friend,” Harry said. Although he was not as close with this version of her, Harry still held a lot of love for his snowy owl.

“I need to look at getting an owl and a wand,” Sirius said, coming to sit by Harry.

“We can look to see if there are any family wands in the Black vault,” Harry said.

“I tried that when I was younger; they didn’t work,” Sirius said sadly.

“Getting a new wand made could also work, if Ollivanders doesn’t have what you need,” Harry said.

Sirius frowned. “But Ollivander doesn’t make wands for people, he just makes them and you find a match,” Sirius said.

“There’s a wand show in Knockturn Alley which makes wands; you pick the wood and core that you react best with,” Harry said.

Sirius frowned. “How do you know what’s in Knockturn?” he asked, worried about the thought of the small boy wandering the streets of Knockturn without an adult - even with an adult it was
Harry shrugged. “I like to investigate,” he hedged.

Sirius sighed. “I know you’ve never had an adult you could depend on, or who worried, but please, for me, don’t go to Knockturn Alley,” he said, then seeing Harry’s frown, he added, “or at least, don’t go without telling me so I can come with you.”

“I think I can agree to that - for now,” Harry said.

“So, this wand shop - you think I will be able to get a match?” Sirius asked. He would no longer deny something just for being Dark and, if Harry trusted the shop, Sirius would consider it.

“You should be able to. It’s where people go to get second wands made as the wands created will always work, just maybe not as well as original wands,” Harry warned with a wince. Sirius had, in his last life, bemoaned the loss of his wand when it had been snapped while he was in Azkaban.

Sirius held back the pang he felt and Harry sympathised. Although his holly wand was his, he had loved having the elder wand. That wand had made his magic sing and surge. He couldn’t wait to obtain it again.

“Think we will have time to go tomorrow?” Sirius asked, anxious to get a wand back.

“We should be able to fit it in before the interview. If not, the shops in Knockturn stay open later,” Harry said, making Sirius realise just how much time the boy must have spent down the darker Alley. His family had always been Dark and, growing up, he had tried to distance himself from that. As soon as he got his Hogwarts letter he had fought to be everything they weren’t: Light, Gryffindor, and good.

Having had his blood inheritance results and being cleansed, Sirius realised now that most of his behaviour was influenced by his Hogwarts letter and the compulsions placed on it; not that his family wasn’t awful, but they were not awful because of their magical classification. They were just awful people in general - well, most of them.

Sirius though, he had denied his own magic and forced himself to become something he was not. He was a Dark wizard. Not a bad person or a sadist, but his magic was naturally Dark. Forcing himself to only do Light magic and become a Light wizard was unnatural for him; it had made him weaker. He would be damned if he would force Harry to be anything other than who he was and, in the short time he had been with the boy, he suspected the boy was Dark. How Dark, he didn’t know, but he would support his godson no matter what.

Harry had given Sirius back his freedom, both from Azkaban and from Dumbledore. He would do anything for him now.

~

Chapter End Notes

Faster update then expected, next one in a few days.
Comments & Kudos
~ Annie
Let the disillusionment begin

Previously

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Harry had given Sirius back his freedom, both from Azkaban and from Dumbledore. He would do anything for him now.

~

The next morning, Harry and the two men had breakfast together before Sirius left for his appointment at St. Mungo’s. Harry’s appointment wasn’t until noon, so he and Remus had some time.

Harry was waiting for Hedwig to return with his letters and the daily newspaper, anxious to see how the paper reported Sirius’ release and trial. Setting aside his replies, Harry gave Hedwig some treats and unrolled the paper.

~

Ministry Blunders - Who Else is Innocent?

By Rita Skeeter

Yesterday in a shock trial, which had members of the Wizengamot unaware until the trial itself, revealed shocking ministry injustices.

Sirius Black, renowned for being a mass murderer and supporter of You-Know-Who, was found to have been innocent of all crimes! The man, now 31, was imprisoned without a trial in Azkaban ten years ago after being accused of the murders of Peter Pettigrew - who has been found by aurors in the last few days - and twelve muggles. In a great twist, it has been revealed that it was Pettigrew who betrayed the Potter family to You-Know-Who, resulting in their murder and it was Pettigrew who killed the twelve muggles. The man is an unregistered rat animagus and was found just days before the trial of Mr. Black by Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt.

What happens next? Who knows, but it begs the question: if Mr. Black is innocent, how many more are?

This reporter aims to find out.
Harry smirked as he read the article before handing the paper to Remus. Picking up his letters, Harry was slightly relieved that Susan hadn’t sent a howler. Reading her letter first, Harry opened it.

~

Harry,

Harrison James Potter, you don’t know how lucky you are that this letter isn’t a howler. My aunt refused to do the charm for me - so you should thank her later!

How could you keep this from us?! You know we would have helped you!

Screw Dumbledore - yes, I swore - we’re your friends, Harry! We will always stand by you and help to support you.

You had better not keep anything from us again without a great reason!

When we meet up on the 1st, you had better be prepared to answer all my questions mister, or I will not be happy.

I hope your summer has been okay regardless. I was getting ready to send my aunt after you because I hadn’t yet heard!

So, don’t be a stranger and write! I want to hear all about it!

Love, Susie,

Your still frustrated but loyal friend

~

Hannah’s letter was more reserved than Susan’s, but Harry was still a bit apprehensive for seeing the two girls together.

~

Harry,

How could you not tell us? Don’t you know how worried we’ve been?! Next time you had better keep us in the loop.

You had better hope that Amelia doesn’t do the howler spell for Susan!

I do understand why you were worried, but next time, let us be involved; we’re your friends for a reason, Harry - we want to help you!

I can’t wait to see you on the 1st and I hope you’re prepared to talk, mister!

Either way, I hope your summer’s been good! If you need anything or just want to talk, remember, I’m always here!

Love, Hannah

~
Neville’s letter was like Harry expected: reserved, but understanding. He really was glad he had befriended the blond boy.

~

Harry,

I can’t say that I’m too impressed to hear you did this alone, but I understand why. You’ve always been alone before you had us, right?

You need to remember that we’re here for you, Harry. Next time I expect to be told straight away!

So, how is Sirius? If he’s innocent, I bet that he’s grateful for having you!

Remember to keep writing! I want to hear from you!

And if you’re free on the 30th, I would like for you to visit. It’s my birthday and gran usually has the elves make a cake.

I’ll ask the girls as well, so maybe you can warm them up if you write.

Neville

~

Harry replied to them all and asked Remus if they were free on the 30th so that he could go to Neville’s. Getting an affirmative from the werewolf, Harry was happy to write back, saying he would go. He hadn’t yet bought the boy a present and wanted to get him something nice to show his appreciation. He had been lucky so far in that he hadn’t been found in the Leaky Cauldron, and he wanted it to remain this way as he didn’t want to be surrounded by people looking to catch a glimpse of the famous Boy-Who-Lived.

As they still had a few hours before they had to go to the ministry to meet Madam Bones, Harry decided to look through his books. He had spent the last few days focusing on Sirius and now he wanted to spend a moment on Tom. He knew the easiest horcruxes to get would be the diadem and the locket. Hopefully the book as well if Lucius acts as he did last time; if not, it wouldn’t be impossible to get the book - all Harry would have to do was get an invite to Malfoy manor. Although he needed the ring, as it was also a Hallow, Harry was wary of going after it; the protections surrounding it would take time and magical energy, which Harry knew he couldn’t spare presently.

He had to collect the pieces of Tom’s soul; even without knowing how, he would save Tom. Harry knew he couldn’t let his soul fragments to remain out there unguarded.

Picking up a book, Harry got out a blank notepad and started the translation spell. The book was an old Russian book he had bought in Knockturn Alley a few days earlier and had looked promising. By doing the spell on a blank notepad, Harry could let the spell run even without him present and he would eventually have an English copy.

“What are you reading?” asked Remus, walking closer to the boy.

Harry looked up. “Just something in Russian - I’m translating it,” Harry said, not wanting Remus to become too interested and, therefore, not being obviously vague.

Remus hummed. “Do you need any help?” he offered.
Harry smiled and replied, “I’m okay, thank you. I like to keep busy.” He didn’t want Remus to notice his use of magic and question it. He had only been using wandless magic sparingly since Remus and Sirius had been around him, unable to use his holly wand as it held the ministry trace. He didn’t want to answer their questions.

“If you’re sure,” the wolf said, walking away and back over to whatever he had been doing before.

~

Eventually, it was time for Harry and Remus to go to the ministry. Dressing in smart clothing, they apparated in. Harry, stumbling slightly as side-along apparition was worse than normal apparition, grumbled as they left the apparition zone.

“Welcome to the ministry, you need to register your wands in order to obtain a visitor’s pass,” a young man said at the visitor’s desk.

Harry pulled out his holly wand and held it out. The guard took it without looking and waited for the results.

“Thank you, Mr.—” the guard paused then and quickly turned to Harry, “—oh, Merlin, I'm so sorry! You're Harry Potter! Welcome to the ministry!”

Harry sighed and turned to Remus with an exasperated expression. “Thank you. Could I possibly have my wand back now and my pass?” he asked.

The guard seemed to startle and fumbled with passing Harry his wand. “If there’s anything you need, anything at all—”

Harry sighed and cut him off, “I think I will be fine, thank you.”

Remus huffed a slight chuckle at Harry’s exasperation before he handed his wand over.

The guard blanched when he read Remus’ results. “Erm, Mr. Lupin, you will need a special pass due to your status as a we-werewolf,” he stuttered out the last word.

“I know,” Remus said pleasantly, used to the fear and prejudice.

The guard watched him warily, as though he would suddenly turn and attack. He practically threw Remus his wand and pass.

Walking to the room towards the lift, Harry watched as the ministry workers eyed Remus warily as soon as they noted his pass. Entering the lift, a young woman even stepped out when she saw the silver pass.

Harry let out a low growl when he saw it happen and Remus stepped closer and rested a hand on his shoulder. “It’s okay,” he whispered into Harry’s ear.

Harry turned towards him. “It’s not, but one day - one day it will be,” Harry whispered back.

Remus smiled at the boy’s words. He didn’t mind the treatment anymore, he had long since grown used to it.

Reaching the DMLE floor, they stepped out of the lift and approached the bustling centre. Seeing the words “BONES, AMELIA. HEAD AUROR.” on the centermost door, the two approached the door and knocked.
The door opened quickly and Amelia ushered them in. Inside, there was another woman around the same age, an older man, and Dumbledore.

Harry sent Remus a look when he spotted the old coot and carefully blanked his face.

“Mr. Potter, Mr. Lupin. Thank you for coming today, won’t you please take a seat,” Amelia said, smiling at Harry. “Now, we are here today as there have been allegations made about your home life, Harry.”

Harry nodded, “Yes, I understand.”

“With me are Joanne Mirwood, head of the Children’s Protection Offices, and Westley Lane from the Muggles Relations Office, as well as Professor Albus Dumbledore, who you obviously know as your headmaster, but he is also your magical guardian.”

Ms. Mirwood looked at Harry with a light smile. “Why don’t you start, Harry? I think it’s important if you tell us in your own words how your relatives treated you before we make any decisions.”

Harry internally smirked but outwardly showed a child unsure; he fidgeted slightly in his seat and looked at Dumbledore with a wary look before turning to the rest of the adults. “If you think that’s best,” he eventually said, before shuffling once more. “My memory has always been good, I remember things from my life before I went to live with my aunt and uncle. I remember my mum singing and my dad’s laugh....”

Joanne smiled. “Why don’t you tell us your earliest memories with your aunt and uncle?” she asked.

“I remember being hungry and crying and I kept asking for my mum. I couldn’t understand why she wasn’t there; I was cold and scared and usually she would come and sing to me. I can remember that night, the flash of green, but at the time I didn’t understand it. In the beginning, they would only tend to me when it became obvious that they had to. I wasn’t ever cared for. However, one of my clearest memories was when I had turned three; my aunt had slapped me and told me: ‘Your whore mother had gotten herself killed in a car crash with your drunk father’,” Harry said, making Remus growl and the women gasp.

Dumbledore’s eyes tightened and Harry saw him clench his fist.

Joanne recovered her composure. “Did you get hit often?” she asked.

Harry shrugged and looked down. “Whenever I did something bad - like magic or burning the breakfast or doing better than my cousin in school. Things like that,” he mumbled.

Amelia looked livid and Remus was obviously struggling. Dumbledore though, he had stiffened and looked ready to jump across the room and strangle Harry. His blue eyes were piercing into him and Harry could feel the signs of legilimency, however, with his rings and his own occlumency, it wasn’t working.

“You were punished for accidental magic growing up?” she asked, shocked. Magic in children was cherished and celebrated. Usually a child’s first big accidental magic was cause for a celebration or party.

“Yes, they didn’t like it when I did freakish things,” Harry said, flinching slightly on purpose when he said the word freak.
“How did they punish you, other than hitting you?” she asked softly.

“I would be locked in my cupboard without food for a few days sometimes…,” Harry said. At this point he had made sure to curl in on himself as he spoke.

“What cupboard, Harry?” the child officer asked.

“That’s where I lived. The cupboard under the stairs,” Harry said.

“I see,” Joanne said, sharing concerned looks with the adults.

“Come now, Harry, I’m sure you’re exaggerating,” Dumbledore said jovially.

Harry flinched, making Remus and the other adults turn to the old man and glare.

“Harry, you mentioned burning the breakfast; are you telling me it was your job to cook?” Amelia asked, joining in the questioning as she had, in her opinion, cause for a criminal case.

“Yes. As soon as I was tall enough to reach the stove, my aunt had me cooking all the food,” Harry said.

Amelia looked confused for a second before she realised what the child meant. “You mean to tell me she had you doing all of the cooking from a young age?”

“I was four when I started, it’s how I got the burn on my arm. I wasn’t good at seeing the pans as they were too high. After that, though, I got really good at judging how long things needed to be cooked for,” Harry said, making sure to sound slightly proud of this achievement. Internally he was dancing with glee - the looks on the adults faces were priceless. They were all eating out of the palm of his hand and he had yet to lie. Only Dumbledore looked murderous, making the moment even sweeter for Harry.

“You were cooking unsupervised and using flames at the age of four,” Amelia stated.

“Yes,” Harry said.

“I see,” she said, turning to share a look with Joanne.

They seemed to share an entire conversation in a look, making Harry assume that as they were both parents, or at least parental figures; it was a look of motherly concern.

Westley joined in then, “You mentioned a cupboard. Were you living there, as you claim, because there was no space room for you to have a bedroom?”

Dumbledore looked victorious for a moment as he thought he had an ally.

“No sir, there are four bedrooms. My aunt and uncle’s room, Dudley’s bedroom and his 2nd bedroom, and the spare one used by aunt Marge when she comes and visits,” Harry said.

Westley looked shocked. “So there was adequate space for you to have a room to yourself?” he asked.

“I think so, sir,” Harry mumbled.

Dumbledore had gone back to looking mutinous. “Come now, my boy, I’m sure your relatives did their best for you. They are your family, after all,” he said. Harry could feel a slight compulsion pushing against him.
Amelia seemed to be pulled out of her shock at that and sent the Professor a dark look.

“It is my opinion, based on these accusations, that Harry’s aunt and uncle are not fit to care for a magical child,” Amelia said. “I’m sure you agree, Ms. Mirwood.”

“I do,” Joanne said.

“Come now, they are the boy’s family and he is a child. Surely you know how a child can exaggerate,” Dumbledore said, making Harry want to hex him as he was basically calling him a liar.

Amelia looked angry but turned to Harry. “Harry, do you have any proof of what you say? Any evidence at all?” she asked.

“Well, I saw a private healer, Jordan Theon, last summer, who recorded all of my injuries. He prescribed potions to combat my malnutrition and to help heal my bones as they had not been set correctly and were weak from breaks. He also gave me an ointment for my scars. Kosti-Recovery, Helga’s Fortune, and Apollo’s Tears,” Harry said.

“Very good. We will ask for him to provide the note of his scans. Is there anybody else who you can think of who could provide evidence?”

“Well, Madam Pomfrey did a scan while I was at school, so she would probably help. And Professor Snape brewed my potions and ointment. My head of house, Professor Flitwick, also knows; over Christmas, he wrote to my family and became concerned as they wrote about how they didn’t care what happened to me if I was sick,” Harry said in an embarrassed voice.

“Three teachers at Hogwarts are aware of your home life?” Amelia said, sending Dumbledore a dark look.

The old man looked livid, probably with how the situation had played out. However, Harry honestly couldn’t see how he thought this would go - maybe the legilimency was supposed to make him say his family was great?

“That’s everybody, I think…,” Harry mumbled.

“Come now, Harry. I really must insist you tell the truth; your family loves you. They were very worried when you didn’t return to them from school,” Dumbledore insisted.

Harry shrunk back. “I didn’t want to go back. I wrote to them and they said they didn’t care,” Harry said.

“Do you have this letter?” Amelia butted in when she saw Dumbledore open his mouth.

Harry nodded and reached into his robe, pulling out the letter Vernon had written him back. Handing it over, Harry watched as Amelia read it.

“Thank you, Harry. Would it be okay if I kept this and made you a copy? This will be used as evidence,” she explained.

“That’s fine,” Harry said.

Joanne spoke up then, “I do understand your fear of returning to your relatives, Harry, but it was very irresponsible of you. You should have gone to a friend’s house. Being out there alone isn’t an option for a child, especially for you, with your status,” she explained.
“Precisely. He needs to return to his family,” Dumbledore said, making the adults and Harry look at him incredulously.

“I didn’t mean that, Harry,” the woman said. “What I meant was that you cannot live alone and look after yourself. It has come to my attention that you are no longer alone as you have Mr. Lupin, but before then what were you planning on doing? You said to Madam Bones yesterday that you are staying at the Leaky Cauldron. That isn’t the best place for a young boy to grow up.”

Harry was happy this conversation was happening now that Sirius was free. “I'm sorry,” he said, “but like you said, I'm not alone now. Remy and Siri are looking after me. And yesterday I went with Siri after he was freed to a healer’s appointment and then the bank; he’s having his house in London redecorated and cleaned for us already.”

“Siri as in Sirius Black?” Amelia questioned. Seeing the looks on the faces of the two adults, she added, “He was found innocent of all crimes yesterday. Peter Pettigrew was the real murderer and was found alive last week - he had set Black up.”

“He’s my godfather. He said he would be filing for custody today to become my guardian in both the muggle and magical worlds,” Harry said.

Dumbledore must have had enough at this point as he sat forward and frowned. “Now see here, I am your magical guardian,” he said.

Amelia, looking exasperated, turned to Dumbledore. “Yes, you are, and do not think I will not be questioning you about your lack of involvement in Harry’s life growing up. As his magical guardian, you had a duty of care - which you failed!” she said, shutting the man up.

Harry barely restrained himself from kissing the woman as she pointed out Dumbledore's failings. Maybe he could send an anonymous gift basket?

“I see. Well, in light of this, I will grant Mr. Lupin temporary guardianship,” Ms. Mirwood said, pulling out some documents from Merlin knows where.

Remus looked startled. “But I'm a werewolf,” he said quietly.

Amelia looked pained by Remus’ quiet admission.

“I am aware,” Joanne said. “However, it is clear you have provided care and support for Mr. Potter. Until a real custody trial can be held, I am entrusting Mr. Potter into your care.”

Dumbledore stood at this point. “If the boy cannot return to his relatives, like is best, then surely you should give me custody as I am his magical guardian,” he said, his voice tight.

“Mr. Dumbledore—”

“Professor Dumbledore,” Dumbledore interrupted contemptuously.

“Professor Dumbledore,” the head of the Child Protection Office started, refusing to be intimidated, “I believe that Harry would be better off staying with Mr. Lupin in his current place as he is clearly happy, well-loved, and looked after. Until the custody trial, which I will book for the 3rd of August, he shall remain in his care as disrupting him anymore would not be beneficial for Harry, who is the most important person in this situation.”

Dumbledore straightened his back and looked down at the woman with thinly veiled contempt. “Very well,” he said, before turning and walking out of the door.
Amelia looked annoyed, but turned to Harry. “I will consult the people you spoke of and have them provide evidence for your custody trial, but rest assured: you shall not have to return to your relatives if I have any say in the situation,” she promised.

Mr. Lane stood then. “I haven’t had much to say in this meeting, but it has been a pleasure to meet you, Harry,” he said, offering his hand. Harry shook his hand and returned the sentiment.

Eventually, just the women and Remus remained.

“I shall send you a letter about the trial details, but if Mr. Black files for it today and, in light of the evidence, I do not see a reason why he should not gain full custody,” Ms. Mirwood said. “And, can I just say, Harry, I am very sorry you had to grow up in such an awful environment. I can promise you this: the wizarding world never knew.”


“Yes, you did,” Joanne said before leaving.

After she had gone, Harry turned to Amelia. “Thank you, Madam Bones,” he said.

“Call me Amelia when we’re alone, Harry,” she said, sitting back with a sigh.

“Thank you, then, Amelia. Also, thank you for not charming Susie’s letter.”

Amelia laughed. “It’s okay, but next time you may not be so lucky,” she warned.

“I also want to thank you for looking out for me. Susan mentioned you started looking into my file at Christmas, that you wanted to help me,” Harry said.

Amelia nodded tiredly. “I did and I do; I don’t know what Dumbledore is up to. He has your file secured - but, no matter. I don’t want you worrying about a thing; we’ll get to the bottom of this,” she promised.

“Thank you, and please mention to Susan how sorry I am for not telling her. I didn’t want her or any of our friends to be worried about me being alone or about the trial,” Harry said.

“Why did you choose to go alone, Harry? I know Susan has offered you a place in our home if you ever need it - and I don’t doubt Hannah and Neville have as well,” Amelia asked out of curiosity.

“Honestly?” Harry asked. “I didn’t want to burden any of you or for you to feel sorry for me. I knew the trial would work, it had to. So, I knew I wouldn’t be alone for long - well, I hoped I wouldn’t be alone for long.”

“I can see why you would think that, but Harry, you are only eleven. I know you are mature for your age, but it really isn’t safe. Please promise me that you will never do something like this again,” Amelia said, more as a concerned parental figure than an auror.

Harry nodded. “I promise,” he said.

Remus interrupted then, “I'm sorry, but I think we should get going. We have a lot to do today.”

“It’s fine, I have mountains of paperwork,” Amelia said, waving off his concern. “Remember Harry: write to Susan. If you don’t, she’ll be wearing holes in the carpet,” she warned.

Harry rubbed the back of his neck and muttered about mother hens. “I will,” he promised.
Returning to the Leaky Cauldron after their meeting, Harry wrote to his friends explaining what happened and what he hoped would happen next. He also wrote a more detailed version for Ragnok and Mr. Dodge, warning them about Dumbledore and making sure they were prepared. He wanted to go to Gringotts, but he feared he wouldn’t have time or be able to slip away unnoticed. He also sent a note to Dodge, asking him to file Sirius’ custody claim immediately. Sirius could sign it tomorrow, but Harry wanted it notarized, even if it wasn’t completely above board.

Once Sirius returned, they had around an hour before Skeeter was due to arrive, so he and Harry picked up cloaks with hoods and disappeared into the summer crowds. That was the one thing he liked about the busy streets; with the amount of people around, it was easy to remain anonymous.

Taking the lead as he knew the dark alley better, Harry lead Sirius through the back streets to Morgause’s Wands and More. When he opened the door, Harry felt a ward wash over him; and knew that if he meant ill will towards the owner, he would be in serious pain right now.

“This is the shop?” Sirius asked, looking around. It was nothing like Ollivanders; there were no wand boxes or supplies. Instead, the small shop was surprisingly light for the alley, and only had a desk and a few paintings of trees. A small bookcase sat to one side with an old sofa and coffee table.

“Yes,” Harry said. He had never been inside, but he had heard about it during his trips to the alley. He had gotten good at going unseen and had heard many interesting things.

“Greetings, Lord Black, Heir Potter. What can I do for you today?” came the voice of an old woman.

Looking up, Harry saw her appear from the back room. She was ancient and probably only stood a few inches taller than Harry’s own miniscule size.

“I need a new wand, mine was snapped when I went to Azkaban,” Sirius said, looking at the woman.

“Very well, Lord Black. My name is Lorelei, please follow me into the back,” she instructed.

Harry followed Sirius as he was interested in the process. He watched as the old woman flicked her wand and a box appeared and grew on a large table.

“Please reach out and feel each piece of wood with your magic. You will know when you feel the right one. If you cannot feel with your magic, then you will have to pick up each wood and see which reacts to you best,” Lorelei instructed.

Sirius closed his eyes and centred himself. His magic was still weak, but it had stabilized and was getting stronger every hour. Harry, interested in the procedure, focused his magic on Sirius' and helped him to guide his, causing the man to open his eyes in shock as he felt Harry’s strength.

Harry felt the moment Sirius' magic bonded with the wood and watched as Sirius approached and picked up a dark brown, almost black, branch.

“Ebony wood. An apt choice for you, Lord Black,” Lorelei commented. Harry searched his memories and remembered what he had read about ebony wands. Ebony wands, Harry remembered, were best suited for those who favoured combative magic and transfiguration. Ebony wands are happiest in the hand of those with the courage to be themselves - wielders were frequently non-conformist individuals or comfortable with the status of an outsider.
Sirius smiled. “My first wand was oak.”

The old woman nodded and took the piece of wood from Sirius, placing it on the side. She then waved her wand and the contents of the box changed, no longer wood, but an array of magical cores now sat inside. Some of which Harry knew were rare and hardly used.

“You will repeat the process to find your core. Sometimes, in rare cases, multiple cores are chosen,” she said.

Sirius nodded his understanding and, once again, with Harry’s help, directed his magic to the box. This time, when his magic reacted, Harry wasn't as shocked as he recognised the sensation. Sirius reached in and pulled out a jar of dark hair.

“Rougarou hair. Not often found in British wands as the beast is native to America,” Lorelei said. Harry once again searched his memories and remembered the monster; it was native to the southern states like Louisiana. The dog monster has the head of a wolf and the body of a man. Although sentient, they were a reclusive and volatile race.

Sirius nodded. “How long until the wand is ready?” he asked.

“You can collect it tonight. Be back at seven,” the old woman instructed.

“Thank you,” Sirius said, pleased he would not be so helpless for long. He was capable of some basic wandless magic, but not much. Probably none in his current state.

Leaving the shop, the two quickly returned to the Leaky Cauldron. They had around 15 minutes before Rita was due to arrive and they had to freshen up.

Seeing the time, Harry had to convince Remus and Sirius to let him go downstairs alone.

“I promise I will be fine, I just want to talk to her alone first,” Harry said.

“But Harry—” Remus said, wanting to point out, again, that he was acting as his guardian.

“—I will be fine; the pub is a public place. I will literally be five minutes,” Harry interrupted.

“Let him go, Remy,” Sirius said before he turned to Harry. “But you have three minutes.”

Harry contained his eye roll - he hated looking like a preteen. “Fine,” he said, rushing out of the door.

Harry only had to wait for a few seconds once he got downstairs. Rita appeared on the dot, her photographer Bozo trailing after her. Approaching the vibrantly dressed woman, Harry withheld his sneer.

“Ms. Skeeter,” he said, offering his hand, which she took. Kissing the air above her's, Harry smiled. “It’s a pleasure, ma’am. My name is Harry potter.”

“My, Mr. Potter, what lovely manners,” Skeeter purred, making Harry want to wipe his lips.

“My, Mr. Potter, what lovely manners,” Skeeter purred, making Harry want to wipe his lips.

“Now, before we begin, I just have one thing to say to you,” Harry said, leaning in close.

“Oh?” Skeeter said, her eyes wide as she thought of the gossip she would get, the prestige.

“It’s a five year sentence to Azkaban for being an unregistered animagus, isn’t it? Even for such a small, little bug,” Harry whispered. Seeing her panic, he continued quickly, “Now, don’t worry,
nobody else knows. But it would be such a shame if my favourite reporter got caught. So, perhaps we should take our conversation upstairs. I do want you to be able to hear me properly; it would be a shame if I was misquoted.”

Harry was proud of how quickly the woman understood his silent threat - he had feared she would miss it.

“I quite agree, Mr. Potter,” she said, her voice losing its sickening purr and gaining an ounce of fear.

“None of that now, Rita, call me Harry. We are friends, after all,” Harry said, leading the way for her upstairs.

Entering the room with Rita and Bozo, Harry saw that Remus and Sirius had laid out tea on the table and were sitting, obviously anxious.

“Take a seat, Rita, we will explain everything,” Harry said.

Rita moved quickly, eyes widening when she saw Sirius Black. “Lord Black, it’s an honour,” she said, the purr returning but vanishing before she finished when Harry cleared his throat.

Sirius, noticing this, sent Harry an inquisitive glance but got a faux innocent look in return.

Joining them at the table, Harry sat with Remus and Sirius on either side, opposite Rita.

“Now, Rita, I’m sure you’re aware that Sirius here has recently been found innocent of all of the terrible crimes he was accused?” Harry asked.

“Yes, such a shameful misjustice,” Rita agreed.

“Well, what is less known is that he is also my godfather,” Harry said. “In a few days, he will be going to trial to prove he is a fit guardian for me.”

Rita’s eyes lit up as she realised how important this information was. “And you would like for me to help his claim, Harry?” she asked.

“Very good, Rita,” Harry said. “What is not known is that the muggles I grew up with were the worst sort. Physically and verbally abusive. They starved me and hated my magic. Sirius, however, is a perfect guardian; he cherishes me and in the short time I have known him, I feel like I have gained a real family. Remus is, as well. They are the best possible people to raise me, to help me recover from the muggles, and to become the wizard the world needs me to be,” Harry said, looking Rita in the eye to get the message across.

Rita’s eyes had grown huge. “I see, I think I know exactly how to help. Perhaps a picture of the two of you though, to help sell the article,” she suggested, her eyes calculating.

Harry knew she wouldn’t betray him; working with him, she not only got to keep her secret safe, but also she gained exclusive rights to stories about him - as long as she painted him in the light he wanted, of course.

~

After the pictures, Rita disappeared, promising Harry the article would be printed how he wanted. Harry had also told her that, if he liked what she did, she would always be the first person he contacted in the press - thus making sure she was firmly in his pocket.
“So, how did you do it?” Sirius asked when they were alone in Harry’s room.

Harry turned innocent once again. “Whatever do you mean?” he asked.

“I know you said you had a contact - but that right there? That was almost scary. So, what do you have on her?” Sirius asked curiously. Although he said it was scary, he wasn’t afraid of Harry; if anything, he was proud of the boy. Yes, the tactics where Slytherin, but he was proving he could survive, that he would survive.

“Did you know it’s a five year prison sentence for not registering as an animagus after you finish school?” Harry asked, smirk widening as he saw Sirius make the connection.

“So, she’s…?” he trailed off.

“Yes. People always did say they thought she bugged them to get her information,” Harry said, hinting widely.

“Bugged?” Sirius asked.

Harry laughed. “It’s a muggle thing,” he explained. “But either way, she’s an unregistered beetle animagus. I just pointed out the consequences if the wrong people found out and the benefits of our ongoing professional relationship.”

Sirius was silent for a moment before he barked out a dog like laugh. Eventually, he calmed down. “You're scary sometimes, but I have never been so proud,” he said, making Harry smile.

~

Chapter End Notes

So i’m ridiculously sick- summer flu is apparently a real thing -.-
There will be an update in a few days, shouldn't be any longer than a week.
Hope you're enjoying the story!
Comment & kudos are welcomed.
~ Annie
Previously

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~

Later that evening, Harry waited with Remus while Sirius went to collect his wand and sign the custody papers. He had taken out a blank book and was planning his days before the trial:

- He needed to go out a get Neville a birthday present, and would be busy on the 30th seeing his friends.
- His own birthday was the 31st, so he should probably expect Sirius and Remus to do something, and the Malfoy’s had also mentioned dinner, so that would most likely occur then.
- On the 1st of August he needed to be in the alley to meet his friends, but more importantly he needed the diary. He hoped Lucius planned on sabotaging Arthur again, he had heard about the raids so he knew the Weasley patriarch was acting as he had in his last life.
- The custody trial was on the 3rd, so they had to be prepared for that.

Thinking about all of this made Harry want to groan and he bemoaned his fate; he half-heartedly considered if it was worth maintaining his friendships, but he knew that he would regret breaking them off. Not only would they be useful in the future, but all the kids he had befriended were genuinely nice - and Neville, well, Harry couldn’t do that to the blond boy. He enjoyed their company, so he knew he wouldn’t deliberately end any of his friendships.

“What are you writing now?” Remus asked, not surprised anymore to find Harry with a book; he was always either reading or writing. He couldn’t believe anybody who spent more than five minutes with Harry would doubt the small boy belonged in Ravenclaw.

“Just a plan for my next few days. I need to go shopping for Nev’s birthday present,” he said.

“This is Neville Longbottom?” Remus asked.
“Yeah, Neville’s my best friend,” Harry told the wolf.

“What’s he like? I knew his parents. They were great people,” Remus said, his voice sad as he thought about the couple's fate.

Harry spared him a sad smile. “Neville is great. He’s in Gryffindor - when we first met he didn’t think he was brave enough for the lion house, but almost immediately he stood up for me against some busybody muggleborn girl. He’s not a loud boy, more brave when it counts. He also loves Herbology and cannot even look at a potion without it failing somehow,” Harry said.

Remus smiled, “He sounds like a nice boy.”

“He really is. I don’t think he had many friends growing up, he seemed kind of lonely. He also doesn’t care that I’m Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived. To him, I’m just Harry. He doesn’t expect me to be anything or anybody I’m not,” Harry said.

Remus frowned as he remembered how the clerk at the ministry had acted. “Does that happen a lot - people acting weird around you?” he asked. He hadn’t realised Harry would dislike the fame, but thinking about it, he thought it obvious.

Harry shrugged. “Sometimes there’s this awful boy, Ron - Ronald Weasley, who I think is actually stalking me. He insists I'm a traitor because I'm in Ravenclaw and not Gryffindor. He says I'm supposed to be a hero and a Light wizard who hates everything Dark and Slytherin,” Harry said with a sneer.

Remus frowned. He knew the Weasleys, he had gotten along very well with Arthur during the last war. He hadn’t seen Molly as much as she had been home with her young children, but he didn’t like the idea of their son making Harry’s life miserable.

“Well, you know to ignore him right? You are exactly who you are supposed to be, Harry,” Remus said.

Harry smiled. “Thanks, Remy.”

Sirius returned then and smiled when he took in the relaxed atmosphere.

“Tomorrow I want to visit Grimmauld Place; I want to see how the goblins have been getting on. Not that I haven’t enjoyed the Leaky Cauldron, but I think it’s time I started proving I can look after you,” he said.

Harry internally cheered when he thought about the Black library - finally, he would be able to get back to looking. He had been scouring his books, but he just had a feeling about the library; he knew the answer was in there. There was also the added bonus of getting hold of the locket as well - he would just have to persuade Kreacher.

“It would be good to actually have a house,” Harry said.

Sirius smiled. “I wouldn’t get your hopes up yet, pup. The house I grew up in wasn't the best and it might be a few days before we can move in.”

“I don’t mind. I need to go shopping for birthday presents anyway,” Harry said.

“Speaking of birthdays, what do you want to do for yours?” Remus asked.

Harry smirked. “Well, I guess cursing Dumbledore bald doesn’t count,” he said. “Honestly, I don’t
know; I’ve never celebrated it before. Can’t we just have cake and stuff?”

The two men exchanged dark looks, realising all Harry had missed out on. “We’ll think of something,” they promised.

~

Entering Grimmauld Place the next day, Harry saw the goblins had done great work; they could probably move in that day. The walls were spotless, with fresh plaster and paint. The floors had been fixed and the wards Harry felt actually intimidated him - they truly were forces to be reckoned with.

Sirius looked just as shocked. “Wow…,” the dog animagus said.

Even the portrait of Walburga was silent, the curtains closed.

“Your goblin friends sure do work fast,” Remus said, walking around the house.

Entering the kitchen, Harry was shocked to see the improvement; it had been modernized slightly and actually sparkled in places. The drawing room, which held the family tree, had been almost remade. The family tree itself was remastered: Harry saw that Sirius was no longer blasted off and a branch now came from him with Harrison James Potter-Black engraved into the weave.

“So, I think we can move in,” Sirius said slowly. The furniture had obviously either been transfigured or replaced as everything was new. There were still a lot of the original items (coffee tables, ornaments, book shelves, etc.), but there were new elements mixed in, making the home unrecognizable. Even Harry, who hadn’t been gone that long in comparison as he had lived in the remains of the home in his last life before returning, couldn’t recognize the house they now stood in.

Re-entering the kitchen, Remus and Sirius startled when Kreacher appeared with a pop.

Harry felt a tug on his magic when he saw the elf, startling him. The elf looked between Harry and Sirius in confusion.

“Which one is Master? Both boy and stain on family have bond - oh, what to do - Mistress would have known,” the elf muttered, distress clear.

Sirius looked shocked and took a step towards the elf. Harry, seeing this, ran and put himself between the two. He knew their relationship was terrible but he had truly bonded with the elf in his last life.

Sirius, startled by Harry’s sudden movement, stopped. “Kreacher, how are you still alive?” he asked

The elf, who was staring at Harry with shocked eyes, turned back to Sirius. “Kreacher lives - oh, how he lives. Great Master Regulus is gone, even Mistress is gone, but still Kreacher lives,” the elf wailed. “Kreacher felt it when the stain became Lord Black. Kreacher never thought he would serve such a man. Sending nasty goblins in to clean and bringing with him a wolf and a boy is also Master.”

Sirius looked angry again, but before he could lash out, Harry intervened.

“Hello, Kreacher, my name is Harry. I suspect you feel the bond because I’m the Black family Heir,” he explained.

Kreacher looked startled and pulled his ear. “Halfblood Heirs, wolves, what is next for poor
“Kreacher?” he muttered.

“You’re right, I am a halfblood and I was even raised by awful muggles. Muggles who hurt me,” Harry said.

Kreacher stilled then. “Muggles hurt little Heir?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s why Sirius became your new Lord. We are going to live here from now on and he is going to help me to get better,” Harry said, looking at Sirius when he went to interrupt Harry’s lies.

Kreacher looked indecisive before he nodded. He could feel the boy’s power as it called to him; he was strong and Dark. The power was intoxicating. If this boy was the Heir to the Black family, Kreacher would be happy to help him and their magic was already bonded, anyway. Kreacher was confused - his boy was his Lord but not his Lord.

“Kreacher is happy to serve new Lord Black if he is helping Little Master,” Kreacher said. “Little Master should have never been with nasty muggles. Bad things. No, Little Master should be here with Kreacher. Kreacher will look after him, help him. Yes, Kreacher will serve,” the elf muttered.

Harry smiled and sent Sirius a smug look. Sirius was floored - the elf never listened to anybody other than his mother and Regulus, who he adored. He had always hated Sirius, even when he was a child.

“How?” he asked Harry when the elf popped away. Harry had used their shock to ask for the locket, promising to destroy it when he could.

Harry shrugged. “I’m just that good,” he deadpanned.

“No, seriously. Kreacher hates me,” Sirius said, still bewildered, “and here he is, willing to serve me just because of you. He’s just met you.”

“Maybe he liked the feel of me through the bond?” Harry suggested.

Sirius shrugged and Remus took the moment to intervene. “This is a good thing, anyway. It means Kreacher will help us and he obviously likes Harry so he will look out for him.”

Sirius nodded, shocked silent.

“Maybe I’ll even work on your mother,” Harry mused. “You said her portrait was behind the curtains.” He had never really tried to win over Walburga last time and wondered if he could.

Sirius seemed to freeze before he grabbed Harry and physically lifted him. “No, I don’t care. You are not meeting that woman for as long as I can manage it.”

“She can’t be that bad,” Harry said, knowing she was but still wanting to try.

“She’s worse!” Sirius cried dramatically, Remus nodding his head.

Harry laughed. “So are we moving in today?” he asked.

Sirius looked around. “There’s no reason not to. Let’s check upstairs first, but if it’s like down here we should be good,” Sirius agreed reluctantly.

Checking out the remaining three floors, they found them all cleaned and refurbished. Even the library, much to Harry’s pleasure, had been refreshed. Seeing the look of glee on Harry’s face, Sirius sighed.
“Am I going to have to put a ban on the door, locking you out, if you start spending all your time in here?” he asked.

Harry stilled and looked at him in betrayal. “You wouldn’t?!” he gasped.

Sirius and Remus laughed. “Pup, you look like I just told you Santa wasn’t real.”

Pausing, Harry turned. “Wait, he isn’t?” Harry asked in a shocked voice, making sure to look sad.

The men froze but seeing Harry smirk after a few seconds, they breathed out a sigh of relief before laughing. “You had us,” Remus admitted.

“I think I just had a heart attack,” Sirius said. “I mean, this parenting thing will be harder than I thought.”

A look passed over his face and he froze suddenly, horror filled eyes going to Harry. “Merlin! I’m going to have to give you the Talk,” he cried. Remus paused and shared a horror filled look with Sirius.

Harry stilled also. No - just no. “Sirius, I’ve already had the Talk; they do that in muggle primary schools. Also, I go to Hogwarts - I share a dorm with boys. Trust me, I know all I will ever want or need to know. You will never, and I mean ever, have to give me the Talk,” Harry said.

Sirius looked so relieved it was almost comical. Remus, however, always practical, took a deep breath. “I know you think that, Harry, but the practicals are different in real life—“

Harry was panicking. He really didn’t need this! He was 18, almost 19, for Merlin’s sake! “Remus, I promise, I swear on my wand, if I ever have any question I will come to you or Siri, but please, no talk,” Harry begged.

Remus looked conflicted but nodded, relieved.

~

After their traumatic discussion about the Talk, Harry managed to ditch the men by asking to go exploring and pick out his room. In reality, he wanted to find a private spot to summon Kreacher.

Calling out, Kreacher appeared with a pop.

“Little Master,” Kreacher said.

“You can call me Harrison or Harry if you like, Kreacher,” Harry offered. He doubted the elf would, but he had to try.

The elf just shook his head, mumbling about proper rules and propriety.

“Can I have the locket now, Kreacher?” Harry asked.

Kreacher stilled and reached into his dirty pillow case. Pulling out the locket, Harry reached for it and felt a fluttering in his scar. Putting it on, he felt his magic surge slightly before it settled and he felt inexplicably more peaceful - like he had been incomplete without knowing it.

Once he had calmed, Harry looked at Kreacher, who was staring wide eyed, and smiled. “Thank you, Kreacher,” he said honestly. “If I can, I promise to destroy this locket.”

The elf nodded. He had felt the Little Master’s magic just then and it felt like home.
Harry, seeing the dirty pillowcase, held in his wince. “Kreacher, I would like for you go and rest. Have something warm to eat and bathe. When you are rested and full, please find something clean to wear,” Harry instructed.

The elf was shocked by the orders and popped away after bowing. Such a great new Master.

Rejoining the men, Harry told them he had picked a room; he was planning on using Regulus’ old room. It was light and airy and had its own bathroom.

They returned to the Leaky Cauldron to collect their things and, after a few hours, they had officially moved in. Kreacher had taken to following Harry around and would answer Sirius’ call, but begrudgingly.

“All really, did you bribe him or something?” Sirius asked after the elf had finished cleaning their dinner plates up. He had cooked Harry’s favourites.

Harry just laughed. “No. I think the fact I was nice to him straight away and that he doesn’t like muggles helped,” Harry lied. He didn’t want to explain about the horcrux or Tom yet, he wanted to build a relationship first.

Sirius just shook his head. “Maybe you would be able to talk to my mother,” he mumbled to himself.

~

Going into Diagon Alley the next day with Sirius in order to get Neville’s birthday present was manic. The papers had circulated the news, meaning Sirius was able to go out, but the crowds were horrendous. It reminded Harry of his first time in Diagon Alley with Hagrid all those years ago. Strangers were coming up to them, shaking Sirius’ hand and saying how they had never believed it.

“Such a shame!”

“Outrageous!”

Some people though, Harry noticed, turned the other way. He could hear whispering about cover-ups and guilt. Harry turned dark eyes on them, and barely stopped himself from hexing the crowd. Sirius took it all in stride though, making sure to smile and ask for privacy while he shopped. Hearing the negative whispers didn’t haze him, he just shrugged them off. Eventually, the crowds seemed to thin out; the sycophants got used to their presence and left them alone.

“So, do you have any idea what you want to buy for your friend?” Sirius asked.

Harry frowned. He had been thinking about it all night but he wasn’t sure. He knew Neville loved plants, but everybody knew that - he wanted to get the boy something special. “No,” he admitted. “I don’t want to get him something obvious. I want Neville to see that I really do care.”

Sirius nodded and looked at Harry with thought. “He’s just a friend? This Neville?” he asked.

Harry actually blanched at the thought of having romantic inclinations towards Neville. “Ew,” he said with a shudder, making Sirius laugh. The man was probably thinking Harry was still too young, when in reality Harry saw his classmates as children.

As his body was physically eleven, almost twelve, Harry wasn’t yet suffering from hormones thankfully. He was not looking forward to going through puberty again; at least this time he knew what to expect and wouldn’t have to stumble blindly.
“You know I wouldn’t care if you like boys or girls or both, right?” Sirius said in a moment of parental brilliance.

Harry smiled. He had suspected Sirius was bisexual in his last life - surely his animosity towards Snape couldn’t be anything but pent up sexual tension.

“I’m gay,” Harry said plainly, shocking Sirius with his easy exclamation. Harry had never actually kissed a man, but as his soulmate was male he was pretty sure he was gay. It only added to the fact the two kisses he had shared with girls, Cho and Ginny, had been rather… lacking.

Sirius coughed slightly. He wasn’t bothered about Harry preferences; homosexuality was accepted in the wizarding world. Nobody cared as the use of potions made it so family lines could continue. However, he was shocked at how easily Harry admitted his sexuality. Most young boys wouldn’t openly say it - especially a boy who was raised by muggles.

“That’s good - fine, I mean, it’s good that you know,” Sirius stuttered out. “Being gay in the wizarding world doesn’t matter, well not really - there’s are always some idiot who won’t accept it, but there are people like that everywhere, people who look down on family and blood status. I just wanted you to know, that nobody will judge you for being gay - if you were worried.”

Harry smiled. He had never had a problem with people’s sexuality, but the issue had never come up.

“Thanks, Siri,” Harry said, spotting a small obscure knick-knack shop that looked promising.

Entering the shop, Harry noticed that the wards must have been keeping the magical signature blocked as the shop practically hummed with latent magic.

Sirius followed Harry. “So when did you notice that you liked boys?” he asked, interested in getting to know more about Harry.

Harry shrugged. He didn’t want to bring up Tom, so instead he turned and arched an eyebrow.

“How did you know you liked both?” he asked instead, getting a roguish grin from Sirius.

“A bottle of firewhiskey and lack of propriety. However, that’s a story for when you're older,” he said with a wink.

Harry chuckled under his breath at the answer. “I’ve never liked girls - not like that, at least. I just didn’t realise that wasn't ‘normal’,” Harry said, his fingers curling into air quotes when he spoke.

Sirius frowned. “It’s perfectly normal,” he insisted, understanding what Harry meant but wanting to reassure the boy.

Harry smiled and noted something in the corner of his eye that caught his attention. There were two glass orbs and Harry could feel the impressive magic coming from them. Picking one up, he examined it.

“Are you interested in the message orbs?” asked a bored assistant, who materialized as soon as Harry picked up the orb.

Hearing that, something in his mind clicked and Harry realised what the ball was. “I think so. How do they work?” he asked.

The shop assistant looked at Harry properly then and did an almost comical double take when he realised exactly who he was talking to.
“They work a bit like muggle telephones. They’re connected, you simply speak a message into your orb and the message can be played back in the other,” the assistant said, staring reverently at Harry’s forehead, where his scar was hidden by his fringe.

Harry hummed. “How much are they?” he asked. They would be the perfect present.

“Twelve galleons.”

Harry considered them again. They were a bit expensive, not that he couldn’t afford them, however he knew that he wanted them.

“I’ll take them, please,” Harry said.

Sirius nodded. “Can you gift wrap one of them?” he addressed the shopkeeper. Turning to Harry, he asked, “I’m assuming that you’re planning on giving one to Neville?”

The shopkeeper let out an actual squeak when he spotted Sirius and, with shaking hands, took the orbs and ran to the back room after frantically nodding his head.

~

Once they were done with the gift shopping, Sirius and Harry wandered around the stores with their cloaks up, their faces partially hidden. Sirius had insisted on paying, claiming it was his job to take care of Harry.

There was a large crowd of children outside of Quality Quidditch Supplies, making Harry remember that Nimbus had just released the 2001.

Seeing the direction of Harry’s gaze, Sirius grinned and asked, “Do you like quidditch, Harry?”

Harry frowned. He had loved it, but he honestly hadn’t played in so long and never in this life. He settled with an, “It’s okay.”

“Just okay? Blasphemy!” Sirius said dramatically.

Harry rolled his eyes at his antics. “I was considering trying out for the team,” he told the dog animagus.

Sirius’s eye lit up with glee. “That’s great, Harry! I loved quidditch when I was at school; me and your father were on the team. I was a beater and your dad was a chaser. He was captain as well in our 6th year,” Sirius said, excitedly taking Harry’s hand and pulling him through the crowd and into the shop.

The shop was not that busy inside, however there was a familiar family standing by the counter. The door had opened with a bell, meaning that when Harry had observed the shop’s occupants, he had met the eyes of Lucius Malfoy, who had looked up at the sound.

Harry remembered how Draco had bought the entire Slytherin team new brooms and wondered if the boy would do so again. The boy didn’t really need to; he was a fantastic seeker, he didn’t need to resort to bribery.

Sirius saw the Malfoys and frowned, probably conflicted by his lack of compulsions warring with his own memories and possible regrets.

Harry gave his hand a tight squeeze before he pulled free.
Lucius, with Narcissa on his arm, approached the pair, Draco trailing behind them.

“Harrison,” the blond said to Harry, giving the boy a nod, before he turned to Sirius. “Might I offer my congratulations on claiming your title, Lord Black,” he said, offering his hand. The gesture was not lost on either Harry or Sirius: Lucius was offering his friendship, or more likely, a political alliance. Harry wasn’t sure if Sirius would take it; he knew Sirius had probably fought the man during the last war and he wouldn’t hold it against him if he held onto his resentment.

Sirius sent Harry a look that said he would be explaining things later before he took Lucius hand and gave it one firm shake. “I welcome them, Lord Malfoy, but please call me Sirius. We are family, after all,” he said, giving Narcissa a smile.

Narcissa was looking at her cousin with calculating eyes, taking in every detail. Eventually she smiled lightly and Harry saw her eyes soften. “Cousin Sirius,” she greeted.

Sirius stepped forward and pulled the aristocratic woman into a light hug, shocking Harry. He had never even heard his old Sirius mention the blonde woman’s name in his last life.

“It’s good to see you, Cissy,” Sirius whispered. He had clearly decided to ignore his resentment at the former Death Eaters.

The woman smiled and pulled out of the hug, before she lightly swatted Sirius’ arm. “None of that, you’re making a scene,” she lightly scolded.

Sirius just grinned and reached over to peck her cheek.

Narcissa smiled again before she turned to look at Harry. Her expression didn’t change as she looked at the boy. She remembered reading Draco’s letter and had spoken about him with Lucius after their meeting at the trial. She understood now what her husband had meant. This child felt… alive. He seemed to vibrate magic, but she felt no overwhelming power from him, and his eyes - they looked like they held all the knowledge in the world. They were both old and young, full of secrets and radiating life.

Holding out a hand, Narcissa smiled lightly when Harry bent and kissed the air.

“Lady Malfoy,” Harry greeted.

“You may call me Narcissa, Heir Potter. After all, like my cousin has said, we are practically family,” Narcissa told the small boy.

Harry smiled. “Then you must call me Harrison or Harry.”

Narcissa turned to Sirius then and the two lost themselves talking about family and memories. Narcissa told Sirius of plans for having them over to Malfoy manor for dinner.

Draco was watching with interest Harry noted, so he turned to him with a smile. “Hello, Draco,” he said, making sure his voice was friendly.


“Are you getting a broom for school?” Harry asked.

“Yes. I’m trying to persuade father to buy the entire team new brooms. Have you seen the school ones? They’re just terrible!” Draco said.
Harry smiled lightly. “They are, but still, it’s best to have terrible brooms for the beginners. Imagine the muggleborns having to ride the latest Nimbus model the first time they got on a broom,” Harry said.

Draco had stilled when Harry had said muggleborn, but smirked as he obviously pictured it. “It would be a disaster,” he said with slight glee.

“Oh, heaven forgive, Neville. He’s my best friend, but give him a broom and he is likely to cause permanent damage.”

Draco laughed. “Or a potion,” he added before suddenly looking unsure as he had insulted Harry’s friend, though not maliciously.

Harry nodded. “True, but watch him in Herbology and you’ll see how amazing he can be. He’s also surprisingly adept at pranks, as Ron Weasley can attest to.” Harry did want to try with Draco, but he wouldn’t allow him to think Neville was a fool.

Draco’s eyes widened. “Longbottom was the one to turned the weasel green?” he asked. It had been a running bet in the Slytherin common room.

Harry nodded. “He didn’t take kindly to Ron’s Gryffindor Light warrior speeches, which usually feature me and how I’m evil incarnate for being in Ravenclaw.”

“I swear that entire family is mental. Their dad is currently having our manor raided hoping to find Dark artefacts, like we would keep them lying around,” Draco scoffed then stilled when he realised what he had said.

Harry didn’t hold any resentment towards Arthur Weasley. It wasn’t his fault his wife and children were morally corrupt twats. However, the man was a true believer in Dumbledore and his Light regime - not in on his plans, but a supporter. Harry didn’t doubt he targeted the Darker families purposely and with Dumbledore’s support, honestly thinking he was doing the right thing.


Draco smirked. “All the weasels are Gryffindors.”

“To be fair, I do rather enjoy the twins. They have rather Slytherin cunning at times,” Harry said, making Draco frown.

“They’re menaces,” he said, offended at the thought of Weasleys in Slytherin.

Harry just smirked. “But I can see their potential.”

Draco frowned when he saw the calculating look in Harry’s eye. He had observed the raven haired boy this year. He had wanted to offer his hand in friendship, but had been unsure how to approach him. Harry Potter was nothing like he had expected him to be: he had grown up with the stories, hearing the rumours. Yet, the boy who turned up to Hogwarts was not the boy he had spent his life picturing, and he found he rather liked that.

Harry noticed Lucius was observing them and turned to include him in their discussion. “Did you ever play quidditch at school?” he asked.

Lucius had observed the boy as he spoke and had to admit Harry was skilful in how he spoke and manipulated people. He didn’t get the sense the boy was being malicious, he was just very calculating. “I did. I was a chaser during my school years.”
Sirius jumped into the conversation then, almost relieved to be escaping Narcissa’s talks of family and available women. “He was quite good, too. Couldn’t beat us lions, though.”

Lucius frowned at that. “Do you wish to play when you return back to school, Harrison?” he asked instead of responding to Sirius’ claim.

“I think I will try out for the Ravenclaw team. I want to be a seeker,” Harry said.

“You have the build for it,” Draco said, though he wasn’t sure he wanted Harry to try out. He didn’t like losing and Harry really did the perfect build for the position, and if the rumours were true, he was a natural on a broom.


“I want to be a seeker, but I wouldn’t mind being a chaser,” he said.

“I’m sure you would do well at either,” Harry said.

“Well, if you're considering trying out, you will need a broom,” Sirius said, “and everything else that a broom requires.”

“I don’t need you to get me a broom, Siri,” Harry said. He didn’t like having money spent on him. Even now knowing he could afford it, Harry still always got a twinge when he had people buy him things.

“Nonsense! It’s your birthday in a few days anyway,” Sirius answered, brushing off Harry’s concern.

“It’s your birthday?” Draco asked, forgetting that fact from the books and stories.

“Yes, on the 31st,” Harry replied. “If you would like, I'm meeting some friends on the 1st in Diagon Alley to celebrate and get our school supplies. You're welcome to join us - you can bring a friend as well if you're wary of the company.”

Draco had a considering look on his face. “No, it’s fine. I shall have to check, but I think that it would be okay.”

“It is fine, dear,” Narcissa said, having overheard. “I shall have to send you an owl, but I will have you, Remus, and Sirius over for dinner in a week and we can celebrate your birthday properly.”

“Would you mind if I joined you? I have business in the alley and was planning going on that day,” Lucius said, making the hairs on Harry’s arm stand on end. It seemed fate really was trying to recreate certain things.

“Not at all, Lucius. In fact, I’m sure that Sirius and Remus would welcome your company as being responsible for five children is a daunting task.”

Sirius had returned at this point, his arms laden with supplies ranging from goalie gloves to wood treatment kits.

Seeing him struggle, Harry rolled his eyes and regretted having to pretend to be magicless. ‘Stupid ministry trace rules,’ Harry thought. Instead, he asked, exasperated, “You do know you're a wizard, right?”

Sirius looked over his pile. “What has that got to do with anything?” he asked.
“Magic, Siri. You could have shrunk those things and put them in a charmed bag - or any other
countless option instead of struggling,” Harry explained.

Sirius grinned and dropped his pile on the counter. “It’s more fun this way,” he told Harry.

Harry shook his head and smiled when he heard Draco muttering about Gryffindors.

~

After getting their supplies and brooms - a Nimbus 2001, a broom Harry had neither owned or
ridden in his last life - the group split up. Harry promised to write to Draco about the meeting on the
1st and Narcissa promised a family meal for Harry’s birthday in return.

Seeing the time, the two decide to return home. Harry spent his time grumbling when he had to
apparate side-along. Leaving the drawing room, Harry allowed Sirius to follow him into the library.

“I didn’t know that you had a cousin,” Harry lied, taking a seat in his favourite chair. He had been
pleased to find the goblins hadn’t changed the chair in the refurbishment.

Sirius winced. “I have three cousins: Cissy, Andromeda, and Bellatrix. When we were kids, we were
quite close; well, I was close with Andy and Cissa. Bella was always a bit…,” Sirius cut off. “When
I went off to Hogwarts, I stopped caring about them. Bella was a 5th year, Andy was a 3rd year, and
Cissy was a year younger. I was sorted into Gryffindor, which Blacks just don’t do, and, with the
compulsions, I became the person I was. I see now that my behaviour probably caused them some
pain; I was always a strong headed kid, standing up for what I believed in. There's a strong chance I
would have gone Gryffindor anyway, but well…."

“You can’t change the past, Siri,” Harry said, the irony not lost on him.

“I know and I would love to get to know Cissa again, even Lucius. I didn’t like him in school, he
was always too Slytherin for me. Then, when the war was starting up, he was already a tattooed
member of the other side,” Sirius admitted before he turned to look at Harry. “How do you know
Lucius and why do you call him Lucius?”

Harry sighed and explained, “I met him the day of your trial, we spoke before it started. He asked for
me to call him his given name and I consented for him to do the same.”

Sirius nodded. “You do know he was a real Death Eater, right? He was never under the Imperius.”

Harry nodded. “I know, but the war is over and now he’s just a man. Granted, an influential man
who holds a lot of power, but he only ever had loyalty to the Dark cause anyway, not Voldemort.”
Harry added that information, remembering how Lucius had abandoned Voldemort. He was a true
believer in the Dark cause and had joined hoping to build a better world.

Sirius looked startled. “How could you possibly know that?” he asked.

Harry shrugged. “Trust me,” he answered without answering.

Sirius shook his head and looked around the room. “You know, you spend too much time in here,”
he said. He wanted to question the boy further but he didn’t want to risk pushing for too much too
fast.

Harry snorted. “Most people would like the fact that their child enjoys spending time in the library,”
he commented.
Sirius grinned. “Have you seen the duelling room?” he asked, twitching in his seat.

Harry stilled. “No,” he said truthfully and barely resisted hitting himself - he was a fool.

He had been using and stretching his magic as much as he could a lot more since the house’s wards prevented the ministry trace from working. He had noticed his magical stamina increasing and using the duelling room would be massively beneficial. He had totally forgotten about it as, in his last life, the room had been warded off and closed for their safety - because practicing duelling during a war where people kept cursing at him was so dangerous.

Sirius grinned and looked triumphant. He had started to randomly pop up whenever Harry had been spending, by Sirius’ own words, too much time in the library, and tried to drag him out.

“Come on, then,” he said.

Harry trailed after the man. The duelling room looked like it had been upgraded. The practice dummies looked new and the wards around the area were much more complex.

“You’ve got your wand on you, right?” Sirius asked.

Harry rolled his eyes. As if he would leave his wand behind; true, he was proficient with wandless magic, but Sirius didn’t know that.

Entering the room after Sirius, Harry looked around and saw how much the room had been upgraded; he had only entered it once in his last life. Now, the room had a row of practice dummies and a power gauge, meaning they could have the difficulty altered depending on who was using them. There was also a raised platform and a small selection of daggers and other physical weapons.

Sirius darted into the room and spun around. “It’s brilliant in here, isn’t it?” he asked Harry.

Harry smiled at his excitement and nodded. “Was it like this when you were younger?” he asked.

“Back then it was more basic. Your goblin friends really did a great job.”

Harry nodded and went to inspect the power gauge. Seeing Harry’s attention waver, Sirius came over. “You can use them but I would prefer it if you waited for either me or Remus to be around,” he told the small looking boy.

Harry nodded. He didn’t plan on doing that as it would be difficult to explain his prowess, but what they didn’t know wouldn’t harm them.

Sirius grinned and set up a single dummy for Harry to use, putting it on the lowest setting. Harry resigned himself to fighting a child dummy and flicked his wrist so his wand was out. Racking his brain, Harry thought of a simple spell chain a child should be able to do: a simple blasting and stunning combination.

Sirius took a step back when he felt Harry’s magic. His small godson was deceptive. He had such control over his magical core that he could go undetected unless he unleashed his power. The control and speed in which he could wield his magic was advanced; his finesse was like somebody already of age, not a nearly twelve-year-old.

“Well, you make me look like a novice,” he joked.

Harry sent him a bland look. “Hardly, I just find that magic comes much more easily to me, especially since I had my blocks removed last summer. I can sense magic, feel it, and with my
memory I don’t really need to practice a spell more than once before I’ve got it for good.”

Sirius hummed. The explanation was true, but it felt like there was something missing. “Well, I’m probably at the same stage as you right now. My healer recommended me coming in and practicing for half an hour a day, but my stamina is shot,” he admitted.

Harry made sure not to look sympathetic. “Give yourself some time - you know you’ll get there,” he said with conviction.

Sirius smiled. “Well, maybe you could join me. You can show me what else you know - don’t think I was fooled by those firstie spells.”

Harry nodded. “I suppose I could practice with you.” Harry would just have to stick to 4th year and below.

~

Chapter End Notes

I’ve tried lemon and honey & putting ’vicks’ on my chest nothing works :'(
Also is it summer or spring? I honestly thought it was summer now...
Hope you’re enjoying the story anyway- The next update Won’t be until Tuesday
Comment & kudos appreciated
~ Annie
New experiences & namely friends

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

30th July 1992

By the time Neville's birthday came around, Harry had developed a minor routine with Sirius and Remus. In the few days they had been together, all three men had sorted out their own lives around each other. Harry would wake up and immediately head to the library (he was so close to finding an answer he could practically feel it; he hoped it wasn't just wishful thinking, but his magic seemed to be humming, making Harry believe he was getting close.) After that, Harry would have lunch when Sirius arrived and then go with him to practice his magic. He had slowly upped his skill level, nothing drastic, when he noted that Sirius wasn't going to say anything. He knew he needed to sit both men down and explain a few things to them soon, but he hoped he would be able to wait until after the custody trial had passed - and maybe after he had a way to return Tom to sanity. It would definitely make it easier to sell if his soulmate was sane.

For Sirius, he would go to his healer’s appointments in the mornings, have lunch, and then spend half an hour with Harry in the duelling room. By that time he would disappear, usually to have a short nap. Sirius was also working through his family’s journals, looking up Wizengamot rules and rulings. He had told Harry and Remus during dinner that he would use all the power he could to ensure he won his custody suit. The temporary grant of custody to Remus was a bonus they could and would use, but Sirius appearing interested in re-entering the world as a proper pureblood Lord would be beneficial.

Remus, as opposed to his more active family members, seemed to putter in and around all day. He would spend time with Harry while Sirius was at his healer’s appointments, letting Harry read and research in the library, while he himself flicked through books. Then he would go out and run
errands in the afternoons. There had been the first real argument the other day when Remus spoke about the full moon; it would occur on the 5th, meaning Remus would not have to worry the custody trial, but he was refusing to allow Harry or Sirius to get him the Wolfsbane potion. Remus had told them he was wanting to become less dependent on them anymore than he already was.

Harry had pointed out he knew a reliable Potions Master, which had led to an even greater argument as Sirius was reminded that Harry not only knew Severus, but also liked and respected the man greatly.

28th June 1992

“I don’t understand why you’re being so difficult about this, Moony. I have more money than I could ever spend. Even if I lived to be 1000 and penniless, I want to do this for you!” Sirius shouted, standing up from the table and pacing.

Remus remained sitting, but his face was tight. “I have survived many times without the potion and besides, I simply can’t afford it for a few months. I will be fine without it like I was before,” he said, his voice not raised but strained.

“But you don’t have to!” Sirius said, turning to look at the wolf. “I can help you! Why won’t you let me help you?!”

Remus sighed. “Sirius, you’re already doing too much—”

“—No, I’m not!”

“I’m living here without paying rent—”

“—So? I’d be living here with Harry anyway! You’re helping me! Let me help you!”

“If you’re concerned, I can always ask Severus to brew the potion. He promised to help me over the summer and to contact him if I needed anything. I’m sure he would brew the potion for you,” Harry said.


Harry and Remus both sighed simultaneously. “Sirius, you can’t call him that,” Remus said.

“But—!”

Harry interrupted him this time, “I know you didn’t get on when you were in school, but Professor Snape really helped me this year. Not only did he brew my ointments and potions, but he looked out for me. He even followed up on his concerns about my family and made sure I would be okay this summer. He’s changed from the boy you knew.” Seeing Sirius’ look, Harry continued, “And trust me, I know everything about his past and how he and Lucius have matching tattoos. However, I don’t hold it against him; he’s paid for his past mistakes. He’s also not the bad guy in our lives. And Remus, remember how you felt when you found out about the Dursley’s? When you held me and promised to be there for me? Well, you can’t do that if you keep doing this. Take the potion, please.”

Both men looked shocked, Sirius also looking slightly ashamed. Reminding them about Dumbledore worked exactly how Harry had wanted it to and, although he was emotionally blackmailing them, it was for the greater good - a phrase that, even thinking it, made Harry cringe.

“He really helped you?” Sirius asked after a few moments of silence.
“Yes, he really helped me,” Harry confirmed.

Sirius and Remus seemed to share a look, before Remus spoke, “If you could contact him and ask him to brew it, I would be very grateful. Make sure to mention he will get paid market price.” Remus had smelt Harry’s emotions and he knew that the boy cared for him and was genuinely worried.

Harry nodded. “Thank you.”

Sirius sat back down and Harry could hear him grumbling about Severus under his breath.

“I know you hated each other, but Siri, please, if you're willing to give Lucius a chance, why not Professor Snape?” Harry argued.

Sirius opened his mouth but didn’t speak. Closing it, he ran his hand over his face. “I’m sorry,” he said eventually. “It’s hard for me - sorting out my feelings and emotions towards certain people.”

Harry and Remus nodded. They too had found it difficult to control their emotions towards people after they had been magically cleansed.

30th July 1992

Like Narcissa had mentioned, an owl had arrived later in the week, inviting the three of them to dinner at Malfoy manor on Harry’s birthday to celebrate. With that in mind, the two men were planning on going out and buying everything they needed to properly celebrate whilst Harry was at Neville’s.

Flooing over with Sirius, as Remus was busy in planning mode, Harry was greeted by a stern faced Augusta Longbottom and a slightly embarrassed Neville.

Harry had rarely met the Longbottom matriarch, however he knew of her fearsome reputation in and out of the Wizengamot. The woman was surprisingly tall and her grey hair was up in an elaborate bun. Her robes were dark purple and expensive without being over the top. Looking around the room, Harry noted that was the general theme - it was clear the Longbottom family had money, but they didn’t advertise the fact as sharply as other families, such as the Blacks (once upon a time) or the Malfoys.

Seeing as he was the adult with the greatest title in their party, Sirius stepped forward and bowed slightly, taking Augusta’s hand and kissing the air above it.

“Thank you for having Harry today, Dowager Longbottom,” he said formally.

Augusta’s stern expression seemed to melt slightly as she released Sirius’ hand. “None of that, now; you will call me Augusta. I’ve known you since you were a boy, for Merlin’s sake! I never did believe you were guilty; I even wrote to the former minister about it, but got written off as a grieving mother - for shame! And as for this young lad, well, he’s made my Neville very happy, really brought him out of his shell. I'm happy to have him.”

Sirius looked shocked and pleased; knowing he had genuine support was heartening.

Seeing as Sirius looked slightly choked up, Harry took a step forward and took the dowager Lady’s hand, “Thank you for having me, Dowager Longbottom. I'm very pleased to meet you - and happy birthday, Neville,” Harry greeted, kissing the air above her hand before sending Neville a large smile.

“I'm very pleased to meet you too, young man, but you should call me Augusta or gran. I expect I'll
be seeing a lot of you, so we shall forgo the formalities," the elderly lady said.

Harry nodded and sent the woman a smile. Neville shook his head lovingly and turned to his best friend. "Thanks, Harry. The girls aren’t here yet, but we can go through and wait for them. My gran already knows Amelia, who’s bringing them both."

~

After Sirius left and the girls arrived, Dowager Longbottom waved them off with Neville, saying she would send an elf when it was time for tea.

Neville lead them through the house and out into the garden. Seeing the manor for the first time from the outside, Harry saw it was a large Tudor manor. The gardens were extremely well maintained and Harry guessed that Neville had spent most of his time since returning from school out here.

Finding a quiet spot by a large pond, the four friends all sat down. As soon as they were settled, three sets of eyes turned to Harry and he gulped slightly.

“So…,” he said, trailing off.

Susan huffed and reached over to lightly clip the back of his head. "You had better start talking or I will hex you. There's no aunt Amelia to watch me and I know Neville’s wards will block the wand trace,” she threatened.

Harry jokingly raised his arms. “Alright, alright, no need to resort to such violence,” he said. He then explained what had happened, going into more detail than his letter had. Once he had finished his friends looked contemplative.

“My gran doesn’t mention the war much. After what happened to my parents, I think she just wanted to forget - but she did say once that she didn’t believe Sirius was guilty,” Neville said. “If you're happy with him, then I don’t mind that you kept it from us, and you know that I will support you anyway.”

“It’s the same with us,” Hannah said, smiling at Harry.

“My aunt’s been working night and day,” Susan said, before whispering, “I don’t think I'm supposed to know, but she didn’t ward her office so I overheard her. Apparently, Dumbledore's been kicking up a fuss since your meeting, trying to get you back to your aunt and uncle. He’s being sneaky about it but she knows it’s him.”

“He really needs to get over his obsession with me,” Harry said, before adding in a sly voice, “I mean I know I'm fabulous, but I like my men a little less decrepit.”

Neville choked and looked green while the girls giggled.

“Please don’t talk about him like that! He’s ancient, he even taught my gran,” the blond boy wailed.

Susan, who was still giggling, calmed slightly. “So how do you like your men?”

“Tall, dark haired, and pale eyed,” Harry said, remembering a sixteen-year-old Tom Riddle.

The three looked slightly shocked, but they didn’t react negatively to Harry’s confirmation about his sexuality. Hannah instead tilted her head and said, “Really, I prefer blonds myself.” She dramatically looked over at Neville, who blushed and threw grass at her.
The group laughed again and Harry found himself relieved about their acceptance.

The next half an hour was spent talking about their summer plans. Neville was going away with his gran and his uncle Algie for the last week of the summer to visit distant family in the Netherlands, which he was excited about as they had a large botanical shop there which sold a variety of exotic plants and herbs. Susan was staying home as her aunt was too busy, but she had plans to visit the beach a few times for the day, and Hannah was leaving in a week to spend the remainder of the holiday until the last week in the USA visiting her cousins.

Eventually the house elf promised by Augusta popped up and they made their way into the informal dining room. Harry saw that Augusta was with an elderly man and Harry assumed that this was Neville’s famous uncle Algie. Looking at the table, Harry saw that a large arrangement of party nibbles had been set up with plates and the children were told to help themselves buffet style. Harry was happy to see such a large selection and picked a few different sandwiches to try, as well as salad and cakes.

After the food was cleared, the presents were passed out. Neville opened Susan’s present first and saw that she had bought him a book on medicinal uses of Herbology and a child’s medi-wizard kit. Although slightly practical, Harry could see that Neville loved the book; he had remembered in his last life how the boy had at one point bemoaned how he didn’t have any skills apart from Herbology, which is wrongly considered useless by many.

Harry’s present came next. Opening in the gift-wrapped box, Neville looked confused before he read the card Harry had written and added, “Wow, Harry, these are great!” He looked at the ball with renewed wonder now that he knew what it was.

Harry smiled. “Well, this way we can talk all the time, even at Hogwarts,” he said.

The girls looked at the note and ooh’d and ahh’d once they understood what the crystal orb was.

Neville moved on and opened Hannah’s gift; she had bought the box a rare hybrid plant, a miniature pineapple-apple tree. Once grown, it would never be over four feet tall, and the fruits would be the size of golf ball at largest.

“Thank you,” Neville said, looking slightly overwhelmed by the sheer fact he had not only friends, but friends who knew him and what he liked.

“It’s okay Neville, that’s what friends are for,” Harry said, pulling Neville into a one-armed hug.

“Yeah Nev, I’m just happy you liked my present. I thought it was too practical,” Susan said, smiling.

“Honestly, it’s great,” Neville said, stroking the cover of the book.

Augusta, who had been watching, smiled at the children. “Thank you all for making the day special,” she said. “Now, I do believe it’s time for birthday cake.”

Singing happy birthday to Neville, Harry was surprised that the day had passed so quickly. He had an hour before Sirius or Remus would arrive to collect him. Spending the remainder of the time playing a few games of exploding snap, Harry was happy to have seen his friends. He had missed them, even though they were so young in comparison to him - at least mentally - Harry found he still liked them and enjoyed their company.

~

Meanwhile at Grimmauld Place
“Have you noticed anything off with Harry?” Remus asked, thinking about the boy’s complex emotions.

Sirius hummed. He had forgiven Remus for his part in his incarceration and loved the man like a brother, but if it came down to it, he would always pick Harry. The boy was his son for all intents and purposes. When he blood-adopted him as part of an old magic godfather ritual James and Lily had chosen, he had developed a deep bond and love for the child. Even after being separated for so long, as soon as his magic was cleansed, that bond had flared back to life. Sure, they were still getting to know one another, but Sirius knew, no matter what, he would pick Harry.

“Like what?” he asked casually, trying to keep his emotions in check as he knew, especially since being cleansed, that Remus could smell emotions on a person if he tried or if they were strong enough.

Remus caught on to how wary Sirius was. “He’s the most amazing child I have ever met,” Remus said, making Sirius relax slightly, “but, I don’t know, I sometimes think he knows more that he should, even with his memory.”

Sirius considered this. “I think that with everything he has been through, that maybe he has secrets he’s not yet willing to share.”

Remus smiled at how well Sirius had taken over parenting - he was instinctual. “You think he will tell us?” he asked.

“I think he wants to tell us, but he’s waiting until he’s ready,” Sirius said, thinking about the time he had caught Harry looking at him before he realised himself and pulled away.

“You’re probably right,” he said, before he smirked. “You know, I saw him do a sixth-year spell perfectly the other day. Wordlessly.”

Sirius snorted. “Please, I caught him wandlessly floating a book to himself. I don’t think he even realised he had done it. It just zoomed to his outstretched hand when he was reading. He checked it then sent it back with a flick of his wrist.”

Remus felt his eyes go wide. “I’m guessing he didn’t notice you?”

“No. I think he forgets sometimes or gets distracted by whatever he’s searching for.”

“Searching for?” Remus asked.

“All of his books are similar: they’re all Dark, but they all relate to the same branches of magic. He must be searching for something - nobody reads that much or that obsessively without a reason,” Sirius said. He didn’t mention the branch of Dark magic, soul magic, as he didn’t want to worry Remus. He was going to have a talk with the boy soon if it continued; he may have decided to be more open with Dark magic, but soul magic was dangerous.

“How advanced do you think he really is?” Remus asked in wonder - controlled wandless magic was extremely rare. It had been in the Potter family before, but to have it you had to have a large magical core as magical abilities like wandless magic take a lot of core magic to manifest, let alone master. If Harry had done so before the age of twelve, then Remus was more than impressed, he was flabbergasted.

“Honestly, I have no idea. And I know for a fact he’s trying to hide it from us, so I can’t even begin to guess.”
“If we keep showing him we love him no matter what, I don’t think it will take him long to come to
us,” Remus said. “I’m just glad it wasn’t just me thinking he was hiding something.”

Sirius smiled, glad he still had his friend. “He’ll talk when he’s ready.”

~

31st July 1992

For the first time in his life, Harry didn’t force himself to stay awake and wish himself a happy
birthday. After he had been picked up yesterday, he had been surprisingly tired and had gone to bed
early to make sure he would be awake and ready for today, his first proper birthday.

His friends had given him his gifts as they all left and instructed him to open them today, so Harry
knew that he would definitely have presents, real presents, for the first time. In his last life,
everything he had received, he realised now, probably came from his own money. He didn’t doubt
Remus and Sirius had gone over the top as well, so he was looking forward to a day of celebration
without any strings or manipulations.

Waking up, Harry pulled on a pair of light grey denim jeans and a navy shirt. His hair was getting
longer and now reached past his shoulders, so he pulled it up into a messy bun. As it was his
birthday he wanted to be comfortable, not restricted by more formal clothes. It was half eight, so
Harry walked down to the kitchen.

Entering, Harry felt more than saw something happening, so he quickly dodged the prank coming his
way.

“I told you he wouldn’t fall for it,” Remus said, laughing. He had noticed Harry’s ability to dodge
and how he was usually always aware of his surroundings.

Harry smiled and looked behind him to see if the spell had done anything to the wall, which was
now bright pink but looked to be turning yellow.

Sirius laughed and pulled Harry into a hug. “It was a Marauder’s tradition when we were in
Hogwarts. Birthday boys got pranked in the morning.”

Harry smiled. “You’ll have to do better than that then, I suppose,” he said.

Sirius smiled and Remus groaned. “Don’t give him such free reign,” the wolf said.

Kreacher appeared then. The elf seemed to have perked up in the time he had been bonded to both
Sirius and Harry. Although he was still old, he was much cleaner and seemed to have more energy.
Having a stable bond with Harry and, arguably, Sirius was really beginning to show.

“Little Master, Kreacher has made all your favourites for your birthday, yes he has, not every day the
Little Master turns twelve,” the elf said.

Harry smiled and pulled the elf into a half hug, startling him. “Thank you, Kreacher,” he said.

The old elf looked stunned and nodded before popping away quickly.

Sirius laughed. “I think you just broke him completely,” he said. Sirius had stopped tormenting the
elf and now mainly ignored him. He had seen how much the elf seemed to adore Harry and just left
him to it. He was no longer doing any harm and did maintain the house for them and cooked without
complaint.
Harry shrugged. He had never hugged the elf before but, as he was still rather small, it felt almost natural to do so.

“Let’s go eat,” Remus said, pulling Harry over to the table.

Looking at the breakfast prepared, Harry felt his mouth water. There was a pile of golden pancakes and every possible topping: from fruits, to yogurts, and even melted chocolate.

Piling his plate, Harry happily tucked in with Remus and Sirius helping themselves.

After they had finished, the two men lead Harry into the sitting room. They didn’t often go in there as Harry preferred the library and Sirius had officially taken over his father’s office. It was only really Remus who ever sat and relaxed in the room.

Harry saw the rather large pile of presents and rolled his eyes. He knew Sirius had gone overboard the other day buying broom equipment, but this looked rather ridiculous. “Really guys? I don’t need you to buy me so much,” he said fondly.

Remus chuckled. “Blame Sirius more than me,” he said, sitting down in his self-proclaimed chair.

Sirius bounded over to the pile. “Hey! I’m making up for ten years of no presents!” he argued before picking up a present and giving it a slight shake.

Harry shared an amused look with Remus before moving to sit with Sirius. “Fine, but I want you to promise: next time, no extra presents. That includes Yule, Sirius.”

Sirius pouted and opened his mouth to argue but Remus cleared his throat. “Fine,” he said, slightly petulantly.

Harry rolled his eyes and picked up a present. Reading the tag, he saw it was from Remus.

Inside was a beautiful leather bound book, the cover engraved with a basilisk and a unicorn. Looking at the back, he saw a phoenix and a thestral.

“It’s beautiful,” he told the wolf, genuinely entranced.

“I know how you like to take notes, so I thought you would like something attractive to take them in. It’s charmed to be never ending and, if you mark it with your magical signature, only you and those you allow will be able to read it,” Remus explained.

Harry smiled and opened the blank book. “Thank you,” he said honestly.

There was also a large box of chocolates from the wolf, which Harry noted was of the dark variety - his favourite.

Sirius smiled at their interaction before his excitement got the better of him. Picking up a random present, he practically threw it at Harry. “Open this one next!”

Harry smiled at his eagerness and opened the present after seeing it was from Neville. Inside was a black and silver bracelet with a small raven charm. Although maybe slightly effeminate, Harry was still very pleased with the gift. He was especially intrigued when he read the note explaining his friends had worked together to each buy combined presents. The raven was supposed to represent Harry.

With this in mind, Harry found Hannah’s present next. Opening the small box, he found a potion
charm and a badger charm. The note explained the vial was supposed to go extremely cold when in
the presence of deadly potions and the badger was purely for decoration and to remind Harry of his
friends in Hufflepuff.

Susan following the same theme and bought Harry two charms as well: a lion and an eye. The lion
was to remind Harry of his own bravery and of Neville. The eye would apparently help him to hone
his occlumency and other mind-magics. He didn’t really need that charm as he had mastered the art
in his year at Hogwarts; well, as much as he was able to without a legilimens. Even if he hadn’t, his
heir rings protected his mind - still, he appreciated the gift and the thought they had put into it.

Next, Harry started in on the pile of broom related things from Sirius. Harry amusedly asked the
animagus if it really was necessary for him to buy Harry everything, even items like keeper gloves
when the boy never played keeper.

“Yes,” was Sirius’ response, though he looked slightly abashed when both Harry and Remus
laughed.

Harry laughed and noted he still had a few presents. Picking up a present wrapped in silver, Harry
saw it was from the Malfoys and was surprised: he assumed they would wait and give it to him later
if they brought him anything.

Inside the box was a written note. Considering the more effeminate writing, Harry thought the note
was by Narcissa.

~

Happy birthday Harrison,

We’re very happy that you accepted our invitation for dinner tonight and cannot wait to see you.

As I know how Draco usually loves to tear into his presents straight away, I thought it was best to
send you yours now so you didn’t have to wait.

I do hope you like them.

Best wishes,

The Malfoy family

~

Looking inside the box, Harry saw that they had gotten him two subscriptions to Quidditch Weekly
and Young Minds, a monthly magazine that talks about politics and important discoveries in the
world of academia. There was also a large crystal wizarding chess set, which Harry found to be
beautiful, and a box of Honeydukes selections.

Harry also received a card from Dumbledore; he opened it and could feel the magic coming from the
card. The magic was very slight but he had been developing his magic sensitivity ever since he had it
unlocked in his last life; his ability to feel magic was now well honed. Scowling at the familiar
scrawl, Harry opened the card.

~

Harry,
My dear boy, I do hope you have a wonderful birthday and do consider visiting and returning to your family.

If not them, then perhaps a familiar wizarding family. I'm sure I know the perfect family who would love to take you in.

It really would be for the best, don’t you agree?

Kind regards and salutations,

Professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

~

Harry snorted as he read the note and passed it to Sirius, who read it with a scowl. The animagus barely resisted his urge to rip the letter up before Remus took it and read it himself.

“He really doesn’t give up, does he?” Sirius said, standing and pacing slightly. He hadn't said anything but Harry could see he was worried; most likely about the trial and the influence Dumbledore had.

“Can you feel the magic on the paper?” Harry asked.

Sirius stilled and closed his eyes - Harry recognised it as him connecting to his own core. Unlike Harry, who could do it instinctively, Sirius had to concentrate - and even then such sensitivity didn’t always work. Remus, he noted, didn’t attempt to sense it at all; Harry assumed the wolf knew he wouldn’t have a chance at detecting the very subtle compulsion. Although a strong wizard, Harry would acknowledge that Sirius did have more latent magic to draw from in his core compared to Remus. Remus did, however, have an advantage with his wolf senses and stamina.

Sirius took a few seconds before he let out a slight growl, sounding suspiciously like he did in his dog form. “It's got a compulsion on it. I can just about feel it when I'm concentrating my magic.”

Harry nodded. “Yes, I felt it as soon as I noted the envelope. It’s subtle, but rather strong.”

Remus placed the note down hesitantly. “Do you have any idea what the compulsion was for and if I’ll be affected? I don’t have rings like you two and I didn’t even note the charm.”

Harry double check the envelope with his magic, feeling the charm. “It’s okay, it was aimed at only me. It was to make me agree with him, most likely with the suggestion about visiting my family and trusting him again.”

Remus let out a relieved breath. That was his new fear - the fact he was susceptible to Dumbledore's compulsions and could therefore be used against Harry and Sirius was more terrifying than any full moon. Even his occlumency training, although not advanced, didn’t help and his wolf, which usually hated being manipulated, didn’t seem to help at all.

“Why?” Sirius asked. “What’s his plan, his goal? Why doesn’t he just leave you alone?”

Harry sighed. “I can’t be sure.”

Sirius swore, making Remus glare. “Pads, not now. It’s Harry’s birthday and we are going to make it special.”

Sirius nodded and let out a long breath. “I would just love to know what he's up to.”
“We all wou—” Remus was cut off when Sirius suddenly jumped up and made a muffled noise, sounding distinctly like a curse word.

“What are you doing now?” the wolf asked in exasperation.

“I have an idea! I’m such an idiot - I had completely forgotten about him!” Sirius shouted, sounding like he was halfway up the stairs.

Harry and Remus shared a look and followed the sounds of Sirius’ footsteps. They found him on the 3rd floor, outside an office, talking to a portrait Harry had never really noticed. The family portraits had been frozen by the goblins and left that way. However, Harry soon realised why Sirius was so excited. In front of them was a portrait Harry recognised well: it was Phineas Nigellus Black.

“It’s about bloody time, boy!” Phineas berated Sirius. “I’ve been trying to get your attention all week!”

Sirius mumbled an apology while Harry wondered how he had never noticed the painting - in this life or the last. He suspected Dumbledore had the paintings removed as most of them were thrown out.

“Hello again, sir,” Harry said, drawing the attention to himself.

Phineas’ painting turned and let out a huff of air. “You! I don’t know whether to be proud of you or worried. You’ve got that fool of a man Dumbledore acting rather erratically,” he said.

Remus seemed to suddenly recognise the painting and took a step forward, placing a hand on Harry’s shoulder.

“What’s he doing?” Sirius asked.

“The coot is obsessed with the boy, always going on about him and his plans. He doesn’t go into detail around us - I suspect he knows we hold no loyalty to him,” Phineas said.

“You’ve heard nothing concrete?” Remus asked.

Phineas started at Remus with pursed lips before answering anyway, “No, not as such. He has mentioned a petition to have more Dark homes searched and getting Grimmauld on the list. Something about making sure something is found. And he has mumbled a few times about suitable Light families, such as the Weasleys.”

Sirius and Harry both growled. The house, being as old as it was, did have a few Darker artefacts - and the books, well, Harry refused to be parted with them. He knew a lot of them were banned and even illegal, but magic shouldn’t be sanctioned.

“I see, thank you,” Sirius said.

“If you keep my portrait unblocked I will be happy to pass along anything I see or hear. Although he is paranoid, he does forget, and sometimes he seems to get caught up,” Phineas said.

“Isn’t your loyalty keyed to Hogwarts, though?” Remus asked, remembering something he had once read.

“Partly yes, that is true, but Dumbledore isn’t Hogwarts. The school has my loyalty as well as my family. Sirius and young Harrison here are my family, my Heirs.”
“Thank you, sir,” Harry said.

The portrait stared at Harry for a moment. “Have we met before? Or have you ever been alone in Dumbledore's office?” he asked.

Harry shook his head; he had never spoken to the portrait in this life. “No, sir. I have been to his office a few times over this year, though. He is rather persistent in trying to get me up there.”

Phineas hummed as observed the boy. “Strange, you seem very familiar.”

Sirius sighed and ran a hand through his hair. Fortunately, it had regained a lot of its former glory with the help of his healers and the goblins who he had visited once again.

“If you would pass along anything, we would be grateful. However, as it’s Harry’s birthday, I think we should get going. We have the day planned before dinner tonight with the Malfoy’s,” he told the painting.

“Oh, finally living up to the family’s standards, are we?” asked the painting snidely. Sirius had never gotten on well with the painting growing up and after he had entered Hogwarts it had been even worse. However, he knew that Phineas’ loyalty was to the Blacks and he would help.

Sirius glared. “I'm finally free of Dumbledore's manipulations and giving people a second and last chance,” he said.

Phineas hummed and looked pleased. “Good. You have to potential to bring our family back to it’s former glory.”

Sirius nodded and walked away from the painting, grabbing Harry’s hand and pulling him along when the boy seemed to stop and stare at the painting. Harry wondered if Phineas was sensing things about him from his other life encounters.

~

The rest of the day passed quickly. The two men had planned it so that Harry could experience as many things as possible. They had apparated him to muggle London and taken him to a matinee performance of a west end show. They had had lunch in Italy - really, Sirius had paid for an international floo to take them all to Rome to have lunch in a private wizarding area of the Colosseum, and then they had explored the city for a few hours, seeing the main sights easily with the help of magic. Harry had also bought a load of souvenirs for his friends, even getting Draco something.

By the time they had returned home, Harry was beyond exhilarated; it had been one of the best days of his life.

“We have an hour before we're due at the Malfoy's,” Remus said after casting a tempus charm.

“I'm going to take a quick bath,” Harry said. Even with cooling charms, which he had been casting wandlessly to not gain attention, he still felt the need to shower before dinner.

“Good idea,” Sirius said, dramatically sniffing Harry, making the boy hit him in the stomach.

~

Dressing slightly more formally than he would for dinner at home, Harry selected to wear black trousers and a silver shirt with an open emerald green robe, a few shades darker than his eyes. He
also had on his new charm bracelet and his hair tied back with a silver ribbon he had bought in Rome.

Looking in the mirror, Harry noted the differences between this twelve-year-old boy and his last. Although still not tall, he was probably an inch taller than last time. His hair was now smoother and fell to his shoulders in more controlled waves. He no longer wore glasses and, although his face was softer, it wasn't as pronounced as it was when he had first had the glamour removed - perhaps as he was younger and still had baby fat. He was slightly androgynous as an adult he supposed, but at this age it wasn't as noticeable. His eyes still dominated his face, the green actually glowing slightly when Harry allowed his magic to flair.

Walking downstairs, he saw that Remus and Sirius had done the same as him and were dressed much more formally than normal.

Flooing into the Malfoy's entrance room, Harry noted the luxury and grace of the place. It was graceful and luxurious but lacked a certain home-like feeling.

“Welcome to our home,” Lucius greeted after Harry had straightened himself out. He still stumbled slightly when exiting the floo and he doubted he would ever master the art.

“Thank you for having us,” Sirius responded as the highest-ranking member of their party.

Narcissa entered then with Draco. “I thought I felt the wards let you in. Welcome,” she greeted warmly, stepping up to Sirius and kissing his cheek.

“Happy birthday, Harry,” Draco said, smiling hesitantly, making Harry realise that his pompousness and arrogance had yet to fully manifest.

“Thank you for having us and thank you for the birthday gifts,” Harry said, sending Draco a smile before Narcissa leant down and kissed his cheek also.

Lucius shook hands with Sirius and even Remus, and offered his hand to Harry once he was free of Narcissa, who had started to flutter about him.

Harry took the hand and shook it, before he felt Lucius’ magic suddenly prod at his. Raising an eyebrow in question, Harry felt it as Lucius' magic seemed to dance around his.

Seeing he had been noted, Lucius straightened. “I apologise, it seems my magic reacts strongly to yours,” he said, making Harry wonder.

Sirius, who heard the exchange, turned and looked at Harry with concern. Seeing this, Harry waved him off before turning back to Lucius. “It’s fine, Lucius. I keep my magic masked slightly, perhaps that is the reason,” Harry said, knowing that Lucius was really trying to gauge his magical core with his prodding.

Lucius nodded, showing he understood Harry had caught him, but he wasn't bothered. “I see. Yes, that must have been it.”

Draco took a hesitant step forward then and offered his own hand. Harry shook it without concern. They all moved into the family sitting room then and had drinks whilst waiting for dinner.

“So, did you get anything good for your birthday?” the blond asked, sitting with Harry near the large windows overlooking immaculate gardens. Harry had even caught sight of a white peacock roaming the grounds.
Harry nodded and explained his presents, once again thanking Draco for his gift.

“Your friends seem nice, like they really care,” Draco said, looking at Harry’s bracelet with a slight frown, making Harry think about Draco’s own friends. He had his two goons, Crabbe and Goyle, but Harry wasn’t sure if they were friends. In his later years he had hung around Zabini, Nott, and Parkinson a lot, but Harry couldn’t be sure who his actual friends were.

Realising this, Harry felt bad for the boy and nodded. “Yes, they’re actually pretty great. I never had real friends before I met them,” he admitted.

“They won’t mind me coming along tomorrow?” Draco asked.

“No. As long as you don’t call them names or spout off rubbish about them like Ronald does, then I can’t see them having any problems. I told them yesterday when I saw them that you would be joining us,” Harry said.

Draco snorted. “Like I could ever act like the weasel,” he said arrogantly.

Harry smiled. It seemed that without Harry there to be his rival, Draco had promoted Ron into that place. Soon enough an elf appeared - Harry was actually pleased to see it wasn't Dobby - and announced dinner was ready.

Chapter End Notes

I'm actually beginning to feel a bit better! Thank you all for the comments on home remedies! i used quite a few of them <3
I hope you're enjoying the story & continue to comment.
As always comments & kudos
Big thank you to my beta- misticalwrites
~ Annie
Fate really does like certain events.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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Dinner was as expected: fancy but delightful. The food all looked and tasted fantastic. Over dinner, the table was set out with Sirius and Lucius at either end and Harry and Remus together sitting opposite Narcissa and Draco.

The conversation over dinner was light, but Harry could sense Lucius wanted to ask some questions each time certain topics came up, such as Sirius’ trial and Dumbledore. Seeing how the blond was almost losing his composure with his need, Harry took pity on him.

“Dumbledore even had the gall to write to me today,” he said. Dessert was just being served, a lovely lemon meringue with vanilla ice-cream and dark chocolate sprinkles.

Lucius sent the boy a look. “Oh?” he queried.

“Yes. I didn’t think that with the custody battle approaching he would contact me, as it wouldn’t be proper. Yet, this morning he wrote and told me to consider visiting the muggles who raised me. I suppose he wants me to forgive their abuse,” Harry said.

Narcissa let out a slight gasp. Magical children were cherished and she had personally been devastated when she learnt she would be unable to conceive again after she had given birth to Draco. To her harming a child was the worst act.

“I see. So the papers haven’t been lying?” Lucius said, making Harry smirk slightly.

Ms. Skeeter had really been going to town on the job; there had been daily articles about Harry,
varying from his past home life to his time at Hogwarts and speculations about Dumbledore’s ability to teach. She had painted a truly amazing story and Harry was proud of the woman. Sure, it took blackmail and threats to create the relationship, but Harry could see it going far if she maintained this quality of work.

“Surprisingly for Ms. Skeeter, the articles are true,” Harry confirmed.

Draco startled. “Wait, so you really did live with abusive muggles?” he asked, shocked. Clearly the Malfoys had raised him to think muggles where beneath magical, not a notion Harry believed but one he would work on fixing.

Harry sighed. “Yes - my mother’s sister, dreadful woman. Dumbledore left me there without checking up on me after my parents died. She hated magic along with her husband and son,” Harry said, making sure to gain Lucius’ eye when he mentioned Dumbledore. “I don’t understand why I wasn’t given to distant family or even an orphanage, surley that would have been better. Not all muggles are awful, however my aunt- truly dreadful.”

“I see,” Lucius said, humming slightly. How the boy didn’t denounce all muggles shocked him, Lucius had been raised to hate and scorn them. “And you have applied for full custody Sirius?” he asked, drawing the other two men in. They had been silently listening and wondering why Harry would bring up this topic.

“I have. I hope to gain the status of both Harry’s muggle and magical guardian. He is, after all, my blood adopted son,” he said.

Narcissa felt her eyes widen as she shared a look with Lucius. “So it’s true, you’re the Heir to both the Black and Potter families.”

“Yes,” Harry said, seeing her eyes widen as she thought about the power he would one day wield.

It was amusing to Harry as she had no idea the power he could wield.

Looking around and seeing everybody had finished, Lucius snapped his fingers and stood. “Perhaps we should adorn to the parlour.”

~

The conversation continued in the parlour and Harry made it clear, although subtly, that he held no love for Dumbledore or his regime. Sirius had also mentioned the information about the raids and the possibility Grimmauld would be raided to them and Harry watched as Lucius stiffened. He hoped the man wouldn’t act irrationally about the diary. Hopefully, he would either hide it better or do as he did last time. Harry didn’t want anything happening to his soulmate’s horcruxes.

As they went to leave, Lucius placed a hand on his shoulder. “I really would love to talk to you more, Harrison,” he said quietly, not whispering but not drawing attention to them. He had spent the night observing the boy and found him utterly fascinating. His magic was intoxicating; it was Dark but pure at the same time.

“Tomorrow,” Harry whispered back, before he pulled away. He wondered why Lucius was so fascinated by him - perhaps it was his Dark mark? But then again Severus seemed to act normally around him…?

~

1st August 1992, Diagon Alley
The next day, Harry dressed quickly and practically dragged Sirius and Remus through the floo after they had breakfast. They had agreed to meet at ten am in the Leaky Cauldron, but Harry wanted to be early just in case.

Lucius and Draco arrived not long after them and Harry subtly probed the man, looking for any trace of Tom’s magic. The relief he felt when he encountered it was enormous: it seemed fate was actually looking out for him this time. It was probably trying to make up for all the crap he faced before, he mused.

Greeting them both, Harry noted that Lucius looked slightly tense and theorized that he was second guessing his decision to ditch the book.

“I shall meet up with you in Flourish and Blotts in one hour,” the man said. “I just have some business to attend to first.”

“That’s fine,” Remus said. “We appreciate you agreeing to stay around and help.” The wolf was trying, like Sirius, to give the other man a second chance, although he admittedly was having a slightly harder time of it.

Lucius nodded and walked away quickly, using his cane to subtly part the crowds. After his father left, Draco looked a little bit hesitant, so Harry drew him into a conversation. They spent the time guessing who would be Head Boy and Girl in the coming school year.

When Hannah and Susan arrived together, the blond boy was much calmer. Doing the introductions, although unnecessary, allowed Harry to break the ice.

“Han, Suse, you know my friend Draco Malfoy. Draco, you know Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot,” he said. The use of the word friend made the blond smile slightly before his mask fell into place.

Draco took both girls’ hands and kissed the air. “Ladies, it’s a pleasure to meet you,” he said.

Both girls shared a look before they smiled. “It’s nice to meet you too, Draco. Properly, that is - we saw you around school last year,” Hannah said.

Seeing them get along, Harry asked them their opinions on the Head Boy and Girl whilst they waited for Neville. Before long, Neville and his gran appeared, Augusta realizing early in this life that Neville needed a new wand. Harry wondered why she had noticed in this life and not his last, and theorised she had been paying more attention to Neville this time around with his new-found confidence and friends.

“We can take him, it’s no problem,” Remus said, getting Augusta to agree.

Now that they were all together, and Harry had once again done introductions between the two boys, they set off. Seeing the crowds, Sirius and Remus bemoaned their fate.

“It’s because of Gilderoy Lockhart,” Harry said, mainly to his friends who looked surprised. “He’s signing his latest book today.”

The girls let out squeals, whilst Harry and the boys shared looks of disgust. “Please, he's such a fake,” Draco spat.

“He’s amazing and such a dreamboat,” Susan gushed.

“And his smile, have you seen it?” Hannah added, them both sharing a dreamy sigh.
“I agree with Draco,” Neville said hesitantly looking at the blond, “he’s a load of rubbish.”

In this life Draco hadn’t targeted Neville, so their relationship wasn’t tarnished by bullying. Harry assumed it was his friendship with Neville but then again Malfoy hadn’t really antagonised anybody last year, excluding Ronald.

Harry laughed; if only they knew how true they were. “I like his books, they’re great fiction,” Harry said, making Draco smirk and the girls frown when they realised he was mocking the man.

Sirius and Remus, who had overheard, snorted. “He’s a right one, that man. I wouldn’t believe what he puts in those books,” Remus advised. He had read one of his earlier works and found it laughable.

“But he’s published so many books,” Hannah said.

“And he has so many awards,” Susan said.

“Just because you're famous and have awards doesn’t mean you're a good person or deserving of them,” Harry said, thinking about Dumbledore as well as the fraudulent peacock Gilderoy.

“Have you looked at our book lists this year?” Draco asked. “It’s full of his books. I bet it’s a silly young witch teaching us.”

Harry withheld his snort. “It’s ridiculous, we won’t learn anything,” he bemoaned.

Fighting through the crowds, they decided to get Neville’s wand first then head straight to Flourish and Blotts. By then, Lucius should be ready to meet them.

Neville entered the shop with Remus. The rest of them decided to wait outside to not overwhelm the boy as they all remembered how it felt to get their own wands.

When the blond boy came out twenty minutes later beaming and holding his wand with excitement, Harry felt a surge of pride. Although, it was probably misplaced. He was proud of the boy; Neville was coming out of his shell much earlier and he seemed to be so much more confident with himself.

“13 inches of cherry wood with unicorn hair,” he told them. Harry was surprised as many kept their wand specifics to themselves only telling those who they trusted.

“My wand has unicorn hair,” Draco said and Hannah agreed.

“Mine’s dragon heart string,” Susan said.

“Phoenix tail feather,” Harry said. He was still wary about giving up that information but then again he would have the elder wand one day.

“Why don’t we get going to get the books? From the looks of it the crowd has thickened,” Sirius said, looking and seeing how there was now a queue out of the door.

Harry hid his grimace when he thought of how Lockhart had used him as a photo opportunity last time and prayed the man left him alone. He would hex him this time.

Getting through the queue waiting for their books to be signed was difficult but eventually they managed. They split up and agreed to gather at the counter once they had collected all of their required texts. Harry was the first to arrive as his ability to part crowds worked well and he was unsurprised when Lucius appeared. Harry noted he was looking slightly tenser, so he reached out with his magic and felt the reason why, hoping he still had the book. Fate really did like certain
events, he mused when he felt Tom's soul piece.

“Harry, what are you doing with Death Eater scum?!” came the distinctive whine of Ron Weasley’s voice and Harry hid his smirk with a look of outrage.

Harry reflected for a moment on his relationship with Lucius, it was perhaps hypocritical of him, forgiving the man and his actions in his last life. He had tortured Harry, tried to kill him multiple times. Yet, unlike with the Weasleys and Hermione's betrayal his action Harry could almost understand. He believed in his cause, he thought he would be creating a better world. Sure, thinking about it still made Harry angry, but the sentiments behind his actions were true if not justified. The Weasleys, Hermione and Dumbledore however, their actions were the result of greed and envy. It also helped that Harry believed he could change the Malfoys, get them to realise their own prejudices and evolve. Harry wanted to create a better Wizarding World.

“Really, Weasley? I understand that you are obsessed with me, but insulting Lord Malfoy is in no way going to gain my attention. You should apologise and leave,” Harry said.

Realising there was a commotion with the youngest male of the family, the twins, Arthur, and Ginny turned.

“That’s Harry Potter! You're Harry Potter!” Ginny squeaked and Harry felt an almost uncontrollable urge to hex her. ‘Perhaps the basilisk would get hungry?’ Harry thought viciously. She was looking at him with a mixture of adoration and obsession, raking her eyes up and down him like he was a piece of meat and she had been starved for days.

“I am, and this is Lord Malfoy. A man I respect and the father of my friend. A man your brother and son has just insulted,” Harry said, looking at the girl he hated and her father.

Without the compulsions, Harry noted that yes, she was a rather pretty girl, but he had no attraction to her physically. She actually reminded him a bit of his mum, which made him blanche internally, as this girl was really a deceiving, gold digging whore.

Arthur looked torn and shot a glance at Ron before his eyes looked at Lucius’ cold mask. Draco appeared then and stepped up next to his father, his look of disgust mirroring Harry’s internal one as he looked at Ginny.

“I’m sure he didn’t mean any disrespect,” Arthur said eventually.

The twins, who had heard what Ron had said, didn’t say anything but just looked between the two groups before they took a silent step back. Their behavior made Harry wonder if he could pull them to his side. He had grown to love the boys when they had been at Hogwarts and the death of Fred still hurt him when he thought about it.

Lucius took the opportunity they created to take a step forward and reached into Ginny’s cauldron. Harry almost missed him slipping the small journal into it. Picking up an old secondhand book, he pulled it out and examined it. “Indeed, how can I expect you to discipline your child when you clearly cannot even provide for them?”

Arthur looked indignant and stepped forward. “I provide well enough for my family, thank you,” he said.

Harry sighed and placed himself between them, subtly reaching in taking the black journal while everybody was distracted. “I feel we’re getting off point and that nothing will be gained from this, so please, Mr. Weasley, Lucius, remember where you are,” he said.
Lucius looked at the boy and nodded. Stepping back, he placed a hand on both Harry’s and Draco’s shoulder. “Come along boys, I sure your friends are waiting, and I can see Sirius is growing concerned.”

Harry looked up then and saw that the rest of their party was hovering near them and Remus was clearly holding Sirius back.

“Look at you! Turning your back on everything your parents died for, running around with Death Eaters like Malfoy and Black. You’re a disgrace, Potter!” Ron shouted and the shop seemed to go silent. The reporters who Harry had barely noted seemed to suddenly still before exploding with action, quills scribbling quickly.

Harry turned then and barely kept his magic under wraps. “My parents died for me so that I could live. You will not ever mention them again or I swear—”

Harry was cut off when Molly Weasley appeared. “RONALD WEASLEY!” she bellowed. “How could you say such a thing? And to poor Harry! You were raised better!” she berated, the shop silently watching.

Harry spared the boy another cold look and felt eyes on him. Sirius was now being held back by Remus with both arms, and the man looked torn between joining Molly in her rant and just wanting to hold Harry. Neville, Draco, and the girls looked like they wanted to jump the redhead and beat him to death with their bare hands while Lucius was sneering with disgust.

“It’s fine Mrs. Weasley, Ronald was just saying what he really thinks,” Harry said dismissively. Harry watched as the redheaded woman flinched, probably at his cool tone.

Turning then, Harry ignored the whispers as he joined Sirius, placing a hand on his arm which Remus dropped once Harry was close.

Lucius spared the crowd a glance, daring them to speak up, before he joined them. “Quite an unpleasant little boy,” he said, once the volume of the shop had once again risen.

“Indeed,” Harry agreed.

“I thank you for coming to my defence,” he said, angling his head.

“It’s no bother, truly,” Harry said.

The rest of the kids still looked shocked by Ron’s behaviour. Draco turned to Neville. “I heard you like pranks. I will fund it if you get that low-class waste of magic every day for the first week of school,” he said.

Neville looked shocked and the girls laughed. “O-okay,” Neville agreed. “You can help me if you like - with the planning and stuff.”

Draco nodded. “I can do the planning. Nonetheless, a Malfoy knows not to do their own dirty work.”

Harry snorted at that. “Just as long at the victim knows who the message is from, correct?” he said.

Draco snorted slightly. “Of course,” he agreed smirking.

Neville sighed. “Harry, your inner Slytherin is showing again,” he joked.
The adults who had been listening laughed. Although, instead of amused, Harry noticed Lucius looked proud, probably about Draco and Harry’s comments.

As they paid for their books, Harry wasn’t surprised when the room silenced and a hand suddenly clamped down on his shoulder. He had felt the approaching magical signature and although he didn’t recognize it, he did have a strong suspicion who it was.

“My word, it’s Harry Potter,” came the overly cheerful voice of Gilderoy Lockhart. The hand on Harry’s shoulder squeezing slightly. “I thought I noticed you earlier in the centre of all that commotion. Playing up for the crowds, are we?”

Sending his companions an annoyed look, Harry pulled away from his grip. “Please refrain from touching me,” he said softly, taking a step back. “I don’t like it when strangers manhandle me.”

Gilderoy looked around and frowned when he saw the crowd was with Harry more so than himself. “Nonsense, Harry. Together we’ll make the frontpage,” he said, putting an arm around his shoulders and smiling to a camera.

Harry pulled way as the photographs were being taken. “I said let me go.” However, the words were lost as dozens of photographers flashes their cameras.

“When little Harry over here entered this shop to get his copy of my latest book, *Marauding with Monsters*, little did he realise he would not only get this copy signed, but a copy of all my published works, signed and free of charge,” Gilderoy said, preening in front of the camera like he had last time.

Harry scoffed. “Thank you, but I have already bought my books. Perhaps you should give them to somebody who really wants or needs them,” he said, the reporters hanging of his words and some even cooing slightly thinking about how generous he was.

After leaving the shop, the group wandered up and down Diagon Alley and bought the rest of their school supplies, stopping midday to have lunch and ice creams as a treat.

While sitting in Florean Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlour, Harry’s friends, now including Draco, asked about the upcoming trial, the adults discussing the same at their own table.

“I think Sirius will be fine,” Harry assured them, “he’s basically my dad because of the blood adoption and he’s shown this week how reliable he is as a guardian. His health has recovered dramatically and nobody in their right minds would ever send me back to the Dursleys.”

“My father said he’d help secure some of the Darker family votes who may have gone against you in spite,” Draco said.

“And my aunt has been to everybody you mentioned and asked for their evidence. She believes you have a strong case,” Susan confided.

“I’m not too worried,” Harry said. “My biggest concern is what Dumbledore will do next.”

His friends nodded in sympathy. They understood the headmaster had a slight obsession with Harry, but Draco looked confused. “What do you mean?” he asked.

“Well, he’s slightly obsessed with me. He was supposed to be my magical guardian but, before our sorting, I had never seen him. He abandoned me with the muggles and, well, last year he was just really weird. He kept dragging me up to his office and he would always be staring at me,” Harry said.
Draco pursed his lips. “My father always did say that Dumbledore was the worst thing to happen to Hogwarts.”

“I think I would have to agree,” Harry said, making Draco smirk lightly.

Eventually Harry’s friends had to return home, but Harry promised to write and visit when he could.

~

At their table the adults all sat down and sipped at their teas; not even Sirius had indulged in ice cream.

“You have everything prepared for the trial in two days?” Lucius asked.

Sirius took a sip and thought about the trial. “I believe so - I've been writing to Dodge and he believes I have a strong case. I trust his judgement and with the evidence against them, I have no doubts that, even if I don't gain custody, Harry will never return to his muggle relatives.”

“Is it true that young Harrison was the one who hired the famous Mr. Dodge?” Lucius asked. The few times he had needed law wizards he had used Mr. Dodge Sr., though he heard that the junior was just as, if not more so, successful.

“Yes, actually. When I first met him he said he had been hired to represent me in the light of new evidence. He kept the fact it was Harry hidden until the day of my trial; most likely to protect his identity. He serves Harry more than myself, really.”

“Harrison really is a remarkable boy. Not only to have survived and flourish with his relatives growing up, but to have the sense of mind to hire such accomplished law wizard. You should be proud.”

Remus spared Sirius a sly glance. “We are,” the wolf said. He was not completely comfortable being with Lucius as he still remembered duelling against him in the last war, however he was willing to keep his concerns buried as both Harry and Sirius seemed willing to forgive him. It helped that he didn’t smell any deceit or harm coming from the blond aristocrat; the second he did he would not be responsible for his actions. He had lost his pack once and he would not do so again.

“We have a meeting tomorrow with Dodge to go over everything that could be thrown at us, but I feel confident,” Sirius said.

Lucius nodded. “Good. And might I just say I also appreciate the time Harrison has taken to get to know Draco; I know my son and I feared the people he would associate with. Harrison is a wonderful friend for him, I will help in any way I can during the trial,” Lucius said, looking fondly at Draco and noticing that Harrison clearly held court amongst his friends. The boy was a natural leader, he noticeably took control and others followed without question. The boy, when he was older, could easily become somebody great. He would gladly help him now, for he knew the boy’s future would be boundless.

“Harry does seem to pick great friends,” Remus said, looking at the small group.

“Thank you,” Sirius said, acknowledging his fellow Lord’s offer of aid, before he continued, “I'm glad. From what I know about his past, he didn't have any friends or, well, anybody really, to confide in. His friends - including Draco - are important to him.”

“I know you said the newspaper reports were true last night, but perhaps you would be willing to share?” Lucius asked. He was quite curious about the boy. Harrison didn’t act like a typically abused
child, instead he was quietly confident. He walked with his head held high and a self-assurance that was remarkable for any twelve-year-old, let alone one who grew up like he had.

Sirius looked at Harry for a moment. He knew Harry said it was fine for the world to know, and Lucius would be voting in the custody trial as a Lord and member of the Wizengamot anyway, but he still had reservations. Deciding it would be okay, as long as he didn’t go into specifics, Sirius replied, “They would hurt him when he used magic growing up. You’ve probably noticed Harry is rather magical for a child and, well, whenever it came out accidently he would be punished for it. They also didn’t feed him properly.”

Lucius gave a small sneer. “And they wonder why we dislike muggles,” he muttered quietly but the two men heard.

After lunch, Harry and his friends decided to go and look at the animals. Harry questioned if he should out himself as a parselmouth - he doubted the duelling club incident would occur as they would be no Chamber of Secrets fiasco this year - but he wasn’t sure if he should risk it. However, if he outs himself then he would be able to control the way people perceived it - or so he hoped.

The girls instantly ran off towards the kneazle kittens and promptly started cooing. The boys followed as though reluctant, but Harry could see that both Neville and Draco found the small fluffy creatures adorable. Harry himself was not immune to their playful charm.

“When I was younger, I begged to have one,” Draco confided, looking at a pure black kitten, rare for a kneazle as they were usually orange or tabby toned. He summarised it may be a mixed breed.

“I was fonder of snakes myself, especially as I can speak to them,” Harry said and waited for the silence to fall. It did and it was almost comical - the adults also going silent as they had caught up just in time to hear Harry’s announcement. Sirius looked shocked, and had turned rather pale, reminding Harry he was afraid of snakes.

“You-you’re a parselmouth?” Neville asked bravely, squeaking that last word.

“Yes, I didn’t realise it was such a rare magical ability until recently. Did you know there hasn’t been a parselmouth in the Potter family since they were known as the Peverells?” Harry said, making sure it was known he had inherited the gift. He didn’t want Dumbledore spreading his drivel about the transfer of power or some such rubbish.

“The Potters are descended from the Peverell family?” Draco asked astonished. Every wizarding child knew the Tale of the Three Brothers. It was a classic that they all grew up listening to.

“Yes, the youngest brother Ignatus had a son, Titus, who had only one child: a daughter. She, Castella Peverell, married my ancestor Atticus Potter, bringing about the end of the family name Peverell, as it joined the Potter line,” Harry explained. He had looked up his family tree one day in the Black library as they had books on many families. He had found he was related to pretty much everybody he knew in some distant way - Neville had been right, all purebloods and most half-bloods really were related.

“It’s a very rare gift you possess, Harrison,” Lucius said, his shock finally settling. To hear this small boy possessed the same gift as his master was both surprising and not - it just made him more intrigued by the mystery that was Harrison James Potter-Black.

They fell silent until Susan bravely smiled at Harry. “Do they have much to say? Snakes, that is,” she asked, sounding genuinely curious; she also had a determined glint in her eye. Most likely her determination not to be afraid.
Harry smiled. “Some do. They’re rather like humans in the aspect that they’re all different; some have a lot to say whilst some don’t, some are rather nice and some are less so. I’ve not met many snakes to be honest, so I can’t give you great insight.”

“It would be fascinating, I suppose, to be able to understand them,” Hannah said. She also smiled at Harry in reassurance.

“Fascinating? It would be brilliant!” Draco said in a rare show of emotion.

“I’m glad you’re all talking this so well; I feared how people would react when they found out. I had read about how rare the gift was and how the last person known for possessing it was Voldemort.”

Lucius flinched slightly at the name, but didn’t say anything about Harry’s use of it. “A rare gift, indeed. I believe the line of Slytherin also married into the Peverell family at one stage. Perhaps that is how the gift was shared?”

“Perhaps,” Harry agreed. He knew that the Slytherin family ring was the ring famous for being a Deathly Hallow, so he assumed it had something to do with the middle brother.

“Do you want a snake?” Sirius asked bravely, hoping Harry would decline. He didn’t know why he feared them so much, but he had hated the animals since he was a boy. Their eyes and the feel of their flesh made his hair stand on end.

Harry considered saying yes just to see what Sirius would do, but eventually declined. “Thank you, but no, I’m okay. I fear Hedwig would react badly to me taking another pet.”

Eventually the day came to an end. After the pet shop, the group had finished their school shopping and each one had promised to write and meet up when they could.

~

Returning to Grimmauld Place, Harry told the men he would go and put his stuff away before dinner. He barely stopped himself from running upstairs with glee. Carefully pulling out a box lined with runes and heavily warded, Harry allowed his magic to surge, making the box open. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the book. All day Harry had been almost fanatically caressing the soul container with his magic. He was still wearing the locket; a notice-me-not charm and an anti-removal hex placed on the necklace just in case someone got too nosy.

Wearing the locket soothed something within Harry and, if he could have guaranteed the diary’s safety, he would have kept it on him. However, he didn’t want to risk Tom’s soul like that, so instead he had created a box that was practically indestructible. It would take an experienced team of curse and ward breakers to get into without Harry’s permission. Placing the diary inside, Harry caressed it one last time before resetting the charms and curses.

He had worked for a week on the box, looking up the spells in his own books then later in Black library books. The box masked even Harry’s ability to sense the soul piece, so Harry didn’t need to worry about if Grimmauld did get raided; the chances of anybody being interested in a box which gave off little magical signature was small.

Returning to the kitchen, Harry saw that Kreacher had make a light dinner for the three of them, having been told they would eat out for lunch. Tucking in, Harry realised he had yet to write to Severus about obtaining Remus’ Wolfsbane. He reminded himself that he would do so after dinner and left straight away to make sure he wouldn’t forget again once he was finished eating.

Entering the library, Harry settled into his own chair and summoned some parchment and ink.
Professor Snape,

You gave me leave to contact you if I required your assistance during the summer holidays. I'm sure you're aware, as I have no doubt you have been contacted, that you have realised what it is I have done to remain safe from my relatives.

I know from a reliable source that you hold no love for Sirius Black and I do not blame you for it. Yet, I hope you would consider meeting him again and trying to bury your past feelings. The man you knew is not the man I have come to know; he has changed and he really is a great guardian for me. I honestly feel like I have a family in Sirius.

However, I seem to have gone off track. I know that this is not the type of help you were offering me sir, but honestly, I didn’t know who else to ask. As you're probably aware, Mr. Black and myself have an acquaintance who suffers from a monthly lunar related condition.

As you know, getting a reliable source of Wolfsbane is difficult as many of the mainstream apothecaries sell diluted potions. If you could, I, along with Sirius and our acquaintance, would be immensely grateful if you were to brew us a monthly supply of the potion. The cost of ingredients and labour would be covered by Sirius.

I understand if you don’t feel able to do so and, if that is the case, I would be grateful for you to recommend a different source of the potion.

Gratefully,

Harrison J Potter

With the letter written, Harry went and found Hedwig who was fluffing her wings in Harry’s room on her perch.

“Hey there, beautiful girl. Would you mind taking this to Severus Snape for me?” he asked the snowy owl as he scratched behind her neck in a way she loved.

Hedwig took the letter and gave Harry an affectionate nip before she took flight. Since Harry had started to write to his friends near daily, he no longer felt like he was ignoring her and letting her sit idle.

With the letter written and everything prepared for the trial until tomorrow’s meeting with Dodge, Harry decided he would dedicate more time to his search of Tom’s cure. He had been going through all the Black family books that related to soul magic and had yet to find an answer, however, if asked, he would probably count as a master of the art with all he had learnt.

Looking through the shelves, Harry felt more than hear Sirius come in. The man sat in the chair closest to Harry;s and waited for Harry to return. Once Harry had found a book which looked promising - Core and Soul Magic Stretching - he returned and sat down. However, he didn’t pick up the book and immediately start to read. Instead, he placed it down by his chair. Harry could feel Sirius through their bond; ever since the day at the bank their godfather bond had subtly faded, so for Harry to feel his emotions and intents they had to be strong. The man really wanted to talk to Harry.
“I just want you to know that you can trust me, Harry. I know with your past you may find it hard to believe, but I really am in your corner. I will never judge you for anything, or any branch of magic you wish to study, but please - I've noticed the books you’ve been reading. Soul magic is dangerous. I trust you, I know you're a strong wizard, much stronger than you let be shown, but I want you to be careful,” he said. Sirius looked both desperate and defensive, like he expected Harry to lash out.

Harry sighed. “I know this answer won’t help ease your worry much, but I need you to trust me for just a bit longer. I do know what I'm doing, just please....” Harry trailed off, unsure how to answer.

Sirius sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. “I want to tell you a story. You know how I mentioned my cousin Bella and how we were never that close? Well, it’s because Bella loved the Dark arts - which is fine, there's nothing wrong with loving them,” Sirius quickly added, making sure Harry knew he didn’t care about dark magic. “But you see, although she was - is - a powerful witch, she experimented a lot with them. She did things when she was young, younger than you, that twisted her magic - her mind. She’s broken. I do trust you, Harry, but I would never forgive myself if I just sat back and watched you do something like Bella did to herself. The Dark arts are addictive, and for Dark witches and wizards - which, like me, and I suspect like you are - they make you feel powerful. I was too young to do anything about Bella, I didn’t understand, but I can do something about you. Now, I will not tell you or force you to stop, but I will say this: I need you to be careful. I can’t lose you, Harry.”

Harry sighed. He wanted to tell Sirius the truth now, but for some reason the words just wouldn’t come out.

Instead, he stood and hugged the man. “I promise Siri, you will not lose me.”

Sirius inhaled Harry’s scent deeply and kissed his head. “I had better not or I will find a necromancer and force you back,” he vowed.

Though Sirius was probably just exaggerating, Harry thought he heard a hint of truth.

~

After their chat, Sirius left Harry alone in the library with his books. With his concentration shot, Harry picked up the book and sighed. There wasn’t much in it that he hadn’t already learnt. It didn’t help that Tom had seemingly done the impossible and had created multiple horcruxes, making it hard for Harry to find any cases of something even barely similar happening. After another hour, Harry closed the book with a sigh. He was beginning to think that his conviction that the answer was somewhere in the library was wrong. Stretching, Harry felt restless and decided to blow off steam in the duelling room.

Entering, Harry was surprised to see Remus and Sirius engaged in a duel. With the full moon only a week away, Remus was slightly more aggressive than usual and Harry noted he tended to try and avoid confrontation as a personal rule a week before moons - when he could avoid it, that is. However, seeing the two men fight, Harry was impressed: Sirius had come far in his recovery. His form was not yet perfect, but it was a long way away from what it had been, and his magic was almost back to full strength.

Seeing them fight, Harry picked up on their styles: Sirius was looser in his form naturally, his agility making his movements hard to predict, whereas Remus was stiffer but his wolf gave him lightning reflexes. Sirius used unconventional methods when duelling, some of his spells being used to throw his opponents off such a prank spells and jinxing his surroundings, whereas Remus stuck to more traditional combat spells. Both were powerful, but Harry could see that it was Sirius who would most likely win. He seemed to come alive when duelling, the thrill making his magic hum excitedly.
Eventually Harry’s prediction came through when Sirius used a spell chain that included an icy floor jinx, resulting in Remus losing his balance and throwing off his defence.

Harry clapped when it was over and the two men looked over, surprised at their quiet audience.

“How long have you been there?” Remus asked, sounding slightly breathless.

“Since Sirius tried to curse your hair to grow ten feet,” Harry replied, making Sirius laugh.

“It’s a good distraction tactic when it hits,” the animagus defended, still chuckling.

Harry nodded. “I don’t doubt it,” Harry agreed. It was a good tactic to use as in a real fight - people don’t expect such diversity.

Sirius grinned and snapped his fingers to summon Kreacher. The elf appeared with a pop and glared before he saw Harry. “Little Master requires something?” he asked, ignoring the fact it was Sirius who summoned him.

Sirius glared while Remus chuckled under his breath. Harry, however, smiled at the elf. “Could you please bring up a pitcher of lemonade and three glasses?” he asked.

“Yes, Little Master, Kreacher will be doing as Little Master asks,” the elf said, disappearing with a quiet pop.

Sirius grumbled about demented elves, making Harry laugh. “It’s not funny! I swear, if it wasn’t for the fact that you so clearly like him, that elf would be gone,” Sirius whined.

“Then it’s a good thing he’s my friend,” Harry said, just as Kreacher popped back with their lemonade.

Hearing his Little Master defend him, Kreacher puffed up his chest with pride and poured the Little Master a glass, leaving the pitcher for the mutt and wolf to help themselves. The Little Master was such a good Master, just like Master Regulus had been, defending poor Kreacher.

After they had drunk their lemonade, Sirius asked if Harry wanted to duel. Harry considered it, but he knew he would only get frustrated in the end having to restrict himself. He needed to find a cure for Tom, as then he would feel comfortable coming clean.

Declining, Harry said he was actually feeling quite tired. As it was nearing nine, he would instead head to bed after having a bath.

Chapter End Notes

The next few chapter will most likely not be Beta'd... So updates may have a few mistakes.
Hope you're enjoying the story!
Comments & Kudos are always welcome.
~ Annie
Previously

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~

2<sup>nd</sup> August 1992

_The next day, Harry and the two men floo’d into Diagon Alley at noon for their meeting with Dodge. Each wore outer cloaks with hoods pulled up to try and remain inconspicuous in the busy summer crowds._

_Entering the bank, Harry walked ahead, leading the men to Ragnok’s office. Harry greeted each goblin with a nod as he passed them. The meeting was being held in Gringotts to ensure privacy and to keep the goblins, especially Ragnok, up to date._

_After knocking, Harry entered and saw that Dodge was already inside. Standing, the law wizard shook Harry’s hand first as he was technically his boss even though Sirius held more political power. After their greetings were done, they all took a seat._

_Ragnok looked over Harry and smiled. “It is good to see you, Harry,” the goblin said._

_“Likewise, my friend,” Harry responded._

_Ragnok turned to Sirius then. “You are looking better as well, Lord Black.”_  

_Sirius nodded. “Thank you, Chief Ragnok. My health has improved dramatically under the care of both the goblin healers and those at St. Mungo’s.”_  

_Dodge interrupted the good news, “That is good, Lord Black. Your strengthening health will reduce the opposition's case against you.”_  

_Sirius turned his head to better look at the lawyer. “I believe my medical records will show that,
although I'm am yet at full strength, I have increased to a level which is acceptable.”

“Good, good,” the lawyer said, appraising Sirius with his eyes.

“Have you any idea who Dumbledore has hired to go against you?” Harry asked. He didn’t know any law wizards or witches, really.

Dodge smiled slightly ferally. “Oh, yes. Her name is Miranda Jenkins; I believe she is the niece of Elphias Doge. Young girl, she has some potential but she is too firmly in Dumbledore's pocket to truly reach it.”

“She won’t be a problem, then?” Remus asked. He had spent the last few days worrying, especially about his influence on the trial.

“No, not for me,” Dodge assured.

“Good,” Harry said. He remembered Doge from his last life and how fiercely he had defended Dumbledore after he died. It didn’t surprise him that he followed the old man now.

“Now Harry, as for you, I've been in contact with Madam Bones. She’s allowed me to see the evidence of your abuse and let me tell you: this case, as far as I can see, should be a clear win. Your medical reports, as well as the correspondence from your family, shows their treatment and dismissal of you.”

Harry nodded. “Any other issues we should be aware of?”

“Well, Dumbledore has been seen stirring amongst some of the Light families, making his presence known. But, honestly? With the evidence I doubt any will go against you.”

“How he thinks he can win this, I will never know,” Sirius grumbled.

“He’s too assured of his own power. He has fooled this world for decades and amassed a following. He will not realise the masses have turned against him until it’s too late - if we’re lucky,” Harry said.

Dodge nodded. “He doesn’t seem to realise some of who he was trying to convince were already against him.”

“Hopefully his inability to see the truth and his arrogance will hold out,” Harry said.

“Another issue that Dumbledore has brought up is creature laws. There has been a bill proposed to strip known Dark magical creatures of their rights to dwell with wizards, including family. Although it does not have Dumbledore's name on it, it screams of his influence. It was proposed by Dolores Umbridge, the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, who has been seen in his company a fair bit more than usual recently,” Dodge said, eyes briefly going to Remus, who had stiffened.

Harry growled and forced his occlumency shields to hold back his magic. Thinking of the pink toad made him remember the pain she had caused him and the other students at Hogwarts. Not only did she use Dark artefacts to torture and maim them, she had tried to Crucio him! He had forgotten about her, but he vowed not to do so again—he would get his revenge. Her persecution of creatures and muggleborns had been ruthless and vindictive; she truly was a dreadful woman.

“The bill won’t pass,” Harry said with conviction. Even if he had to manipulate the Wizengamot himself, he wouldn’t let it pass.

“You think he’s trying to undermine my claim as Remus lives with us and was granted temporary
custody?” Sirius asked, his voice tight with anger.

“That you be my guess,” Dodge said. “It shouldn’t cause too much trouble as, like you said, Mr. Lupin has already been granted temporary custody and it is you who is going for full. Seeing how well you function as a family unit will also help as it shows Harry is settled and happy.”

“He’s a fool to go after Remus,” Harry spat out. “He’s alienating an entire race - and for what? To try and control me? He’s doing us a favour, really.”

Sirius looked at Harry in shock, trying to find his logic. “A favour?” he asked.

“He’s showing the world that he doesn’t care about creature rights; he’s showing his hand. Before now he has always preached goodwill and fairness and, even if his name isn’t on this bill, those who need to know will find out.”

“So his attack is a good thing?” Sirius asked.

“Yes and no. No, as if it goes through it’s bad in general, but I will do everything in my power to stop that from happening. Yes, as it shows the world Dumbledore isn’t as great and Light as he claims,” Harry said.

Remus, who hadn’t relaxed since the mentioning of the bill, nodded his head stiffly. “I will leave if I have to,” he said quietly.

Harry shook his head and Sirius moved to stand, however Remus stilled them by raising a hand. “I promised to always be there for you, Harry - and if that means I have to leave for a while so Sirius can gain custody, I will. But I will never truly abandon you. Yes, I may be gone from home, but I will still be around.”

Harry sighed. “It won’t come to that. The trial tomorrow will be fine.”

“There is also a large chance you will be called on to testify, Harry,” Dodge said.

“Me?” Harry asked. He thought you had to be informed before; hand-sign, papers, etc.

“Yes. I received word of it just before I arrived - I believe Dumbledore hopes that the pressure of a trial will make it easy to manipulate you.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Let him try. It could actually be a good thing; I can share my story in my own words.”

~

After talking through the details once again, the three of them left the bank. Harry had been thinking of the newest proposed creature bill and felt his magic flare behind his occlumency shields. He couldn’t let it pass. Slowly, an idea formed and he smirked darkly. Seeing the look on Harry’s face, Sirius leaned down and whispered into his ear.

“If I have to help you bury a body, I want a few days notice,” he said, joking but not.

Harry looked up and rolled his eyes. “Please, like I would need help with that,” he said.

Sirius grinned. “Yes, but an alibi is something I could provide.”

Remus, overhearing their conversation, snorted. They quickly reached the apparition point and Sirius, holding onto Harry, moved to apparate.
Returning home, Harry went straight upstairs and into the library, pulling out books on creature history, statistics, and old law books. After a few hours, Harry stood and stretched his back, hearing it pop in satisfaction. Pulling out a piece of parchment, Harry smirked as he wrote down all he had found out, before writing his letter.

~

Miss Skeeter,

I’m sure you’ve heard about the truly horrendous new creature bill proposed by Dolores Umbridge? It’s an atrocity, really. Not only is she relentlessly persecuting the victims of an unfortunate curse, but also their families and loved ones. Her relentless bigotry truly disgusts me.

I’m sure you, like I, feel this awful act cannot go on and that the public needs to know how truly biased and restricting the laws against Dark creatures are. You will have noticed a few extra pieces of parchment in this letter. They are notes I have made, all true and referenced.

You will find that the number of Dark creature attacks on wizards and muggles has increased only after restrictions were put in place. Before, when Dark creatures had more rights—the rights they should have—there were less than ten attacks a year, usually performed by rogues and outliers.

Much like I, I’m sure you will want to share this amazing discovery with the public and make it known to everybody.

Your friend,

Harry Potter

~

Sending Hedwig off with the letter, Harry wandlessly cast a tempus charm and quickly headed downstairs.

“I thought I would have to call for you,” Remus said. Harry had almost been later for dinner.

“I'm sorry, I was caught up writing a letter,” Harry said, sitting down just as dinner appeared on the table. Kreacher had made chicken in a creamy sauce and boiled potatoes.

“To your friends?” Sirius asked.

“No, actually. I was writing to Miss Skeeter about the creature bill,” Harry said nonchalantly. Remus choked on his bite of food and coughed slightly. “You're going to involve the press?” he asked.

“Well, you see, I decided to do some research. Did you know that the number of creature restrictions put in place directly correlates to the rising number of creature attacks? Before the restrictions came about 200 years ago, the number of creature related attacks were under ten per year,” Harry said, shocking the men.

“Wait, is this true?” Remus asked.

“Yes, I even referenced my findings. I thought Miss Skeeter would be interested in sharing them.”

“Pup, you’re a genius,” Sirius said, staring at Harry with wide eyes.
Harry blushed. “Well no, I’m somewhat impressive and surprisingly good at research - but a genius? Nah.”

Sirius laughed and Remus looked slightly choked up. “You have no idea how much this could help,” he said.

Harry reached over and placed his hand on the wolf’s. “I do and that’s why I did it.”

Grimmauld Place, 3rd August 1992

The next day was the trial and Harry seriously considered hexing both Sirius and Remus; their nervousness and panic was annoying.

“What if something goes wrong?” Sirius said, pacing with his hands in his hair.

Harry sighed and gave up. Flicking his wrist so his wand was in hand, he sent a petrifying curse at Sirius.

“Now listen to me, the trial will be fine. Nothing will go wrong,” Harry said. “Don’t you agree, Remus?”

Remus, who was watching, inched slightly away when Harry turned his irritated gaze on him. “Yes,” he said.

Flicking the countercurse at Sirius, Harry watched as the man became reanimated. “You know, petrifying curses are borderline Dark,” the animagus said.

Harry shrugged. “I didn’t want to knock you out, I wanted you aware,” Harry said.

“And what’s wrong with a normal Petrificus Totalus? You know, a simple freezing charm?” Sirius asked, shaking his arms a bit to get rid of the pins and needles the countercurse left behind.

Harry shrugged. “Would you believe I simply didn’t think of it?”

“But you thought of a rare, borderline Dark curse instead?” Sirius asked.

“Yup,” Harry said.

Sirius laughed. “Only you, pup,” he said, fondly looking at Harry.

The ministry, 3rd August 1992

Eventually it was time to leave. Going via floo, Remus left first, quickly followed by Harry and Sirius. Entering the main atrium of the ministry, the two men lead Harry to the wand check-in. Going through the same procedure as last time, Harry and Remus were handed passes for visitors. Sirius, as a Lord, didn’t need a pass as he was officially a member of the Wizengamot.

Going to the area where the courts were, Harry watched as Dodge skilfully weaved his way through the crowds to reach them.

“I’ve listened in on those around us and I can say we have 70% of the crowd already,” he said in lieu of a greeting.

Looking around, Harry saw some familiar faces. Lucius was standing with a crowd of his more
distinguished peers and seemed to be holding court. Catching his eye, Harry nodded his head in greeting.

“You're all prepared in case you're asked to give evidence?” Dodge asked.

“Yes,” Harry confirmed. He was more than prepared - he was even looking forward to it.

“Right, good. Follow me, then, I will lead you into the private entrance. As it’s you who is fighting for custody, you will be in the front box, not the main viewing area,” Dodge explained, leading them to a well-hidden door.

Feeling eyes on him, Harry looked up as he was about to enter and caught Dumbledore's periwinkle blue eyes boring into him. He could feel the pressure of the old man’s legilimency and knew the wizard was trying to plant something. Frustrated, Harry casually raised a hand to his head, making sure his Heir ring was on show.

He barely managed to contain his smirk when he saw Dumbledore’s eyes flash with anger as he realised he wouldn’t be able to plant suggestions that way.

Taking his seat behind Sirius, Harry looked around and saw the members of the Wizengamot had started to trail in. Lucius was sitting with men who Harry recognized as past Death Eaters and Dark sympathisers. As if sensing his gaze, Lucius looked up and caught Harry’s eyes, emerald and silver clashing. The subtle nod the blond gave told Harry he had been successful in swaying their votes.

Harry also noted that, when Dumbledore took his seat, he too was in the front - however, he stood on the opposing side to Harry. The elderly man was glaring at Sirius and Remus with disgust, and Harry could practically feel the hatred pouring off him. His magic, which practically rolled off of him in angry waves, was screaming his bad mood. Feeling his magic, Harry barely withheld his snicker.

Eventually the room grew quiet as an elderly man Harry didn’t know stood and took the seat of the overseer. He was around 70 looking, with a neatly trimmed beard and a face marred with laugh lines.

“I, Lord Marcus Trilby, do hereby call this session of the Wizengamot to order,” he spoke, his voice easily above the residual noise.

Harry had never heard of the Lord, so he couldn’t guess which side of the fence he sat on.

“Today’s session has been called by Lord Sirius Black 3rd, on the issue of guardianship for Heir Harrison Potter-Black. Heir Potter-Black’s current guardians have filed to retain their claims - therefore, a vote shall be called at the end to ascertain the outcome.”

Again, the crowd who didn’t know the reason behind the trial started to whisper, before Lord Trilby called them to order.

“Mr. Dodge, as you are representing Lord Black, why don’t you give your opening statements,” Trilby said.

Edgar stood, his robes flaring in a way that reminded Harry of Snape. “Ladies and gentlemen, today I come before you to ask you to see reason. My client, who is actually Heir Potter-Black, is a boy who desperately wants and deserves a family. He has withstood trials we could hardly begin to imagine and now asks for you to grant him his wish: to be returned to his rightful guardian, his blood adopted father, Lord Black.”

Harry was impressed with Edgar’s approach. He saw how a few, particularly the women, seemed to soften as he spoke. The mention of the blood adoption also stirred the purebloods as it was an old
magic ritual - to ignore it would be to ignore all the bonds of family, something no pureblood did lightly.

“Thank you, Mr. Dodge, now for the opposition Chief Warlock I believe you have retired your chosen council and have decided to represent yourself and the boys Muggle family who didn’t chose to come,” Trilby said to Dumbledore. There was no scorn in his voice, but Harry got a feeling that this man was either not fond of Dumbledore or was firmly on Harry’s side.

Dumbledore stood and walked slowly forward. “Yes, thank you, Marcus.” Lord Trilby didn’t react noticeably to the dismissal of his title, but Harry saw his eyes flash momentarily.

“Ladies and gentlemen. As you know, I have dedicated my life to helping our community and have spent countless years helping to mould the minds of our young - many of you yourselves are my former students. Therefore, I implore you to see reason: Harry is best left with his muggle family. They are, after all, his last true blood family.”

Harry actually had to pinch himself to distract him from the urge to laugh aloud. The old man was a fool.

Trilby, however, nodded. “Very well. Mr. Dodge, if you would like to plead your case.”

“To start, I would like it noted that, although Heir Potter may share blood with the muggles that raised him through his mother Lily Potter nee Evans, they are in no way, shape, or form his family. Those despicable human beings are the worst possible guardians for a child, magical or otherwise.”

Dodge paused then to let his words sink in.

“I will ask now that the voting members of the Wizengamot to please consider the files provided. You will find Healers’ reports and evidence of not only their gross negligence, but violent physical and verbal abuse.”

Harry saw the files appear to the members and watched as their faces changed; even the Death Eater squad looked disgusted.

“As you can see, by the time Harry reached Diagon Alley at the age of eleven, he had suffered from 31 broken bones, none of which received proper medical treatment or care. His body had scaring all over, most heavily on his arms and back, the patterns corresponding with raising his arms in defence and being whipped with what appears to be a muggle belt. There was no sign of Heir Potter-Black having ever received medical treatment.”

Dodge once again paused. During his speech, Sirius had stilled and lost all colour; Harry could see his magic was coiled and actually lashing out towards Dumbledore. Placing a calming hand on the animagus’ knee, Harry tried to soothe him. It wouldn’t do well for Sirius to attack the man now and appear to be an unsuitable, or rather unstable, guardian.

“Not only this, Heir Potter was severely malnourished and underweight. His health and growth were stunted by his poor conditions. These findings made by Healer Jordan Theon are also supported by Hogwarts’ own matron Poppy Pomfrey, as well as Potions Master and Professor Severus Snape - both of whom helped Heir Potter-Black throughout his school year to recover from the damage caused by his relatives.”

The final statement had Dumbledore stilling, his anger almost tangible.

“Therefore, I ask you this: Do you really think muggles who would do this to a child, a member of their own family, are really the best guardians for Heir Potter-Black?”
Dodge finished his segment and sat, giving Trilby a nod showing he was done for now.

Dumbledore practically flew from his seat and stalked to the centre of the room, barely managing to calm his voice as he spoke. “I will admit the medical records do look damaging, but who here hasn’t experienced a little rough and tumble playing whilst growing up? To blame all of these injuries on Mr. Potter’s relatives surely isn’t fair, many boys will have a few scrapes from rough housing. I myself had a few growing up with my brother.”

Harry actually let his incredulousness show. Rough housing? Rough and tumble? The coot was delusional.

“To take the boy from his only family would be a mistake. Harry needs to grow up in a place where he is treated normally, to grow up where he can hide away from his fame, to have a retreat.”

Harry clenched his hands into fists before he realised his nails were starting to cut into his skin. How dare he?

Dumbledore was staring intently at the crowd, looking both genial and humble, his periwinkle eyes twinkling behind his half-moon glasses. Harry saw as some of the crowd started to be swayed and he wondered just how many people Dumbledore had manipulated in his time. Remus and Sirius sure, but what about the rest…?

Seeing how some in the crowd looked like they agree with the old coot, Harry had to start going through all the exercises he’d read about to keep his magic locked and stop it from lashing out.

Dodge, however, didn’t look ruffled at all and calmly passed Dumbledore as he re-took the floor.

“What Professor Dumbledore fails to see is that, family or not, the Dursleys are not only abusive but negligent and dismissive of Heir Potter-Black. They didn’t and don’t want to be his guardians in the first place and, according to them and in their own words, he was ‘forced on them’.”

A copy of the letter Flitwick received at Christmas appeared and Harry saw as the crowd read and, in some cases, re-read the note.

“You can clearly see that the Dursley family holds no concern or care for Heir Potter-Black,” Dodge said once the majority of the crowd was finished.

“Growing up, Heir Potter-Black was subjected to physical, verbal, and mental abuse for things which, in a normal, happy, and healthy family, would have been celebrated. His accidental magic was met with physical violence and stretches of starvation. Something which we all hold sacred and celebrate resulted in him having broken bones.”

Dodge waved his hand and Harry saw that his medical file was once again out, this time with Healers’ notes attached, the notes holding their speculations on the age and cause of the injuries. There was also a note from Severus which Harry recognised, his elegant scrawl explaining how the Apollo’s Tears ointment was obscure and only used for old wounds which were never given adequate medical attention.

Seeing this, Harry smirked internally but made sure to keep his outward appearance scared and reluctant. He wanted to appear like an unsure child. Having Severus in his corner would be a great aid as the man was both Dark and Light. Sure, his love for Harry’s mother could be problematic with Tom, well, Voldemort killing her, but if Harry was willing to work through it, he was sure Severus could. His skills and power would be a great aid to the Dark.

“Even non-magical achievements were met with violence. Heir Potter-Black was told to hold himself back academically and was physically beaten whenever he achieved good results in his academics.
He was forced to act as a mindless muggle as his so-called family didn’t want him to out-perform their own son, who is the same age. Yes, these muggles also have a child; a child who, from investigation, is not only rude, abusive, and mentally uninspired, but who also took part in the violence against Heir Potter-Black.”

The crowd looked shocked again and Harry internally applauded. He could see Dumbledore vibrating again, his face puckered like he ate a sour lemon as more and more evidence was shown.

“This is just the tip of the iceberg. How Heir Potter-Black survived and came out of that home as a well-mannered and magically gifted child is a miracle on the scale of Merlin. To force him back would not only be a shame, but a crime.”

Dodge finished his speech by looking around the room, his blue-grey eyes boring into the crowd.

Dumbledore once again took the stage and Harry saw the maniacal gleam in his eyes. A feeling of dread entered his stomach but he refused to show it.

“I will admit that perhaps I was hasty in trying to reunite Harry with his family. I just find it so sad to separate them after eleven years of love. But clearly, Harry believes it for the best or else he wouldn’t have produced such evidence.”

The insinuation was clear, even a dead man would have heard it: Dumbledore was trying to convey that the evidence was fake. Silently growling, Harry had to place a hand on Sirius, who was straining to stand and launch himself at the brightly coloured manipulator. Sending his godfather a discreet look, Harry shook his head.

“However, if Harry isn’t to be reunited with his family, then perhaps we should consider sending him to a family already known for their love and devotion to child rearing. As his magical guardian, I do feel that if Harry is not to return to the Dursleys, then he would be best off with a family I have known well for many years: the Weasleys.”

The crowd was clearly split at this announcement; the Light families and those loyal to Dumbledore seemed happy with this while the Dark looked murderous. Harry noted that Lucius looked slightly green at the idea - hell, Harry himself was disturbed by it. If he was for some reason sent there, he knew he wouldn’t be responsible for his actions. Eventual guilt aside, he would murder the traitorous redheads, he didn’t care if he would suffer afterwards.

“Many of you know the family and I feel that if you will not consider sending Harry home to his true family, then the next best option would be to send him to them. I have spoken briefly with them and Mrs. Molly Weasley nee Prewett would be delighted to have Harry. I would have taken the boy in myself if I felt I would have adequate time for him, but with the combination of all my responsibilities I feel I must not. Truly, the next best option after his own family would be the Weasleys.”

By the time he was done speaking, Harry considered letting Sirius loose just to see him beat the old man to death. His godfather, no, he was more his father now with the adoption bond, was shaking with rage. Harry couldn’t believe the gall of the man.

“The fact that Harry has been placed with a recently released criminal and a werewolf, a Dark and dangerous creature, is shocking. Harry needs to be with a Light family, a family who shares his views and the views of his late parents. The Weasleys are the best form of this. I'm sure that together they would achieve and grow to love each other very much. After all, although not his true family, they would be great substitute.”
Finishing on this, Harry saw how the crowd was reeling, stuck on the word werewolf. He hated the prejudice and the corruption of the ministry.

Dodge once again stood, this time sending Dumbledore a dark look that was hidden from the crowd.

“I do not understand why Professor Dumbledore is insisting on mentioning family so much. Perhaps he wishes to sway you to see the Dursleys as Heir Potter-Black’s only blood? I do not know. However, as it is family he so clearly wants to speak about, let us speak about Heir Potter-Black’s family. Many of you have probably read the papers this week, so it is no surprise to you to see Heir Potter-Black here today, escorted by his godfather Lord Sirius Black - a Lord, who might I remind you, was wrongly imprisoned and is innocent of the charges laid against him. However, I digress. It was not publicised that Lord Black is more than Heir Potter-Black’s godfather: Lord Black magically and blood adopted Heir Potter-Black as a baby with the permission of both the late Lord and Lady Potter. Meaning that magically and biologically, Heir Potter-Black is Lord Black’s son and heir.”

Harry saw the second Dumbledore realised his bindings had been broken and watched in satisfaction as his magic flared with anger and indignation. His body seemed to clench and his eyes narrowed. The crowd, however, exploded; blood adoptions were not common as they were irreversible and fully binding. Therefore, they were considered almost sacred - some of the wizarding world respected them more as it resulted in the adoptee having inherited magic from multiple parents. In this case, Harry had both the Potter and Black family magic as well as his mother’s muggleborn magic.

Harry had to close his eyes to hide his bliss as he heard their shouts.

“Why is there even a trial? The boy belongs with his father!”

“Preposterous! The boy is a Black as much as he is a Potter!”

“A blood adoption, why, I never knew!”

“Explains why the boy practically drips with power - a Potter and a Black!”

Eventually Lord Trilby regained order, having to bang his gavel a few times and use the sonorous spell.

“Continue Mr. Dodge, unless you’re finished,” Trilby said, once the room had quieted down.

Dodge nodded his head respectfully in thanks before he turned back to the crowd. “Clearly, many of you understand the implications of this. However, let me also add, that even without this bond, Lord Black would have been the best possible guardian. He and Heir Potter-Black share a relationship that is beautiful to watch - the love between them is pure. They are helping each other to heal and together they have regained the family they lost. In the short time I have had to observe them together, it is clear to me and anybody who watches that they are a great family unit.

“I know some will have their doubts about the stability of Lord Black after ten years of the dementors’ effects, so please now read the provided document. As you can see, Lord Black has regained much of his previous magical ability and his mental health is nearly perfect, a feat many would not be able to claim after such a small amount of time. Yes, there is still room for improvement but I am confident, as are the four Healers who have been asked to provide evidence, that Lord Black is not only magically but mentally fit to be Heir Potter-Black’s guardian.”

Harry placed his hand in Sirius’, then gave it a squeeze, hoping some of the less-than-convinced would notice this and would be swayed. He did also want to provide his support.

“And to address the issue brought up by Professor Dumbledore: Mr. Remus Lupin, who was a close
friend of the late Lord and Lady Potter, does indeed suffer from the lycanthropy. However, this medical condition, or rather curse, does not in any way impede his ability to provide a support system to Heir Potter-Black. Mr. Lupin suffers for one night a month; he proposes very little harm to both Heir Potter-Black or Lord Black. Even with his condition, Mr. Lupin was granted temporary custody over Heir Potter-Black. Together, all three form a family and, though it may be slightly irregular, it is full of love and encouraging of Heir Potter-Black’s development - magically, physically, and emotionally. He has been there for Heir Potter-Black ever since he found him again.”

Harry was proud of how Dodge portrayed Remus and slipped his hand into the wolf’s. He hated having to defend Remus against the stigma attached to being a werewolf. Dodge, however, wasn’t done. Harry saw how he turned to Lord Trilby and inclined his head before he turned to face Dumbledore.

“I do, however, have an issue I would like brought forward. I ask you this, Albus Dumbledore: you question the ability of Lord Black and Mr. Lupin in raising Harry, in Lord Black’s capability in being his guardian. Yet, where were you when he was being beaten? Where were you when he was being starved? When his very magic was the only thing keeping him alive? Where were you when he was growing up? You had a duty of care to Heir Potter-Black, a duty you have failed to meet as his magical guardian.”

The silence that fell then was deafening. Harry could hear his very heart beating.

Dumbledore looked shocked, his mouth was actually gaping open slightly and his eyes had lost their sparkle. Realising that every eye was on him he seemed to puff up and slowly stood.

Dodge wasn’t done, however. “Remember Professor, your words and testimony must be true or else Magic shall damn you where you stand.”

With that final blow, Dodge sat and turned his attention to the old man now shaking in his rage.

“Never have I been so insulted,” Dumbledore began, his voice sounding distraught and frail. If Harry didn’t know how manipulative he was, he would have brought the act, mistaking the shakes for sadness instead of anger.

“I have dedicated my life to this world, our world. I have experienced and witnessed many great and many awful things. Yet, never have I had my honour held to such ransom. I am the boy’s magical guardian, yes, but surely you didn’t expect me to be there throughout his childhood? I have responsibilities to this world. I am the Headmaster of Hogwarts, the Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, and the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot. I don’t have time to raise a child on a day to day basis, but I have always had the greater good in mind. Harry will become a fine Light wizard like his father. He will be a great man, exactly what the world needs.”

Harry, hearing this phrase, barely contained his anger. He saw how Dumbledore’s words caused a divide: the Neutral and Darker families picking up on the fact Dumbledore was admitting to not having Harry’s interests in mind, whereas the Lighter families seemed to fall for the hidden truths.

“I have not failed in my guardianship, not yet. Therefore, I should remain the boy’s guardian. I am entrusted with this world’s children on a daily basis, so I ask: is there really anybody better for having such an important role?”

Dumbledore looked proud of himself by the time he was finished and Harry actually wanted to clap; even some of the Light families were looking less convinced.

Dodge kept his stoic mask, making Harry wonder if he was related to Snape. The law wizard stood
and walked forward.

“There you have it,” he said. “Professor Dumbledore has admitted it: he cares for the greater good, yes. But this is not about the greater good, this is about a young boy - Heir Potter-Black. A boy who has already given up so much. He deserves a chance to be with his family, to be happy, loved, and supported. He deserves a chance to be himself.”

Dodge stopped then and looked at the audience before he motioned with his hand towards Harry, who was sitting with a hand on both Remus and Sirius.

“I understand some of your reservations, but I ask you this: look at them. You can see the love, the care, the support. Lord Black truly is the best option for Heir Potter-Black’s guardian. Do you really think separating them now, after Heir Potter-Black is finally settled and happy, would be the best option for him?”

Dumbledore stood then and the attention once again fell to the Headmaster. The old man looked ancient, his anger cooling to disdain. He didn’t step forward or speak, so Trilby called the attention back to himself.

“Both sides have given their evidence and suggestions and both have had a chance to defend their words. Given all we have heard, we the Wizengamot will vote,” Trilby said.

Unlike with Sirius’ trial, the result wasn't instantaneous. Although the voting members were blurred, Harry could see the figures of them moving, clearly impassioned by their own arguments.

After around 20 minutes, the spell disillusioning them faded and Trilby slowly retook his seat.

Once seated he spoke, using the sonorous charm so his voice filled the entire room, “We have between ourselves reexamined all of the evidence, we have read and reread the witness statements, and we have finally reached a verdict.”

“Lord Black, you have been granted full custody, both muggle and magical, of your son and heir Harrison James Potter-Black. However, this does come with some conditions. For the next six months you will continue to seek the care of Healers to ensure you have fully recovered your health. You will also have two surprise visits from the Department of Children’s Protection to ensure that Heir Potter-Black really does benefit from living with you.”

Harry let out a breath he hadn't even realised he had been holding. The conditions were fair - the check-ups would be annoying, but he could live with them.

“Furthermore, Albus Dumbledore, there are many here today who wanted you stripped of your titles and charged for criminal child endangerment and neglect. However, you seem to have support still. Therefore, you shall not be charged but instead fined 10,000 galleons to be paid to Heir Potter-Black. This fine is to remind you that no matter what titles you hold, the charge of being a magical child’s guardian is the greatest honour a person can have. It is an honour you have wasted and disgraced.”

Harry barely held in his glee - this was getting better and better. Dumbledore looked so shocked Harry feared he was having a fit or a stroke; his face had gone slack and his eyes were dull.

~

Albus couldn’t believe what he was hearing. How had it come to this? The brat was supposed to be malleable, to be a clone of his useless father, a perfect soldier for the Light, ready to do his bidding and die.
How had his carefully laid plans failed? Clearly some of his magical blocks had come unbound, but surely some still held? He didn't feel an overwhelming power from the child and he doubted he was skilled enough to mask his magic at the age of twelve.

How the trial had gone so wrong he would never know. And Sirius—how dare he be freed! Albus had worked so hard to ensure he was locked away. Getting him sent straight to Azkaban without a trial hadn't been easy and it had taken a lot of skill to hide the fact for a decade. How Harry had found out he didn't know and he wanted to. Being in the dark wasn't right - he needed answers! The boy was destroying years of work, turing his own people against him; even Severus, a man he had depended on hating Harry, was supporting the brat!

He would have to work harder next year to regain his influence on the boy. Perhaps he would benefit from having a younger female friend? Ronald had failed miserably but Ginevra, she had potential. Yes, she would be perfect….

Chapter End Notes

Big thank you to my Beta reader miisticalwrites!
The next few updates may take slightly longer as I'm super busy for the next two weeks, but they will appear eventually.
Hope you're enjoying the story!
As always comments and kudos are welcomed.
~ Annie
Previously

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4th August 1992

After the trial yesterday, the three of them had returned to Grimmauld Place happy with the result. Sirius even asked Kreacher to make a cake in celebration of the result, which the house-elf did, albeit reluctantly.

“You know this is only a temporary victory, right? He won’t stop,” Harry warned the two men, who were happily toasting to the result.

Sirius sighed and sat down. “I know, but I want to celebrate this little victory. We have some breathing room for now - he’s officially locked out of your accounts and he has no power over you other than being your Headmaster.”

Harry nodded. He was reluctant to celebrate yet as he knew how tricky the man could be. He would have contingency plans, Harry would bet his magic on it. Eventually leaving the men to their alcohol, he made his way upstairs.

~

With the custody trial over with, the only thing left to do was attend Pettigrew’s trial, which was scheduled for tomorrow. However, Sirius was reluctant to go, let alone allow Harry to attend.

“But don’t you want to see justice being done?” Harry asked. He wanted to watch Peter be sent down. He had plans for that rat which involved Pettigrew’s lips and those of a starving dementor.

“Yes, but Harry, I don’t want you there! That spineless coward is the reason your parents are gone. He's the one who betrayed them,” Sirius explained, sounding both angry and sad.

“I understand that - that’s why I want to go!” Harry said. Well, it was that and the residual hatred from the Peter he knew in his other life.

Sirius stared at Harry intently, his grey eyes scanning the boy. Harry looked so intent, his emerald eyes hard with determination. “You really want to go?” he asked, his voice resigned. He didn’t want to go and see that traitor. He didn’t want to waste another minute on him. It was because of him that he had lost a decade of his life, that Harry had grown up unloved, that James and Lily were dead. He
was done giving that rat time and attention.

“Yes,” Harry stated.

Sirius sighed. Rubbing the back of his neck, he sat down opposite Harry. “If it means that much to you, we can go,” he said eventually.

Harry let out a breath. He didn’t know why Sirius was so against going to his trial but he wanted to watch as the rat went down. “Thank you,” he said, relieved.

As he had the day free, Harry eventually returned to his search for answers. However, as he stood to leave the kitchen, his attention was drawn to the window, where a large black owl was perched. Flicking his wand, Harry let the owl enter and watched as it swooped in and landed next to him, its large dark eyes staring intently at him.

Reaching out, Harry quickly ran through a few detection spells before he picked up the letter, ignoring the package for now. After all, he hadn't survived the last war by taking unnecessary risks. Picking it up, he instantly recognised the handwriting. Flicking his wand to summon a few owl treats, Harry went to pet the bird who moved subtly away for him, obviously taking after his owner in his dislike for physical contact.

~

Mr. Potter,

I must say that I am wary to congratulate you on your ingenuity in avoiding your family. However, I am pleased you are well and trust you will remain so, even if your current company is less than ideal.

You will find enclosed a few doses of the Wolfsbane potion; extra was provided to be taken at the user’s discretion. I shall provide this potion annually, however this in no way means I am willing to, as you say, ‘get to know’ your new caregivers. As for the price, an invoice is in the box. Have the newly named Lord Black sign it and our business will be concluded.

Once again, my offer for aid stands if you ever find yourself in need contact me.

Severus T. Snape

Potions Master

~

Smiling by the time he was finished reading, Harry passed the note to Remus while he investigated the potions Snape had sent. Looking at the vials, Harry could tell the potion was of the highest quality from the colour and consistency. He was sure that, if he took off the vial’s lid, he would be hit with the pungent smell of the potion’s namesake.

“I wasn't sure he would help,” the wolf admitted after reading the note and passing it to Sirius, who had been reading over his shoulder with difficulty.

“I had faith in him,” Harry said. The younger wizard was looking at the invoice as well and saw that Snape hadn't even over charged Sirius like Harry had feared he would - he wouldn’t put it past the man to hold onto his grudge and act childish. However, Harry was proud to see that Snape had charged them fairly, if even a little less than the standard rate.
Remus smiled at Harry’s words and picked up a vial of the potion he needed. Examining it, he sighed when he saw the high quality. “Thank you,” he told the green-eyed child.

Harry smiled and offered Remus a shrug. “I didn’t do anything. If you want to thank anybody, thank Professor Snape.”

Remus held back his cringe at the thought of writing to Severus. He doubted the man would even read the note before burning it. “I will, but I also wanted to thank you. It’s because of you that all of this has happened—we’re here together because of you.” Harry smiled at the lanky man.

Sirius, who had reread the letter twice, smiled at the words, distracting him from his annoyance towards Snape. Since the charms had been lifted, he found a lot of his emotions and feelings towards people were mixed up; things he had been certain about, people he had hated, no longer lined up to his true feelings and he was at a loss.

“Moony is right, Prongslet, you’re really, very good at bringing people together,” Sirius said.

Harry smiled. “Here’s the invoice - it’s actually a little less than I expected,” Harry admitted.

Sirius took a look at it. Although he wasn't sure what the price should be, he believed Harry when he said it was less than the usual.

~

After the potions delivery, Harry continued with his plan. However an idea struck him and he wandered up to the third floor.

Clearing his throat in front of an empty frame, Harry called out cautiously, “Headmaster Black?”

Standing for almost a minute, Harry thought he had failed when suddenly Phineas Black appeared in his portrait.

The painting looked at Harry and blinked in surprise. “You summoned me, Harrison?” he asked.

“Yes, I thought you may be able to help me with something,” Harry said.

“Oh? What is it?” the painting asked, interested in the young boy in front of him. As a painting he couldn’t feel magic any longer, but he could still recognise a powerful wizard when he saw one and oh, this boy. He was powerful and he had barely scratched the surface of his own potential.

“I want to know more about Soul magic,” Harry said bluntly.

Phineas let himself gape before he laughed. “No, no you don’t,” he said after his chuckles died down. “I understand the pull of Dark magic, but that is a branch which will do you no good.”

Harry sighed. “I know that, that’s why I want to learn more. I have—” he cut himself off before pulling out his wand. He went through the motions of putting up a privacy and secrecy ward around himself and the painting, as well as a detection ward to warn him if Sirius or Remus approached.

Phineas watched in fascination as the boy wordlessly threw up wards some adults would have struggled with. He felt the secrecy charm take effect on him and wondered what the boy was about to tell him.

“I have a soulmate,” Harry admitted. “A soul mate who dabbled in Soul magic, horcruxes, and is now scattered.”
Phineas let out a laugh when he realised who this soulmate was. He had been around for a long time and, as a Black, he had made the acquaintance of the Dark Lord.

Harry sighed as the painting started to laugh. “It’s not funny,” he grumbled.

Phineas finally settled down. “Oh, but it is. It’s brilliant! Tom tried to destroy his own soulmate. I tried to warn that boy, but did he listen? No! He was the Dark Lord, surely he knew best!”

Harry sighed again. “Gloating doesn’t help me, Professor.”

Phineas gave another snort. “Oh I know, but this is just too good.”

“So? Do you have any ideas on how I can help him?” he asked.

Phineas went silent then, his face contorting as he thought. “This branch of magic is one of the least studied because of the dangers - your Tom is the perfect example of what can go wrong,” he said.

Harry nodded; he knew all of this.

“However, I do have an idea. In the library, go to the family archives. There should be a book written by my seven greats-grandfather Corvus Black. I believe he had a friend who attempted something similar and, when he realised what he was giving up, attempted to reverse it. I read the book in my youth, but the details are beyond me.”

Harry felt a surge go through him at the idea of finding what he needed. He would be able to save Tom.

“Thank you,” he told the painting solemnly.

Phineas smirked. He knew that he was familiar with this boy, but he couldn’t pinpoint it.

~

After dispelling the wards, Harry ran to the library. The family archives were something he never really looked at; he just hadn’t thought to look there. Reaching the old part of the library, Harry scanned for anything written by Corvus Black until his eyes fell on a book that looked like it had once been black but had faded to grey. Picking up the ancient text, Harry reverently stroked the cover. This book had the potential to save Tom.

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Turning, Harry sat in his chair and started to read. How long he sat there he didn’t know, however he was finally draw out when Sirius physically shook him.

“Harry, you need to come down and have dinner. Kreacher said you didn’t even react when he brought your lunch up,” the animagus told him.

Harry blinked and looked around, seeing how night had fallen. Next to him sat a plate of sandwiches and a pot of tea, now turned cold.

“Oh,” he said, distracted by the knowledge he had gained.

Sirius sighed when he saw he had only part of Harry’s attention.

“I know I promised not to ban you but, Harry, this isn’t healthy,” he said.

Harry narrowed his eyes and barely resisted hissing in anger. “I’m fine, it’s just that I’ve found what I’ve been looking for,” he said, and he had. He had the answer; well, half of the answer, but the other
half was sitting in his hands.

His magic was practically singing with excitement - he could have his soulmate back!

Sirius looked at the worn book in Harry's hands, but he didn’t recognise it. Then again, he had never really spent much time in here growing up and, if not for Harry, he wouldn’t have been in here since his release.

“You’ve found what you’ve been searching for?” he asked.

“Partly, but I know this book contains the answers,” Harry admitted.

“I see. So, I take it you won’t be joining us for dinner?” he asked, resigned to the fact that Harry would not be leaving the library until he had his answers.

Harry sent his godfather a sad smile. “I know you're worried, but please, trust me for just a little while longer,” Harry said.

“I would trust you with my life, pup,” Sirius replied.

~

With the last page read, Harry put the book down and felt a surge go through him. He had done it, he had found the answer.

Flicking his wrist, Harry erected the strongest wards he knew around the library before calling out, “Death.”

Sitting, Harry hoped the entity would come; he remembered Death’s words about not always answering, but he wanted to speak to a being who knew for certain if the ritual would work. Eventually Harry saw the shadows grow before Death appeared.

“Master,” Death greeted, His unnerving voice filling the entire room. “I see you have found the answers you seek.”

“I have. This ritual, will it work?” Harry asked, indicating to the book.

“Yes, it will work,” Death confirmed.

Harry felt a weight lift from him - he had feared that Tom’s damage would be too great.

“So if I gather all of his horcruxes then Tom will become whole? He’ll be sane?” Harry asked.

“The more you gather, the more whole he will be,” Death said.

Harry thought about this and an idea hit him. “So, let’s say I kept one back, the one inside of me. Would Tom be sane?” he asked.

Death was silent for a moment before His rattling voice filled the room, “I abhor this magic, but for you Master, I will allow it as insurance. Your Tom will be sane with one horcrux inside of you.”

Harry thought of the ritual and what it would require. He would have to give up a horcrux on each of the Pagan holidays, the ritual needing the walls between magic and the earth to be at the lowest. Depending on how many horcruxes a person made would depend on how long it took to restore them; only one horcrux could be used per ritual per holiday as the magic involved was Olde and set by Lady Magic herself.
Thinking about when the next date would fall, Harry realised he would now need to inform Sirius and Remus about - well, everything. His past, who he was, and what he was trying to do. He would be back at Hogwarts for the first two ritual nights and he needed them to be the ones who would perform the ritual.

Mabon, otherwise known as the Autumnal Equinox, fell on the 24th of September that year. Harry would be at Hogwarts and, although he didn’t doubt he could perform the ritual, he didn’t want to risk doing such a major piece of ritualist magic so close to Dumbledore. However, thinking about it, Harry considered starting the process on Samhain anyway, therefore he would be home for the final ritual. He thought it would be best if he was present when Tom was restored as he was his soulmate.

The Samhain ritual, otherwise known as Halloween, would also occur whilst he would be in Hogwarts. However, if the process started, then it would finish by the time Harry was home for the summer before third year. Luckily, he would be present for the Yule ritual as that was the students’ Christmas break, but not Imbolc, most commonly known as Groundhog Day.

With a quick calculation, Harry realised he would also be present for the Ostara ritual as it would fall during his Easter break. He would miss the final Beltane ritual as that was May Day, however the Midsummer ritual, which would be the final one as Harry was only giving up six pieces, he would be home for.

Knowing that he had finally done it, that he had found a way to restore Tom, left Harry feeling elated.

“Thank you,” he told Death.

“I have done nothing Master, it has been all your own work,” the immortal being told Harry.

~

After Death once again left, Harry cast a quick tempus charm and saw it was nearly ten. Dispelling his wards, Harry summoned Kreacher.

The elf appeared with a pop and looked at Harry eagerly. “What does the Little Master require? Is it food? He didn’t eat the food Kreacher brought for lunch or dinner, such a bad elf Kreacher is, not providing for his Master! Will have to punish himself,” Kreacher ranted to himself.

“No Kreacher, don’t punish yourself, I am fine. I do, however, need you to go and get Remus and Sirius. Please tell them to meet me here, I have things I need to tell them,” Harry instructed.

Kreacher bowed and popped away, grumbling about dirty mutts.

Rolling his eyes, Harry waved his hand and reheated the tea, pouring himself a cup as he waited. Remus was the first to arrive and took a seat opposite Harry, Sirius quickly joining them.

Pouring them both tea, Harry looked up at the faces of the two men he honestly admired and loved like family.

“I know you’ve noticed I’m not exactly your average twelve-year-old,” Harry said.

Sirius and Remus exchanged a glance before Sirius placed his tea down. “Well, I’ve noticed a few things,” he said.

Harry smiled. “I have to tell you a story and I would like it if you listened without interrupting. I know it will be hard and that you will have 1001 questions, but save them for the end,” Harry
instructed.

Remus shot Sirius a glance before he nodded.

“Okay,” they both agreed.

Harry began at the beginning and spoke about his original life: how he grew up, how Hagrid came, becoming a Gryffindor and all his adventures—the stone, the basilisk, Sirius' escape, the Tri-Wizard Tournament and Voldemort’s return, the second war, Sirius’ death. He spoke of the final battle - all of it, though he did hold back some details. He didn’t tell Remus he had been married or about Teddy as there was a chance he would meet and fall in love with Tonks again.

Once that was done, Harry stopped. He had reached him finding out about the truth, but he wanted the two men to digest all he had said. At some point during the story one of the men must have summoned some alcohol as they were now nursing teacups full of firewhiskey. Sirius looked white and Remus was devastated.

“You're not finished yet, are you?” Sirius asked. He believed Harry, he had to. It all made sense but it didn’t explain how or why Harry was here now.

Remus also believed Harry. The story was completely farfetched but Harry’s scent had held true - he hadn't told a lie. And his eyes, eyes which had always looked too old, spoke the truth.

Harry smiled sadly and continued his tale, speaking about the goblins, the charms, and the betrayals. Telling them about the betrayal by the Weasleys and Hermione, by Dumbledore above all, had Sirius and Remus both standing and pacing. Remus was growling slightly as Moony strained to come free; it really was too close to the full moon.

Harry finally reached the part he had been dreading.

“I understand you're angry but please, both of you, I need you to understand. Dumbledore - he’s been manipulating and twisting things for years, decades....” This was true but Harry wasn't actually sure if Dumbledore had had anything to do with Tom and his insanity.

“I also discovered something else when I did my inheritance test,” Harry said. “I have a soulmate.”

The two men sat down heavily and stared at the boy in shock and wonder. Soulmates were rare and beautiful things - celebrated and cherished as being blessed by Magic herself.

“Who Harry?” Sirius asked.

Harry winced. “I need you to promise to try and understand,” he warned.

The two men shared a look. “We promise,” they said.

“His name is Tom Marvolo Riddle, but you know him by another,” Harry said, before raising his hand so the words spelt out and then reorganised into ‘I am Lord Voldemort’.

Remus felt the blood rush from his face and feared he would pass out while Sirius felt like he had crashed into an alternate reality.

Harry sat still, watching them absorb this information. “I refuse to bind myself to Voldemort, but Tom—Tom is not him. He did something to himself when he was younger, a few somethings that changed him. They warped his ideals and his plan and he became a monster.”
“But Harry - he's Voldemort!” Sirius exclaimed.

“He's also my soulmate. Do you know what that means?” Harry asked.

Remus, who had yet to speak, did understand. “You need him to stay alive,” he said. He remembered reading the old legends and books - had even found the notion of them to be beautiful.

Sirius shut up then, but he continued to whine. “Yes,” Harry said, nodding to Remus.

“But-but - he killed your parents! James and Lily!” Sirius said.

“I know,” Harry whispered sadly. “And I will never forget that, but Tom is not to blame. That was Voldemort.”

“But Tom is Voldemort!” Sirius said, frustrated.

Harry sighed. “I know, but I have to try. I have to bring him back - bring him back sane. I don’t have a choice. Without him, I'm dead.”

Sirius stopped then as he realised what an impossible situation Harry was in. He would not allow his pup to die, but bringing back Voldemort?

“This is why I waited to tell you,” Harry said. “I've found a way to bring Tom back.”

“That's what you were searching for in the Soul magic books?” Sirius asked.

Remus turned to Sirius, shocked. “You knew Harry was looking into Soul magic? And you did nothing?” the wolf asked.

Sirius rubbed the back of his neck. “I trusted him.”

“But—” Remus was cut off by Harry.

“I know I look like a child, but I still have my adult mind, Remy. I knew what I was doing. I was careful,” Harry said.

“So what is this solution?” Remus asked warily. Soul magic was not something he would dabble in, even for Harry. He knew he didn’t have the power to control such a branch of magic.

“There's a ritual, but it's Olde magic. For each horcrux Tom made the ritual needs to be performed on a night of an Olde holiday,” Harry said.

Sirius felt his eyes widen at the admission of horcrux, while Remus was unsure of the term. It was familiar, but he could recall where he had heard it.

“He created a horcrux—wait. He created *multiple* horcruxes?” Sirius asked in shock. One was bad enough but to create more? It was no wonder Voldemort went insane.

“He has multiple. We will be doing the ritual six times,” Harry said, careful with how he phrased it as he didn’t want them to know he was a horcrux or that he was intending on remaining one as a safeguard.

“What is this ritual?” Remus asked.

Harry went on to explain the ritual and all it would involve. It wasn't necessarily a Dark ritual, but it did use and require blood *willingly* given - and as an Olde magic ritual, it was usually frowned upon
by the Light. Olde magic was a branch of magic that, in the last few decades, had been declared Dark.

Sirius took a deep breath. He had remained silent during Harry’s explanation as he worked his way through his thoughts. He would do anything for Harry, even restore the Dark Lord.

“I will help you,” the animagus vowed.

Remus agreed when another thing hit him. “Harry, you’ve not told us how it is that you’re here,” he pointed out.

Harry thought back and realised he hadn’t, so he continued his tale until he reached the part about the Hallows.

“You know the Tale of the Three Brothers?” he asked, before launching into his story and why he had brought up the child’s fairytale.

Sirius sat gaping by the time the tale was told. “D-Death?” he said.

Harry shrugged, “Pretty much.”

Remus frowned. “You could have gone back and saved your parents?” he asked, however it sounded more like a statement. He didn’t understand why Harry would pick a time where they died.

Harry frowned and thought back to what Death had told him. “Not really. I merged with my younger body and going back to a time I didn’t exist created too many reality paradoxes. I could have gone back to when they were alive, but I wouldn’t have been able to save them; I would have been trapped in the body of a baby, unable to talk or control my magic. Yes, I have the magical abilities of an adult, but I am limited by my physical body,” Harry tried to explain.

Sirius nodded his head in understanding while Remus frowned in thought.

Sirius, however, soon got a look of consideration on his face. “Wait, how old are you?” he asked.

“Physically I'm twelve, but mentally I'm 19. I was 18 when I chose to come back,” Harry said.

Sirius grinned. “This explains so much,” he said, thinking about all the small things he’d noticed about the boy.

5th August 1992, Ministry courtroom 2

“Do I really have to come with you?” Sirius whined as they entered the courtroom. He understood why Harry was so against the rat now, but he still didn’t want to be here. It didn’t help that he now knew who Harry was and all he had been through; he didn’t feel as needed anymore.

Harry rolled his eyes at his guardian and tugged at his hand. “Yes, because to the rest of the world I'm a sweet, innocent twelve-year-old who needs parental guardianship, also known as you,” he said.

Sirius scoffed. “Even before I knew about you know what, I wouldn’t have believed that,” he joked.

Harry smirked. “Well, you’re a special case then.”

Looking around, Harry noticed Lucius was once again present and wondered if the man had a real job - he always seemed to be at the ministry. He remembered the Malfoys owned a chain of apothecaries, but surely their vast fortune had other areas of interest.
Approaching the blond aristocrat, Harry nodded his head slightly.

Sirius, seeing who Harry had acknowledged, held out his hand. “Lucius,” he said in greeting.

Lucius wasn't surprised to see the duo and looked at the pair. Since his release, Sirius had come on leaps and bounds and appeared to be once again healthy. Looking at him, you wouldn’t guess he had spent a decade in the worst wizarding prison in the UK and possibly the world.

Harrison, however, was the real eye drawer. The pre-teen held about him a grace and poise that Lucius didn’t even think he was aware of. He screamed power but when feeling for his magic, he gave off so little - that level of control was deceptive as usually a person doesn’t learn to mask their power until much older. For a child to do so made Lucius wonder just how powerful the boy was.

“Sirius, Harrison, I trust all is well,” he said in greeting.

Harry smirked and nodded. “As well as can be on a day such as this,” Harry said.

Lucius inclined his head. “Indeed,” he said.

~

The trial itself held very little interest for Harry. Both he and Sirius knew all the facts that would be revealed - Harry from his last life and Sirius from being there and hearing Harry’s tale. The only point of interest was Dumbledore, who stood up and asked for leniency, stating fear was a great motivator. At that point, Harry actually had to bite his tongue to stop the curse from coming out. He had never actually performed the killing curse, but at that moment he knew with certainty he would have gotten it on his first try. He sat staring with his Avada Kedavra green eyes, glaring into the back of the old man who had literally ruined his first life.

Sirius, who was doing the same, was soon drawn away from his anger when he felt Harry’s magic react. Looking at the boy, he couldn't help but gape when he saw Harry practically glowing, his magic reacting to his anger. It was his eyes, however, that shocked Sirius the most: those green eyes were swirling, every shade of green and what even looked like black twisting.

“Harry, calm down,” Sirius said, throwing up a privacy ward.

Harry, however, was lost in his anger. Seeing this, Sirius did the best thing he could think of - he cast a water jet spell at Harry’s face before closing his eyes and hoping the boy didn’t kill him by accident.

Harry reacted immediately, turning his attention to the supposed threat. However, seeing Sirius, his mind caught up to him and he was able to regain control his power, forcing it behind his occlumency walls.

After a few moments, Sirius opened his eyes to see Harry sitting normally, the ethereal glow from his skin gone and the magic he had been humming with remasked.

“I'm okay now,” Harry said, his voice soft.

Sirius ran a hand through his hair. “Well, if I ever had any doubts about your story, they’re certainly gone now,” he joked.

Harry looked up and smiled, though it was a sad, little thing. “I want him dead, for everything he's done to me, to us, to everybody. The lives he's ruined and manipulated,” he whispered.
Sirius let out a breath. “I know, pup, and I will stand by you. Hell, I will even cast the curse if you need me to,” he vowed.

After a few more minutes, the pair regained their composure and Sirius felt safe to dispel the ward. Turning their attention back to the trial, neither noticed a pair of eyes staring at them in both shock and awe.

Chapter End Notes

Big thank you to my Beta Miisticalwrites.
Hope you’re enjoying the story!
The next update won’t be until Wednesday Probably, I have too much going on.
Comments & kudos,
~ Annie
Four out of five

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

6th August 1992, Grimmauld Place, London

After Harry’s outburst, Sirius had been distracted through the entire trial. He had only half heartedly listened as Peter - the snivelling rat - was sentenced to five years in Azkaban after which he would be given the Kiss.

Harry, however, had paid attention with a look of rapture; he wanted the rat to pay. He was the most pathetic excuse for a wizard Harry knew, a spineless coward who stood for nothing and would sell his own mother if he thought it would keep him alive. Five years and then the Kiss was lenient in Harry’s mind—the rat deserved a much harsher treatment.

~

As it was the first day of his summer that he didn’t have anything he needed to do, Harry wandered the house aimlessly. He had never had a chance to do nothing - in his past life, he was always either with the Dursleys being worked worse than a house-elf or with the Weasleys, recovering and constantly being harried. The rest of his time was spent at school trying not to fail his classes while putting up with Voldemort’s yearly schemes. Then, to top it all off, he had been on the run for ten months, living like a vagabond, constantly worried he would either die from exposure to the elements, of being cursed to death, or from going insane. However, the point being was that he had always had something to do and now he honestly felt slightly awkward. He had freed Sirius, found his cure for Tom, and even gotten Peter punished, but he was honestly feeling slightly lost.

With a sigh of frustration he turned and went to the library, a thought finally crossing his mind and giving him a purpose. He still didn’t have all of the horcruxes and, thinking about it, was Nagini even a horcrux yet?

Harry thought about it and realised Voldemort had used the death of Bertha Jorkins to create the horcrux with his familiar, therefore he actually only had six horcruxes: the locket, the diary, the ring,
the diadem, the goblet, and Harry himself.

With this in mind, Harry thought about the ritual. He wanted to be there for the final ritual as that would force Tom to appear and he wanted to be there to calm his soulmate and explain what he had done - hopefully Tom would understand. According to the log in Corvus Black’s book, the ritual worked quite suddenly, meaning Tom would not feel his soul rejoin until the last part was performed on the final holiday - the final ritual used a different incantation to bring all the soul pieces together and force them to reenter the person. This also meant that Harry would be able to perform the final ritual without returning all of Tom’s soul, keeping himself as a horcrux as long as he performed the ritual five times and used the final wording on the 5th.

Thinking about Tom’s horcruxes made Harry realise he had yet to tell Sirius and Remus about where they are. He was hoping, with Sirius being Lord Black, that he would be able to enter the LeStrange Vault; although not technically legal, Harry hoped his friendship with the goblins would ease the way. However, Harry did understand that it would be difficult for Ragnok - the reputation of Gringotts was infallible and if it ever got out they allowed somebody to just enter another’s Vault, the ramifications would be immense.

Getting the ring would also be difficult and Harry felt that it should be him who goes after it just to be on the safe side. The curse should not affect him and, if it did, then he wouldn’t die being the Master of Death.

The diadem would be the easiest to recover hopefully; it was just sitting, waiting in the Room of Requirement. Harry could recover it just before coming home for the Yule break and then they could start the ritual. If they performed the first ritual on Yule, they would finish on Midsummer and Harry would be present for Tom’s resurrection.

The realisation that he only had a year to wait for his soulmate’s return made Harry giddy. He had worked so hard for this.

~

Persuading Remus and Sirius was the only thing standing in Harry's way to getting another horcrux.

“The persuasions on the ring are deadly,” Harry told them. He’d asked Kreacher to gather the men together; he wanted to tell them about the horcruxes and his plans for the ritual.

Remus frowned. “Precisely why we need to come with you,” he told the small preteen. Even knowing all he did, he was still having difficulty seeing Harry as an adult, somebody who didn’t need constant care.

Harry sighed. “I know I look like a child, Remus, but I have fought and won a war. It’s safer for me to go and get the ring as I will most likely not be overwhelmed by the compulsions. I already know they’re there and, if for some reason I am overwhelmed, I can’t die.”

Sirius frowned. He hated the reminder of all Harry had been through and his blunt way of speaking about it didn’t help - but, then again, he also hated the idea of Harry going alone. “Let me come with you. Not into the shack to get the ring but to Little Hangleton.” That way he would be able to help if something did go wrong.

Harry tilted his head as he considered it. “Okay, but promise me you won’t follow me in. I don’t want anything happening to you.”

“I promise.”
Meanwhile

Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire

Lucius sat in his office and considered all he knew about the mystery that was Harrison James Potter-Black. The boy was truly an enigma; how he managed to keep such power contained and hidden he would never know. It had been pure chance that he had looked up and seen Harrison’s magical outburst before Sirius had shielded them. Had he not, he would have never realised the power the small and delicate looking boy could wield.

Thinking back, Lucius recalled how Harrison’s emerald eyes had actually glowed, illuminated by his power, and how his hair had been stirred by the magic currents he had been giving off. Such a display should have been impossible for a child. Lucius had wondered when Harrison had admitted to masking some of his magic, but he had never thought it would be such a shocking amount. The boy was truly impressive. Lucius hadn’t felt power like that since the glory days of the Dark and even then his Lord’s power was tinged with weakness, brought on by his own insanity.

How anybody could believe that Harrison was the saviour of the Light he wouldn’t know; even from a distance Lucius had recognised the Darkness in his magic. The boy had the makings of a Dark Lord.

He would have to watch him, be there for him. Lucius was suddenly very grateful to his son. When he had first read Draco’s letters, he had been torn—his son had expressed a desire to befriend the Boy-Who-Lived, a boy who Lucius had assumed incorrectly would be a Light pawn. Now, instead, his son was friends with a great potential ally.

~

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Scotland

Albus paced his office as he waited for Severus to join him. How dare his spy give evidence to support that little brat! The man is supposed to hate him, hate him for being the child of his school bully, of living when Lily died!

“Stupid child, ruining my plans,” Albus muttered to himself, not noticing how one portrait in particular was actually paying attention.

Hearing his wards beep, letting him know Severus was on his way up, Albus quickly gripped his wand and straightened out his office. It wouldn’t do for Severus to see how out of place everything was.

Sitting behind his desk, Albus carefully constructed his facial expression right before Severus strode inside.

“Severus, my dear boy, thank you for joining me,” he said, before holding out a bag of familiar yellow candies. “Lemon drop?”

Severus sneered at the offered sweet and took a seat. “You asked to see me, Headmaster?” he said more than asked in his usual drawl. He suspected it was because the old coot had found out about his involvement in the Potter boy’s life.

“Yes, yes, if you’re quite sure,” Albus said, putting the sweets down but not before putting one in his mouth. “I’ve just come from Harry Potter’s custody trial.”
Severus allowed an eyebrow to rise. “Oh?” he inquired.

“Yes, I'm surprised you yourself were not there, considering the evidence you gave. Evidence which, might I just say, not only allowed for myself to be removed as Harry's magical guardian, but also weakens your own status as a spy for when the Dark Lord returns.”

Severus withheld a sneer—how dare Albus blame him. He had helped the boy, his best friend’s only child, to escape from his abusive family and to be reunited with people he loved and would look after him - albeit people Severus hated.

“I gave records of my actions. I'm surprised you felt the need to challenge the court; surely the boy is better off with the mutt and monster then where he was. However, had I known of your involvement, I would have warned you,” Severus lied, he had known and kept silent.

He didn’t know what the old man had planned, but he doubted he would like it. Albus was far too interested in the boy and his actions so far - nevermind what he had planned never had been in Harry's interest. He had lied about him and his life growing up and it seemed that he wanted Harry to continue living in an abusive home. Severus couldn’t work out his reasoning yet, but he would be damned if he let this old fool harm Lily’s child anymore.

Albus, thankfully ignorant to Severus’ thoughts, was relieved - at least Severus was still in his pocket. He had feared he had lost the man when he heard he had given evidence to support Harry.

“Yes, I wished to remain Harry's guardian. Your evidence, however, made it look like the boy was abused. Sure, he may have had a firm hand growing up, but all young boys need that,” Albus said. He needed Snape - he knew Tom would be back, he had made sure of it.

The words made Severus want to lash out; his own father had been an abusive drunk and the fact Albus was making light of it and making excuses sickened him. “Indeed,” he said.

“You will have to be careful this coming year, last year you were almost nice to the boy. If this continues when the Dark Lord returns you will be unable to rejoin him.”

“I shall have to try and rectify the situation.”

“Indeed, my dear boy - I would hate for you to be in danger. It really shouldn’t be so hard; I'm surprised, really. I mean, Harry really is just like James was as a child.”

Severus was thankful for his mastery of occlumency—how the old man could say such a thing with a straight face he didn’t know. If it wasn’t for the fact he knew Lily would never cheat on her husband, Severus wouldn’t have been surprised if Harry had been somebody else’s son with how opposite he was from a young James Potter. James had been arrogant, cruel, a bully while Harry was quiet, soft spoken, intelligent.

“If the Dark Lord returns I’m sure I shall be able to regain any position.”

“Good man,” Dumbledore said, eyes twinkling. Now he just had to find a way to get Filius and Poppy on his side. His plans for Harry would be so much simpler if he was in Gryffindor….

**August 9th 1992, Gaunt Shack, Little Hangleton**

Harry apparated himself and Sirius to Little Hangleton, as the animagus had never been before and was therefore unable to apparate. It was a novel experience for Harry as he had not apparated in over a year as being a child had made it next to impossible to get away with. Landing, Harry closed his eyes and took a breath. Although he hated magical transport, he preferred to be the one in control as
it didn’t leave him feeling quite nauseous.

“It’s weird seeing you do magic like that so easily. You look like a kid,” Sirius said after straightening himself.

Harry shrugged. “It’s weird being in such a young body, but I’ve got used to it.” Looking around, Harry spotted the path which lead to the rundown shack and made his way towards it.

“So you’ve still got all you powers from when you were an adult?”

“Yes, however I’m still limited in what I can do. I’ve been working my magical stamina but still, this body is that of a child’s. I find I tire more easily than that of my adult body. It also doesn’t help that when I'm at school I have to revert to only using age appropriate magic, so any progress I make while at home is usually null and void,” Harry said.

“There’s nowhere you can practice?” Sirius asked, just as the shack came into view.

“I've got a few places that I will check out this year,” Harry said, thinking about the Room of Requirement and even the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry stopped when they reached the shack. “Stay outside,” he said, turning to Sirius and making sure he saw how serious he was.

Sirius nodded. “I will, but if you need me, call me,” he said.

Harry nodded his understanding and entered the shack. He could practically taste the malicious magic in the air. The whole place vibrated with it. Remembering what he had been shown by Dumbledore, Harry approached the kitchen where he knew the ring was - underneath the floorboards. Walking slowly with all of his senses open, Harry could feel the magic reaching out to him; however, when it reached him, it seemed to stop. Scanning him, it seemed to recognise Tom’s soul in him and the locket. Tensing as the magic continued to push against him, Harry was about to push back when the magic suddenly retreated.

Letting out a breath, Harry crouched down and loosened the floorboards. Seeing the ring, Harry didn’t have the compulsion to put it on. Instead, he levitated it and placed it into a small velvet bag he had brought for this purpose. Tucking the ring away ,Harry let out a breath. He had done it.

“Congratulations Master, you’ve regained one of my Hallows,” said a deep voice, causing Harry to spin.

Standing, well, more like floating, behind him was Death.

Harry took a second to get his heart rate back under control and sent Death a glare. “Are you trying to kill me?” he asked the entity.

Death chuckled, the sounds coming out scratchy. “You are unable to die, Master, so no. I do not have any plans to kill you.”

“Well, that's something I suppose,” Harry grumbled sarcastically.

“You have done well,” Death said, “now all you need is the wand.”

“Like that will be easy. Did you forget who’s got the wand? I doubt Dumbles is going to happily hand it over to me.”
“The wand will know its true Master. You will be surprised at how well it knows. I shall be going now,” Death said before He slowly disappeared without even waiting for Harry to speak.

“Well that wasn’t cryptic at all,” Harry muttered under his breath as he made his way back to Sirius.

~

Sirius had been pacing outside and it was only through his sheer force of will that he hadn’t gone after Harry. 100 different scenarios passed through his head as he paced: what if something had gone wrong? Shouldn’t Harry be finished by now?

Seeing Sirius pacing, Harry felt bad; he knew both he and Remus worried, but honestly there was no need.

“Sirius, stop, you’re going to wear a hole through to China,” Harry joked, gaining Sirius’s attention. Hearing Harry's voice, Sirius spun and looked him up and down, searching for any damage or injury.

Seeing this, Harry huffed, “I’m fine Siri, and I’ve got the ring.”

Sirius let out a breath. Although he still had his reservations about the resurrection, he would always stand by Harry.

“That’s good,” he said. “Do you want to go to Gringotts now?”

Harry considered it and nodded. “Please.”

Sirius had been shocked when Harry had told him the location of the goblet horcrux, but then again Bella always was very devoted to the Dark Lord.

Apparating to the alley, Harry and Sirius made their way to the bank. Harry had missed seeing his friend and had only spoken to him through owl in the last week.

Entering the bank, Sirius followed Harry as he made his way through the back passages, no longer shocked by the respect shown to his godson. Seeing Harry stop and wait to enter the office he recognised as Ragnok’s, Sirius hoped the goblin would be able to help.

~

9th August 1992, Gringotts Bank, London Branch

Entering Ragnok’s office once he was called, Harry was happy to see his old friend.

“Ragnok,” he greeted, taking a seat.

“Harrison. Lord Black,” the goblin chief said in return.

“I trust business is well,” Harry said.

Ragnok smiled toothily. “Our gold continues to increase,” he said.

“Excellent,” Harry said.

Ragnok looked at him then and decided to forgo anymore pleasantries. “Although I do enjoy your presence Harrison, I would rather you tell me what it is that has brought you here. Our business with Dodge is firmly settled for now, I believe.”
Harry smirked. “You never have been one for small talk,” he said. “Very well. As you know, my soulmate was foolish enough to create multiple horcruxes. In his bid to protect them he gave one to his follower, Bellatrix LeStrange nee Black. Bellatrix, not knowing what it was but knowing it was important, placed the horcrux, which is within Helga Hufflepuff’s cup, inside her Gringotts Vault.”

Ragnok nodded then realised why the young wizard was here. “You wish to enter her Vault,” he stated.

“As Lord Black, I believe Sirius is able to enter the Vault of a family member,” Harry said, “especially one who is so indisposed.”

Ragnok sighed. If it got out that he had allowed such an action then the reputation of Gringotts could be ruined. However, he trusted Harrison to keep the act secret.

“I see. Was the cup given to her when she was still a Black?” he asked, finding a stretch in loopholes.

Harry wasn’t actually sure, but seeing as he knew his chances would be better, he lied, “Yes.”

Ragnok knew Harry wasn’t being truthful, but allowed it. “Very well - I shall accompany you. You will remove nothing but the cup, Lord Black,” he said.

～

Entering the LeStrange Vault, Harry watched as Ragnok nullified the Flagrante and Gemino curses, making it so the treasures within wouldn’t burn and multiply.

“You may collect the cup,” Ragnok said, watching with sharp eyes as Sirius walked into the Vault.

Sirius didn’t dally and practically ran to the cup; he wanted this to be over with as quickly as possible. Picking up the cup, Sirius barely withheld his shudder as the Dark magic washed over him. As he was no longer renouncing his magical affinity, Sirius found the presence of powerful Dark magic almost intoxicating. It wasn’t an exactly pleasant experience, but it was overwhelming.

Seeing Sirius struggle, Harry held out his hands as he rejoined him and Ragnok at the doors to the Vault.

“Let me have it, Sirius, its magic doesn’t affect me,” Harry told his godfather.

Taking a breath, Sirius handed the cup over. As he was no longer touching it, its presence wasn’t as bad - he could still feel it, but it was diluted.

Placing the cup into his pocket after wandlessly shrinking it, Harry turned to Ragnok. “Thank you, my friend. I understand that doing this was difficult for you, but know I appreciate it and all you have done for me. May your Vaults never empty and your enemy’s blood run cold,” Harry said.

Ragnok inclined his head. “I thank you, and may your gold overflow. However, we shall never speak of this again,” he said with finality.

Harry sent Sirius a look. “Never,” he promised.

Instead of returning to Ragnok’s office, Harry and Sirius said their goodbye and returned to Grimmauld Place. Having the extra two horcruxes on him had made Harry feel almost giddy, their presence soothing him.
Going to his room, Harry carefully dispelled the charms and hexes around the box containing the diary and placed the ring and cup inside.

Looking at the diary he had a moment of intense longing - he could talk to Tom….

He quickly buried the desire; the soul piece in the diary wasn’t really his soulmate he had to remind himself—and it was also a soul leech. If Harry used the diary he would have to be careful - the spells on it would easily drain him of both his magic and his life.

~

After collecting the ring, the rest of the summer weeks flew by for Harry. This was the first summer that he was completely free to do whatever he wanted and although the lack of purpose was frustrating, Harry soon found ways to amuse himself.

Spending most of his time in the library, Harry soon found books which drew and captured his attention, most notably a book on Parselmagic. Why the Black family library had such a book when there was no known Black family Speaker, Harry didn’t know, but he was grateful. Although the book was small, Harry found the spells inside quite interesting. They were not necessarily Dark, but Harry doubted they would be legal in this pro-Light government. Most of the spells in the book were basic; all they required was the user to speak Parseltongue—they were mostly charms and a few minor hexes.

However, there were some much Darker spells that Harry vaguely recognised from the last war - spells Harry had assumed Voldemort had created. There were spells which left the victim without blood as theirs boiled from within, spells which trapped a person in their nightmares unable to escape, spells which caused hair to grow inwards. These spells Harry did teach himself - he had no real plans on using them but one never knew.

This system of lazily learning spells continued throughout the summer, broken only by trips out with Sirius and Remus and visits to his friends. Never had Harry had such a peaceful break.

~

August 20th 1992, Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire

When Harry had received Draco’s invitation to visit him for the day, he had accepted without concern. He had really come to like this Draco; sure, he was still slightly pompous and his views on muggleborns and muggles were outdated and needing change, but he liked the boy. He had a dry wit that Harry appreciated, he was intelligent, and he wasn’t obsessed with Harry's fame. Oh, Harry didn’t doubt that it had initially been Harry’s status as the Boy-Who-Wouldn’t-Die that drew Draco in, but getting to know him, they had actually become true friends. Shockingly enough, Neville and Draco got on ridiculously well too - Draco’s more outgoing sarcasm mixing well with Neville's sly cunning. They had been writing to each other and swapping ideas about how to get back at Ron this year.

Arriving at the manor via Floo, Harry stumbled out and, after straightening himself, saw that it was slightly less perfect than it had been last time.

Draco, who had been waiting, saw Harry's look and snarled, “The bloody ministry fools came again and searched the manor.”

Realisation hit Harry and he remembered the threat of having Grimmauld searched. “I gather they found nothing?”
“No, but it’s the second time this summer. It’s Dumbledore and his pet weasels - I swear that man is getting worse.”

“Hopefully the old coot will stop once we’re back at school; he has enough problems being Headmaster without meddling in our families’ affairs,” Harry placated.

Soon enough Harry had distracted Draco into forgetting about the old coot’s persecution against Dark families and the two boys spent the morning flying and chatting about the up and coming school year.

“Father has been trying to find out who the new Defence teacher will be, but apparently Dumbledore hasn’t officially announced it yet,” Draco grumbled as they sat in the gardens, drinking some iced tea an elf had gotten for them.

Once again, Harry was surprised he hadn’t seen Dobby. “If they’re awful, I’ll just do what I did last year and teach myself,” Harry said.

Seeing Draco’s look of intrigue, Harry expanded on his sentence. “I made a study group last year. We all taught ourselves and helped each other. You’re welcome to join us, we usually meet in the library after classes.”

Draco smiled slightly. “I would like that. Perhaps I could bring a few of my Slytherin friends,” he said cautiously.

Harry didn’t allow his face to change, but inside he was wary. He didn’t really know any of the other Slytherins; even as enemies, like he had been with Draco, he didn’t know any of them. However, he didn’t want to exclude anyone just become of their House so he nodded. “Sure, bring them along. I don’t really know that many Slytherins to be honest.”

Draco nodded his head once. “Well, there’s Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle - you’ve got to have noticed them, they’re the brainless lugs that tend to follow me around. They’re alright I suppose, but you can’t have any form of conversation with them—at least not one when you gain any reply. Then there’s Theodore Nott - he’s alright but he doesn’t really speak to anybody and keeps to himself. I can’t really say much for him, he doesn’t even sit around in the common room much. Finally for the boys there’s Blaise Zabini; he’s my best friend in Slytherin, you’d like him. He’s half Italian and from a Neutral family. He’s the boy you’ve probably noticed daydreaming in classes, but he’s probably one of the smartest people I know. He’s also the gossip king of Hogwarts - anything you want or need to know, Zabini can find out. Even I don’t know how he gets some of his information. Don’t worry though, he’s a great friend, very loyal.”

Harry smiled at Draco’s descriptions. He had never really spoken to Zabini - a few threats and grumbled words here and there, however he had seen how in later years he and Draco had become close, especially after the Dark Lord’s return. Nott he had never even noticed until the war, the boy really was a quiet wallflower and the other two… well, Harry honestly had no desire to get to know.

“For the girls in Slytherin, there’s Bulstrode, she’s the rather... well... she’s the larger girl.” Draco’s hesitance on his description of Millicent left Harry fighting laughter. True, Millicent wasn’t blessed with great physical beauty, but to hear Draco scramble to say so made Harry smile.

“She’s alright though, great sense of humour for a girl. Then there’s Tracy Davis, she’s a half-blood but you wouldn’t notice - her and Daphne Greengrass are always together, they’re annoying to be honest, always whispering and giggling. Finally, there’s Pansy Parkinson, she’s actually my other best friend. She pretends to be a total girly-girl in classes and around school, but she’s actually ridiculously smart and very practical. She says she acts like that so people underestimate her, which
is true as I know everybody thinks she's a fool. It’s like me - I know everybody thinks I'm a cold and heartless Slytherin who relies on my family name, which is fine as then they will underestimate me too.”

Harry was surprised by Pansy, he had honestly believed the mask she portrayed, but then again he had believed Draco’s in his last life as well.

“I think I will get on with your friends, but why do you have to pretend to be underestimated?”

“Everybody expects Slytherins to be evil, to automatically be Death Eaters. The other Houses exclude us and bully us, we have to act this way to protect ourselves. Even the teachers to an extent treat us differently and sure some of them try not to, but it’s still there. We’re automatically viewed as being Dark, so we act to be underestimated; that way, if we ever are bullied or attacked, then we can surprise them. I’m not going to lie: we are sneaky and cunning, we cheat and manipulate, but we’re not evil,” Draco explained.

Harry nodded. “The hat was torn between Ravenclaw and Slytherin for me. I picked Ravenclaw because I knew Dumbledore wouldn’t leave me alone if I went green.”

Draco’s eyes went wide. “So the Light’s golden boy was almost a snake?”

“Yes, the hat thought me very cunning.”

Draco laughed. “You would have been good in Slytherin, but I suppose Ravenclaw is okay.” He knew not to dismiss Gryffindor and Hufflepuff now and, having met the rest of Harry’s, and now his, friends, he could see the benefits of the other houses - even Gryffindor.

Harry was pleased Draco was learning and no longer thought the other Houses were automatically jokes. Now he just had to work on his muggle views….

“It’s stupid - what people think about Slytherins. You’re not all bad. Judging you just because the Dark Lord was in Slytherin and a lot of his Death Eaters came from there is ridiculous. I mean, come on! Look at that rat Pettigrew, he was in Gryffindor.”

“I know, but everybody just sees a Slytherin and thinks evil. Dumbledore doesn’t help; I mean, he goes on about the greater good and so called fairness but he never does anything to actually help,” Draco ranted.

Harry was surprised the blond had noticed - or perhaps he had been listening to Lucius rant.

“Hopefully Dumbledore will not be around for much longer or, at least, his influence on the world will start to crumble,” Harry said, hoping that everything he had brought to light and was planning on bringing to light would be enough to destroy the old man.

Draco saw Harry's dark look and hid his shudder. His friend could be scary sometimes.

Eventually the topic was dropped and the two went back to playing catch the snitch. A game which Harry won eight out of ten times, losing only because he started to lose interest. He still loved flying but his passion for it was not the same anymore.

~

Harry eventually persuaded Draco to stop flying and he instead was lead to the boy’s room, which was more like a suite than anything else: It had a bathroom, dressing room, and small sitting room attached.
“Nice,” Harry said, looking around and actually finding he liked the style. The room had white walls with one wall painted a midnight blue and a pale blue fluffy carpet. The furnishings all matched and were a dark mahogany wood. The bedspread was dark blue and pale green and the throw pillows were green. It was slightly mature for a twelve year old Harry supposed, but it was very nice. It was also quite relaxed with slouchy looking sofas and knickknacks around. Harry even spotted a few soft toys from when Draco was younger hidden among the rest.

“It’s the Heir suite,” Draco said as an explanation for the size.

Harry nodded and went to the bookshelf to see what types of books Draco had. There were the usual ones you would expect to find in a magical child’s room: fairytales, encyclopaedias, and quidditch books. However, what drew Harry’s attention was the number of magical animal books and even more potion guides.

Seeing the number of potion books, Harry smiled. “You actually enjoy Potions, don’t you?”

Draco shrugged and looked slightly self-conscious. “They’re alright,” he mumbled, shocking Harry as he had never seen the Malfoy heir mumble.

“I think that’s cool. I’m okay at the subject but for some reason I just can’t feel the passion, you know?”

Draco suddenly looked much happier. “Really? I think that they're fascinating; I mean, you can do almost anything with potions.”

Harry smiled at Draco’s enthusiasm. “I remember - Snape’s speech from the start of year said the same.”

“Severus is right. I mean, I doubt I could do half of those things but he could. He’s a Potions genius,” Draco said, the familiarity and happiness in which he said Severus’ name reminding him that they were close.

“You know Professor Snape from before school?” he asked.

“He’s my godfather. He and father were friends in school and, well, you know the war and everything,” Draco said, looking slightly awkward.

“I didn’t know that, but I do like Severus. He helped me last year; he brewed potions for me and he even helped out at my trial by giving evidence. He’s a good man, even if he does scare the magic out of Neville and make people cry,” Harry joked before he acknowledged the rest of Draco's sentence. “Also, Dray, you should know I don’t care about the last war. I mean, I do, but I don’t hold it against people. It’s time to move on; most people did what they thought best for themselves and their families, for the Wizarding world.”

“Well said, Harrison.”

Harry turned and saw Lucius standing in the doorway. The aristocrat’s mask was firmly in place, revealing nothing of what he felt about what he had heard.

“Father, what are you doing here?” Draco asked.

“It’s almost time for lunch and as I was passing by, I thought I should collect you myself instead of sending an elf. I believe your mother wants to eat outside on the terrace,” Lucius said.

Harry nodded. “It is a lovely day.”
“Indeed. Come along then, boys,” Lucius said.

Following Draco, Harry felt more than saw Lucius staring at him and wondered what he had done this time to garner his attention.

“Do you really feel that way, Harrison?” Lucius asked softly as they walked.

“Yes, I tend not to say things I don’t mean,” Harry replied.

“It’s a rare few who are willing to move on so easily. Many hold grudges; it would not be shocking if you yourself did, as you lost a lot in the war.”

“Yes, but holding onto the grudges would only make it impossible for me to move forward. I also do not believe in hating those who have done nothing to me personally; many people may have fought in the war, either directly or indirectly, and for many different reasons - who am I to judge them? I only hold grudges against those who stand against me and my plans, who try to do me or my loved ones harm.”

It was the best way Harry could reveal his feelings without saying too much. It also explained his willingness to forgive Lucius and other Death Eaters, but not people like Ron and Dumbledore. Most Death Eaters were simply following orders and their beliefs, few actually enjoyed their actions. They were soldiers fighting for what they believed in. However, there were a few who Harry did hate and held grudges against: Pettigrew was an example - he was a traitor and he was weak. He didn’t believe in anything other than saving himself. Bellatrix was another, although he could perhaps sympathise more since Sirius said she was honestly mentally ill. Still, she was a sadist who enjoyed hurting people, even children. Then there was the pink toad, Umbridge; her vindictive spreading of hate and prejudice was sickening.

Then there was Hermione, who was a conundrum. Harry still didn’t forgive her - sure, she was innocent in this life, but she had manipulated him in his last, made him believe he had friends and then plotted to steal from him and kill him. She and Ron had utterly destroyed his heart in his last life, they had betrayed him along with Molly and Ginny. However, the one person he knew he would never forgive was Dumbledore. That man had destroyed Harry’s life, he had plotted and schemed and manipulated until Harry had nothing - and why? For what purpose? Harry still didn’t know for certain.

“You have goals, then?” Lucius asked, bringing Harry back to the present.

Harry tilted his head. “I think everybody has plans, Lucius.”


~

After lunch Harry and Draco played a few games of chess and exploding snap while they talked idly. Draco was a better player than Harry, but Harry could hold his own.

Seeing an opportunity to ask something that had been bothering him for a while, Harry spoke, “Draco, I was wondering, do you happen to have a house-elf named Dobby?”

Harry saw Draco’s face scrunch in confusion before he answered, “Yes, but he’s not here at the moment, he’s still in training. However did you know about him?”

“I'm not sure - perhaps you or somebody mentioned him?” Harry dismissed quickly. “Anyway, what training?”
Draco didn’t look sure, but shrugged slightly before he continued, “Well, he’s a young house-elf and, to be honest, he’s slightly batty. Anyway, he’s been sent off to train under the older elves so he can find his designation; to see if he would be best in the garden or looking after children, for example.”

Harry nodded - that did make sense. “Where do they do this training?” he asked, a suspicion growing in his mind.

“Hogwarts, of course. Hogwarts has the most house-elves anywhere in Britain.”

“I see. So is he a Hogwarts elf or a Malfoy elf while he’s training?” Harry asked.

“Well, he’s officially a Malfoy elf, but he has to follow Hogwarts orders until he’s finished.”

“Ah.”

Harry thought about the events that transpired thanks to Dobby and honestly? He wasn’t surprised that Dumbledore had manipulated them. However, it did leave the question of how much control the old man had on Lucius. If he simply manipulated Dobby that was one thing, but to manipulate the head of the Malfoy family was another. Perhaps Harry needed to bring in the elder Malfoy on a few of his secrets. If he was under charms Harry wanted him free, if only to strengthen their newly formed alliance.

Harry had also genuinely liked Dobby, the little elf had died rescuing Harry and the rest of them. But if the elf had been manipulated at first then he wasn’t sure how much he could rely on his old friend.

“Why are you asking about elves anyway, Harry?”

“No reason - just interested, I guess,” Harry lied.

Since Harry had become close to the Malfoys, he had noticed that their elves were actually treated rather well. They wore clean uniforms at least—sure, Lucius treated them like lowly servants but he wasn’t excessively violent or cruel and Narcissa seemed to simply ignore them while Draco was a mixture of both. He hadn’t seen anything like the abuse he had witnessed towards Dobby in his second year.

20th August 1992, Evening, Grimmauld Place, London

Returning home, Harry Floo’d into the parlour only to be met with the sight of garish periwinkle and orange robes. It seemed that Dumbledore had somehow talked his way into Grimmauld.

Looking around, Harry saw that Sirius had a look of anger on his face and Remus looked no better.

Steeling himself, Harry plastered a fake smile on his face. “Hello Headmaster, what brings you here today?” he asked.

Dumbledore turned and looked at the boy. He hated how at ease Harry looked wearing wizarding robes, he should be like a muggleborn.

“Hello my dear boy, I'm actually here to see you and Sirius. It’s rather good timing on your part, I myself have only just arrived a few moments ago.”

Harry sent Sirius a discreet look before he nodded. Remus, seeing this, stood and gave the Headmaster a strained smile. He would never forget his words during the trial and how the man who had allowed him an education had thrown him under the bus.
“I see. Well then, why don’t you go into the parlour?”

Sirius nodded stiffly. “Yes, why don’t you follow me Albus,” he said, with barely concealed anger. Harry followed behind and sent Remus a look to control himself.

Entering the parlour, Harry joined Sirius on the sofa and sat opposite to Dumbledore. He wondered how he had gotten in as the wards were very impressive and decided that Sirius must have let him in.

“Why are you here, Albus?” Sirius asked, his voice coming out frostier than before.

Albus withheld his snarl at the tone - who was he to speak like that at him? “I thought it would be a good idea to come and clear the air, so to speak, before young Harry comes back to school next week.”

“There is no need Headmaster,” Harry said.

Albus smiled, thinking he still had some control over the boy. “Yes, very well then,” he said. “However, there was another reason I came.”

Sirius barely stopped his eye roll. Of course there was.

“Oh?” Harry inquired.

“Yes, I thought that after such a hectic summer you may wish to be re-Sorted when you return to school.”

Harry just about held back his snort of derision - that was an exceptionally weak excuse. He wondered if the old man was really becoming that desperate.

“Thank you, Headmaster,” Harry said, allowing him for a moment to think he had won. “However, I will have to decline. I love being in Ravenclaw.”

Albus felt his elation crash and narrowed his eyes. “I see, you're certain?”

“Yes,” Harry said smiling.

“Very well then, I shall be going. Do enjoy the rest of your holiday,” Albus said, his voice clipped as he thought about how the boy refused to do as he was told.

Walking him back to the parlour, Harry sent Sirius a look which had the animagus biting his lip to stop himself from laughing. He did so love winding the old fool up.

Chapter End Notes

Big thank you to my Beta reader Miisticalwrites
Hopefully you’re all enjoying the story! Then next update will probably be on Friday, maybe Saturday.
Remember, comments & kudos are loved!
~ Annie
Second Year

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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After Dumbledore’s visit the rest of the summer flew by - the only thing to break it up being the promised surprise visit from the Department of Children’s Protection. It was Joanne Mirwood herself who came, much to the relief of Remus and Harry.

August 25th 1992, Grimmauld Place, London

“You’re looking well, Mr. Potter,” Joanne said, following them into the kitchen. Her quill was taking notes as she walked, probably on the house and its suitability for a family.

“Thank you, Ms. Mirwood,” Harry said, sending her a sweet smile. He had liked Ms. Mirwood when he had met her in Madam Bones office and hoped she would continue to be in his good books.

“So Harry - is it okay if I call you Harry?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry said.

“Call me Joanne,” she said, smiling. Unlike most adults, her smile wasn’t patronising and Harry could see how such a young woman had become the head of such an important department.

“Anyway, as I was saying, Harry, would you mind if I asked you a few questions about your life now that you’ve been living with your blood father?”

“Certainly,” Harry agreed easily.

“Well then, let’s start with the basics: are you happy here?”

“Yes, Sirius and Remus are great guardians,” Harry said.
Joanne smiled at the small boy in front of her; she had been present during the trial and had been disgusted by what had come to light. She was one of the many who had wanted Dumbledore charged with neglect and she had, along with the Muggle Relations Department, already sent their findings off to the muggle authorities. The Dursleys would be in a lot of trouble soon and there would be no way for them to worm their way out of it if she had anything to say about it.

“That’s good, Harry. Now could you tell me what has been the best thing you’ve done together so far?”

Harry tilted his head when he thought about it. “My birthday,” he said.

“Oh?”

“When I lived with the Dursleys, I never got to celebrate my birthday. When I was younger I didn’t even know I had one. This year though, I got to celebrate it. Sirius and Remus took me to muggle London and we saw Cats - it’s a muggle West End show - and it was so good. Then we went to Rome for lunch—did you know the Coliseum has a wizard only part with a restaurant? Then we went to the Sistine Chapel, the Pantheon, the Trevi fountain. It was great!” Harry had sure to act excited, which wasn’t hard as he really had had a fantastic time in Rome.

“Then to finish it off we had dinner with the Malfoys. Did you know aunt Cissa is Sirius’ cousin? That means me and Draco are sort of related, which is great because Draco’s one of my best friends.”

“That’s sounds great,” Joanne said, smiling at how obviously happy the boy was. “What about punishments? Have Sirius or Remus had to punish you since you’ve been living with them?”

“No. Well, at least not that I’ve realised - they’re not like the Dursleys. They don’t shout at me or hurt me,” Harry said. “Sirius did once speak to me about being too independent and knowing I could come to him and he made me promise not to wander off on my own, but other than that I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong.”

“That’s really good, Harry. So you’re not worried about being punished here?”

“No, I know Remy and Siri wouldn’t hurt me.”

“That’s great! Now, what about food? What's your favourite thing to eat?”

“Treacle tart,” Harry said immediately, an answer that hadn’t changed since his last life.

Joanne smiled again at the answer. “That’s one of my favourites too. How about dinners though?”

Harry considered this for a minute. “I like it when Kreacher makes roast dinners,” he said. It was true, he liked having roast dinners on Sundays with Sirius and Remus.

“Kreacher?”

“He’s our house-elf. He’s a bit old and slightly batty, but he’s great. He likes me the best for some reason,” Harry said, blushing slightly.

“He obviously has good taste,” Joanne said. The quill was still moving behind her and noting everything that was being said and anything else that was relevant. “Now, what have you been doing for fun since you came here?”

“I spend a lot of time in the library. It’s great! There are so many books, it’s like Hogwarts library.
I've also been to see my friends a few times. Neville like plants so I've helped him in the garden—we even got to harvest his pineapple-apple tree. I've also spent a lot of time with Draco; we both love flying so I've done quite a lot of it, I'm even thinking about joining the Ravenclaw team. I've even seen Susan a few times. We went to the beach with her aunt once, which was fun as I've never seen the sea before, but I'm not the best swimmer so I didn’t go too deep.” All of this was said with excitement, Harry making sure to portray a happy child, not that it was too difficult a task.

“It sounds like you’ve had a great summer;” Joanne said. “I think that's everything I need to know. Why don’t you show me around? By then I think I’ll be done, I just need to have a quick word with Sirius.” She had no concerns about the boy and was glad to see him so happy.

Harry smiled and went to give her the tour, making sure to happily show off his room and the library. Once that was done he left Sirius to have his conversation.

“Hello, Lord Black,” Joanne said.

“Please call me Sirius, Ms. Mirwood,” Sirius said, offering her some tea.

“Then call me Joanne.” Accepting the tea, Joanne looked at the young Lord Black and noted he looked healthier. “Now I've just got a few questions, then I’m done.”

“That’s fine.”

“Have you noticed anything wrong with Harry since you've had him? Things such as nightmares or behavioural problems? They're not uncommon in children from bad homes.”

“No, nothing like that, he’s been great. I'm surprised, really; I swear he handles some of the things better I do.”

Joanne nodded. “He certainly is a remarkable young man. I’ll be honest when I say I can see no cause for concern. Harry appears to be well adjusted and he’s settled with you; however, I wouldn’t be doing my job if I didn’t ask. Harry mentioned being independent, would you explain that for me?”

“I think it’s from him never having an adult to rely on. He sometimes doesn’t realise he’s not alone - that he can ask for help. It’s not a problem really, and since living with us he’s got a lot better. I think he’s realised that we’re here for him and that we won’t abandon him,” Sirius said.

“That’s good. Have you any idea about his school work? I heard that's he’s in Ravenclaw, so I'm guessing he’s smart?”

“He’s top of his class. I was thinking about writing to Professor Flitwick about getting him some advanced tutoring if he’s still so ahead by Yule. I know he gets advanced work in Potions already.”

“That is remarkable,” Joanne said, surprised at just how advanced Harry was.

“I’m guessing that he got Lily’s brains. Me and James were more interested in having fun when we were at school, Lil’s was always the smart one.”

“Have you spoken to him about his parents and his past? Not just the abuse, but everything? With his history and his fame, it’s important he has a good foundation and knows he can talk to you about these things.”

Sirius nodded. She had no idea just how much of his past and technically future Harry had shared. “At the start Harry was hesitant to talk but since then he’s opened up. I think he’s told us pretty much
everything and he knows he can come to me and Remus. He’s got pictures of his parents and I’ve explained about the last war and what it involved, not the gory details, but the basics so he would understand."

“He took it well?”

“He said that if the world wants to move on and get better then we had to forgive and forget. He doesn’t like to dwell on the bad stuff, he says it hold people back.”

“He really is a special young man,” Joanne said. “I think that's everything, unless you have any questions for me?”

Sirius thought for a moment. “I was wondering about Dumbledore, actually. I mean, he was Harry's guardian yet he allowed for the abuse to go on for so long. Is there anything we can do?”

Joanne hesitated. “I was present during the trial, you know. I can’t say much as the voting is bound by secrecy vows, but I can say this: Dumbledore's recent actions have brought quite a few suspicions to light and many people are starting to question him.”

“Thank you,” Sirius said, hiding his glee. He knew Harry would love this.

“Now, if that's everything, I shall be going. Thank you for your time and hospitality, Lord Black.”

Walking her out, Sirius practically ran to Harry, who was sitting in the library, to let him know about Dumbledore's growing troubles.

~

August 31st 1992, Grimmauld Place, London

Harry watched as Remus fretted and Sirius paced. He had never had such mother hens in his life—even Mrs. Weasley wasn’t as bad. Perhaps having to go through the process so many times with all of the older Weasleys had mellowed the manipulating witch.

“You’ve definitely packed everything?” the wolf said, looking between Harry's trunk and him like he would suddenly say no.

“Yes Remus, Kreacher and I packed everything.”

“And you're sure you want to go to Hogwarts? I mean, I hear Beauxbatons has lovely gardens,” Sirius said. In the last few days the animagus had become worried about Dumbledore's influence and what he might do to Harry while at school.

“Yes, I'm sure they're very beautiful, but still I want to go to Hogwarts,” Harry said, amusement clear in his voice.

Harry was actually looking forward to the year. Sure, he knew Dumbles - the manipulative old coot - would try something, but honestly, as far as he knew, this year would actually be totally event free. There would be no opening of the Chamber as he had the diary safely locked up here in Grimmauld. So, as far as Harry could tell, he had nothing to really worry about. Instead, he would focus on stretching his magic in either the Chamber or the Room of Requirement and simply prepare for Tom’s return. He would just have to be careful about the basilisk, but Harry was sure that if he spoke to her, then he would be able to get her on his side. He didn’t want to release her or get her to harm muggleborns, he just wanted her not to harm him if he does decide to investigate the Chamber.
Yes, he would have to deal with the pompous peacock Lockhart for a teacher, but if he really couldn’t cope he had already devised a plan for him. He didn’t like cheats, let alone liars who made their fortunes off others, and he had planned to make it known that Lockhart was nothing more than a fraud.

Lost in his thoughts, Harry didn’t realise he was smirking until Sirius spoke.

“You know, when you look like that I expect you to suddenly start cackling or talk about world domination.”

Harry rolled his eyes playfully at his father figure. “I'm not into being a dominatrix, Siri,” Harry deadpanned, making the animagus choke on air and Remus stumble.

“Little boys should not even know that word,” Sirius said after eventually getting his breath back.

“I'm 19,” Harry said, shrugging.

“That’s more information than I ever wanted or needed to know,” Remus said, shaking his head but his eyes were twinkling with mirth.

Sharing another look, Harry could no longer contain his laughter and suddenly burst out with it, his chuckles sending him, and eventually Sirius, to the floor.

“I'm going to miss you, pup,” Sirius said after finally calming down.

“I'll be back for Yule and I promise I will write.”

“Daily.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “No, but at least weekly.”

Casting a wandless tempus, Harry saw the time and announced he was going to bed. He would be up early in the morning as he knew he would end up having to calm both Sirius and Remus down before actually getting to the station. He and his friends had arranged to meet at ten in order to find a good compartment and hopefully not get caught in the main rush which usually arrived around 10:30.

~

1st September 1992, King’s Cross Station, London

As he had suspected, Harry had spent the better part of his morning calming down both Sirius and Remus, who both decided to have nervous breakdown at the thought of Harry being so far away and in Dumbledore’s grasp.

“I’ll be fine. I have allies in the castle, both Filius and Snape are trustworthy and, hell, Lucius is on the Board of Directors. Nothing bad will happen,” Harry said as he forced the two men towards the parlour and, more importantly, the main Floo system. It was almost ten and he didn’t want to keep his friends waiting.

“Fine, fine, no need to push,” Sirius said, letting Remus go through the Floo first.

“You know, I think the Blacks have a family seat on the Board of Governors,” Harry said, thinking of a book he had read.
“We do,” Sirius confirmed before taking a handful of powder and disappearing.  

Harry followed after him, stumbling as he landed at the station.  

“Will you take it up?”  

“Maybe. Although there is a seat, I would still need to be recommended by a current member.”

Sirius was becoming more active in politics since Harry had freed him; although he didn’t have a passion for it, he knew that making allies would benefit him and Harry. However, as he had never bothered to pay much attention to his father’s lessons, and the fact he had run away before they had gotten to the important political strategies, Sirius was pretty much playing blind. His name and natural charisma, and the fact he and Lucius had a rather strong alliance, were the biggest draws he currently had. He was lucky there hadn’t been a formal full Wizengamot session yet. While all members were invited to vote in trials, full sessions were called only four times a year with the next in autumn. He had already had many different proposed bills sent to him as he was now an active member and he honestly didn’t know how people could find any joy out of this. All the reading and the scheming was boring to him, however, for Harry, he would do it.

“I’m sure Lucius would gladly recommend you, if just to have an ally with him,” Harry said, cautiously looking around before flicking his wrist and making all of the powder currently on his robes disappear before his robes and hair straightened out.

He had finally had his hair cut and it was now back to being shoulder length; still longer than in his old life, but Harry had found he liked it. It separated him from the boy he was - he still had things in common with the ‘old Harry’ but he was slowly becoming more Harrison James Potter-Black than Harry James Potter.

Seeing Lucius alongside Narcissa and Draco, Harry made his way other to his friends. Narcissa, seeing them approach, sent them a dazzling smile.

“Are you ready for your second year, Harrison?” she asked after leaning down and giving him a soft hug and kiss on the cheek. As there was nobody else really on the platform she allowed her pureblood mask to fall.

“Yes, aunt Cissa.” She had insisted he call her aunt after the second time he had been over to the manor.

“Excellent! Now, I expect at least one letter this week from both of you. I want to hear all about your lessons and classmates,” she said in mock sternness.

Harry and Draco exchanged looks before replying in sync, “Yes, ma’am.”

Lucius gave the boys a soft look. “Now boys, I don’t want to hear you’ve been caught getting up to any trouble.”

Sirius smiled. “And by that he means cause as much as you can, but don’t get caught.”

Lucius sent the man a look. “Obviously,” he said.

Harry smiled at the interaction. Although Lucius wasn’t as obvious as Narcissa, and much more calculating, he really felt like he had a family in these people. Neville was still his best friend, but Draco was sort of like an annoying little cousin who you couldn’t help but like. He was spoilt and arrogant but also caring, sweet, and, underneath all of his masks, he was a loyal friend.
Soon enough Madam Bones appeared with both Hannah and Susan; they usually arrived to everything together with either Hannah’s parents or Susan’s aunt. Madam Bones didn’t stay long, trusting the girls to get on the train, however she did stop to briefly talk to Sirius and Lucius and give both of the boys hugs.

Harry hadn’t seen Hannah since getting their school supplies as she had been on holiday and greeted both girls with hugs.

Neville soon arrived and Harry was happy to see the slight changes in the boy. No longer did he walk with his head down and eyes averted but instead he walked with confidence. Seeing this, Harry smiled. He would never regret being friends with Neville.

Once they were all together the adults quickly spelled their trunks and owl cages onto the train. Harry, however, didn’t need this as he kept his shrunk in his pocket. There was another round of goodbyes and promises to write and the friends soon found themselves on the train in a compartment near the back.

~

The train

Halfway through the journey, Harry found himself wondering if perhaps the Weasleys would actually be better off if their youngest male member was to mysteriously disappear. His journey had started off great: he and his friends had chatted about their holidays, eaten sweets, and played a few games of exploding snap. However, Harry should have known it wouldn’t last. It was while they were daring each other to eat different Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans that the door to their compartment had opened quite forcefully.

“Harry mate, how’s your summer been?” Ronald asked.

Harry sent his friends incredulous looks before he sighed and stood, facing the redhead. Although taller than in his last life, Harry was still shorter than Ron by a few good inches.

“As I said when I saw you in Diagon Alley, I do not wish to speak to you again. If I had my way I wouldn’t even see you again. Unless you’re here to apologise, which I very much doubt, I think you should leave,” Harry said.

The rest of the compartment watched as Ron's face slowly went red and started to match his hair.

“But-but - I was only saying the truth. You were with Malfoy, he’s a dirty Death Eater!”

Harry sighed again and put up a hand when he saw Draco rise, most likely to defend his father. “Lord Malfoy is practically my uncle, so I would recommend you stop saying such slanderous things. Now, as I said before, leave.”

“You know what? I will. You’re just a dirty Death Eater sympathizer. You’re worse than them, actually - you’re supposed to be a hero! But you’re nothing! I’ll show you. I’ll be a great hero one day and you’ll regret ever picking them over me!”

Harry watched with cold eyes as Ron stormed out of their compartment. Although he knew the words were meaningless, he momentarily got lost in his memories. Flashes of Petunia and Vernon beating him, calling him a worthless freak, quickly crossed his mind before he was able to stop them.

Shaking his head to rid himself of his past, Harry turned and faced his friends. “I hope you two have finalised your plans for that menace,” he said to Neville and Draco.
The two boys shared sly looks. “We may have.”

“Good.”

~

The rest of the journey went by quickly and before long they were reaching Hogwarts. Seeing a few Slytherins, Harry nudged Draco and told him to go get Blaise and Pansy so they could all share a carriage.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, it’s fine. If they're your friends, then I want to meet them.”

Draco smiled and quickly pulled a reluctant looking pair of Slytherins back with them.

“Blaise, this is Harrison Potter. He’s my friend and I think my second cousin or something. Harry, this is my best friend Blaise Zabini, heir to the Zabini family.”

Harry smiled and held out his hand. “Nice to meet you, you can call me either Harrison or Harry. I'm not really bothered which,” he said, sending the dark skinned boy a smile.

Blaise looked at his hand and his smile with calculating eyes before nodding and smiling back. “Pleasure,” he said, his posture relaxing.

Draco looked between them and nodded happily. “Now Harry, this lovely young lady is Pansy Parkinson. Pans, this is Harrison Potter, Boy-Who-Lived and—” he managed to say before he got cut off by Harry smacking him in the stomach.

Harry smiled at Pansy and kissed her hand. “Ignore Draco, apparently his manners have left him. I shall have to tell aunt Cissa. Anyway, it's a pleasure Ms. Parkinson,” he said.

Pansy blushed slightly before straightening out. “The pleasure’s all mine, Heir Potter.”

“Please, call me either Harry or Harrison.”

“Then you must call me Pansy,” she said.

Harry nodded and motioned for them to get into a carriage. All eight could fit comfortable as they were designed for up to ten.

“So, how did you and Draco become so close?” Blaise asked. The rest of the group had done introductions in the carriage and now the girls were all sitting together, giggling about Gilderoy Lockhart’s latest interview while Draco and Neville were plotting Ron's fate.

“We met through my guardian, Sirius Black. He and aunt Cissa are cousins and, after his release, they rekindled their relationship,” Harry said, remembering what Draco had said about Blaise being a gossip king.

“I see, that's good,” Blaise said. “It’s outrageous - what happened to Lord Black.”

“I know. I doubt if he had been from a Light or even Neutral family such an injustice would have occurred.”

“Undoubtedly,” Blaise agreed.
With his opinion now out there, Harry moved on to safer topics and soon the carriages pulled up to the castle. Promising to meet up after breakfast, Harry and his friends soon split up and went to their individual tables.

~

The Sorting, Harry realised, didn’t really change, but Harry was happy when a tiny Luna Lovegood was placed in Ravenclaw. He had grown extremely fond of the airy blonde in his last life; her peculiar outlook on life and bubbly personality always making him smile, even during the worst of the war. At times Harry had even wondered if the little blonde was a Seer of some sort as she always knew just what to say to cheer him up.

Sitting at the end of his yearmates in the hope the little blonde would join him, Harry soon relaxed as Luna danced towards him and took a seat.

“Hello, Lord Potter-Black-Gryffindor-Peverell-Slytherin.”

Harry blinked when Luna trailed off all of the titles he had gained in his last life. ‘Well,’ he thought, ‘it would appear she was a Seer of some kind.’

“Hello, Luna. It’s actually just Heir Potter-Black at the moment,” Harry said, smiling at the small girl.

Luna looked up at him with large, unfocused blue eyes. “Oh, did you lick a moon frog and loose them?”

Harry chuckled. “No, no, moon frogs this time, but I did come back with the help of somebody, so I no longer have them.”

Harry watched as Luna’s eyes gained focus for a moment. “You’ll be a great man, Harrison James Potter-Black.”

Harry smiled. “Hopefully, but only if I can count you as one of my friends.”

Luna stilled again and a beautiful smile appeared on her face. “You’ll keep the nargles away?” she asked.

“I’ll even disinfect the mistletoe,” Harry promised.

“Then I can’t wait to join your followers,” Luna said with a smile, making Harry wonder for a moment before he shrugged and smiled back.

After that, Harry tuned to watch the end of the Sorting. It all passed as he remembered up until it was time for Ginny to be Sorted.

Harry watched as the hat was placed on her head and, for a while, all was silent. Unlike her brothers, the hat didn’t immediately shout Gryffindor. Harry wondered momentarily if perhaps she would go into Slytherin - it wouldn’t surprise him as he knew she was a manipulative swine.

Eventually the hat shouted out, “GRYFFINDOR!”

Harry watched as Ginny sat up and shouted, “But I don’t want to go to Gryffindor!” She then proceeded to put the hat back on.

The whole hall was silent; the few who had started to clap stopped to stare. Even the teachers were sharing incredulous looks and, much to his amusement, Snape looked like he was attempting to set
the redheaded fool on fire with his glare.

Minerva was shocked to say the least. “Ms. Weasley, you have been Sorted. Now stop this foolishness at once and go and sit with your housemates!” she said.

“No! I want to be in Ravenclaw with Harry. This stupid hat will put me there!” Ginny whined. Although most of the hall couldn’t hear, some did - including Harry, who was paying special attention.

Minerva shook her head and flicked her wand, summoning the hat to her. “Go and join your housemates and be prepared for a serious conversation, young lady.”

Ginny stood up and stomped to the Gryffindor table but not before sending Harry a look of longing that make him want to take a bath.

“I've never seen so many Blibbering Humdingers in one person’s head before,” Luna said, staring at Ginny with a look of disgust, shocking Harry as he had thought they were friends.

“I'm surprised, I thought her head empty,” Harry grumbled back.

Luna snorted softly. “Don’t worry, Harry, she won’t get you. Her plans are childish and immature.”

~

At the end of the feast everybody was still gossiping about Ginny's outburst and Harry could see the even the twins were looking at their little sister with slight incomprehension. He hoped that their obvious reaction showed they were not in on the plan to get him, and would be willing to join him.

The other shock for the students was Gilderoy Lockhart. Harry watched with amusement as the students found out and Lockhart made his grand entrance. The hall was spilt in their reactions; half obviously excited and the rest clearly disgusted. Harry was happy that 90% of the Ravenclaws looked exceedingly putout and upset with the news. They had obviously read his book and realised what a load of rubbish the man spouted.

Harry actually felt bad for the 5th and 7th years, they would have to work exceedingly hard to pass their OWLs and NEWTs.

Once all of the news was done and Dumbledore had passed on some words of ‘wisdom’, all of the students were dismissed. Harry walked with Luna up to the common room but left her so she could do the first year initiation with the prefects. Sitting with his year mates, Harry asked about their summers while they waited for the 1st years.

After a few minutes they trailed in with Luna at the front, who quickly danced over to Harry.

“I fear that my classmates are all infested with nargles,” the blonde said, looking around the room. “Actually, a lot in the house of intelligence and wit seem to have a nargles problem.”

Harry tilted his head and thought about what he had learnt about Luna and her creatures before he realised she was worried about bullies. He remembered how much of a tough time she had had in her earlier year and vowed that he wouldn’t let it happen. He was surprised when he thought about it, as last year they had been almost threatened to not bully their own, but he supposed there was always an exception.

“If any of the nargles-infested do or say anything, you let me know, Little Moon,” Harry said. “I won’t let them upset you.”
“Thank you, my Lord,” Luna said, her usual soft and dreamy voice once again making Harry wonder about what she could see.

Eventually the new 7th year prefects came forward and gave more or less the same speech as last year, once again outlining what Ravenclaw stood for, their unofficial rules, and their study policy with the notice boards and Flitwick.

After their speech was done, Harry left Luna to get sorted and meet her roommates while he went to sort out his own things. Although he had initially been close to Terry last year, he hadn’t really spoken much to the boy over the summer and was feeling bad about that now. So he spent the night talking to him and asking about his summer.

~

In the morning Harry once again resorted to sending tickling charms at his roommates to get them up; he had done so throughout the year last year and was happy to keep the trend going.

“I’ll see you guys down there,” Harry said to them once they were all up. He didn’t want to miss Luna coming down; he wanted to know about her night and if she had had any problems.

Sitting in one of the midnight blue loveseats, Harry waited for Luna and was happy when she appeared looking excited instead of forlorn.

“You had a good night then, Luna?” Harry asked, offering her his arm to walk to breakfast.

“Yes, although I don’t think they really like me. They think me odd. However, they are all interested in you, mighty Dark wizard slayer.”

“Well then, they obviously don’t realise what they’re missing.”

Getting to the hall with the rest of their House, who, like last year, all turned up together. Harry sat down with Luna and enjoyed his breakfast.

Out of nowhere Luna spoke, “The manipulator is watching you, my Lord. He has many plans.”

Harry looked up discreetly and saw that Dumbledore was indeed watching him. However, he didn’t know how Luna would have noticed as she had been daydreaming while eating her grapes. The thought solidified his theory about her being a Seer of some sort. “Thank you, I will make sure to be on my guard.”

When Flitwick gave out their timetables, the half goblin gave Harry a smile and asked if he would like to join him for tea in the evening.

“Certainly, professor,” Harry agreed. Before looking at his timetable, he had Herbology first, which was good as he would be with all of his friends.

Glancing over at Luna’s timetable, he saw she would have to suffer Lockhart straight away.

“I’m sorry, Little Moon, but if it helps he shouldn’t be here all year. I have plans for him,” Harry said, seeing her forlorn expression.

“Oh, are you going to feed Aithusia?”

Harry thought for a moment. “If that’s her name, then perhaps,” Harry agreed. He hadn’t known the basilisk’s name yet, but he was going to go out on a limb at guess it was Aithusia.
“She would like that, she gets very lonely.”

“Then I’ll try to visit her,” Harry promised, making Luna once again smile brightly.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the delay, i’ve been rushed off my feet and literally not had a free minute.
Hope you're enjoying the story so far!
Comments & kudos
~ Annie
A peacock and two weasels

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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“She would like that, she gets very lonely.”

“Then I’ll try to visit her,” Harry promised, making Luna once again smile brightly.

~

September 2nd 1992, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Scotland

Making his way to Herbology with the rest of his year mates, Harry noticed both Draco and Neville sending Ron sly glances. Looking up, Harry noticed how jumpy the redhead looked and how his already pale skin seemed even whiter, the dark bags under his eyes standing out.

“What did you do to him?” Harry asked, watching in amusement as the redhead’s eyes seemed to dart around.

“Well, last year I found out he hated spiders,” Neville said. “He would actually scream like a girl—”

Neville was cut off when Susan hit him. “Not all girls are afraid of spiders,” she said.

“I know, sorry. Anyway, he would scream like he had seen a troll whenever he saw one.”

“So Neville and I went looking for a spell or charm that would make him think he would see spiders,” Draco said.

“But the best part is that I also placed a charm on his robes, all of them, so that he would feel like they were crawling on his skin. Not all the time, but sporadically, so hopefully he won’t notice the charm on his robes,” Neville finished.

Harry laughed. It was genius - evil, but genius.

Walking towards the greenhouses, Harry was actually looking forward to the lesson as he would be with all of his friends; sure, they would most likely be potting mandrakes again like last time, but at least he had a chance to talk to all of his friends. However, before he reached his destination, he was accosted by none other than Colin Creevy. He had forgotten about the boy’s almost manic hero worship - he had grown out of it or at least mellowed before his death during the final battle.

The blinding flash made Harry growl as he fought his reaction to obliterate the camera, his war-
honored instincts fighting to come out.

“You’re Harry Potter! You’re my hero! I read all about you - I’m Colin, Colin Creevy. I tried to get put in Ravenclaw like you, but the hat—”

“Enough,” Harry growled out, holding up a hand. “I understand there are books out there that paint a picture of me as being some hero, but I’m really not. I’m just a regular student like everybody else.”

“But you’re the Boy-Who-Li—!”

“No, and another thing: I hate that title. I lost my parent that night, all it does is remind me of that fact. I’m nothing special and I would ask you to please not take my picture again without my permission. Actually, don’t take anybody’s picture without permission; most people will find it incredible rude.”

Colin looked both awestruck and devastated. “O-okay,” he squeaked.

Feeling bad, Harry sighed. “It’s okay to have heroes and look up to people, Colin, even looking up to me. But you should only do it to people who deserve it, whose actions actually merit praise. And I do understand that you’re excited, but taking people’s photo without their permission isn’t polite - ask beforehand. Most people will probably be happy for their picture to be taken.”

The boy seemed to perk up. “Thanks, Harry,” he said, his awestruck expression taking over his devastation.

Harry rubbed the back of his neck before he nodded and walked away. He hoped that he had nipped Colin’s excessive hero worship in the bud; he really didn’t want the excitable first year trailing after him like a lost puppy.

~

At the end of his first day, Harry was happy to be free of classes. He had forgotten how exhausting it was to play down his abilities, especially since coming clean to Sirius and Remus meant he didn’t have to hide at home anymore.

Making his way up to Flitwick’s office, Harry knocked and was soon called in.

“Come in, Harry,” the half goblin said, smiling and offering Harry a chair.

“Good evening, professor,” Harry said, sending the diminutive man a genuine smile.

“You’re looking very well,” the professor observed. “I trust your summer was good?”

“As you’re probably aware from the papers, if you’ve been reading them, I had a hectic summer to say the least,” Harry said. “But yes, it was surprisingly good. I actually had a chance to relax and have fun.”

“That’s great to hear, Harry. And yes, I did prescribe to the Daily Prophet this summer. To say I was surprised would be an understatement. I just want you to know that you can come to me no matter what. If half of what was written is true then I understand you may have reservations about trusting me - not only because I’m an adult, but because of who I work for. However, please know I will do my best to always help you.”

Harry nodded. “Thank you, professor. I do trust you and if I ever find that I need your help, I promise to come.”
Flitwick smiled and looked relieved. “Now tell me, how is Sirius?”

Harry smiled. “He’s great. He’s recovering remarkably fast, but he does have both wizarding and goblin healers helping him.”

Filius felt his eyes widen. He had suspected last year that Harry had the respect of the goblin nation, but this just proved it. Goblins usually hated wizards; to allow their healers to treat one showed respect and friendship. “You truly are a mystery, Mr. Potter. However, I am glad he is recovering. I will never truly forgive myself for believing the lies about him.”

Harry nodded. “You shouldn’t feel bad, professor. The evidence was damning and made to look worse; Sirius does not hold grudges against the people who thought him lawfully convicted and guilty. You and they couldn’t have known,” Harry said.

“Still, let him know that he can count on me from now on. I have had my eyes well and truly opened.”

Harry wondered what that meant and guessed that the part-goblin was starting to see through Dumbledore’s persona. “I will professor, thank you.”

After their conversation was finished, Flitwick sent him on his way. Harry was happy that he could count on the part-goblin; having his head of House’s support would hopefully make life easier for him.

~

**September, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Scotland**

The quality of Neville and Draco’s pranks continued throughout the week and Harry soon found himself almost thankful that the two boys didn’t become friends in his last life - Neville could be truly scary when he put his mind to it. Throughout the first week, Harry watched as Ron slowly seemed to lose his mind. He would jump up and scream at random intervals and constantly twitch. This left Gryffindor in the minus when it came to House points, Severus taking points almost gleefully.

However, the charms soon started to fade and the boys gleefully informed Harry that they were preparing for phase two. What phase two was, Harry had no idea, but he was looking forward to their ingenuity.

It wasn’t until the next day that Harry saw exactly what it was that the two boys had done. He had been sitting with Luna, who was excitedly telling him about her plans to find a Crumple-Horned Snorkack and prove their existence whilst he was braiding her hair. He hadn't braided hair before and honestly he found the experience quite therapeutic.

Ron had stormed in, much like he had a year ago with green skin, this time however his hair was also bright Hufflepuff yellow and his robes Ravenclaw blue. Seeing this, Harry burst into laughter along with the rest of the hall. When the teachers tried to spell him back, Harry only laughed harder as the colours shifted: his skin turning yellow, hair blue, and robes green.

“Oh my! Even the nargles are laughing at him,” Luna said, giggling her bell-like laugh as she stared at Ron.

Harry snorted and tied off the braid with a piece of bark blue ribbon. It wasn't anything fancy but both Harry and Luna took pleasure in the activity. Luna because it was something her mother used to do, and Harry because it was something new and had no association with anybody else.
Luna hummed when she pulled the braid around and saw the ribbon.

“thank you,” she said happily running her dainty hands over it.

Harry smiled and stood. “care to join me on finding out more about this fine example of magic?” he said, offering his arm.

Luna took it and skipped next to Harry who was making his way over to the Slytherin table.

Luna, who he had introduced to his friends and who had easily found her place among them smiled at the snakes as they made their way over.

“How long will it last?” Harry asked once Draco was in hearing range.

“It should last for a few days and hopefully they won’t find a counter. Each time they attempt one, the colours will shift,” Draco said, still chuckling.

Harry nodded. “Ingenious.”

“If you hadn’t lent me those books I wouldn’t have found out how to do it,” Draco said. Harry had lent him some of his less age appropriate books over the summer when Draco was complaining about a lack of inspiration. He knew the boy wouldn’t judge him and as they were not actually Dark arts books, Harry didn’t fear lending them to his sort of cousin.

Harry smirked. “I’m glad I could help.”

~

As Neville and Draco's pranking vendetta continued, Harry wasn’t surprised when he was suddenly pulled into a hidden alcove. He had felt their approaching magical signatures and he was wondering what they wanted.

“Look here, Gred!”

“I can see Forge, we’ve caught ourselves a baby bird—”

“—a naughty baby bird, who’s making our ickle Ronniekins very mad—”

“—oh, yes! Very, very mad!”

Harry laughed at their byplay before he felt a pang in his heart as he remembered the last time he had seen his Fred and George acting like this, so carefree and happy. He had missed them and seeing them together made him realise just how much.

“Not that I don’t find myself loving being hidden in dark alcoves with handsome men, I must ask, what do you want?”

Fred and George sent each other shocked looks before they burst out laughing,

“We like you,” they said simultaneously.

“We admire your pranks and, as fellow pranksters, we thought it best to introduce ourselves,” Fred said.

“He’s Gred and he’s Forge,” they said indicating to each other with smiles.
Harry smiled. “It’s a pleasure. I’m Harrison Potter as I’m guessing you already know.”

“Smart birdie we caught ourselves, Freddy boy,” George said.

“Smart birdie indeed. Now, we normally wouldn’t allow somebody to target our family but the way we see it, Ron-Ron has made his bed,” George said.

“His actions not only reflect badly on him, but on our family,” Fred said, being surprisingly serious.

“We just wanted you to know that we don’t condone his actions,” George continued.

“And we support yours. I must say, the colour prank was particularly exceptional.”

Harry smiled. “I would thank you, but I would hate to take undue credit. The real geniuses behind it are Neville Longbottom and Draco Malfoy.”


“Such a pair! They obviously love their leader,” George said.

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know about that. I think they just find his particular brand of Gryffindor courage to be... less than ideal.”

The twins laughed. “Well then, tell your friends that if they ever want to collaborate then we would be honoured.”

“Such talent like ours deserves to be shared,” Fred said, grinning.

“I will. However, I must be off. Not that this hasn’t been insightful, but I do have to get to Potions.”

The twins nodded and stepped back. “We’ll be watching you, baby bird.”

Harry nodded before walking away, careful to keep an eye out for any pranks they might send at him. He didn’t know what to think about the twins; he didn’t want to get his hopes up, but he wished more than anything to have them back in his life.

~

The only other interesting thing to happen in Harry’s first week was his first Defence Against the Dark Arts lesson. Like last year, Defence was shared across the entire year, so Harry found himself sitting with Neville on one side and Susan on the other, Hannah taking the final place in their row. Harry’s new Slytherin friends were sitting in front as Harry had claimed the back row, trying to put as much distance between him and the fraud as possible.

“I can’t believe he’s actually going to teach us!” Susan gushed.

“I know, think of all the incredible things we’ll learn,” Hannah said.

Harry rolled his eyes. “All we could ever learn from this buffoon is how to write a fantasy book.”

“And not a good one,” Blaise added from the front, sending Harry a smirk.

Harry wasn’t surprised that the Slytherins held his disdain for the man - they could probably see through his lies easier than most.
“But he's a member of the Defence Association,” Hannah argued.

“Have you read his books? Half of the facts don’t even line up,” piped up Pansy, sounding exasperated. She appeared to be the only girl who wasn’t blown away by Lockhart's looks. Harry figured it was because of her practicality, which Draco had mentioned.

“It wouldn’t surprise me if he just took the credit for others’ achievements,” Harry commented, making all of those around him, bar Hannah and Susan, agree. Even Neville, who was usually saw the good in people, nodded along. Little did they know he was actually telling the truth about Lockhart.

However, before the two loyal badgers could argue his defence, the man in question entered the room from the office he had installed upstairs. Harry rolled his eyes at the lilac silk robes the fool was wearing and prayed the lesson would be over quickly.

“Settle down children. Now, I know you’re all excited, you're in the room with your hero - and no, Mr. Potter, I'm not talking about you,” the man had the audacity to say, before winking at Harry and causing him to clench his fists in anger in order to avoid hexing the smarmy bastard.

“However, I think I should do this right! Hello class, my name is Gilderoy Lockhart! Now, let’s get some facts up about me,” he said pulling out his wand and flicking it at the board, which was next to a giant portrait of the man.

On the board words appeared: ‘Gilderoy Lockhart: Order of Merlin Third Class, Honorary Member of the Dark Force Defense League, and five-time winner of Witch Weekly’s Most-Charming-Smile Award.’

The man in question read them aloud and added, “But I don’t talk about that. I didn’t get rid of the Bandon Banshee by smiling at her!” At the end he turned and looked expectantly at the class.

Harry was thankful that nobody laughed. Even Hannah and Susan seemed put-off by the man after his jab at Harry's fame. They both knew how much Harry hated to be reminded about his status in their world.

Just as the silence was becoming uncomfortable, the fool shook himself and pulled out a stack of papers with a flourish. Harry recognised them immediately: they were the same lilac scented tests he had given the first time around.

“Now to start, I think it’s best we have a little quiz, just to check if you’ve all read the books I assigned.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Surely such self endorsement shouldn’t be allowed,” he grumbled, making Neville giggle slightly as he was the only one who heard.

Seeing the test was a replica from the one in his memories, Harry sighed. Picking it up, he looked at it in disgust as he read the questions and placed a copy in his bag. He wondered how Lucius, being on the Board of Directors, would feel about the quality of their education.

Seeing what Harry had done, Neville and the girls all shot him confused looks, to which he just shrugged.

It wasn’t until the end of class when they sent their answers forward that Lockhart called him out.

“Mr. Potter, it seems you haven’t handed your test in. Couldn’t answer the questions?” the man asked. His smile was blindingly bright, making Harry wonder what charms he used as it couldn’t be
natural.
“Honestly sir, I didn’t want to waste the ink,” Harry said with faux innocence, shocking the class
into laughter, particularly the Slytherins. Harry had never acted out last year; he had been polite and
studious, so his words held even more of a punch to his peers.
Lockhart stilled at the laughter and shook himself, actually puffing up his chest before he spoke,
“Now see here. I understand you feel threatened by me; I mean, my fame clearly outshines your own
—”
Harry cut him off, “Actually professor, that has nothing to do with this. I simply refuse to take part
and waste ink on a quiz that holds no educational value at all.”
Lockhart stood with his mouth open and gaped for a few minutes, reminding Harry of a fish, while
he struggled to find words. “Detention with me tonight and ten points from Ravenclaw, Mr. Potter!”
he shouted.
Harry shrugged. “So be it.”
The class watched in fascination as Harry continued to daydream and refuse to answer any question
Lockhart asked him, resulting in a further ten points being lost by the end of class.
The Ravenclaws looked horrified but the Slytherins were almost losing their pureblood masks with
the amount of delight they found themselves in. By the time they were dismissed, Draco was actually
shaking with his suppressed laughter. Even the Gryffindors, who had followed Ron's example and
had not really taken to Harry, were laughing. The only two people who didn’t look pleased were
Ron and Lockhart himself.
“What was that, Potter!? What? You think you're too good for even the famous Gilderoy Lockhart?”
came Ron's voice as they entered the hallway.
Harry sighed and turned. “No, I refuse to partake in such a joke of a lesson. The man is clearly a
fraud and a fool,” Harry said.
“You just think you're so great—”
“No, I really don’t,” Harry said cutting him off with a glare. “Now, if you will excuse me Ronald, I
want to get to lunch. Dealing with idiots makes me hungry.”
Harry turned to leave, but, when he felt an oncoming hex, he span around and flicked his wand. The
hex rebounded off of his shield and hit Ron, who immediately started breaking out in boils.
“Attack me when my back is turned again and I will do much worse than rebound your pathetic little
hex,” Harry threatened, not realising how terrifying he looked.
His friends, who had drawn their wands, and even the Slytherins all sent Ron dark looks. The picture
they presented was making him shiver in fear and the pain from the boils intensified.
Straightening out, Harry shook himself and flicked his wrist so his wand went back into his holster.
“Come on guys, I don’t want to be late to lunch,” he said, walking ahead of them.
When they neared the hall, Luna appeared and draped herself against Harry.
“The dingle sprites told me you were angry, my Lord.”


“I’m not angry Little Moon, I just don’t seem to be able to suffer fools for as long as I could in the past,” Harry said.

“I see. You know, I’m sure Aithusia would love an entrée to go with her appetizer.”

Harry chuckled darkly, glad his friends were unable to understand what Luna was saying fully. “I’m sure she would, but I hear strong spices like ginger are bad for snakes.”

Luna just hummed as she let go of Harry and danced towards the Ravenclaw table; obviously, they would be sitting there today.

“You know, she's quite odd,” Draco said looking at Luna.

“I suppose. She just sees things differently from the rest of the world,” Harry said, hinting loosely.

“Are you sure she's not just one core short of a wand?” Pansy asked. She had taken a very Hermione-like approach to the blonde, meaning she thought her deluded and refused to be swayed.

“I'm quite certain,” Harry said, taking a seat next to Luna and helping himself to lunch.

“So Harry, what was all that about in Defence?” Neville asked, reminding the group that he was a member of the house of brave lions.

“I saw no reason to partake in such a ridiculous lesson. It's a sham and I honestly fear for the 5th and 7th years if they have that fool preparing them for their exams,” Harry said.

Draco and the Slytherins nodded and even Hannah and Susan looked like they agreed. “What are you going to do - refuse to go to his lessons?” Neville asked.

“I might just,” Harry said. “At least Quirrell knew his stuff; the stuttering was annoying, granted, but he did actually teach important and useful spells. I doubt Lockhart even knows how to perform a simple Expelliarmus, let alone enough to teach for an entire year.”

The group looked shocked. “But you can’t just not turn up, Harry. The teachers wouldn’t let you just skip an entire lesson,” Hannah said, looking worried.

“I think I’ll write to Sirius and go speak to Flitwick. I honestly do not wish to suffer through a year with that fool,” Harry said rather bluntly.

“You know what? Harry’s right,” Draco said. “I'm sure my father would love to know what a simpleton the old coot has hired.”

The idea of making Dumbledore look like a fool attracted Draco. He had grown up with stories of the man and he had picked up on his family’s dislike for him. He knew a lot of it stemmed from the war, but he had also heard about how unfair the man was - how he would look the other way for his favoured students while persecuting those he deemed Dark. His father called him the greatest manipulator in the world. Knowing Harry and his friends also disliked him, or at least didn’t trust him, was a great relief.

“And my mother,” Blaise said, sharing a look with Draco. Although Neutral, Blaise’s mother disliked Dumbledore and his hypocritical ways. He preaches equality and unity yet he enforces division.

“If his lessons are all like today’s, then I think my aunt would be interested as well, but maybe it was just a one off. He could get better,” Susan said, but it was obvious she didn’t really believe her
words. However, her loyalty was always something Harry respected, so he couldn’t blame her for her lingering hope.

Harry was internally cheering. If he got them to complain and highlight just how bad of a job Dumbledore was doing, then the old coot’s position would continue to be weakened. That was his main goal; sure, he would love to get out of the peacock’s lessons, but he already had a plan on how to deal with him.

“Do you really think it will work? Not turning up and writing home?” Neville asked looking at the group.

“Who knows? However, I'm going to see if Flitwick will take control of my detention anyway. I have charms next so I can talk to him then - I don’t want to even be near the man. Hopefully, if a few more people complain, he won’t last the year.”

“December 21st,” Luna said seemingly out of nowhere. The rest looked confused but Harry decided to note the date.

“No wand core,” Pansy said, looking at Luna like she was mental.

“Kelpie hair, actually,” Luna said dreamily, making Harry chuckle.

“I may also write to your father, Draco. As a Board member, I'm sure he would be interested.”

Draco nodded and smirked. “I'm sure he would.”

Once he was finished eating, Harry pulled out some parchment and started his letter to Sirius, deciding to include Remus in it as well as he didn’t want the wolf to feel left out.

~

Padfoot & Moony,

I'm sure you will be proud to know that Neville and Draco have fully embraced their inner pranksters and have made Ronald Weasley their main target. So far the boy has been stalked by imaginary spiders and tuned every House colour there is. They've even caught the attention of Hogwarts' champion pranking duo, so I'm sure they will continue to flourish. If you have any recommendations on how they can improve their game, then I'm sure Draco would love to hear from you.

However, I am writing to you for a reason. Did I ever go into much detail about my second year and the fool Lockhart? If I didn’t, then let me tell you the man is insufferable. All of his claimed achievements are the works of others. The man’s only real claim to fame being his skill at Obliviating his victims and taking credit for their success; his books are all fictional tales about the success of others which he butchers and twists into mockery.

It would seem that I'm not as willing to suffer fools as I once was and I may have accidentally started a boycott of his lessons among my year mates - or at the very least, my friends. However, in my defence, the man is a fool. I doubt he could even disarm a dummy standing a foot in front of him and I refuse to suffer through an entire year of his lessons.

Sirius, hopefully you've managed to once again become a Board member as Dumbledore's skills at hiring teachers is ridiculous. Perhaps you should apply Moony, you really were one of the best teachers I had.
Lovingly yours,

Harry

~

Happy with his letter, Harry also penned one for Lucius, knowing the man would happily snap at the opportunity to discredit Dumbledore. That was one thing about the man that hadn’t changed. Although he seemed willing and actually happy to accept Harry and Sirius, Lucius still detested Dumbledore. Harry was sure that his own treatment at the old coot’s hands had added to this, but Lucius was still happy to hate the Headmaster.

~

Lucius,

I’m sure, as a member of the Board of Governors and as a parent, you are well invested in the quality of teaching that goes on in Hogwarts. Therefore, I thought it best to write to you and let you know what a fool Dumbledore, in all his esteemed wisdom, has hired. The man, Gilderoy Lockhart, is perhaps the greatest fraud I have ever met.

His written works are, at best, an admission to his crimes - taking the credit for the actions of others - and, at worst, a collection of poorly written fiction. The man has no skill or knowledge to pass on.

*Included is his idea of a test. I thought you would appreciate an example of his form of education.

As you can see, the man is a fool. However, Dumbledore trusts him to shape the minds of children - he trusts this buffoon to help the 5th and 7th years to pass their exams! The Headmaster is clearly deluded; therefore, I thought it would be best to write to you and inform you of this, as both a parent and a member of the Board.

Hopefully you will take action and do as you see fit,

Harrison J Potter-Black

Heir of the most Ancient and Noble House of Potter
Heir of the most Ancient and Noble House of Black

~

Happy with his letters, Harry sealed them and placed charms so that they would only be legible to the intended recipients. He didn’t want his mail getting intercepted and giving away his clear disdain for Dumbledore, not to mention his letter to Sirius and Remus talking about his past life.

Seeing the time, Harry, along with Hannah and Susan, left to get to Charms. The others had Transfiguration together.

Walking into the classroom, Harry took a seat next to Padma and sent the girl a smile. This term they would be working on blasting and fixing charms, as well as cleaning charms. However, before they could get onto the practical work, they would have to get through all of the theory, much to Harry's annoyance.

As the lesson was coming to an end, Harry stood and turned to face Hannah and Susan.

“I’m going to talk to Flitwick, you guys go on ahead to the library without me and I’ll meet you
“Okay, Harry,” Susan said, sending him a smile.

“We’ll save you a seat,” Hannah promised.

“Ah, Mr. Potter, what seems to be the problem?” Filius asked when he realised Harry hadn’t left the class alongside his friends.

“Well sir, if you haven’t already found out, I had a bit of trouble this afternoon with Professor Lockhart. I was wondering if there was any way I could be excused from his lessons in the future?”

Filius looked at Harry in shock. He didn’t really blame the boy, he also found Gilderoy to be a fool, but never had he had a child actually ask to be excused from a lesson.

“I’m not sure, Harry, I would need to ask. Is there a solid reason why you feel the need to be excused?”

“Other than the fact the man is clearly a fraud who has no idea what he is doing? Not really. His comments about me and my apparent fame I can ignore. However, I would rather not be forced to - I know that I would be able to pass the end of year tests without his so-called teaching.” Harry made sure to slightly sneer the word professor and teaching, as he felt the man was undeserving of such a title.

“I see,” Filius said. “I will look into it for you, but I expect you will have to go, at least for now. It is a core subject.”

Harry sighed. “I thought as much.”

“Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“I was wondering, as my head of House, would it be possible for you take over my detention with him tonight?”

Filius felt his eyes widen. Harry getting a detention was very unlike him. “I can. However, how did you manage to get a detention? You didn’t get a single one last year.”

Harry made sure to look sheepish. “Well, I refused to take part in a quiz he gave - it was ridiculous! It was a quiz about him, his favourite colour, ideal birthday gift. It had no educational value at all.”

Filius nodded. “I see, that is troubling.” How such a fool had gotten a job teaching, he would never know. What was Dumbledore thinking? He would have to set up extra lessons on the weekends for his 5th and 7th years. He didn’t want them falling behind and failing their exams thanks to Dumbledore's ridiculous hiring standards.

“I will take your detention tonight, please come to my office after dinner,” he instructed Harry.

“Thank you, sir.”

~

Meeting up with his friends in the library, Harry was happy to see Luna had joined them for their study session. Although a first year, she really did have some insightful, if not always relevant, tidbits of wisdom to add to their group.
“Everything alright, Harry?” Neville asked as he noticed his best friend’s arrival. He had initially been afraid when he realised their growing friend group, but Harry had quickly waylaid his fears, making sure to treat Neville exactly the same as before.

Harry smiled. “I'm fine. Flitwick said he’d take over my detention for me tonight so I don’t have to see Lockhart and that he'd look in to seeing if I can self study for Defence this year.”

“That’s great, Harry,” Susan said.

“Hopefully father will do something about the man quickly,” Draco sneered.

“My Lord, there’s a pair of nargles infested lions heading this way,” Luna said, cutting into their conversation and making the rest of the group send her odd looks. They had started to notice her habit of calling Harry her Lord.

Harry sighed. “They wouldn’t happen to be redhead nargles would they, Little moon?”

Luna blinked owlishly at him. “They would. Have you been listening to the the blibbering humdingers as well, my Lord?”

“I only listen to you, Luna,” Harry said, making the girl smile and the others share looks of confusion.

Looking up, Harry could see that Ron and Ginny were walking towards the tables he and his friends had taken over.

“Not again,” he grumbled under his breath, wondering what the two were up to and how they planned on enticing him this time. However, much to his surprise, the two ignored him and went to Luna.

“Hi, Luna,” Ginny said, smiling at the girl.

Luna blinked, “Hello, Ginevra.”

“Call me Ginny. We’re friends after all,” Ginny said.

“Are we?” Luna asked. Although they lived near each other and had been forced to have play dates as children, Luna knew they had never been friends. Ginny had actually bullied her slightly as a child, mocking her and her beliefs and calling her crazy.

“Of course, silly,” Ginny said, her voice sounding slightly strained.

“Yeah, you’ve been friends for years,” Ron added, nodding his head and giving Luna an incredulous look.

“Oh,” Luna said, blinking owlishly.

“So, who’re your friends Luna?” Ginny asked, pretending to just then see the rest of the group.

Harry snorted slightly under his breath.

Luna looked around the group saying the names of people as she pointed at them. When she got to Harry, she smiled. “And this is Harrison Potter-Black.”
Ginny acted shocked. “Oh, I've always wanted to meet you,” she gushed, batting her eyelashes at Harry.

“That's nice.”

“You're a hero, how you defeated You-Know-Who,” Ginny said, still sending Harry smiles and fluttering her lashes.

“Have you got something in your eye?” Neville blurted out, going red when everybody turned to look at him. Harry had to bite his lip to stop the laughter that threatened to escape.

“What?” Ginny asked.

“You keep blinking,” Neville said, making Harry's grip on his laughter fail and resulting in him almost crying.

“What's so funny?!” Ron demanded, affronted when he realised Harry was laughing at his sister. The Slytherins, who had also realised what was happening, were also laughing.

“N-nothing,” Harry said, trying to contain his mirth.

Ginny looked just as angry as her brother, her face patchy with red. “I don’t have anything in my eyes!” she said angrily.

“Oh,” Neville said, clueless as to why Harry and the rest were laughing.

Realising she had lost her current chance, Ginny sent the blond Gryffindor a dark look before forcing an obviously false smile on her face. “Well, I’ll catch you later Luna - and I would love to get to know you Harry, perhaps we could even be friends,” she said, batting her eyelashes once again, making the Slytherins who had started to calm down start laughing all over again.

Turning with a huff, the two redheads soon vacated the library and Harry regained control. “That was awful,” he said, once he finally had his breath back.

Neville looked around. “I don’t get it.”

Susan sighed. “She was obviously flirting with Harry.”


“God, Harry, the way she was looking at you. You could be the next Mr. and Mrs. Weasel,” Draco said, still laughing.

“Please,” Harry said, before tilting his head. “Then again, I have heard the older brothers are quite attractive.”

Draco blanched. “Don’t even joke about such things, Merlin. Could you image being a part of such a family?”

Harry shook his head. “I actually really like the twins, and I'm sure the older brothers are okay. It's just the youngest that are awful.”

“Please, blood traitors the lot of them. They might as well be muggles with how they act,” Draco said.

“There’s nothing wrong with muggleborns or even muggles. Muggleborns have just as much magic
as us, they just need to be better educated about our society. We shouldn’t blame them for being ignorant, we should teach them our traditions, holidays, and laws. If we brought them into our society earlier and educated them before Hogwarts then there wouldn’t be such a big gap or divide. I mean, that's the main problem. It’s not that they don’t have our power, it’s that they just don’t know a lot about our world,” Harry said.

“As if. Mudbloods will never be as powerful as us,” Pansy sneered.

Harry felt his magic crackle with rage. “My mother was a muggleborn witch,” he said, his emerald green eyes piercing into her. 

Draco felt the air suddenly condense and gulped when he saw the look in Harry's eyes. The others could all feel it and stared, shocked at the power he radiated. Neville and the girls were shocked the most - they had spent the entire of last year with Harry and had never felt such raw magic coming from him.

Taking a breath, Harry tightened his shields before he spoke, “Never use that word again. There is nothing wrong with being muggleborn or muggle-raised. We all have magic and that is what’s important—being witches and wizards, celebrating our holidays, our traditions, our culture. We’re not better than the muggles but we are different and that's okay. We all need each other to work together and have a better future.”

Harry had read a few books on wizarding customs while he was searching for answers during his first life. He had found that witches and wizards traditionally celebrated the Olde Pagan holidays as magic was more powerful during those times for rituals and spells. It was only in the last 100 or so years that celebrating their holidays had stopped being so public. Instead, places like Hogwarts started to celebrate Christian holidays in order to make their muggleborn students more at ease. Now it was illegal to celebrate some, as certain holidays required blood in their celebration rituals - any form of blood magic was deemed illegal and had to be controlled by the ministry. Harry knew this didn’t stop most families from celebrating but now it was done in secret.

That's where the term blood traitor had come from. It was used to shame witches and wizards who turned on their blood and embraced the Christian holidays and muggle world, denouncing their own traditions. To be honest, he couldn’t blame people for being angry about this and ostracising families like the Weasleys. Harry hadn’t understood last time why Arthur was so looked down on, but now he knew it was because he had abandoned all tradition and culture. However, he knew that Bill had embraced the Olde ways. His wedding had included them and he knew Fleur, as a quarter veela, had be adamant that their daughter would grow up celebrating them. Harry had no idea about the twins or Charlie and Percy, but he knew Ron and Ginny had sneered at the thought of religion. They said that the rituals were all Dark magic and evil and Harry had, at the time, believed them, not knowing any better or being interested enough to care.

“You have to admit, Harry, it’s the mud-muggleborns who are the ones that make it hard to celebrate our traditions. I mean, look at Hogwarts! We have to celebrate Christmas now instead of Yule because they do. Dumbledore wants them to feel comfortable, meaning our lifestyle, our history, is lost because of them. I mean, Merlin, it’s illegal to even celebrate Samhain properly now!”

“That’s not their fault, it’s Dumbledore’s. They come into our world and they know nothing. If they were taught, then it wouldn’t be so bad. If they were introduced into our lifestyle, our traditions and culture earlier they would integrate and be part of it. And you can’t blame them for that ridiculous law - that's, once again, Dumbledore and his influence. He's the one who said all blood magic is evil and Dark, the bloody hypocrite.”

“I doubt they would even want to learn,” Pansy sneered. She, like Draco, had grown up celebrating
the Olde holidays in secret with her family and hated having to hide their traditions and culture - having to act like it is wrong.

“They’re not even given a chance to. There used to be classes, but now they have nothing,” Harry argued.

“You’re right,” Blaise said. He had been listening to them argue and he could admit that Harry had some valid points.

Draco looked at his best friend, surprised that Blaise agreed. Although his family was Neutral, Blaise himself was rather Dark. He had grown up like Draco and Pansy, celebrating the Olde ways, so Draco was surprised at his friend.

“Thank you. We shouldn’t condemn them just because they don’t know better. They’re taught nothing about our world apart from what they learn here or in books. Books which, might I add, are not easy to find or exactly clear. Most of you have all been raised in similar ways. You’ve been brought up with magic, celebrating the Pagan holidays, knowing our history. Muggleborns and muggle-raised don’t have that. Everything is new and it’s people like Dumbledore who pander to them and refuse to teach them our traditions and holidays that make it so they never learn, make it so our world slowly loses its rich culture. It’s those stupid laws making it illegal for us to properly celebrate that are the problem.”

“I’ve never thought of it like that,” Susan said, looking shocked.

“That’s why the Weasleys are blood traitors. They turn their back on our traditions.”

Harry couldn’t argue with that. “They do and, in my opinion, they shouldn’t. We’re not muggles.”

“Precisely,” Draco said, looking smug.

“What about you, though?” Pansy suddenly asked.

“What about me?” Harry asked right back.

“You’re not ignorant - you act like one of us,” Draco pointed out.

“Perhaps that's true - I am muggle-raised. However, unlike them, I have an eidetic memory. Therefore, I was able to remember and learn magical customs, history, and traditions easily. I also spent the entire summer before 1st year in our society, so I was prepared. Many of the other muggleborns and muggle-raised don’t have my advantages. I also now live with a pureblood Lord, who is my blood adopted father.”

“So you think we should help them - muggleborns, I mean - instead of looking down on them?” Draco asked, the word help showing his clear reluctance.

“Yes, they just need to be taught. We shouldn’t sacrifice our world for them, they just need to be shown how to embrace it.”

The three Slytherins shared a look: Blaise clearly the most willing to see Harry's point of view. Draco, however, did look like he was considering Harry's words. Harry's other friends all looked intrigued, especially with how Hannah and Susan were whispering together.

“You’ve planted the seeds now, my Lord. Soon they will grow and flourish,” Luna whispered quietly so only Harry heard.
Harry smiled. Perhaps making Draco see the error in his ways wouldn’t be as hard as he had feared.

Chapter End Notes

Big thank you to my beta Miisticalwrites!
Hope you’re enjoying the story, the next update will probably be Tuesday...
Comments & kudos are loved!
~ Annie
Traditions

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

October 1992, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

September quickly turned into October and Harry was soon watching the trees start to change. He found himself happy he had stood up to Lockhart in his first lesson. After serving his detention with Flitwick, which was really just him sitting in the Charms professor’s office doing his homework for an hour after dinner, he quickly inspired the rest of the school to question the man’s ability and suitability to teach. Owls and howlers had soon started to arrive.

However, today topped it when he caught sight of the headline of the Prophet. Reading, he could feel the smirk forming: Hogwarts: From World-Class to Classless!

“Did you hear? The entire 7th year class is now refusing to go to his lessons. They say they would rather teach themselves,” Blaise said as he came to sit down, paper in his hands.

They were currently at lunch and had decided to sit at the Slytherin table for the first time. The older years were shooting Harry and some of their group odd looks but they were ignoring him for the most part. It had gotten out how close the patriarch of the Malfoy family was to the Potter-Black heir and, adding Sirius and his reputation to the mix as well as Harry's unexpected attitude and intelligence, even the older year Slytherins were willing to give him a chance.

Harry smirked - he had gone back to Defence only once since his first lesson and, predictably, he had found it to be ridiculous. Lockhart had spent half an hour talking about heroic battles he had fought in, claiming to have done such outrageous and practically impossible feats of magic that Harry had feared his eyes would roll out of his head. It was laughable. The man was a fool; he could hardly disarm a dummy, let alone engage in a one versus five all out duel with vampires.

Even his friends had started to follow his example by going to their Head of House and asking for self-study. In Neville’s case, as McGonagall had flat out refused, he had taken to feeling ‘unwell’
whenever Defence came about.

Harry had heard back from Lucius a few days after he had sent his letter.


Harrison,

I thank you for bringing such a shocking problem to my notice. Draco has also written to me and shared his concerns and I am appalled at the quality of staff Dumbledore has hired.

As a member of the Board and, more importantly, a parent, I shall do everything in my power to see to it that you do not have to put up with such standards of teaching for long. It’s shameful that Hogwarts, which was once heralded as the best school for witchcraft and wizardry, has let its standards fall so low. Hopefully, I shall have this outrageous situation dealt with and you will not have to suffer for long, however I fear the headmaster will foil any attempts I make to rectify the situation. Therefore my actions may take longer than initially expected.

I am grateful for the example of teaching material that you sent, it shall go a long way in proving the quality of the lessons. Hopefully the rest of your teachers and classes are going well and, as always, if you ever need any help or advice, I shall always be willing to offer it.

Lucius Malfoy


Meanwhile

September, Grimmauld Place, London

Sirius laughed as he read the letter Harry had sent him—the boy really did have the best qualities from them all. He had Lily’s brains, James’ sense of humour, and the Black cunning. How he had managed to orchestrate a school wide boycott he would never know; that level of manipulation was simply obscene.

Remus, recognising the laugh, sighed. “What’s he done this time?”

Sirius grinned. “I’ll be honest, Remy - how he managed to persuade the hat not to put him in Slytherin I will never know.”

“Oh?”

“He’s only managed to get the entire school to boycott their Defence lessons. Apparently Dumbledore hired Gilderoy Lockhart and Harry is refusing to go. Why didn’t we do something like that?”

Remus laughed. “We wouldn’t have been able to pull it off. How on earth did that fool get a job teaching children?”

“Dumbledore must be getting desperate.”

“He probably spent the entire summer focused on us and Harry and left it until the last moment, the manipulative old goat.”

“You know, Harry did mention that I should try to take my seat on the School Governors’ Board.
I'm sure that with the right push, Lucius and I could make Dumbledore's job a lot harder.”

Remus nodded. Although he was still wary around the former Death Eater, he could recognize the fact that Lucius Malfoy was an awfully useful ally and he did appear to genuinely like Harry.

~

Lucius Malfoy had just finished replying to the letters from both his son and Harrison when a House-Elf popped up saying Lord Black wished to speak to him through the floo.

Standing, Lucius walked to the parlour and saw Sirius’ face in the green flames.

“Sirius, won’t you please step through? I do hate to talk through the fire.”

“Erm, sure. I'm not dressed for company though,” Sirius said, looking at his black trousers and dark red shirt. He knew that to purebloods like Lucius, one wasn’t dressed unless in robes. Sirius, however, had fallen into the habit of not wearing them in the house, which didn’t bother either Remus or Harry.

“It is fine, we are family after all,” Lucius said, stepping back so Sirius could walk through.

Sirius stepped into the manor and wordlessly removed any soot from his clothing.

“Let’s take this to my office,” Lucius said, motioning Sirius to follow him.

He hadn’t had chance to talk to the man much on his own; there had always been a buffer between them, either Harry, Remus, or Narcissa. Therefore, he didn’t quite know how to deal with him. He could still remember Sirius from the last war and how he had fought so fearlessly for the Light and his reputation had been feared by Lucius and the other Death Eaters. All Blacks were famed for their duelling - even Narcissa could be deadly if the situation arose.

However, he did recognize that Sirius had changed; the betrayal by Dumbledore at the end of the war had left its mark on the man. Yes, he had recovered physically, magically, and mentally, but he was different. Sirius was much more like the boy Lucius had known growing up. He seemed to no longer be pretending to be a Light wizard and seemed willing to actually accept himself and his magic. Lucius suspected Harry’s influence as he had no doubt that the boy was as Dark as they come.

“Would you like something to drink?” Lucius offered, ever the good host.

“Perhaps a cup of tea,” Sirius said.

Lucius clicked his fingers and summoned an elf. “Two cups of tea,” he ordered before turning back. “Not that I am not happy to have you here, for I am. However, I do find myself at a loss at to the reason for your visit.”

“Right. Well, I'm sure you've heard about Lockhart and Harry's influence on the school resulting in a boycott?”

“Yes, both Harrison and Draco wrote to me.”

“Well, I'm sure you're aware that as Lord Black, I have a seat on the Board of Governors.”

“Indeed,” Lucius said, now seeing the reason.

“I was hoping you would put forward my recommendation so that I can claim my seat. I want to help
Harry to get rid of Lockhart and, as a governor, I would have more power to do so. What was Dumbledore thinking, hiring that man?”

“I will be happy to put your name forward,” Lucius said. “As for Lockhart - well. I doubt he will remain for the entire year after we inform the others of his teaching standards.”

“How was he hired anyway? I thought the governors had a say in new teachers,” Sirius asked.

“We should. However, Dumbledore, in his esteemed wisdom, thinks himself above that rule. And, as the Defence position always needs to be refilled, the Board grew tired of fighting him and allowed him his choice. But now I think we shall be able to argue our point and have the power returned to us,” Lucius said, his smirk dark as he thought about getting one up on Dumbledore.

“That man really doesn’t know when to stop,” Sirius grumbled.

“Oh? I had believed your business with him is finished.”

“He is still obsessed with Harry. I worry for him now, being at the school with him,” Sirius confessed.

“I’m sure he will be fine. From what I have seen and know, Harry isn’t somebody who needs protection.”

“I know, but still it’s a father’s job to worry, right?”

“It is indeed.”

~

October 1992, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

After receiving the letter, Harry noticed an increase in the number of students questioning the quality of teaching, particularly in Defence. It looked like Lucius had brought to light just how bad it was to the other parents and Board members and they in turn questioned their children. The results were obvious with a record number of students ‘forgetting’ and feeling ‘unwell’ during Defence, leading to low attendance.

All because of his boycott, Harry had five detentions with Flitwick; detentions in which he was allowed to learn Defence from the textbooks or given practical demonstrations with the former duelling champion. Often there would be other members of his House, even those from different years, in his detentions as they too started to avoid the peacock’s lessons.

However, Harry soon found the answer to his problems. Looking up the school rules, Harry found something that hadn’t actually been used in the last 200 years: “If a student feels unable to attend a lesson, be it for personal, medical, or religious reasons, then they can be excused from attendance with the understanding that they will self study in preparation for the end of year examinations. This option is available with the permission of said student’s legal guardian and Head of House, as long as the materials requested for the lesson are available”.

After Harry shared this information with Flitwick and the rest of the students, he wasn’t surprised to see the number of absences increase. Therefore, when he received a note from Dumbledore asking for his presence, Harry wasn’t surprised. He had been shocked when he hadn’t been immediately called up to the man’s office at the start of term; he had thought the man would want to get his claws back into him immediately after losing his control of him to Sirius in the summer.
Harry,

I would appreciate if you would join me for a quick chat and a spot of tea this afternoon.

Oh, and today I am enjoying acid pops.

Albus Dumbledore,

Order of Merlin, First Class
Grand Sorcerer
Chief Warlock
Supreme Mugwump of the International Confed. of Wizards

what did surprise Harry was the use of all his titles. Then again, maybe he was hoping to intimidate him…?

Walking up to the office once his lessons were finished for the day, Harry sighed when he heard his name being called.

“Oh, there you are Harry,” Ginny Weasley said, practically running at him.

“Ginevra,” Harry greeted coolly. She had taken to following him around like a love sick puppy. It not only grated on his nerves, but also his friends; she would butt into their conversations and be extremely rude and argue with them like Ron had in the previous year. However, unlike him, she was better at keeping her cool. This made her even more annoying in his opinion as it usually meant he had to be in her presence for longer.

“I’ve told you before, silly, call me Ginny,” she said, latching onto his arm and smiling sweetly up at him.

Harry hid his grimace of disgust and freed his arm from her. “What do you want, Ginevra?”

Ginny fought to keep calm. She had been flirting with him for over a month and yet he still refused to even call her Ginny. Ron had warned her that he was a dirty snake, but she had thought she would be able to win him over. She was beautiful, after all, and any boy would be lucky to have her; her mom had told her that all her life and she knew it was true. She even looked like Harry’s mother - they would look perfect together, just like his parents. Dumbledore had promised her that she would get him, that his fame and fortune would be hers if she could get him to fall in love with her, and she would not fail. She deserved all of it, everything.

“I want to spend some time with you. You’re my friend, after all,” she said, making sure to bat her eyelashes like her mother had taught her.

Harry fought to not roll his eyes. “You don’t know me, Ginevra.”

“But I could. I would love to get to know you; surely you want to get to know me better as well?”

“Not particularly,” Harry said honestly.

Ginny barely contained her shriek of fury and instead let out a high-pitched laugh. “You’re so funny, Harry.”
Harry did roll his eyes then. “I wasn’t joking.”

Ginny was at a loss for words. Seeing this, Harry placed even more distance between them. “I have to go, the headmaster wishes to see me.”

Ginny nodded and smiled brightly. “That's nice, you should go talk to him. He really is such a great wizard.”

“Indeed.”

“Well, I’ll let you go then, Harry.”

Harry just nodded and quickly walked away from the persistent redhead. No matter how blunt he was with her, she kept coming back.

~

Walking into the headmaster’s office, Harry let his eyes wander over the portraits of the previous headmasters. When he spotted Phineas, he sent the man a sly smirk and got a matching one in response. The portrait had heard what his heir had done and was proud of the Slytherin move; Harrison James Potter-Black really was a force to be reckoned with. How he forced Albus to lose his genial mask was hilarious.

“Harry my boy, it’s good to see you,” Albus said, eyes twinkling madly. He was struggling to resist his desire to curse the damned child.

“Headmaster,” Harry greeted, his voice neutral. He himself fought to not show his anger at being called ‘my boy’ or simply being in the man’s presence.

“Take a seat, my boy. Would you like some tea or perhaps a lemon drop?”

Harry looked at the offered sweets with barely concealed disgust. He wondered idly if the man doped them as he always offered them out.

“No thank you, headmaster. What is it you wanted to speak with me about?” Harry asked, his voice still neutral.

Albus held back his snarl - how dare the little brat talk to him like that. Why couldn’t he do as he was told? He was ruining decades worth of plans and making his life much more difficult. Thanks to the boy he had the ministry investigating him and he was barely keeping hold of his titles—both Chief Warlock and as the Head of the ICW. Then, to make matters worse, he had somehow gotten the entire student body to boycott their Defence lessons. The boy was turning out to be a menace; and now that he had his Heir ring, Albus was forced to stop his magical manipulations. Then, to top it all off, the Board was on his back, demanding they get involved to fix the issue and making him look incompetent. Lucius Malfoy, with the help of Sirius - who had turned into just another Dark arts worshiping fool like the rest of his no good family - were both behind the troubles he was facing with the directors. Their alliance was just showing the world that Black really was just as bad as the rest of his blood.

“I simply wished to clear the air. I know you may hold some anger and even resentment towards me because of the actions of your relatives; however, I promise you Harry that I never knew,” he lied. Had he known the little brat would turn out like this, he would have made his relatives beat him harder.

Harry withheld his snort of contempt. “I see.”
“Had I known, I would have been much more involved in your life. However, I wanted you to grow up to be a normal happy boy, not bogged down by your fame or the stress that came with it. You needed protection from the magical word.”

“Still, you never once thought to check?” Harry said, watching as the portraits of the other headmasters all sent Dumbledore dark glances. He could hear some mutterings, but he focused his attention on the lying old man in front of him instead of listening to them bad mouth the present headmaster.

“No, and that was a mistake on my part. I truly am sorry,” Albus said, making sure to send Harry a sad smile. ‘Sorry you didn’t turn out right, you no good brat,’ Albus thought.

“What’s done is done. I would rather move on,” Harry said.

Albus internally smirked, thinking Harry meant he was happy to move on and forgive his actions.

“Excellent. That's very mature of you.”

“Is that all, headmaster?” Harry asked, wanting to leave before he cursed the old man.

“Sadly not,” Albus said. He was furious with the boy; he had just received another howler and it was all the brat’s fault. “Now Harry, I must say I am disappointed in you. Last year we had no issues with your behaviour. However, this year you have been acting out. I can’t help but wonder if perhaps your home life is the issue.”

Harry growled under his breath. “Acting out, sir?” Harry couldn’t believe he wanted to blame Sirius and Remus for his acting out. Sure, Harry was setting more things in motion this year, but the fact the man wished to blame his guardians infuriated him. He had heard from Sirius and knew he and Lucius had started to work on the Board of Governors and together were weakening Dumbledore’s image.

“Yes, Harry. I know it is you behind the Defence Against the Dark Arts boycott,” he said, sending the boy a disappointed look.

“Oh, professor?”

“Don’t act as though you don’t know what I’m talking about. It was you who first started this and now I am being pelted with letters and owls demanding to know why students are not attending their lessons. Your actions have left me in quite a situation, Harry.”

“I'm sorry about that professor, that wasn’t my intention—” Harry said before being cut off.

“Good, then you will return to your lessons. You must know how important Defence Against the Dark Arts is; you of all people should realise how the Dark arts are evil.”

Harry fought to not narrow his eyes. “As I was saying, it wasn’t my intention, but I will not be attending Mr. Lockhart's lessons. The man is a fraud.”

Albus narrowed his eyes. “Detention, Mr. Potter. Such words have serious consequences. Now, you will return to his lessons or you will find yourself in even more trouble. Do I make myself clear?”

“I'm sorry, headmaster, but I will not,” Harry said. “I am happy to sit for the end of year tests now to prove I do not need to attend his so called lessons.”

“That is enough. You are a child and you will obey me.”
Harry fought to not react. “Actually, professor, if you look up the Hogwarts school rules, you will see that a student can forgo attending a lesson if they have consent for both their Head of House and their guardian. As long as they spend sufficient time self studying the course content with the appropriate materials, the student is allowed to skip a class. I have both, therefore I will not be attending his classes. And as all the materials for his lessons are books, then every other student is able to do the same as long as they have permission.”

Albus clenched his teeth to contain his hiss of fury. “I see,” he said. ‘How dare he? Now I’ll have students refusing to go to classes all the time!’

Harry contained his glee at watching the old man lose his cool. “Now, is that all professor?”

“Yes, you may go now.”

Harry nodded and stood, calmly walking away from the old man.

After the door had closed and Albus felt the wards attached to the guardian let Harry leave, he exploded in anger. The boy was nothing like he was supposed to be! Albus feared that most, if not all, of his compulsions had failed. It seemed like only his magical blocks had remained as the boy did not appear to be overly strong. Picking up a plate, Albus sent it crashing into the wall, the destruction satisfying him momentarily.

A soft trilling caught his attention and Albus waved his wand, dissolving the concealment charm. Inside a magically binding cage was Fawkes. The phoenix had once been his familiar but had slowly stopped listening to him, and now Albus had to resort to caging the bird and binding his power. The golden eyes of the phoenix drilled into him, the look both condemning and sad.

~

After his meeting with Dumbledore, nothing really exciting happened for Harry. He soon found October was nearing its end and the Halloween feast was fast approaching.

Harry and his friends had once again taken to haunting the library. It was one of the few places in the castle where groups from different Houses could congregate together without issue.

It also helped that every time Ginny would appear, Harry was able to easily lose her in the stacks. She would pop up out of nowhere and attach herself to his person at random intervals. Draco found it hilarious and kept offering to burn his robes every time Harry managed to escape.

Realising how much time had already past, Harry soon started thinking about Halloween, but more importantly Samhain. Harry was interested in expanding his knowledge of wizarding traditions and customs. He had read a few books before he had been sent back, so he already had a good base of knowledge; however, when he had been arguing with Draco and his friends he realised that while he did know the basics, he didn’t actually know much about the actual holiday traditions and how to celebrate them.

Harry knew Samhain was one of the banned holidays - well, not so much as banned, but its original celebration ritual was made illegal. Harry knew it contained blood, so Dumbledore and his Light followers had worked to have it made illegal along with all Blood magic. Now Blood magic was ministry controlled and regulated. Another example of magic Dumbledore deemed unfit for the world alongside Blood magic was Soul magic. Alchemy, the Dark arts, ancient history, spell crafting, wizarding studies, political studies, and magical languages were banned too; all of which had disappeared from the Hogwarts curriculum. Well, Soul magic had never been on there; however,
all of the books on the subject had been removed from the library.

Looking up the traditional celebration, Harry found himself intrigued and curious. The ritual itself was beautiful and Harry felt his anger and hatred at the man grow. ‘How could he ban something so magical from the world?’ The celebration consisted of creating a rune circle, within the centre of which a bowl of purified water is placed. Then all those attending who wanted to reach out to their ancestors and deceased relatives simply added a drop of their blood. Once that is done, the water is set alight and those whose blood is added are able to converse with the dead through visions. Although it is noted as converse, it’s not actual conversations which occur, but more visions and feelings. These visions vary in length but once they are over, participants usually feel purified, their magic stronger and more settled.

Reading the passage, Harry growled. How could Dumbledore see this as Dark? Was the man truly so blinded by his fear of Dark magic that he couldn’t see the beauty and benefit of such a ritual?

“What’s got you scowling?” Neville asked, noticing Harry's face as he finished reading.

“I was just thinking about Samhain and how ridiculous it is that we’re unable to celebrate it properly without breaking the law.”

“I know. Father and some of his political allies have been trying for years to get the law revoked, but Dumbledore and his goons won’t allow it. He says it’s Dark magic and allowing people, especially children, will tempt them towards the Dark arts and lead them down a dangerous path,” Draco sneered, showing how ludicrous he thought the law was.

Harry snorted. “That’s ridiculous.”

“I know. This will be the first year that I won’t be able to take part in a proper celebration,” Draco admitted, obviously sad and annoyed by the fact.

“Same here - even my gran thinks the laws are ridiculous,” Neville said, shocking most of the group.

“I didn’t know you celebrated Samhain in the traditional way, Neville,” Pansy said. “I would have thought your family would follow Dumbledore's example.” Her words thankfully didn’t come across as malicious, simply curious.

Neville blushed and looked around quickly. Seeing his nerves, Harry flicked his wrist and cast a privacy charm around himself and his friends.

“Thanks, Harry,” Neville said, now used to Harry's casual use of spells well beyond their age group.

“Wow, that's a fifth year spell,” Blaise said, looking at Harry in shock.

“What can I say - people call me a prodigy.” Harry said plainly, smirking to show he was joking. “Anyway Neville, you were saying?”

“Oh, yeah. Well, even though my family is Light, we still celebrate the Olde ways. The House of Longbottom is an Ancient and Noble one, and my gran thinks it’s important that, as the Heir, I knew all of the proper traditions and customs. Olde magic is Neutral, it’s only in the last few years that it was deemed Dark and banned.”

“My aunt said our family used to do the same, we only stopped because of her job. She said she couldn’t disobey the law being the Head of the DMLE, even if she didn’t agree with it,” Susan said.

“Same here,” Hannah added.
“But you would celebrate if you had the chance?” Harry asked, curious as an idea formed.

The girls shared a glance before nodding. “Yes, I’ve always been curious,” Susan confessed.

Harry nodded and hummed as inspiration hit him. “I think I may have a way for us to celebrate, here at Hogwarts.”

“How? You know if we get caught Dumbledore would happily throw us out. He’s been in a particularly foul mood ever since you found that old school rule,” Blaise said.

“Yeah, Blaise is right. The headmaster has been watching you like a hawk, Harry,” Neville said.

“The Room of Requirement,” Harry said.

“The room of what?” Hannah asked.

“The Come and Go room,” Luna said, smiling and nodding.

“It’s a secret room on the 7th floor. If you walk in front of the dancing troll painting three times, it will appear and provide you with whatever you need. If you wanted a bedroom, it would be one, a training room, or even a fully stocked potions lab.”

“But wouldn’t the wards pick up on the ritual?” Pansy asked, thinking about the possible failures. She would love to celebrate, but only if she wouldn’t be caught.

“No, the room hides you from the wards,” Harry said. They had found that out during the second war.

“But what about the rune circle? None of us actually know runes,” Draco asked.

“Leave that to me,” Harry said. He had looked at the book and was sure he would be able to recreate a working rune circle. His memory of the book was firmly in place.

~

**October 31st 1992, the Room of Requirement**

Harry sat back and admired the circle of runes he had drawn. Pushing his magic into them, he was happy when he felt the circle complete itself.

He had written to Sirius and told him about his plans to perform the traditional ceremony and hadn’t been shocked to learn that both he and Remus would also be taking part in a ceremony with the Malfoys. Sirius confessed that he and James, and eventually Remus and Lily, had always performed the Olde rites together while at school. Harry hadn’t been that shocked to learn that; both his father and Sirius were from Olde families and they were obviously not completely biased about Blood magic as they had used a blood adoption.

Thinking about what else he needed, Harry was happy when the room conjured a bowl full of purified water for him.

“Thank you,” he whispered, speaking to Hogwarts herself. Harry felt a slight warmth wash over him for a second and wondered if he was just imagining it or if the castle really was sentient.

Casting a quick Tempus, Harry saw that the first group of his friends should be arriving soon. He had told them to come in two separate groups just in case people were watching. Draco, Pansy, and
Blaise appeared first.

“This is amazing,” Blaise said when he entered the room. “It can really turn into anything we would need?”

“Yes,” Harry told him, smiling.

“Merlin, Harry, did you draw this?” Pansy asked once she was finished studying the rune circle.

“I did,” Harry admitted.

“It’s amazing. I didn’t think you had celebrated Samhain before.”

“I haven’t but I saw a picture of the needed rune circle.”

“Wait, you drew this from memory?” Pansy asked, clearly shocked enough to let her pureblood mask fall. All the Slytherins were slowly letting themselves act more normal around Harry and the rest of their group. In public they would still be emotionless, but when alone they would show more of their true selves.

“I did, but I remembered the room could give me any book I wanted, so I checked against them.”

“Well, it looks fantastic,” Draco praised.

Just then the others arrived and Luna danced towards Harry, smiling brightly. “Tonight’s a good night, my Lord,” she said.

Getting his friends in position, all sitting on the floor on comfortable cushions provided by the room, Harry focused his magic and set the bowl of water alight with a flick of his wand.

The effect was immediate for Harry - he felt like he was floating in water. He was completely at peace and one with his magic. He could not see or hear much, but he felt like he was surrounded by love and affection. He felt safe.

Harry soon recognised a feeling in this space space. He had only associated it with one being and, before his eyes, a figure appeared quickly from the nothingness. Death.

“Master, I am surprised to see you here in my realm. You’ve never before crossed on Samhain.”

“Hello, Death,” Harry greeted. “And no, I’ve never been part of a traditional Samhain ritual. I never knew how to do one or even what one was. They’re illegal now thanks to Dumbledore.”

“The number who partake each year is dwindling,” Death said.

Harry nodded, not surprised. “I see. Do you mind? I mean, you have no problem with the ritual?”

Death stared at Harry from beneath his shadowed cloak. “No, the walls between these realms are at their weakest tonight. The ritual is my gift to Magic. For your people to know peace and love is eternal in the afterlife.”

“Then I thank you,” Harry said, surprised that the being that invoked such fear would be even slightly sentimental.

Death seemed to growth, the shadows increasing. “I shall leave you, Master, to your family.”

As quickly as Death had appeared, He disappeared and Harry once again found himself surrounded
by warmth and protection. He imagined that this was what children felt like when in the arms of their parents.

Eventually Harry felt himself falling back into his body and, after Merlin knows how long, he was able to open his eyes.

“You’ve been gone the longest, my lord,” Luna said. The rest of Harry's friends were all sitting on a table that had appeared and seemed to be eating a selection of sweets and cakes. The room must have provided them a snack as Harry guessed they had missed the feast.

“I see,” Harry said. He felt light and happy, like the love from his experience was still with him.

“I only just got back, myself. My mother was very happy to speak to me,” Luna said. Harry tilted his head. “You were able to actually speak to your mother?” he asked. “Oh, yes,” Luna said. “She always has so much to say. She can only talk once a year and has to cram to get it all said.” Harry nodded. “Was she like you, your mother?” Harry asked. “Like me, my lord?” “Able to see beyond the scopes of us lesser beings?” he said, smiling cheekily. Luna giggled. “She was,” she admitted. “Then I'm sure she was a remarkable woman and I am sorry I never got the chance to meet her.” “Oh, she likes you. She told me as much. She also likes how you did my hair today, she’s happy that we’re friends.” The words made Harry smile. Luna’s hair was up in a bun today, with plaits wrapping the bun to her head, it was the fanciest thing he could do, and he personally thought his hair dressing skills were improving.

“Let’s join the others before they eat all of the food,” he said, offering Luna his arm.

~

After the success of the Samhain ritual, Harry found his friends seemed to blend and integrate easier than before. Now Harry wouldn’t be shocked to see Draco talking to Hannah and Susan, Neville and Pansy studying together, or even Blaise and Luna gossiping. They all seemed to really relax and accept each other in a way they hadn’t before. Even Pansy seemed more willing to listen to Luna; she was still sceptical, but now she at least listened.

It was while they were sitting out in the courtyard, enjoying what would probably be the last sunny day of the year, when Harry felt eyes on him.

Looking up from plating Luna’s hair, Harry saw Dumbledore staring at him, his blue eyes boring into his emerald.

Albus knew that Harry had done something - his magic and that of his little friends all seemed to suddenly grow and they radiated with power. It wasn’t great power like himself, but a calm power that was mature for their young age. It was like they had performed that damned ritual, but Albus knew they couldn’t have. He would have felt it if they had performed any Olde Blood magic within
the wards of Hogwarts.

Harry watched the twinkling eyes and withheld his sneer.

“Hello, Harry.”

Harry groaned. His eye battle with Dumbledore had distracted him from Ginny's approach.

“Ginevra,” he said, tying off a plat and pulling his hands away. He didn’t want to hurt Luna by accident if he got angry and distracted.

“Honestly Harry, why must you insist on this formality? Call me Ginny,” the redhead said, rolling her eyes. However, Harry noticed how her brown eyes stared hatefully at the small blonde in front of him.

“What do you want this time, Ginevra?” Harry asked.

“I was wondering where you were the other day during the feast. You and your friends all missed it.” Her eyes held a gleam that Harry recognised.

“I tend not to like celebrating the day I was made an orphan. My friends joined me and we spent the night together away from the crowd,” Harry said.

Harry watched Dumbledore’s eyes narrowed—obviously, the man was listening. Ginny, however, nodded. “Oh, yeah. Why didn’t you say anything, Harry? I would have happily helped you,” she said, batting her lashes.

“I wanted to be with my friends,” Harry repeated. He was being blunt but, honestly, he didn’t care anymore.

Ginny flushed. “Yes, well, I could have helped.”

Harry rolled his eyes at how petulant she sounded. “I’m sure,” he said dryly.

Ginny ground her teeth together. Why was he being so difficult? “Really Harry, I want to help you. We could be great friends.”

Harry looked around at the mixed group of friends he had found before looking back at Ginny. “I think I’m alright, to be honest.”

“But—”

“Enough, Weaslette! Harry doesn’t want you here and neither do we,” Draco finally burst out. He hated how the redhead menace would always appear and attach herself to Harry.

Ginny sent him a dark look. “Please, like I would listen to you, you slimy snake.”

“You should. Unlike you, Harry actually wants to be my friend,” Draco said haughtily.

“Well, he obviously hasn’t realised how terrible you are!”

“Hey, Draco’s not terrible,” Neville defended. He and Draco had bonded over their pranks.

“And you, you’re just as bad. You’re a Gryffindor, yet you’re supporting a snake!”

“Your point?” Pansy said, giving Ginny a droll look.
“He’s a traitor!” Ginny said, sending Neville a glare. She still hadn’t forgiven him for making Harry laugh at her weeks ago.

Harry rolled his eyes at the irony. “They’re my friends. Now, I think it’s best if you left, Ms. Weasley.”

Ginny gaped. “But—”

“Goodbye, Ginny,” Luna said, sending the redhead a sweet smile and wave. Before she insisted Harry finish her hair.

Ginny let out a small snarl and turned with a huff. If she didn’t get Harry to start liking her back soon, then she was done for. Dumbledore was already angry enough about the Lockhart situation. She didn’t understand how he could resist her—she was perfect! She was smart, funny, beautiful - she even liked quidditch! She was so much better that that weirdo Loony Lovegood!

What was she doing wrong?

Chapter End Notes

Hope you're enjoying the story!
Big thank you to my lovely Beta reader Miisticalwrites, she's a star!
Also shout out to tori_cat13 for the idea about harry doing Luna's hair, I thought it was adorable so I went back and added it.
Comments & kudos!
~Annie
Building bridges

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

November in Hogwarts always seemed to drag for Harry. Without Voldemort’s yearly Halloween session and the fallout which would always follow, the month had no draw for Harry. In this life, October at least held Samhain and the ritual which solidified his friendships. December had Yule - which, this year, held the greatest importance for Harry as he would be starting the ritual to bring Tom back; it would also be his first proper Yule celebration with family and friends who wanted him only for himself, not his money or his name.

“You know, I think that somebody has your birthday wrong,” Neville said, looking at the package Harry had received just moments ago.

Harry looked up and frowned. The parcel was wrapped in cheap, easily available brown paper and, although it was neat, it didn’t have the finery he associated with either the Malfoys or Sirius. Even Ragnok tended to use high quality paper.

“I doubt it’s a birthday present,” Harry said.

“Open it,” Susan said, peering up from her Daily Prophet.

Harry looked at the parcel and frowned once again. Opening his senses, he allowed his magic to wash over the package and found it clean. Picking it up, he used his wand to break the wrapping with a small severing charm.

Inside was a box of chocolates. Harry, remembering his last life, knew not to eat them and instead picked up the note.

~

Always yours,
Scowling, Harry picked up the box and placed it in his bag. Ginny had apparently upped her game if she was resorting to potions this quickly. Although he didn’t have definitive proof, he recognised the childish handwriting. He had to wonder if Dumbledore had put her up to it; he knew the old man recognised his Heir ring - perhaps the girl and her mother were acting alone? Or at least without the council of the old coot.

“Not going to share, Potter?” came Ron’s voice. He had been watching enviously from down the table. Harry frowned before a thought hit him, the smirk on his face making him look truly sinister.

“By all means…,” Harry said, taking out the box and offering it to the redhead.

Ron looked surprised for a minute, the shock making him gape. “Oh-wha-? O-okay,” he said greedily, his sense of entitlement overruling the little doubt he had.

Harry noticed his friends’ confused looks and hoped they wouldn’t question him. Seeing Ron eat the chocolate, Harry watched in fascination as his eyes clouded over for a second before clearing.

Taking the chocolates back, Harry hurried out of the hall.

“What was that all about, Harry?” Draco asked, recognising the smirk on Harry’s face. It usually came before he destroyed somebody or made a fool out of them. Harry had been wearing it a lot recently—mostly around the youngest weasels and the peacock, as Harry had dubbed Lockhart.

“I think these have been doped with a love potion,” Harry said conversationally, as though he was talking about the weather.

Susan and Hannah gasped, the Slytherins frowned before smirking, and Neville looked confused. Luna, however, looked slightly green. They had each realised now why Harry had let Ron eat one and, although none of them objected, their own personalities still came into play through their reactions. Neville took the longest to catch on but he soon joined the Slytherins with a matching smirk.

“You let Ron eat one?” Susan asked.

Harry shrugged. “He wanted one and I don’t know for certain,” he said.

Susan frowned before nodding. “Well, that’s true, and anyway it’s not your fault somebody wants to poison you.”

“That’s right. I wonder who would do such a thing?” Hannah said, frowning.

Draco laughed then. “Merlin! Imagine if it’s the weaslette.”

Luna just nodded. “Please don’t, it’s not a pretty picture.”

Harry just smirked again. “That’s why people shouldn’t play around with love potions,” he said, practically biting his tongue to hold back the manic giggle that wanted to escape.

“Love potions?”

The rest of the group looked up at the repeated phrase and all took a step back when they saw Severus appear, even the Slytherins.
“Yes, sir,” Harry said, taking a step forward. He had been leading the group towards Severus’ office to have the man check for love potions.

“What’s this about love potions? Surely you're not brewing them, Mr. Potter. Although I doubt even Amortentia is beyond your ability, I had thought you had slightly more common sense. Perhaps I was mistaken?”

Harry smirked at the backhanded compliment. “Like always sir, you’re correct. I've not been brewing love potions; however, I think somebody has. I was sent these and I noticed something was, well, off about them. Could you perhaps check them for me?” Harry asked, offering the box.

Severus took the box and noticed the missing chocolate. Raising an eyebrow in question, he held back his snort when he got a smirk back. He was coming to recognise that expression as being Harry’s face for whenever he had done something devious and slightly amoral.

“Did you notice this... off feeling after consuming one yourself?” Severus asked just to check if the boy had been stupid enough to do such a thing.

“No, before,” Harry said.

“Oh?”

“Well, Ronald Weasley thought I was being unfair to put away an entire box of chocolates. He clearly wanted one and, as I didn’t know if my feeling would be correct as I am not a Potions Master, I had no reason to deny him,” Harry said.

Severus, who like many of the teachers, had noticed the youngest Weasley’s obsession with the Potter-Black Heir and immediately realised the potential backlash. It was only his years of training that made it so his face remained impassive when he realised the situation.

“I see,” he said, making sure to sound monotone.

Harry and the Slytherins, however, recognised the tone and all shared smirks.

“I will let you know the outcome of the tests. If a love potion is found, then I will of course notify your Head of House and guardians. Love potions are highly illegal,” he said.

Harry nodded. “Thank you, professor,” he said.

Severus nodded and turned, taking the box with him. It was only when he closed the portrait behind himself that he allowed his laughter free, snickering until his eyes watered and sides ached. He hoped the female Weasley had been stupid enough to attempt to use a love potion - the pure horror on her face and that of her overly sanctimonious mother would make his year.

16th November 1992, the Great Hall, Hogwarts

It was a few days later, when Harry saw Flitwick walking towards him looking furious, that Harry found out the reaction to the chocolates.

It was dinner time and Harry and Luna were sitting at the Ravenclaw table alone for once. The rest of the group hadn't made it to dinner yet.

“Harry, I know you have not eaten yet, however an urgent matter has come to my attention and our presence is required in the headmaster’s office,” the part-goblin said.
Harry nodded and spared Luna a glance. “Will you be okay here alone, Little Moon?” he asked.

Luna nodded. “Yes. The nargles are not as bothersome this time around, my Lord,” she said.

Harry nodded and stood, picking up his bag. “I’ll see you later then, Luna,” he said.

Following his Head of House out of the Great Hall, Harry saw how agitated he was.

“Is everything alright, sir?” he asked.

Filius sighed. He was furious, angry, confused, and concerned. Ever since last year he had been questioning the people and things around him and, although he didn’t blame Harry in any way, he did recognise that it all started when he re-entered the magical world.

“No, Harry,” he said. “It seems that the chocolates that you received really were doped with a love potion.”

Harry nodded sagely and used his occlumency shields to hide his mirth. “I see.”

“This is obviously a serious matter as love potions are illegal. However, the use of them are not altogether unheard of; we do sometimes get a few cases of young witches and wizards brewing them, usually unsuccessfully. However, that is not the reason for this meeting. Your situation is more complex.”

Harry sent the man a look. “Isn’t it always?” he asked.

Filius shared a sad smile. “It would appear that the potion was keyed to the youngest Weasley child and, when her brother ate one of the chocolates, the artificial feelings attached themselves to him.”

Harry was happy for his success at mastering occlumency as he hid his reaction. “That’s awful,” he said, making sure to sound both shocked and disgusted.

Filius nodded. “Yes,” he agreed. “Now, let’s not speak more about it until we reach the headmaster’s office. He wants the entire situation sorted out.”

Filius thought the situation, although bad, was clear. He had seen Ginevra’s obsession with Harrison and didn’t doubt she had been the one to send him the potion but he didn’t know where she would have gotten it. Although not dumb like her year older brother, Ginevra didn’t seem the type to have the ability to brew such a complex potion. The situation itself was awful: young Ronald had thrown himself at Ginevra and kissed her quite forcefully. Thankfully that’s all he had done, but the damage was done. Still, Filius didn’t see why Dumbledore was insisting on a meeting between the Weasleys and Harry - it just added to his belief that the old man was abnormally invested in his young student’s life. Harry had done nothing! Thankfully, Filius had seen to it that Sirius would be present as well as Severus, who had done the initial testing.

Harry followed his Head of House and wondered what Ron had done—probably an overly soppy love poem or song like he had written for Lavender in his last life. Reaching the gargoyle, Harry watched as Filius gave the password.

“Pumpkin pastries.”

**The Headmaster’s Office**

Entering the room, Harry was surprised to see both Sirius and Lucius sitting together with Severus standing behind them like a shadow. Both men were dressed in expensive robes, looking like the
Lords of two Ancient and Noble Houses that they were. They contrasted drastically to Molly Weasley, who Harry was seeing properly for the first time in this life. The matriarch of the Weasley clan was dressed like she had always done: she wore a loose-fitting dress with a knitted shawl over it.

Seeing his guardian, Harry approached and gave him a smile before Sirius pulled him into a hug.

Dumbledore was sitting behind his desk, looking grandfatherly in yellow robes with silver suns. Seeing Harry enter, he picked up his lemon drops.

“Excellent, it’s good that we are all here,” he said before holding the bowl out to the young boy who had become the biggest pain in his side since Tom Riddle. “Lemon drop?” he offered.

Harry rolled his eyes at Sirius before looking at Dumbledore. “No, thank you. I’ve yet to have dinner.”

Dumbledore frowned, the expression only becoming more pronounced when Ron immediately reached forward and snatched a handful of the sour sweets.

“Very well then, let’s get straight to business,” he said. “I’m sure you all know why we are here.”

Lucius took that moment to intervene. “Actually, professor, I for one do not understand why we are here.”

Dumbledore frowned. He hadn’t expected Filius to contact Sirius so quickly or for the animagus to arrive with Lucius in tow. However, he should have realised their partnership - the two of them had been spending a lot of time together recently. Both of them most likely working together to undo all of his hard work and decades of progress.

“Yes, well—”

“Why is he here?” Molly Weasley demanded, pointing a finger at Lucius and looking at him like he was a bug under her shoe.

“He was invited to come with me as both a member of our extended family and the Head of the school governors,” Sirius said, managing to sound snobbish, something Harry knew he struggled with.

Molly looked like she had sucked on a lemon before she harrumphed.

Dumbledore sent her a sharp look before turning back to Harry. “As I was saying, we are here about the situation about some chocolates,” he said, playing down the seriousness of the matter.

Harry narrowed his eyes. “I see.”

Lucius, however, wasn’t done. “I do not understand why you have called this meeting. The situation is quite clear. Why haven’t you contacted the DMLE?”

Molly let out a small shriek. “The DMLE?!”

Dumbledore hushed her. “What I’m sure Mrs. Weasley meant was that contacting the aurors isn’t necessary.”

Sirius growled. “Not necessary?” he repeated.

“Yes. Surely you agree, Sirius? What with your past pranks.”
“That’s Lord Black to you,” Sirius snarled.

Molly turned. “After all he's done for you, you no good—”

Sirius, looking like he was about to lose control, went to stand before Harry placed a hand on his arm. “Headmaster, I too do not understand why this meeting is taking place without law enforcement. The use of love potions is illegal.”

Dumbledore bit his tongue before taking a deep breath. “Yes, however—”

“There is no alternative here, professor. The law is the law,” Harry said. “Surely you do not think yourself above it?” Harry made sure to ask the question as innocently as possible and watched as all of those standing in his corner smirk, even Flitwick.

Dumbledore frowned. “Surely you wouldn’t want to take this further, Harry? You would be potentially running a young girl’s life - and over what? A prank and school girl crush?”

Lucius stepped back in then. “If it was just a crush we wouldn’t be here, nor would Severus. As it stands the potion used is not only illegal but exceptionally potent, as I'm sure Mr. Weasley the youngest can attest to.” He sneered the last bit and Harry watched in fascination as both Ginny and Ron turned white while Molly turned red.

“Surely they have suffered enough?” Dumbledore continued, sending Harry hopeful looks.

Harry tilted his head. “Suffered enough? What about what I would have suffered? Do you know that line theft usually has a lifetime sentence to Azkaban?”

Dumbledore choked for a moment, Molly let out another shrill sound, while Ginny whimpered and Ron just looked confused.

“Now see here, nobody is talking about line theft. It's just a schoolgirl crush,” Albus quickly defended.

Harry sent him a dark look. “It’s a schoolgirl crush now, but then what? Would she have just stopped one day, hoping I would have fallen in love with her?”

Ginny picked that moment to speak up, “I would have! You will love me one day!”

Harry sat back, satisfied with the events, while Lucius shared a silent conversation with Severus. He saw that his friend was also surprised at how well Harry had played the room.

Sirius turned and gave the Weasleys the darkest look he could; the look the girl was sending Harry gave him the creeps. “I very much doubt that,” he said.

Ron, thinking they were being insulted, forgot his fear and puffed up his chest. “Yeah? And why’s that? You too good for us? Too rich and fancy?”

Harry snorted. “No, you fool. I'm gay.”

Ron recoiled as though struck while Ginny shrieked, impressively sounding very much like her mother.

The Slytherins were shocked but hid it well. Lucius thought for a moment about the implications of this, but he, unlike some traditionalists, didn’t mind same-sex relationships. The use of potions made it so heirs were possible, therefore he was all for the celebration of love in all forms. Severus too
didn’t mind, he was just shocked at the delivery of the news - it reminded him of Lily and how she would have announced something.

Albus, however, was gaping—this wouldn’t do. He needed his Light warrior to be perfect, to be the ideal that people aspired to be. How was Harry gay? Surely his muggle relatives had beaten any freakishness out of him? Yes, Dumbledore could understand the weakness of flesh, him more than anybody, but Harry should be above it. He should aim to be normal, not happily spouting that he’s gay!

“You're a freak,” Ron said after a few seconds.

Harry responded by raising an eyebrow. “Yes, because being gay is so outrageous.”

“You can’t be gay! We’re going to get married!” Ginny protested.

Harry sent the adults on his side a look as if to say, ‘See what I have to deal with?’ He turned back and sighed. “I will only marry for love and who I love will be a man.”

Filius shook his head. “Not that this isn’t important, but we have gone off topic,” he said, speaking up for the first time.

“I agree,” Severus said, reminding the room of his presence.

“Indeed. Now, headmaster, I demand that you contact the DMLE as both Harry’s father and a member of the Board. And do not think I will be keeping this from them,” Sirius said, using the title father for the first time and making Harry smile.

Albus floundered; how had he lost control? He was sure that Harry would be swayed once he realised the trouble Ginny would get in.

“That was not a request,” Lucius said, managing to sound threatening without actually doing so.

Molly sent Dumbledore a panicked look. “Now see here, surely you're overreacting! Ginny is a good girl.”

“A good girl who attempted to use highly illegal potions to poison another student,” Severus said, happy to add to the woman’s panic. He had never liked her and, out of her seven children, she only had four children he could tolerate. Well, perhaps just the oldest two. The twins, although gifted potioneers, were menaces.

“Poison? It was a love potion, for Merlin’s sake!”

“A potion which alters the senses and free will of the victim. It is a poison, Mrs. Weasley,” Severus said.

Sirius nodded and sent Snape a grateful look. It was the first time he had seen his schoolhood enemy and he was grateful to the man; not only for the help he had provided Harry, but for his support now.

Severus saw the look and nodded his head once, remembering Harry’s letter about Black being a new man.

Albus stood and glared at the men in betrayal before sending Harry a disappointed look. “If this is what you really want, Harry,” he said one final time.

“It is.”
Making sure to sigh dramatically, Dumbledore stood and went to the fireplace.

“Albus!” Molly shrieked in betrayal.

Albus turned to her. “My hands are tied,” he said, before throwing in the green floo powder. “Madam Bones office, Department of Magical Law Enforcement, British Ministry of Magic.”

Soon Harry heard Amelia through the Floo. “Dumbledore, is there a problem?”

“Yes, Amelia. Perhaps you and one of your aurors could step through? We’ve had a slight issue with a love potion.”

Amelia sighed when she heard the words. They would get one of these every few years and each time she would end up with a headache. “Give me two minutes,” she said before leaving her office and pulling the first auror she saw along with her.

“Kingsley, with me,” she said, seeing the tall black auror. She trusted and respected the man enough for this. “There’s been use of a love potion at Hogwarts,” she said as explanation to the man’s look. Kingsley cringed— he hated love potions.

Stepping through the Floo, Amelia’s gaze automatically locked with the emerald eyes of Harry Potter and she found herself looking up and praying to Merlin for peace.

“I should have known you would somehow be involved, Harry,” she said to the boy, who was smiling sheepishly.

“Amelia—sorry, Madam Bones, it’s lovely to see you again,” he said making sure to act charmingly.

Amelia sighed and smiled at the boy. “Heir Potter-Black, this is my associate Senior Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt.”

Harry nodded and looked at Kingsley - he hadn't changed much from the man he once knew.

“It’s nice to meet you, Auror Shacklebolt,” Harry said.

The rest of the introductions were quickly given and Madam Bones was swiftly brought up to speed. Once all of the information was given, she sighed and turned to look at Harry and Sirius.

“Lord Black, as your Heir is the victim here, it is up to you on how we proceed. Although it’s not enough to convict Ms. Weasley with line theft, you still have the right to claim for the attempt of poisoning and the use of an illegal substance,” she said.

Molly, who was listening, let out another harsh sound and brought Ginny closer to her while sending Albus looks of betrayal.

Sirius nodded and rubbed his neck. “May I speak to Harry in private, please?” he asked.

Harry couldn’t believe his luck and once Amelia agreed, he turned to face Sirius along with Severus, Lucius, and Filius.

“What do you intend to do?” Lucius asked.

Harry smirked. “I have an idea.”

Once he explained what he had in mind, he watched as the two teachers nodded. “That should work,” Flitwick said.
Severus nodded as well, smirking.

“I have made a decision,” Harry said, “that my father agrees with.”

Amelia nodded. “Very well,” he said.

“I do not want Miss Weasley to be kicked out of Hogwarts. She deserves a chance at getting an education and snapping her wand would just mean that there is another person out there more likely to expose us to muggles or cause damage to herself and others. Instead, I think she should serve detention every other night for the remainder of the year and every weekend bar one a month. She should also receive no special privileges. I know that the Weasley family is not well off in terms of monetary means, therefore I do not want them fined. Why should the entire family suffer for the actions of one? Instead, I think that it should be placed on her permanent record that she is guilty of trying to poison somebody with a love potion, so that the world knows what she has done.”

Amelia nodded. “Very well. If that is all, then we can leave it here. This is now a school matter and not a matter for my department.”

Albus nodded, glad she would be going. “Don’t you think that’s a bit harsh, Harry?” he asked.

Amelia, who had been about to leave, turned then and shot the old man an incredulous look.

“Headmaster, you should know that Heir Potter-Black is being incredibly lenient. He could have demanded conviction and, being who he is, he may have gotten it. He could have even demanded excessive fines as compensation. He could have had Ms. Weasley kicked out of school. I, for one, think he is being more than lenient and should be commended on his compassion.”

“Compassion? It’s going to be on her record!” Molly screeched.

“Then she shouldn’t have attempted to do something illegal! You should be grateful Heir Potter-Black is not pressing charges. If I had had to investigate, I wonder what I would have found concerning where the potion came from?” Amelia asked.

Molly immediately shut up and sneered.

“A whole year?” Ginny whined.

“Hush now, dear,” Molly said to her daughter, still sending Amelia irritated looks.

November 16th 1992, the Ministry of Magic, Head of the DMLE Office

After taking her leave, Amelia sent a confused looking Kingsley on his way before taking out her wand and unlocking her desk. Picking up the folder she had hidden, she sat down and looked through it briefly.

~

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Born: August 17th 1881
Mould-on-the-Wold, England, Great Britain
Blood Status: Half-Blood
Marital Status: Single
Not reading the entire file, Amelia instead wrote about their recent meeting and the implications of it. She knew there was something more going on between Dumbledore and the Potter boy, but she didn’t know what. Dumbledore’s recent behaviour was inexcusable and the information being brought to light about him made Amelia wonder about his past actions. His famous defeat of Gellert Grindelwald had made it so nobody questioned him too harshly—he was given untold amount of freedoms to do as he pleased and Amelia wondered what it was he had actually done. The rumours and allegations she was hearing and suspected to be true did not paint a pleasant picture.

What she didn’t understand is: why? Why he was acting in such a way? What is his goal? The unknown answers frustrated her.

**Meanwhile**

**Headmaster’s Office, Hogwarts**

“I believe we are done here,” Sirius said, his tone of voice leaving no room for question.

Albus nodded and held his tongue. “Yes, you may use my Floo to leave.”

“I think I shall walk and apparate. I wish to speak to my son,” Sirius said.

“A splendid idea. Perhaps you would care for a cup of tea before you go? I wish to talk to you about Harry’s classes,” Filius said quickly. “Both Severus and Lucius are welcome to join us.”

“Very well,” Severus conceded.

The men all left the office after sending the headmaster cool looks, Harry following behind them silently.

Sirius smiled down at him. “So how’s your year been? Dull?” he asked.

Harry smirked. “Dreadfully so.”

“I’ve got to say pup, you really don’t do things by halves—the Lockhart situation or gaining a crazy crush.”

Harry shrugged. “Both were out of my control. Well, the Lockhart one wasn’t really, but I didn’t make other people follow my example.”

“The Board is attempting to find a suitable replacement while the ministry is organising an investigation into his claims,” Lucius said.

“Please do let me know what they find.”

Severus snorted quietly. “I have a feeling you already know,” he said.

Sirius looked up then and finally noted the change in Severus. The other man hadn’t changed that much from school, but now he held an air of confidence he had once lacked.

Harry looked innocently at the men and batted his eyelashes. “Who me?”

Filius chuckled. “You may join us for tea as well if you fancy, Harry, or perhaps something to eat. I
know you didn’t have chance for dinner.”

The words seemed to remind Harry’s body that he was hungry and his stomach growled. Sirius frowned and looked over Harry with concern. He noticed that Harry was still small for his age, but it wasn’t as dramatic as last year - and, although skinny, he didn’t look ill.

“You’ve been taking your potions, right?” he asked. The evident concern in his voice made the others realise that Sirius Black really was taking being a parent seriously.

Harry nodded. “Yes, every other day.”

“And you’ve been eating?”

“Yes, Siri, three meals a day and sometimes even snacks.”

“Good. Over Yule we’ll take you to see our healers to have another look at you. You may be able to come of the potions soon.”

“Hopefully,” Harry said. Although not the worst, Harry hated having to drink the foul-tasting concoctions every other day.

“How is your stock fairing?” Severus asked.

Harry tilted his head as he thought. “I think it’ll last until Yule break,” he said.

“If you need more, you know to ask.”

“Yes, thank you,” Harry said.

“Here we are!” Filius said, opening his office and waving them in.

Summoning a House-Elf, the part goblin ordered a pot of tea and five cups as well as some food for Harry.

“Just some soup and a buttered roll, please,” Harry said, smiling at the elf.

Sirius frowned. “That’s not a full meal,” he said.

“I had a big lunch,” Harry said.

When the elf appeared, Harry smiled. “Thank you.”

The others watched as the elf’s eyes grew wide and it squeaked before popping away.

“So, it’s not just Kreacher who loves you?” Sirius asked.

“Nope,” Harry said, popping the ‘p’.

Sirius shook his head. “You wanted to speak to us, Professor Flitwick?” he asked.

Filius smiled. “Yes—and, please, call me Filius.”

“If you insist. Now, what is on your mind?”

“I’m guessing Lord Malfoy is trusted by you?” Filius asked.

Sirius nodded his head. “Yes.”
“Very well, then. I asked you for tea because I am honestly concerned about the headmaster’s near obsession with Harrison.”

Harry looked up from his soup. He was surprised that Flitwick had chosen now to speak up; he had thought it would take longer for the man’s doubt in the Light leader to wane enough for him to speak up.

“I see,” Sirius said.

“From what I have learnt in the past year, Dumbledore has done nothing for Harrison other than try to control his life. His actions just now show how he wants Harry for something - he has encouraged a relationship between the Weasleys when it is clear that the youngest two are nothing more than idiotic sycophants! This doesn’t even take his obsessive observations into account. What I want to know is why? Why is he after my student?”

Sirius shot Harry a look.

Harry looked around the room and considered his options. Looking at the occupants, Harry made a decision. Flicking his wrist, he gripped his wand and set the strongest privacy and secrecy wards he knew. The ease at which he put them up shocked three of the four occupants.

Sirius looked at Harry surprised, knowing Harry was about to let more people in.

Flitwick reached for his wand and tested the wards. “These are professional grade, Mr. Potter, and yet you didn’t say a word,” he said.

Harry raised an eyebrow. “Magic doesn’t need words. Words are just props; like wands, they allow easier access, but they’re not necessary with the right level of power, skill, and control. Magic is about intent - it’s alive, after all,” Harry said, lifting his hand and focusing so a controlled ball of fire lit up and twisted around his fingers. He also allowed his shields to drop, exposing his magical potential and core.

Severus gaped at the boy in front of him. The power and control he was showing was beyond anything he had felt. Lucius, however, was conflicted. The blond man was both excited and smug; he knew the boy had power and potential and now he was going to get some answers.

Harry sent Sirius a look, hoping that the animagus would agree with whatever he was about to say.

“It all started with a prophecy,” Harry said, startling Severus. Taking a deep breath, Harry recited the words that clawed his life away from him.

"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 his 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...."

In the quiet that followed the prophecy, Harry continued, “This prophecy was told by Sybil Trelawney to Albus Dumbledore at the Hog’s Head Pub in 1980 during her interview for the Divination teaching position, which had just opened up. It referred to a boy born at the end of July who has the power to defeat Lord Voldemort. The timing fit both me and Neville Longbottom, so our parents, who had been fighting him both, went into hiding, not knowing which one of us was this child. Yet, by coming after me, Voldemort made it so I was the marked child. However, more recent events make me question the prophecy.”
Severus sat back and stared at the boy. “You know?” he asked. Memories of his role flashed before him and the guilt made his knees weak.

Harry spared him a look. “About your part in the prophecy? Yes. However, it’s not important right now. You hold no blame or responsibility. You were young and manipulated,” Harry said.

Harry watched as Severus seemed to fold into himself. The rest of the room looked confused while Sirius, who knew, spared Snape a look - not of pity, but concern.

“Although this does explain his interest, it doesn't explain you,” Filius pointed out, indicating the flame that Harry still had dancing in his hand idly.

Harry nodded. “As I told you before sir, my memory is rather exceptional. I have memories from when I was very young. I remember a few things about my life before my parents died; not a lot, but brief flashes. However, growing up, my memories left me confused. I was beaten for any instances of “freakishness”, which I now know were moments of accidental magic, so my memories and their abuse conflicted. Why would I be punished for something that I couldn’t control if they knew? I convinced myself my memories were just dreams up until I received my Hogwarts letter. When I returned to our world, I realised my memories were true.

“The first thing I did was look myself up. My memories lead me to believe I had magical parents, so imagine my surprise when I found out I was right and famous. This discovery lead me to the goblins. I did an inheritance blood test when I went after they realised I knew nothing of our world. The results were fascinating—I had a blood glamour placed on me, as well as many magical blocks and a core block. There were also some compulsions on me; however, my Heir rings nullified them. Still, not all things can be nullified by rings, so the goblins removed these blocks and compulsions for a price. During this process I gained their respect and they, mine.

“It was also then discovered that Dumbledore had been stealing from me; he was granted access to my family Vaults as my magical guardian. As I said before, I remember things about my past - which includes the night my parents died. Realising Dumbledore was my guardian made me think Sirius was dead as well as I knew he was innocent. However, I soon found out he was not dead but wrongly in Azkaban. I worked on freeing him and I did so. Dumbledore is the reason Sirius was sent without trial to Azkaban; he was the bonder for the ritual, he knew who the Secret Keeper was.

“I returned home after the removal but my family didn’t take kindly to my presence. Their actions against me lead me to returning and staying at the Leaky Cauldron for the remainder of the summer where I studied all of the books I could get my hands on. With my eidetic memory, I was quickly able to learn and, from watching the people, I soon worked out how to blend. The removal of my blocks left me able to feel my magic and sense it on a deeper level - honestly, magic comes easily to me. Even without a wand I can manipulate my magic. It’s a part of me. I can read about a spell once and get it right performing it after a few tries before I move on to the next. I can recall entire books, spells, and even rituals.

“After a few days of studying, another thought occurred to me and I started to see things clearly. Dumbledore had been sending money to my relatives, relatives who beat and starved me and, although I cannot prove it, I would bet he knew how I was treated. It’s then when I went to see my healer and had the abuse treated. Why he has done these things I don’t know, but he did them. He manipulated my life from the very moment he heard that prophecy. He wanted me to become his prophesied little Light warrior, somebody he could mould and manipulate.”

Harry sat back then and allowed the flame to diminish, allowing the men to fully digest his entire story.
“That is quite a tale,” Filius said after a long pause.

Harry nodded his head to acknowledge him. “Yet you believe me.”

“I do,” the part goblin admitted. It was a far-fetched tale, but he did believe it.

“Why you? You clearly don’t think the prophecy has much credit. So why you?” Lucius said.

Harry knew the answer to this probably laid with his soulmate, but he didn’t want them knowing about that, so instead he smirked darkly. “I was born under a lucky moon. A cursed star - maybe I kicked puppies in my last life?” He said sarcastically before adding in a normal tone, “I honestly don’t know - yet.”

“You think he set everything up. The prophecy and all that followed?” Severus asked, his voice sounding rough. That night he had lost his best friend and he had blamed himself. He had lived for years with that crushing guilt weighing him down.

“I find it odd that he would hold an interview in a pub during a period of civil unrest. A pub which is notorious for its reputation,” Harry said.

Lucius nodded and Severus looked shocked as he too realised the facts made little sense. How he hadn't noticed before he didn’t know.

“You suspect more foul play,” Filius stated.

“I do. Either the entire prophecy is fake or just the delivery.” Harry’s words made the entire room silent again.

“So you’ve never trusted him? The entire time you’ve been in our world?” Filius asked eventually.

“No, and I never will. I am not the little Light warrior he wanted. I will find out what he has planned for me and I will have my revenge.”

“You're Dark,” Lucius said.

“My magic is Dark, but I am not evil. I am not, nor will I ever be, a Dark Lord. I would never murder innocents nor do I care about blood status, creatures, or other frivolous things like that.”

“Not a Lord?” Sirius asked, surprised Harry felt the need to say that.

“Luna keeps bringing it up,” Harry grumbled.

“You're building a circle,” Severus pointed out.

“No, I have friends.”

“Friends who would follow you, trust you, fight for you.”

“I would never ask that of them.”

“You won’t have to, they will do it anyway,” Lucius said, agreeing with Severus.

Harry frowned. “How did we get onto this? I have no plans on being the next Dark Lord. I honestly just wanted you to know why Dumbledore is obsessed with me.”

Filius, who had taken a step back as he listened, laughed slightly. “Sometimes you don’t have a
“I trust you will all keep this information to yourselves?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” they all agreed.

“I will also watch out for you around Dumbledore. I have been doing so more diligently this year but now that I know why, I will try harder,” Filius said.

“As will I,” Severus said.

Harry nodded his head. His privacy wards would make it so they kept their words, but he liked to hear them vow their silence. He trusted them.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry for the slow update- mt laptop & external hard drive were stolen during a fire drill along with half of my classes. This means I am having to re-write all of the story I hadn't yet sent my beta which is pretty much all of it as I had only sent up to chapter 25. The good news is though, that I now have a sparkly new laptop thanks to insurance.

update will be coming, i promise, but they will probably take longer than what you're all used to.

Hope you're enjoying the story!

~ Annie
secret chambers and sacred maps

Previously

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~

After the conversation, Harry left the room and returned to Ravenclaw Tower. In the boy’s absence, Sirius looked around at the shocked faces of the other men.

“So, any questions?” he asked, clicking his fingers and asking an elf to bring a bottle of firewhiskey and some tumblers.

“His power—how?” Lucius said. As Harry was leaving, he had re-masked his power and it was then that Lucius finally realised just how much magic he was hiding.

“I honestly don’t know. He wasn’t lying when he spoke about being able to learn a spell in a few minutes - I’ve seen him do it. I’ve never seen somebody so in tune with their own magic; it’s as easy as breathing for him.”

“How advanced is he?” Filius asked. He knew Harry was beyond his year group and, as a teacher, he knew the boy would be bored in classes. Still, he feared pulling him out and gaining Dumbledore’s attention.

Sirius tilted his head in thought. “He could probably take his OWLs and get Outstandings, however his knowledge is mainly based on whatever he finds interesting. He probably knows more obscure rituals than anybody in the UK, but he probably knows next to nothing about household charms - that type of thing.”

Severus nodded. “I can continue to give him different potions to brew in my lessons, but I doubt you want to draw much attention to his skills. It would be unwise to pull him out of his other classes as well,” he said, picking up on Filius’ concern.

Lucius, however, was lost in his own thoughts, not concerned about the boy’s classes.
Sirius flashed Severus a bright grin that startled the dower Potions professor; he hadn't expected Black to look at him with such genuine happiness.

“Thank you. Harry said he doesn't mind the classes - the work is easy and usually things he already knows, so I think he can cope. Before he left for the year, he had mentioned doing his own studying and magical training; I forgot to ask about it, but I'm sure he's stretching and using his magic.”

“I know he performed the Samhain ritual,” Filius said. As a half-goblin he was sensitive to Olde magic - it was similar to goblin magic. While Filius himself didn’t possess much goblin magic, he was more gifted with his witch mother’s magic, he did have goblin sensitivity when it came to picking up magical traces.

Sirius nodded. “He told me about it in his letter a few weeks ago.”

“Yes, Draco mentioned being involved,” Lucius said, drawing himself out of his stupor. He had invited Sirius and Remus to join him and Narcissa on Samhain, but the animagus had declined, instead choosing to celebrate alone.

“I thought their group seemed too content,” Severus acknowledged, realising now that what he had noted were the effects of a successful ritual.

“I do not understand why Dumbledore and his flock of mindless drones ever saw fit to ban the rituals. They not only give people hope, but it helps to settle magic in the younger generation,” Lucius said, clearly frustrated. His family had always and would always celebrate the Olde ways.

Filius looked at the blond aristocrat and thought about what he knew about the man. As a part-goblin, he had been Neutral in the last war; he hadn’t liked or believed the values of the Death Eaters, but his nature didn’t allow him to take part. However, he wasn't ignorant of the main players and he had heard the rumours about Lucius—how he was a cruel, heartless man who hated anyone who wasn't pure-blooded. Yet, seeing him now, Filius found he agreed with his views. Then again, if Sirius and Harry liked him, he probably wasn't that bad.

“Think of the children,” Severus deadpanned, making Sirius choke on his whiskey as he laughed.

“Ah yes, because anything not wholly Light must be malevolent,” Lucius sneered.

“Don’t forget all Dark magic and mages are evil,” Sirius grumbled.

“Indeed,” Lucius agreed.

“I take it you wish that the school taught a more diverse range of magic?” Filius asked, chuckling at the men’s humour.

“I believe that all magic should be taught - within reason. To ban entire branches of magic and areas of study just makes them more appealing and when somebody wants to learn them, they end up sneaking around and being branded evil. It results in mistakes and is dangerous; if it was open to learn then they could at least freely research and study, meaning less chances of mistakes being made. People can learn that the dangerous areas can be controlled and taught to use with caution,” Lucius said.

Filius frowned in thought but couldn’t say he disagreed.

“We’re not saying teach the Unforgivables to First years, but instead teach a range of magic. Darker arts and magic aren’t all evil. Alchemy, Blood Magic, Politics, Ancient Studies, Spell Creation - they’re all banned,” Sirius said. “And just look at History of Magic! The students are taught nothing
of wizarding history, customs, or traditions. It’s all goblin wars.”

Lucius was surprised at how much thought Sirius had put into the problem and was now glad he had nominated him back into his position on the Board. It was clear that they would most likely have the same views.

Severus was also shocked, more so by just how much the man in front of him had changed. He was still confident and cocky, but he could see he had grown up, though maybe his stay in Azkaban had had an influence on him. He obviously loved Harry, his adoration of the boy clear, but he had shown a surprising amount of parental skill. He would have to watch him closely, Severus decided.

Seeing the shocked faces, Sirius smiled. “Harry had a long rant about it over the summer. It made me realise how much wasn’t taught and how our society was falling behind the rest of the world.”

Lucius nodded. “He really is a remarkable child.”

“The best,” Sirius agreed happily, proud of how much Harry had achieved already.

“Do you think he means it when he says he won’t be a Dark Lord?” Severus asked.

Sirius thought about all he knew. He doubted Harry would be a Dark Lord as he knew who Harry’s soulmate was—then again, he couldn’t see Harry standing back and letting Tom call all the shots.

“I think he will be exactly who we need him to be,” he said evasively.

Lucius snorted softly at the Slytherin answer. “Do you believe the prophecy?”

Sirius did have to think then. Harry hadn’t mentioned his suspicion about the prophecy before, so the information had thrown him. “Honestly? I don’t know. I’m torn - I would love for it to be fake but, at the same time, I know James and Lily died because of that prophecy.”

Sirius also realised that, as soulmates, the prophecy didn’t make much sense. It didn’t apply to Harry as surely Fate wouldn’t make a perfect match only for them to kill each other.

Severus suddenly found it hard to swallow as he once again thought about the prophecy. It was his fault that the Potters were attacked that night; if he had only kept his mouth shut, none of this would have happened.

Sirius seemed to realise his problem and sent him a soft look. “It’s not your fault,” he told the man.

“It is. I am the one who told—”

“Enough. You didn’t make the Dark Lord go after them and if the prophecy is fake, then all the blame rests solely with Dumbledore,” Sirius said with conviction.

“I am still struggling to see why this is all happening,” Filius said.

Sirius shrugged. Harry hadn’t mention the compulsions in detail yet and Sirius was wondering if he should mention it, letting them know as they probably have some on them. Harry also hadn’t brought up Tom and his soul bond, so Sirius knew he couldn’t say anything about that either. “I don’t know,” he said.

Severus watched Sirius and noticed how he tensed slightly before he spoke. “Hopefully time will tell,” Severus said. He desperately wanted to know what was going on.

Sirius nodded and drained the last of his whiskey.
“I think I should be getting back, Remus will probably be wearing a hole in the carpet from all his pacing.”

Lucius did the same and stood. “Thank you for the hospitality,” he said to Flitwick.

“Yes, thank you,” Sirius said.

“It’s no problem. I enjoyed the conversation,” Filius said. He had truly enjoyed the conversation as well as finding out all the information from Harry.

“Severus, I will be in touch soon. It’s been an age since we last got together. I know Narcissa has missed your company,” Lucius said to his old friend.

“Yes, well, escaping the castle is hard now that the juveniles are back.”

“You must come over to the manor this weekend,” Lucius said.

“I shall see if I am free,” Severus agreed, nodding his head to Filius as he exited the room with the two Lords.

“Really, I insist. Both Sirius and Remus will be visiting for lunch on Sunday. You will join us.”

Severus bit back his snarl at his friend’s high handed request. “Very well then, but I refuse to sit through a formal meal.”

Lucius chuckled. “No formality - just a meal between friends. I will even ask the elves to find a bottle of that wine you liked.”

Severus grumbled but nodded reluctantly, knowing better than to argue. And, if he was being honest, Lucius always did have great wine.

Sirius watched them with a fond expression. He had never seen Severus or Lucius act like this, not even at school. He knew Severus and Lucius had gotten on when they were at Hogwarts, but he had wrongly had assumed the older man had taken Severus under his wing out of pity rather than anything else. However, he saw now that he had been wrong and that they genuinely had friendship between them.

~

Meanwhile

Dumbledore's office, Hogwarts

“Albus! How could you let this happen?” Molly screeched, her face red with anger. She was furious - not only because she had been threatened by Amelia Bones, but by the fact that her darling girl would be punished.

Albus glared. “If you had come to me and told me you planned on using a love potion, I would have told you to use caution.”

“But—”

“No, the boy is cautious and he is wearing an Heir ring. Now, I don’t know what his ring defends against, if it is potions or mind arts or a combination of both, but I do know that we need to tread carefully.”
"You promised me he would be weak! Malleable!"

"He should have been!" Albus exploded, shocking the two students who had been sitting in silence.

After a moment of shocked silence, Ron broke the awkward air. "You heard him, he’s a freak," he grumbled. He couldn’t believe he had tried so hard to befriend such a person.

"Yeah," Ginny agreed, still angry over the fact she may not be able to become Lady Potter.

"Now children, don’t worry. I’m sure Harry is just confused and needs a guiding hand to see reason," Albus said. He had worked too long and too hard to let the boy destroy all of his plans. "He will soon see the error of his ways."

The two youngest Weasleys shared a nod. Ron began gleefully daydreaming about all the things he would one day be able to buy once he had access to the Potter fortune while Ginny imagined all of the attention she would get - every other girl in the wizarding world would envy her, every boy would want her.

"Do you have a plan, Albus?" Molly asked.

"We need to tread carefully. First, we need to get him away from Sirius, we need to destroy their relationship and cut him off from his support. When he’s alone, I can appear and be his saviour. He will be indebted to me and easily follow my instructions. We also need to find out just how strong his ring’s protections are and how to get around them. Hopefully they just offer mild support from legilimency."

"It’s just a stupid ring, why’s it so important?" Ron grumbled jealously.

"That ‘stupid ring’ shows he is the Heir to the Potter and Black families. I thought I had taught you that, Ronald," Molly said.

Ron grumbled under his breath, “It's just a stupid ring, he doesn't deserve them.”

"That may well be but until we know what his rings defend against, we need to tread lightly," Dumbledore said.

Throughout their discussion none of them noted how all of the previous headmaster portraits all looked shocked, disgusted, and angry. Well, all bar one Phineas Nigellus Black who looked almost gleeful. He couldn’t wait to tell his Heir this news and see what revenge they take.

~

Meanwhile

After leaving the office, Harry wandered aimlessly. However, he soon stopped when he realised just where his subconscious had taken him. Looking around, Harry cast a silencing charm on himself before he disillusionsed his body. Stepping through the bathroom door, Harry glanced briefly around and noticed Myrtle wasn’t about but he knew that the ghost girl was probably lurking somewhere hoping to jump out or catch a free show. Really, the dead girl was a menace! She had practically stalked Harry after watching him bathe in the prefect’s bathroom after his fourth year - she took being a peeping Tom to the next level.

Flicking his wrist, Harry placed a repulsion ward around the first floor bathroom doors. The obscure ward was one he had read about over the summer and acted rather like a muggle repelling ward. It wouldn’t stop people from entering if they really wanted to, but it would make them not want to
come in and instead find another bathroom. Flicking his wrist so his wand was back in his holster, Harry approached the sinks and focused on his Parseltongue.

“Open,” he hissed, looking at the snake carving in the sink.

Harry took a step back and watched as the Chamber of Secrets opened. Swinging his legs into the slide, Harry pushed himself off the floor and allowed gravity to work, casting a wandless cushioning charm just before he reached the bottom.

Standing up properly once he had landed, Harry looked around as he cleaned his robes. The place was much like he remembered, but this time there wasn’t a giant shedding—most likely because Aithusia was still locked behind the giant statue of Slytherin.

Walking down the hallway he remembered lead to the main area, the place Ginny Weasley had almost died, Harry cast a few Incendios to light the torches around the room. Once the room was bright enough for him to see, Harry looked around in fascination. The stone carvings in the walls and the overall rustic beauty of the Chamber greatly appealed to him; it needed cleaning, but Harry liked the open space.

Walking into the middle of the room, Harry closed his eyes and opened his mouth as he tried recalling what the apparition of Tom Riddle had said in his second year.

“Speak to me, Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four.”

With his eyes closed, Harry heard the stone creak before he heard movement of soft scales dragging against stone.

“Who calls for me?”

With his eyes closed, Harry could feel something approaching him. “Hello Great One, Queen of Serpents.”

“Who are you, Speaker? You are not the same boy who came last time. Your scent is similar, but different.”

“My name is Harrison Potter-Black.”

Harry felt something flicker against his face and fought the urge to open his eyes.

“Where is Tom? Tom used to visit me often - he would bring me food and warm my tunnels with his magic.”

“Tom is dead,” Harry admitted but instantly regretted it when he felt the snake’s body suddenly surround him.

“Who killed him?! I will destroy them. Kill them,” Aithusia hissed angrily.

“It’s okay, Great Lady, I'm working on bringing him back.”

The snake seemed to still and Harry felt something flicker against his face again. “Why?”

“He is my soulmate.”

Silence fell and Harry decided to speak, “Is it possible for me to look at you without harm?”

“Yes.”
Harry took a deep breath and opened his eyes. He knew he couldn’t die, but he didn’t want to be petrified and trapped down here for millennia, just waiting for another Parselmouth to find the secret chamber.

As soon as his eyes opened, Harry jumped and let out a breathless squeal before he could stop himself. Aithusia was directly in front of him, the serpent’s massive head just inches from his own face, her yellow eyes boring into him.

“You are a strange child,” the snake said, flicking her tongue against Harry’s face. She was scenting him, he realised.

Harry gulped. “May I ask your name, Great One?”

“I am Aithusia.”

“A beautiful name. May I ask how is it I am looking at you? It is thought that the gaze of a basilisk is deadly.”

“If you thought it deadly why do you risk yourself to look at me?” the snake asked.

“I had a suspicion,” Harry said honestly.

“It’s true the gaze of my kind is deadly, but only when we want it to be so. We have a second set of eyelids which we use to cover the deadly gaze.”

Harry nodded. It made sense as he doubted Salazar Slytherin interacted with his familiar with his eyes closed, let alone Tom doing so.

“Why are you here, Little One?” the snake asked.

“I wanted to find the Chamber.”

“Why?”

“I want a place that I can come and practice my magic without being caught in the school wards. There is another room, but in this one I can be completely alone - I can be myself.”

“I see.”

“Would you be able to tolerate my presence?” Harry asked.

“If you warm my tunnel and allow me to wander and bring food, I shall allow you to build your nest here.”

Harry nodded before a thought hit him. “You won’t leave the Chamber, right? I don’t want to risk harming any students or staff—or, at least, not without my permission,” he said. There were one or two people he wouldn’t mind harming, but not yet.

“No, I have never wanted to harm any students. I will do as you instruct me, Little Speaker.”

“Then what happened to Myrtle?”

“Is that the girl who died last time? It’s my fault. I thought I was alone and lowered my eyelids as I was returning to the Chamber. She was hiding and, when she saw me, she screamed, drawing my attention. There was nothing to do, she was dead before she hit the ground. I didn’t see Tom after that.”
Harry nodded. “I’m sure he didn’t blame you and missed you. And I have no problem with allowing you to roam as long as you stay clear of the school.”

“Then please, feel free to join me in the Chamber.”

“Thank you. I will remember next time to bring you some food.”

“I liked it when Tom would bring rabbits. Lots of rabbits.”

Harry nodded and fought the smile which threatened his face when he thought about the greatest Dark Lord of the century bringing bunnies down for his pet snake.

“I will get the House-Elves to fetch some rabbits,” he promised.

The snake hissed in pleasure and slowly drew away from Harry. Looking at her, Harry saw she was around 50 feet long and her scales ranged from green to black, the lights making them seem to change colour. She was quite beautiful in a terrifying way and he felt a slither of guilt of having killed her in his last life.

“Aithusia, do you perhaps know of a way out? The slide isn’t exactly practical,” he asked, realising he didn’t actually have a way out. While he knew some levitation spells, he had a feeling that Slytherin would have built other exits.

“My master would just ask for stairs,” the snake said.

Harry nodded and berated his stupidity. “Thank you, Great One. I will go now, but I promise to return in a few days with food.”

~

Leaving the Chamber, Harry realised it was almost curfew. Walking quickly back towards Ravenclaw Tower, he felt approaching magical signatures and quickly found a corner in which to stand and wait. He didn’t want a teacher, or worse, Filch, finding them.

“Hello, little birdy,” George said.

“Nice night for a bit of mischief,” Fred continued.

“Gred, Forge,” Harry greeted.

“Now, you know us - we love a good prank—”

“—a nice laugh—”

“—a jolly good joke—”

“—therefore, imagine our laughter when Ronny starts acting crazy!”

Harry looked at them in disbelief. He had thought the twins would be furious at him.

“He was kissing Ginny with the desperation of a starving man.”

“ Took four prefects to pull him off her. He was quite attached.”

Harry snorted at the mental image before schooling his features. “In my defence, I didn’t know who had tried to poison me.”
The twins shared a look. “Right,” they said simultaneously, snickering.

“Shouldn’t you be, I don’t know, mad?”

They laughed. “Oh, we are mad.”

“Furious.”

“Outraged!”

Harry felt his heart break a little bit at the thought he had lost his chance at gaining back his friends.

“Yes, how dare Ginny try and poison you!”

“Her scene at the Sorting was bad enough.”

“But this - this is just mental!”

Harry was almost dizzy with relief. “You're mad at her? Not me?”

“You did nothing wrong. If anything, what you did was brilliant!”

“Comedic gold, by the way.”

“Magic’s way of getting even,” Fred agreed with his twin.

Harry looked at them in disbelief.

“Don’t look so shocked, Harrykins.”

“Yes, we told you we would be watching.”

Harry nodded. “Well, that’s not creepy at all.”

Fred snorted and George pretended to lecherously look him up and down.

Harry rolled his eyes. “I'm happy you're not angry, but why are you here?”

The twins shared a look. “Well, after our mother turned up—”

“—and let me tell you, she screamed like a banshee when she heard what had happened—”

“—feared we’d go deaf!”

“Anyway, we did a little investigation and found out what happened—”

“—and let us tell you, we are not impressed.”

Harry nodded.

“So, we thought we would come and let you know that we would be taking the time to personally let our younger siblings know the error of their ways.”

“Therefore, imagine our surprise when we went to find you and instead noticed you disappear off the map completely.”

“One second you're in the bathroom—”
“—a girls’ bathroom might I just add—”

“—then pop! You're gone.”

“Disappeared.”

“Vamoosed.”

Harry let his eyebrow rise. “Map?” he asked. He obviously knew the map they were referring to was the Marauders’ Map, but he didn’t want them knowing that.

The twins shared a look before Fred spoke, “We have in our possession a rare magical artefact.”

“A great treasure of noble cause,” George said.

“May we present the Marauders’ Map,” they finished together, brandishing the map before Harry.

“It is capable of showing everybody in the castle, where they are, who they're with, what they're doing. We found it at the end of last year and we’ve studied it completely.”

Harry nodded, “How does it work?”

Together the twins said the password: “We solemnly swear that we’re up to no good.”

Harry watched as the map came to life and smiled. “Interesting,” he said. “I'm sure Sirius and Remy will be happy to know their map is helping this generation of pranksters.”

The twins looked at Harry shocked. “Sirius and Remy?”

“Yes, you might know them better as Padfoot and Moony.”

“But—”

“What?”

Harry chuckled at the twins. It was rare for them to mess up their joint speech.

“My dad was Prongs, Sirius is Padfoot, and Remus is Moony. Wormtail was Peter Pettigrew. They were best friends in school.”

The twins shared a look before grabbing Harry and pulling him into a three-way hug.

“You're a legacy!”

“Please, oh great one, we are not worthy!”

Harry snorted and pulled away with a laugh. “I'm surprised you managed to work the password out.”

George snorted. “It took us a whole afternoon.”

Harry was shocked - it would have taken most people weeks, if not years, to figure it out. Then again, he always knew the twins were smart, they just applied their brains to things they deemed worthy of their attention.

“If you knew about the map, why did you ask?” Fred asked.

“I wasn't 100% sure,” Harry told him.
The twins shared another look before turning to face Harry.

“I think you were trying to distract us, baby birdy.”

“Yes, trying to get out of answering our question.”

Harry laughed. “Ask away.”

“Why did you disappear from the map?”

“The map only shows areas that the marauders found,” Harry said truthfully.

“So there’s a secret passageway in the first floor girls’ toilets?”

“One that they never found?”

Harry smirked. “Something like that.”

“Oh, such a mysterious baby bird.”

Harry laughed. “I swear, if you guess correctly, I’ll tell you.”

The twins shared a look and nodded. “Deal,” they said in perfect synchrony.

Harry smiled. “Well then gentlemen, it’s been a pleasure,” he said before turning. However, before he could get far, they called him back.

“Wait,” Fred said. He and George had quickly shared a conversation.

“Yeah,” George agreed.

“Here,” they handed the map over to Harry.

Harry took it and looked at the twins. They looked happy but he could see the slight disappointment in their eyes.

“It should belong to you, really.”

“Your dad worked on it and, well, if it was us, we would want something he had made.”

Harry smiled and tucked the map into his bag. “I’ll ask Sirius and Remus about how they made it, maybe we could duplicate it. If not, I don’t mind lending it back to you,” he promised.

The twins smiled and looked relieved. “Little bird, I do believe this is the start of a beautiful friendship.”

Harry was happy to hear the words. “I do believe you are correct, my good sirs.” Realising the time, Harry quickly said his goodbyes and managed to reach Ravenclaw Tower before curfew. Harry smirked when he thought about all of the adventures the twins could get up to with Draco and Neville.

Entering the tower, Harry made his way over to Luna, who was sitting alone reading a star chart.

“Hello, Little Moon,” he said, sitting down next to her.

“Hello, my Lord,” she said. “Did you have a productive meeting with the goat and his minions?”
Harry snorted at her dismissive tone when it came to Dumbledore. “It was certainly interesting. I also decided to trust a few more people.”

Luna hummed and looked thoughtful. “I think you’ve made the right choice,” she said before pulling on her hair and looking at Harry with big doe eyes.

Harry nodded, relieved. “I’m glad. You will also be happy to hear that Aithusia will no longer be without company,” he said before picking up her long pale hair and running his fingers through it. Slowly, he started to braid small sections before pulling them together in a knot at the back of her head. Looking around, he saw a few eyes on him, so he knew he couldn’t use wandless magic. As though sensing his problem, Luna’s hand appeared and in it was a beautiful silver hair pin. Smiling, Harry picked it up and used it to secure the braided knot.

While this was going on, their conversation continued to flow.

“You found her?” Luna asked, happy that such a magnificent creature would be allowed some freedom.

“Yes and she is beautiful,” Harry said smiling.

“Will she be willing to help with our peacock problem?” Luna asked, smiling deceptively.

Harry laughed lowly. “Honestly? I forgot to ask, but I think she would be willing.”

“Good. Maybe you could write to a certain bug and get her to spread a web. I’m sure she could dig up the truth with the help of your family,” Luna said.

Harry grinned. He hadn't thought to use Rita, but could see the logic behind the idea. “Little Moon, you are a genius.”

Luna giggled. “Well, this is the House of wit and intelligence.”

“Indeed it is.”

Harry opened his bag then and pulled out a piece of parchment and a quill. Moving so he could use the desk, Harry thought about what he wanted Rita to write. She really had been doing a fantastic job demeaning Dumbledore - her stories all told the truth but in such a way they really engaged the readers.

~

Rita,

I must say I am very impressed with your work so far and commend you for it. You truly are a remarkable reporter. I'm sure you will be pleased to hear that Dumbledore now fears to read the papers—your articles really are causing him quite some bother.

Therefore, I need you to use your talents to spread the truth once again. Gilderoy Lockhart is a fake. I know this to be a fact, but I need you to do a little investigating and produce them for me. I want the world to know the type of man he is: a liar, cheat, and fraud.

You will find all his claimed acts of heroics are those of others who he has Obliviated. The man has not done a single thing he has claimed.

I'm sure you, like I, feel the public must be made aware of such outrageous news.
It might also benefit us both if you were to share your findings with my guardian, Lord Sirius Black. I'm sure he would be very pleased with them and happily share them with both the Wizengamot and the Hogwarts School Board, of which he is a member.

Yours,

Harrison Potter-Black

~

Smiling, Harry tucked the note into his bag and vowed he would take it to Hedwig first thing the morning.

Everyday Harry would wait with baited breath to see if Rita had decided to publish her article on Gilderoy. Her response to his letter had left him giddy for days when he had read it.

~

Heir Potter-Black,

I must say, I am pleased to hear you have found my work to be satisfactory. You would not believe the uproar my articles have caused - it’s been very entertaining to say the least.

Do believe the old man has even tried to have me fired! Therefore, I must thank you for your support in me keeping my job. I never knew the Potters owned such a large share in the Daily Prophet.

I would be beyond happy to go and look into Mr. Lockhart for you, I'm sure I will be able to dig up all of the juicy tidbits surrounding his stories. Once I have them, I will gladly share them with the world. It is like you said after all - they deserve to know that such outrageous lies have been fed to them.

And I quite agree! I'm sure Lord Black would be very pleased to hear from me.

Rita Skeeter

~

December 1992, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

“What has you so excited, Harry? You’ve been like this all week,” Neville finally questioned his friend.

Harry smirked. “I just can’t wait for the morning owls to arrive.”

“Oh? Why?” Susan asked, looking up from her breakfast.

“Becau—”

“I bet you're waiting for a love letter from your boyfriend,” spat Ron Weasley.

Harry rolled his eyes. The redhead had taken to bombarding him every breakfast, especially by making snide digs at Harry’s sexuality ever since he had learnt of it.

“I don’t have a boyfriend, Ronald, but with the way you keep bringing one up, I might begin to suspect you want to be mine.”
Harry’s friends sniggered as they watched Ron turn red with anger, his cheeks blotchy with the colour. “Never! You’re just a freak!”

Harry’s eyes narrowed. He hated that word, even after all this time. It reminded him of how weak he had once been, how easily he had been controlled. However, before he could voice his fury and, better yet, curse the sad excuse of a wizard, the twins appeared.

“Now, now, Ronnykins, there's no need to blush.”

“Yeah. I mean, we do understand - little Harrison here is rather lovely.”

“Quite a catch.”

“Apparently the most eligible bachelor under 16!”

“But, like we said, there's no reason to blush around him. I'm sure if you just declared your love, he would be willing to consider you.”

The twins stopped then and dramatically looked Ron over before exclaiming, “Or maybe not.”

“I do believe we got all the looks in our family, my good sir,” Fred simpered to his twin.

“You might be right, you handsome chap.”

Harry smirked and nodded at the twins while his friends looked fascinated by the exchange. “Now boys, both William and Charles are rather pleasant as well,” Harry said.

His statement made Ron turn even redder. “Shut up!”

Harry raised an eyebrow. “Temper, temper, Ronald.”

The twins laughed and picked Ron up, making his legs flail.

“We'll just go get rid of the trash, little bird,” George said.

“Yeah, it seems the House-Elves forgot,” Fred agreed.

As the older boys left, Ron struggling in their arms, Harry let out a small chuckle.

“What was that?” Draco demanded, recovering the quickest.

“I do believe the twins are taking the rubbish out,” Luna said, making Harry snort louder.

“But-what—why?” the blonde aristocrat spluttered.

“I told you, the twins are friends,” Harry said.

“They are funny,” Neville agreed. He had spoken to them quite a bit that year in the common room. They had started to share a few of their ideas about pranks with him, which he had been sharing with Draco.

“But they're Weasleys!” Draco all but wailed.

“Enough, Dray. They are my friends and I think, if you got over your silly little prideful vendetta, you would find yourself liking them as well.”

Draco looked shocked and a little hurt, making Harry feel bad momentarily. But, before the blond
could retaliate, they were interrupted.

“Look at this, Gred!”

“I know, Forge.

“The little bird is defending us!”

“He’s such a hero—”

“—so dreamy!”

“No wonder Ginny is so in love with him.”

Harry turned to see the twins standing there and smirked at them. “I take it the rubbish is gone?”

“Oh, yes,” they said together.

“Fancy joining us? Breakfast is far from over,” Harry offered.

The twins shared a look before jumping to sit down.

“So, how long have you guys been friends?” Blaise asked, reminding Harry that he loved to gossip like an old lady.

Harry watched as the twins quickly became accepted, Neville being the easiest because he had been talking to them in the common room all year. Even Draco, after initially sitting there pouting like a toddler, soon jumped into the conversation as they started to exchange notes and ideas on pranks.

After breakfast was finished, Harry and his yearmates made their way to Potions.

“See, they're not so bad,” Harry said, poking Draco in the ribs.

Draco grumbled what sounded like an agreement before he straighten his uniform.

Harry smirked. “What was that? I didn’t quite catch it.”

Draco grumbled again.

“Sorry, you will have to speak clearly. I would hate to have to write to aunt Cissa and say her only son has turned into an urchin who cannot speak.”

“I said you were right!” Draco snapped, making the group snigger.

“See! That wasn't so hard, was it Dracie?” Harry said

Draco looked aghast at the nickname and turned pleading eyes on Harry, “Please never, ever, call me that again.”

Harry smirked. “Why ever not, Dracie?”

“I beg of you, have mercy.”

The group continued to laugh as they made their way into class, making Harry glad he had decided to risk having friends again.

~
Meanwhile

Grimmauld Place, London

“You’ve got an owl, Sirius,” Remus said, looking up from the letter to see the name.

Sirius looked up and frowned when he didn’t recognise the bird. It wasn’t Hedwig or one of the Malfoy’s eagle owls - it wasn’t even a ministry carrier.

Flicking his wand, Sirius checked for curses and compulsions and found it to be clean. Even with how tightly warded the house was, he wouldn’t become complacent; he had vowed that to himself when he had finally been cleared by the healers.

Picking up the letter, he broke the wax seal and quickly read the entire thing.

~

Lord Black,

I am writing to you on the suggestion of your son and Heir, Harrison Potter-Black. He suggested I contact you and give you a copy of my findings into the actions of one Mr. Gilderoy Lockhart.

You will see I have enclosed them all, so you may view them and share the results among your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Rita Skeeter

~

Sirius smirked and read through the files, grinning like mad when he got to the last one.

Remus, who was watching him, looked amused. “I take it you’ve had some good news?”

Sirius grinned. “Oh, yes.”

“Care to share?”

“You know how we’ve been having trouble finding proof that Lockhart is a fraud?” Sirius asked.

“Yes?”

“Well, it seems Harry asked Ms. Skeeter to look into it and she’s found the evidence we need.”

“Really? I thought that Dumbledore and his supporters in the ministry were making it hard for the investigators.”

Sirius grumbled, “He was - why he wants the fraud to keep his job, I don’t know.”

“He probably fears what the repercussions will be if the public finds out he hired such a fool,” Remus said.

“It shouldn’t matter, he has a duty of care and he’s failing,” Sirius said happily.

Remus chuckled. “Most people would look sad by that.”
“I'm not most people.”

“Are you going to let Harry or Lucius know?”

“Yes, I’ll write to them both,” Sirius promised. Oh, what a good day this was turning out to be.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the serious delay, hope you're all well!
enjoy this chapter as the next wont come for around 2 weeks as I'm going on holiday
without my laptop!
Hope you're enjoying the story!
Comment & kudos!
~Annie
How to get rid of a peacock

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Late November 1992

Harry was counting down the days until the 21st of December; he wanted to see what would come from Luna’s insight. He knew it would be spectacular thanks to the build up provided by Sirius and Lucius. Looking back, Harry was glad that the two had never teamed up in his last life - together they were a force to be reckoned with.

It had started up immediately after what Harry called his coming out—after he had set Rita onto Lockhart. Harry had waited with bated breath each morning, reading the subtle hints she would drop.

It had started with an article on the illegality of memory charms.

~

Ministry Blunders: Memory Charms Not So Charming

By Rita Skeeter

In a recent investigation, I, Rita Skeeter, journalist extraordinaire and seeker of truth, went undercover to discover the secrets of the Ministry’s lack of control when it comes to one of the most delicate branches of mind magic...
The article had brought to light how easily mind magic, like the Obliviate charm, can be used and abused and how the ministry had no procedures set in place for the control of the branch.

After reading it, Harry had watched in fascination as Lockhart held his composure. The man really was a good actor when the situation called for it - the only sign he was bothered by the article was a slight tightening of his eyes and a subtle stiffening of his back.

Next came an article on Azkaban, the conditions, and a proposal for a tightening of sentences.

Azkaban: The Truth - Dementors or Demons?
By Rita Skeeter

Many of us know the name, but how many can say they know the truth about Azkaban? I, Rita Skeeter, journalist extraordinaire and seeker of truth, decided it was time to really expose the deep dark secrets of the hellish island...

That article had made the man blanche and Harry snort. True, the prison was nothing to joke about and thinking of Sirius there made him shiver, but the man’s reaction was gold. Severus also quickly caught on to the ongoing situation after a particularly entertaining article and cornered Harry after a Potions lesson.

Truth and Lies
By Rita Skeeter

In a recent top secret investigation, I, Rita Skeeter, journalist extraordinaire and seeker of truth, have discovered something so shocking that I tremble as I write. But, before I say more, I must wait and verify more facts—never let it be said that I spread lies! However, I can say that my recent investigation involves none other than our beloved hero and winner of the Witches Weekly most charming smile award: Gilderoy Lockhart...

“Mr. Potter, if you could please stay behind.”

Harry paused from packing up his things and nodded. “Yes, professor.” Turning to see Hannah and Susan, he sent them both a smile.

“I will catch up to you in Charms,” he promised.

After they left, Harry resumed tidying his things. “Is everything okay, professor?”

Severus snorted at the innocent tone. “Indeed. I simply wished to inquire as to what you have on Rita Skeeter - the woman is notorious for her articles, yet she seems to be firmly in your pocket.”

Harry smirked and stopped what he was doing. “I haven’t a clue what you mean.”
Severus allowed a single eyebrow to rise. “Really?”

“Well, I *may* have found out about a... *small condition* she has.”

Severus smirked. “I see. I had wondered why she decided to target Dumbledore and now that fool Lockhart.”

“She’s a very morally conscious woman,” Harry said, nodding solemnly before smirking. The innocence of his expression was quickly turning into mischief.

“I have no doubt,” Severus deadpanned.

“Was that everything, sir?”

“No, not quite. I would like to know what it is Lockhart is hiding—I know you know.”

Harry tilted his head as he considered the man in front of him. “Gilderoy Lockhart is a fool, but one you don’t need to worry about for much longer.” He didn’t want to spoil Rita’s or Lucius and Sirius’ fun too early by revealing the truth.

Severus hid his frustration at the vague answer and instead asked, “How did you manage to avoid my snake pit? You’re sneakier and more cunning than anybody I have ever met - and I served the Dark Lord once.”

Harry felt his smirk grow. “Could you imagine it? The famed Boy-Who-Lived a *Slytherin*? No, the hat agreed with me, I’m better off in Ravenclaw.”

Severus considered the boy in front of him. “You made the hat put you there, didn’t you?”

Harry smiled brightly. “I can neither confirm nor deny.”

Severus snorted, flicking his wand so a note appeared. He passed it to Harry. “Get out of here, brat,” he said fondly.

Harry smirked as he took the note. Snapping his fingers, the remainders of his potions supplies were instantly packed up. Severus shook his head at the casual display of power and control. How he had missed it to begin with he would never know.

The next morning was a Saturday and Harry finally got the confirmation he needed when Sirius’ familiar brown owl landed in front of him during breakfast.

~

*Pup,*

*It would seem that your relationship with that bug Skeeter has really paid off. She somehow managed to get around all of the roadblocks Dumbledore and his flock set up and has found quite a bit of evidence condemning Lockhart.*

*I must say, I am very impressed with her. I’ve sent a copy of her files to both Lucius and Amelia Bones, so hopefully the DMLE will be able to investigate and verify Skeeter’s findings. With any luck, you won’t have to suffer with the fool for much longer.*

*Me and Lucius, along with Severus, are having lunch tomorrow, so we will play our attack. Remember, don’t do anything to draw the old coot’s attention and look after yourself!*
Love,

Pads

~

Satisfied that Lockhart would be dealt with soon, Harry turned his mind to his magi. Ever since opening the Chamber, he had visited Aithusia only twice; getting free time was hard for him, so he wasn't stretching and using a lot of magic. Ever since the block had been removed in his last life, Harry had found his magic was easier to react and call upon. However, at times it appeared almost sentient—it would react to simple things, passing thoughts, or ideas. Keeping his power under wraps was definitely becoming harder - his classes required little in the ways of mental stimulation or magical power, so he had a lot of power built up and masked behind his occlumency shields.

“You know my Lord, I'm sure Professor Flitwick would be happy to give you some extra Charms work,” Luna said seemingly out of nowhere.

Harry tilted his head in consideration. Even the extra work wouldn’t do much for his magic build up. “Thank you Little Moon, but I think I will be okay.”

“You should consider it my Lord, it could be like your remedial potions.”

“I see,” he said, surprised she had Seen something so specific about his old life. Usually Luna was vague in the visions she Saw and mostly relied more on feelings and intuition.

Harry was still secretly shocked at how accepting Luna was being. He hadn't mentioned Aithusia to his friends yet as he hadn't yet worked with them enough to introduce his darker ideas and wanted to build closer and stronger relationships before he started revealing more truths, but Luna seemed to be the exception.

He recognised that his friends were children and, although more mature than Ron and Hermione had been at that age, they were still young and naïve. Even his Slytherin friends, who would undoubtedly support his Darker tendencies, were still only children. Therefore, using Charms lessons would be a great excuse to go and visit the great snake and work his magic.

With this in mind, Harry excused himself and went to find the part goblin. After knocking on his office door, Harry was quickly called in.

“Good morning, Harrison,” Flitwick greeted happily. He felt like he saw the boy much more clearly ever since the meeting in his office.

“Good morning, sir.”

“What can I do for you today?”

“I was wondering, sir, if you wouldn’t mind being my excuse with my friends? I need time and space to work on using up and stretching my magic. I have somewhere to go where I am safe and can be alone, but I simply don't have the time or reason to leave my friends. I don’t what them involved yet - they're still children, still innocent,” Harry said.

The words about the innocence of children made Filius both profoundly sad and simultaneously angry. The fact that Harry couldn’t count himself among them made him want to hex Dumbledore. “I don’t see why not. What were you thinking?”

“I was planning on saying I had Advanced Charms; it shouldn’t be hard to pull off.” He shrugged.
Filius smirked. Harry was once again at the top of his year by a large margin. “If they ask, I will back your story up.”

Harry smiled. “Thank you, sir.”

“How have you been anyway, Harrison?”

“I'm good, thank you. Sirius wrote to me today saying they had found some evidence of Lockhart being a fraud, so hopefully we won’t have to deal with him for much longer. And the headmaster has left me alone since our meeting.”

“That’s great. Dumbledore has been steering clear of me this week, he no longer asks for near daily updates.”

Harry nodded and after a few more minutes of idle chat left his Head of House, happy he now had an excuse for disappearing.

~

Malfoy Manor Wiltshire, Sunday November 30th, 1992

Sirius practically bounded through the floo connection to Malfoy Manor on Sunday. He had owled the files over to Lucius when he had received them and he wanted to know what the blond thought of them.

Barely holding his composure, Remus followed at a more sedate pace, arriving just in time to watch Sirius bound off through the doors in search of Lucius. He was glad at times like this that Harry was already mentally an adult as Sirius really could be a child.

Using his nose, Remus tracked Sirius through the manor into the informal sitting room. Entering he saw Lucius and Severus sitting in large lounge chairs while Sirius was bouncing on the spot in front of them.

“Did you inject him with sugar?” Severus said, eyeing Sirius with caution as if he was contagious or would explode at any moment.

Remus chuckled. “No, he’s been like this since I woke up.”

Sirius pouted for a moment before sitting down on a lounger. “Have you read them?”

Severus looked intrigued and turned to the blond aristocrat and noted his smug expression.

“Yes, I have and I must say I never knew Skeeter could be so useful.”

“What has she done - other than her articles, I assume?” Severus asked.

“Harry put her on the task of investigating Lockhart’s success,” Sirius said, grinning madly.

“Oh?” Severus said. He knew the man was a fraud but he had no evidence other than his obvious incompetence and lack of magical and mental skill.

“She sent her files to me a few days ago and to say she found gold would be putting it lightly.”

Severus snorted. “So the fool will be gone soon?”

“Hopefully. I doubt Dumbledore can keep this hidden. I sent a copy of the files to Amelia Bones as
Severus smirked at Sirius. “Smart, Black. I heard rumours he was trying to stop the ministry investigation?”

“Well,” Severus smirked at Sirius. “Smart, Black. I heard rumours he was trying to stop the ministry investigation?”

“Indeed. However, now it’s been done for them; all they have to do is check the facts,” Lucius said, his smooth voice injected with amusement.

“It shouldn’t take them more than a few weeks to verify them - what I read was pretty condemning,” Remus said.

“What she has printed so far hints as much,” Severus agreed.

“Oh yes, her articles have been great!” Sirius said, “The one about Azkaban was pretty accurate.”

“Hopefully that buffoon will find out for himself,” Severus said, not wanting to linger on the subject as he wasn't sure if Sirius would be comfortable.

“I must admit I'm disappointed in myself for never seeing her full potential. Harrison really did find a great resource in her,” Lucius said.

“Indeed,” Severus agreed.

“Has the ministry started their investigations?” Remus asked.

“My sources in the DMLE confirmed they had sent agents out to look into the claims this morning.”

Sirius snorted and grinned. “Somehow I'm not surprised you have sources in the DMLE.”

Lucius allowed one perfectly shaped eyebrow to rise. “I have people everywhere,” he said before continuing. “Madame Bones is overseeing the investigation personally because of all the roadblocks Dumbledore put in place.”

Severus smirked. “So his meddling has drawn her eye.”

“Well, it is rather obvious if you know where to look. I gathered from our meeting in the headmaster’s office that she is no longer enamoured with the beloved leader of the Light.”

“Harry is close with her niece, Susan. He spent a few days with them over the holidays - they even went to the beach. She likes Harry and she’s always been more skeptical of Dumbledore from what I remember.”

“Such powerful and influential friends he has... it really does make you wonder if he planned it,” Lucius said, more to himself than anyone in particular. What he saw of the boy reminded him of the stories his father would tell him about their Lord’s early days.

Sirius, however, just smiled. He knew Harry didn’t pick his friends for that reason, but he did sometimes wonder if he subconsciously allowed what he knew of their families to influence his decision when befriending them. Neville was influential because of his family and status, Susan had her aunt, Hannah’s family, although not as well known, were still respected among the Light sects, Luna’s father owned the Quibbler, Draco was a Malfoy, Pansy’s family was almost as respected by the Dark families as the Malfoy’s, and the Zabini family was not only rich but a recognised and respected Neutral family—Harry had even recently mentioned befriending the Weasley twins.

After that the group slowly fell into idle chitchat as Narcissa joined them and lunch was served.
Before leaving, Lucius arranged to meet up with Sirius later in the week to discuss the Lockhart situation in detail; they wanted to work together with the DMLE and the Hogwarts Board to bring the man, and hopefully Dumbledore, down.

~

21th December 1992

The latest article by Rita had really made an impact on Lockhart and Harry enjoyed watching him as the man struggled to respond to the rising number of questions being raised. He feared the man would flee before his plan had a chance to take effect - he knew in his last life the man had tried to run before he and Ron had forced him into the Chamber to rescue Ginny.

Harry knew that now practically nobody attended Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons. Instead, most were choosing to self-study and several students had also opted to do the same for History of Magic. Yet, it hadn't been until Lucius and Sirius had come into school that Lockhart had really panicked.

~

Earlier in The Week

Harry and his friends were sitting at the Gryffindor table for breakfast - they had slowly started to include the lion House in their daily rotation ever since the twins had come on board and often joined them at meal times to plan pranks with Neville and Draco. This new development between the four made Harry smirk internally as the foursome honestly thrived together. The twins were better at pulling off the pranks, having had years of experience, whereas Neville was better as their informant as he was always overlooked or underestimated and Draco was the mastermind behind most of them. Somehow, he had hidden this talent in Harry’s last life, but now he was letting it flourish. He was full of ideas, it just took the help of the twins to bring them to life. They reminded Harry of the Marauders but, unlike his father and his friends, they were not malicious. Sure, they did tend to target Ron and Ginny, but they never skirted close to bullying.

Sitting together at the table gave Harry the perfect view when Sirius walked in, flanked by Lucius and who he guessed were the other members of the School Board. Harry noticed how the room quickly silenced as the imposing looking group entered. All of the members were dressed in robes - not formal, but certainly high quality.

Sirius quickly scanned the crowd of students and spotted Harry and his friends. Catching his eye, he winked at him and smiled when he saw Harry shake his head in amusement.

“What is the meaning of this?” Dumbledore's voice boomed out, tearing almost everybody’s attention from the intruding witches and wizards. He stood tall from his chair in the centre of the room and stared at the group.

Harry, however, focused not on his words, but his magic. It was swirling unnoticed by all but him, angry and malicious.

“Headmaster, as you seem to have not received any of our numerous owls and appear to never be in your office when we attempt to floo you, we, the school governors, felt it necessary to come in person,” Lucius said, coming to the front of the group and letting his cool aristocratic voice ring over the crowd, hushing the growing whispers.

“You have no business forcing these witches and wizards to follow you, Mr. Malfoy,” Dumbledore
said, the rude tone showing his displeasure.

Lucius didn’t respond. Instead, an older looking woman stepped forward next to the Lord. Harry didn’t recognise her from either this life or his last, but he recognised some of her features and wondered if she was related to Justin Smith’s family.

“Actually Albus, it was Lord Black who brought our attention to the matter we wish to discuss with you. From this it was our decision as a body to hold a full meeting. The fact you would accuse us of being so weak willed that we could be manipulated is offensive, and to do it so publicly not only insults Lord Malfoy but also us.”

Harry wanted to laugh as he knew just how easily they could be manipulated but instead nodded his head. He could have clapped when he saw a few students looking disgruntledly towards the headmaster and guessed they were related to the members Harry didn’t know.

“I apologise. That was not my intention and, like you say, this is not the place for such a conversation,” the headmaster said, his voice now soft and genial, the tone not matching the anger his magic was pulsating with.

After they left the Great Hall broke out in whispers and Harry held back a smirk when he noticed most eyes were on him and Draco.

“Little Bird, you wouldn’t happen to know what's going on would you?” Fred asked, seeing Harry’s expression.

“Yes, you have a look which just screams hidden knowledge—”

“And we should know, we have often had the same expression.”

Harry allowed himself to smirk then and allowed his eyes to fall on Lockhart, who, as though sensing his gaze, looked up and allowed his blue eyes to lock with Harry’s own.

“I may have an idea,” he said. The twins followed his gaze and nodded.

“We see,” they said. They knew that Harry was behind the articles by Rita Skeeter and they had caught on quickly.

“My Lord, I do believe that rabbit and peacock go very well together,” Luna said, staring at Lockhart with large eyes.

Harry tilted his head. “Are you sure? That is a rather gruesome end result,” Harry asked. He knew Lockhart needed to pay, but he was having doubts about giving him to Aithusia - being eaten by a basilisk was a bit extreme and the man hadn’t targeted Harry or his friends personally.

“It’s not the 21st yet,” Luna said as though it explained everything—then again, Harry supposed it did.

Harry hummed and wondered what the man was going to do to make Harry feed him to Aithusia. He wasn't too worried as he knew Luna wouldn’t let him or somebody he loved to get hurt, but he was curious as to what the man would try.

“Does anybody have any idea what they’re talking about?” Pansy asked, looking between the two with open concern.

“Not a clue,” Draco said.
“Barmy, the pair of them,” the twins added, “but we love them anyway.”

Luna smiled at them and nodded, happily going back to her breakfast.

~

Meanwhile

The Headmaster’s Office

“How can I do for you?” the headmaster asked, looking around the room and smiling.

Sirius held back his snort - the tone was so humble and deceiving.

“Headmaster, have you not been reading the owls we have sent you?” Lucius asked straightaway.

Albus bit back his snarl at the tone and hoped to look benign sitting behind his desk.

“I'm sorry to say that sometimes things get on top of me. Your owls must have built up in the pile of mail I have yet to get through. As I'm sure you're aware, I've recently been under some strain.”

Sirius once again struggled to remain composed. “I'm sure. I gather you simply missed our floo calls as well then?”

“Yes, my boy. Being headmaster I am often out of my office dealing with the children and other issues.”

Sirius shook his head. “Undoubtedly, however, as headmaster, it’s your duty to run the school and to provide your students with a happy, safe environment and, most importantly, a quality education. You have staff and, as deputy, it is Professor McGonagall’s duty to deal with students and any behavioural concerns, as well as their Head of Houses. This makes me wonder how seriously you're taking your duty.”

Albus bristled at the words. How dare Sirius Black of all people tell him how to run his school.

“A simple oversight, my boy.”

“Indeed,” Lucius said.

“Now, what is the matter that is so important that you felt the need to intrude on our breakfast?”

“Intrude? You make it sound like we’re not welcome,” Lilian Freemont said. Sirius remembered her family from one of Lucius’ speeches - they were Light-Neutral. He vaguely recognised her as being from Ravenclaw and a few years older than him.

“A simple slip of the tongue, my dear,” Albus said, exasperated. Never before would they have questioned him and it was leaving him flustered.

“I'm sure you’ve read about the investigations into your current Defence teacher?” Lucius asked.

Albus wanted to growl. “Yes, well, if we believed everything written then we wouldn’t know who to trust,” he said. He had tried to bury the fool’s incompetence, but even he could only do so much. If it wasn't for the fact he owed the man for saving his reputation he would have left him to hang.

It was five years ago when a busy body reporter had found out about his connection to Gellert and their relationship; he would have been ruined until Lockhart had literally stumbled in on their
meeting. When he saw what was happening, Lockhart had Obliviated the man and, from that point on, he had Albus in his backpocket.

As such a public figure, Albus hadn't wanted to risk getting rid of him, but now he was questioning his actions.

“I'm sure,” Lucius said, “however, you undoubtedly also know that the ministry has looked into Mr. Lockhart’s claimed feats of magic and heroism and they have found nothing. He is a fraud and the ministry is, as we speak, finalising the order for his arrest. It will be done in a matter of days, if not sooner.”

Albus bristled internally. “I see. As awful as this is, I am sensing that some of you hold me responsible for this?” he asked, making sure to sound tired and sad.

“You have refused our input when picking teachers. It is the Board’s job to decide who is hired; however, since becoming the headmaster you have yet to hold onto a teacher for more than a year.”

“Yes, well—”

“And what's more, the man is clearly incompetent. Why, a second year has been more successful tutoring students in Defence these last few months,” Lucius finished with.

Albus stared at the man for a moment, barely holding back his contempt. “As the headmaster, I feel that I should hire my staff. I know the school and the students the best; however, I will admit that perhaps I have made a mistake with Mr. Lockhart.”

Sirius bit his lip to stop himself laughing. Perhaps? There was no perhaps about the situation.

“As a matter of precaution, I have a signed letter of approval from Madam Bones and the Minister himself for you to lock the Hogwarts wards, stopping Mr. Lockhart from leaving the school grounds,” Lucius said, pulling out the mentioned letter and passing it over to Albus.

Quickly reading the letter, Albus hid his anger and carefully concealed how his hands shook with rage. “I see. However, I don’t agree that such drastic action needs to be taken.” He hoped his grave voice would sway the crowd and he saw a few members falter slightly.

Sirius, however, wasn't moved and quickly spoke up, “It’s just a precaution and as a staff member, he should not be leaving before the investigation is completed anyway. If the investigation turns up with nothing then he will be apologised to and released. Why, with how worried you look, it’s almost as though you believe he is guilty.”

Closing his eyes briefly to hide his anger, Albus bit back another snarl. “I have the utmost faith in my staff,” he said eventually.

“Then let’s get to it, some of us have important things to be doing,” Atticus Vane said. Although Neutral, the man was a former Slytherin and throughout the meeting he had observed the headmaster, and he had not liked what he had seen.

Knowing he was unable to get out of it, Albus stood and gathered the ward book for the school. As headmaster, he had primary control of the wards; however, McGonagall could take the reigns as deputy and, in the cases of emergency, the Heads of Houses could make a few edits. Pushing his magic into the book, Albus allowed the Board to witness him binding Gilderoy.

After it was done the group left, many not even bothering with polite farewells. Their dismissal of him had Albus trembling in rage; he would have to carefully plan how to get the man out now - he
didn’t trust him not to spill all he knew in a desperate effort to save himself.

Lucius and Sirius, however, detoured back to the Great Hall in the hopes of seeing their sons and heirs.

~

Meanwhile

The Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Harry, feeling the school’s wards flicker, allowed a smirk to fall into place. When Sirius had written to him about the plans to bind Lockhart until he was arrested, his final plans had fallen into place.

“You know, you look rather terrifying when you do that,” Blaise said, observing Harry’s face.

“Terrifying? Me? I’m an angel,” Harry said, allowing his eyes to widen and an expression of innocence to take over.

The group all paused to look at him.

“Merlin, you're good at that,” Draco said.

“Yeah, do you teach lessons?” the twins asked.

“Because, if you do sign us up,” Fred continued.

“Yeah, Minnie would never punish us if we could look like that!” George finished.

Harry snorted and allowed his face to go back to his normal expression. “It’s a gift,” he deadpanned.

Hearing the doors open, Harry looked up to see Sirius and Lucius enter.

Smiling, Harry stood and walked to his father figure. “Constructive meeting?” he asked.

“Very,” Sirius said, pulling Harry into a sideways hug.

Smiling at the action, Harry allowed the contact. “I felt the wards change. I take it the peacock’s bound?” he whispered.

Sirius nodded and was slightly disturbed by the look that passed over Harry’s face.

“Am I going to need an alibi again?” he asked, only half joking.

Harry snorted. “Please, I'm not an amateur.”

Lucius, who had caught the last of their conversation, looked intrigued. Seeing this, Harry sent the man a nod.

“Over Christmas I think we could do with meeting up, there are things you need to know.”

Lucius nodded. “I look forward to it.”

The rest of Harry’s friends took that moment to join them. Sirius was happy to meet the twins and share what he remembered about making the map.

As the adults left, Harry wasn’t the only one barely holding back laughter. The awestruck
expressions on the two Weasleys faces had drawn a crowd which was shaking to remain emotionless.

“Harry, you're related to the second coming of Merlin,” Fred said with awe on his face. Nodding vehemently, George stood next to his twin with a matching expression.

With that Harry lost it, laughing until his eyes watered.

~

Meanwhile

Gilderoy Lockhart was panicking. He was caught, trapped, and that senile old man could do nothing to help him. How it had come to this he didn’t know. He was beloved by all, a hero, cherished and adored. Actually, that was a lie, he knew exactly who to blame. He knew who’s fault this was and, if he had his way, he would get his revenge.

Harry Potter would rue the day he challenged the great Gilderoy Lockhart.

Chapter End Notes

Please not this chapter is NOT Beta'd but I felt bad for keeping you all waiting for so long! So there are mistakes, I don't think there are any drastic ones but still just a warning to you all. Hopefully the edited version will be up soon so do check back, Also thanks for all the review, I do read them but often don't reply! Remember comments & kudos!

Updated 21/07/17
it's now been beta'd so big Thank you Miisticalwrites,
the next chapter should be up on Sunday
~ Annie
Foolish plans of a peacock

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

Gilderoy Lockhart was panicking. He was caught, trapped, and that senile old man could do nothing to help him. How it had come to this he didn’t know. He was beloved by all, a hero, cherished and adored. Actually, that was a lie, he knew exactly who to blame. He knew who’s fault this was and, if he had his way, he would get his revenge.

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~

21th December 1992

Harry could practically feel the excitement pouring off him; it wasn’t just the actual event, but the knowing why that made him giddy. He hated Lockhart and, yes, he was a fraud, but even with his new, albeit looser, morals he just couldn’t see why he would actually feed the man to Aithusia.

He had enjoyed the man’s obvious distress brought on by being bound in the wards for the last few days—that added to his reactions to Rita’s articles had actually made his repeated second year slightly enjoyable. How he was going to cope with another five years he wasn’t sure - perhaps he should consider skipping a few?

“What's got you so happy, Harry?” Neville asked. They were in Herbology and Harry had paired with the blond Gryffindor for the day.

“I'm not that happy.” Harry tried to play it off. The fact he wasn't occluding his emotions was showing just how comfortable he was with the young lion.

“Oh, I thought it was because we only have today until we break up for Yule.”

Harry blinked in shock when he realised Neville was correct; he had honestly forgotten about that in his build-up to today. He had owl ordered his gifts weeks ago but his mind had been completely focused on just how and why Gilderoy Lockhart would earn his wrath.

“Well, Yule is always something to be excited about,” Harry said. This Yule would bring him the best gift: he would be one step closer to having Tom back.

“It will be your first one with Sirius and Remus,” Neville commented.

Harry nodded and hoped that with everything going on the pair hadn't forgotten to get everything he would require for Tom’s ritual.

“I know. It will be my first proper holiday with them - my birthday doesn't count.”

Neville smiled. “I'm glad that you're happy, Harry. You deserve it.”

Harry sent the Gryffindor a look. “So do you, Nev. How’s your gran been treating you? And your uncle Algie?”
Neville shrugged a shoulder. “They're nicer to me now that I’m here and have friends. I swear gran almost cried when she saw my grades last year - not a single T, even in Potions.”

“That’s good. You know you could always come and spend a few days with me over the holidays, I'm sure Sirius and Remus would love having you. They could even teach you a few things!”

Neville’s smile widened. “I could write to gran and ask before we go to the feast.”

Harry nodded. “Do it.”

“Thanks Harry, you really are the best friend I could have ever had. Without you I would probably be a friendless Hufflepuff.”

Harry shook his head. “I don’t think there is such a thing as a friendless Hufflepuff but even without me you would have been a lion. You're brave Neville and you will be a great wizard. You don’t need me for that.”

Neville smiled bashfully making Harry smirk. “Now enough of this, show me how I'm supposed to make these things stop crying and trying to bite me,” Harry said, indicating to the baby mandrakes.

Neville nodded and fell into his instructor role, clearly showing his passion and skill with plants.

~

As the two second years approached the leaving feast, having detoured so Neville could send his letter, Harry was surprised when Luna didn’t attach herself to them. The small blonde was always waiting for them and would usually be outside their classes (how she managed to get to theirs from her own he didn’t know), but on the rare occasion she didn’t she would always find them by the time they reached the Great Hall.

Sitting at the Ravenclaw table, Harry looked around before pulling out the map. He had shown it to the group when the twins had given it to him so he didn’t feel the need to hide it as they covered him from the eyes of the rest of the hall.

“I solemnly swear that I'm up to no good.”

As the map came alive Harry scanned it until his eyes fell onto the name he was searching for.

“What's she doing on her own on the seventh floor?” Draco asked, looking over Harry’s shoulder to see the map.

Harry felt his eyes narrow. “I don’t know. Why don’t you guys wait here for us though? I’ll be back,” he said, standing to leave.

“We’ll come with you,” Hannah offered.

Harry, however, knew that whatever he found would be the reason he fed Lockhart to Aithusia and knew they weren’t ready for that. “No, I don’t want you guys to miss the feast. Save us something good, though!”

The group shared a look but eventually conceded.

Picking up the map, Harry wasn’t surprised when he saw Lockhart not far from Luna. With a growl he closed the map and made his way to them.

“Mischief managed.”
Entering the room that he had seen Luna in, Harry felt his magic strain to lash out. Sitting bound to a chair with bleary eyes was his little moon.

A hiss escaped him, whether it was English or Parseltongue he didn’t know. “Luna!”

Her unfocused gaze strayed towards him and a half smile appeared on her face. “Hello, my Lord.”

Harry walked forward and, with a flick of his wrist, unbound her from the chair. He couldn’t see anything wrong with her, but he knew with magic sometimes the effects were hard to find.

“Are you okay, little moon?”

“I feel a bit dizzy, my Lord. Did you know that you did that without a wand? Also my head hurts, it’s very dark in here.”

Harry felt his anger rise. “I know, Luna. Lumos,” he said. Lifting his wand, he allowed the spell to light up the large, empty room.

“Harry Potter, I knew you would come if I took your little girlfriend,” came a voice from behind him.

Harry allowed his occlumency shields to rise and killed off any emotion he might have felt. “Lockhart,” he greeted tonelessly.

Gilderoy felt a shiver race down his spine at the voice of the child in front of him, it held no emotion whatsoever. That alongside the glowing green eyes and unnatural stillness of the boy made him question himself for a moment. However, he quickly shook off his fears - he was Gilderoy Lockhart after all. “You should have never chosen to go against me, you mere child!”

Harry felt his magic crackle and wondered if the fool was smart enough to back down, but he didn’t hold much faith in the thought.

“I may not have done all of the things I have claimed but I am still a wizard of great skill, skills you could never dream of reaching. You’re just a school boy with a pretty face and fame you don’t deserve. You’re nothing compared to me, Harry Potter. Nothing.” Gilderoy pulled out his wand in a flourish and pointed it at the boy.

Harry took a moment to check his shields before answering, his voice conversational but emotionless, like he was talking about the weather. “If you tell me exactly what you wished to accomplish here I promise you will not find a painful end. An end yes, but it will be painless.”

Lockhart felt his mouth go dry at the boy’s reaction. There was no fear, no pleading, it was like he was void of all humanity. He hadn’t even glanced at the wand pointed at him.

“You think you can threaten me? Admit it Harry, you’ve lost!”

Harry tilted his head for a moment. “Lost?” he asked.

Gilderoy felt a moment of satisfaction, thinking he had won, before it quietly died. Harry allowed his magic to slowly fill the room, the darkness seeping and growing.

“You’re a foolish man. You should have targeted me - yes, I would have retaliated, but I would have been swift. However, instead you chose to target somebody I love.”

Harry heard Luna let out a small giggle and turned to her to find that her eyes were now on him and
she was smiling. She wasn't bothered by the darkness he was radiating nor the power that was now making the air around him vibrate. Nodding to her, he turned back to face Lockhart who now stood dumb in the middle of the room, his wand limp in his hand and eyes starting to dart around in panic.

“My friends, my family… you don’t get to touch them. Nobody gets to touch them,” Harry said, his voice quiet and chilling yet somehow managing to fill the room.

In his now growing panic Lockhart sent a stunner at Harry, but the spell died before it reached him, sizzling out with his lack of power and overwhelming fear.

“S-s-stupify!”

“I shall give you one last chance. Tell me what you had planned!” Harry demanded, his voice filled with power.

Realising he had made a mistake, Gilderoy turned and tried to run. But before he had taken a step, he was frozen.

“I asked you a question, professor. It would be rude of you to run away without answering me.”

Harry turned his palm and watched as the frozen man mimicked his movements until he was on his knees in front of him, their eyes almost level.

“If you don’t wish to tell me professor, I think I shall find the information for myself.”

Harry knew he wasn't the best legilimens around. He had studied occlumency almost religiously but his study of breaking into people’s minds was limited. However he had read all of the theories behind it and, in the present circumstances, he didn’t fear leaving lasting damage like he would have had he been attempting the mind magic on somebody else.

“Legilimens.”

Harry met a surprisingly strong resistance before his magic flared and crushed the barrier, bringing a shocked gasp from the man bound before him. Suddenly images swarmed him: pieces of broken conversations, dreams of a child, actions of a man, lost thoughts and hidden desires. Overwhelmed, Harry felt his body tremble slightly as he focused on slowing the information, on viewing it and searching through it for what he wanted until something finally caught his attention.

~

The Hag’s Lair, Knockturn Alley, ~5 years ago

Harry looked around the memory, viewing it from Lockhart’s perspective. The pub, which he recognised from his own wanderings in the dark alley, was hardly visible in the torrential rain, the few street lamps blown out by the harsh winds.

Walking in, Harry noticed Lockhart was afraid of the sparse occupants of the old pub and soon found himself settled into a corner with a warm mulled cider for comfort while he waited out the storm. Harry, from the memories he had stolen from the man’s mind, knew Lockhart needed to pick up a book from a nearby shop - that was the reason he was seeking shelter and waiting. Soon, however, the reason why Harry had his interest piqued walked in. Harry felt the memory of Lockhart look up, shocked when he recognised the old man under the dark cloak. The rest of the rooms occupants didn’t look up, used to looking the other way, so Dumbledore's entrance was only noted by Lockhart.
Dumbledore was dressed in a way Harry had never seen before. Gone were the bright and garish robes and in their place was a dark cloak, the colour of which he couldn’t make out in the poor lighting. Harry watched as the professor looked around with shrewd eyes before walking towards the stairs with purpose. Harry felt Lockhart’s interest spike as he rose to follow the man; he didn’t fear being found as everybody knew the headmaster was the beacon of Light in the magic world.

Following the old man, Harry noted how Lockhart's excitement grew, the fool thinking he would find out some juicy gossip or perhaps some important secrets. Letting Dumbledore enter the room, Harry noticed how it took Lockhart four fumbled attempts to cast an eavesdropper charm and overhear the conversation going on inside.

“The world needs to know what you did, Albus! Who you were!”

“They were the mistakes of a child. I am a different man now, a better man.”

“A man who has never paid for his crimes!”

“Would you really destroy all I have worked for?”

“When it is built on lies and deceit? On the suffering of others? Yes!”

Lockhart had heard enough and with a flourish, he opened the door, his wand raised.

“Obliviate!” he shouted, pointing the wand at the surprisingly young woman.

Harry was fascinated as he watched the memories of her discoveries disappear as they were removed with the spell and her eyes go glassy. He didn’t recognise her from this life or his last, but he studied her features and vowed to himself he would find her and find out what it was she knew. After a while he turned his attention to the headmaster, who had turned and drew his wand when the door opened.

“What is the meaning of this?” he asked Lockhart.

“A debt, headmaster,” he said almost gleefully. Harry picked up on his thoughts of a mutually beneficial agreement.

Harry watched as the headmaster looked between the woman and Lockhart. “A debt?” he asked.

The memory faded then as Harry lost interest in the terms. However, the two came up with an Unbreakable Vow and agreed to help one another.

Pulling out of the memory, Harry allowed himself to filter through the man’s thoughts once again, only catching glimpses of them but not delving in fully like he had just previously. Another thought quickly caught his eye, but unlike before, it wasn’t such a mystery as he was in it. After a few moments Harry felt his smile become almost feral as he realised he had found what he was looking for.

~

The Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Harry, once again, found himself viewing the memory from Lockhart's perspective. This time, however, he knew exactly where he was and even when he was as he was watching himself. Viewing yourself was quite a disconcerting experience; he was actually rather fascinated seeing how he walked and interacted. Looking at the memory of himself, Harry realised just how different he
was from the old Harry Potter—not just his looks, but his mannerisms and his confidence: Gone was the lost little boy.

However, Harry soon focused again on why he was here and allowed Lockhart's thoughts to filter in. Gilderoy had watched the boy for days; he and his little friends didn’t understand just who they were messing with. He was the Gilderoy Lockhart: Order of Merlin Third Class, Honorary Member of the Dark Force Defence League, and five-time winner of Witch Weekly’s Most Charming Smile award! He was what mere wizards aspired to be yet Harry Potter thought he could take him on and win? On no, he would make the boy pay for humiliating him.

He knew he was done for - even Albus couldn’t get him out now. The DMLE was coming for him thanks to the brat. How he had known, Gilderoy didn’t know. He was careful when covering his tracks, yet Harry bloody Potter hadn’t bought his act from day one. He had set his murderous godfather on him and that pompous Death Eater then that evil wrench Skeeter. He knew he would be caught, but he refused to go down without taking that brat with him!

Looking back at the group, he clenched his fist. The boy had everything Gilderoy wished for: money, fame, friends, looks, charm—yet he didn’t even try! He didn’t deserve any of it. Looking at them, he noted how the small blonde girl seemed to gravitate to Potter and how the boy allowed her to drape over him with no concern. He had taught her a few times - she was a Ravenclaw like Potter. Linda? No, Lucy? Not quite... Luna. Yes, Luna Lovegood.

Staring at the pair, Lockhart started to plot. What better way to destroy Potter than to go through the person he clearly loved the most?

‘Potter thought he was untouchable as the Heir to a Noble House. Well, I’ll show him.’

Harry watched as the plans were built. Lockhart targeted Luna because of how close they were, though the thought made Harry tilt his head. While Luna was probably the closest of his friends simply because she knew so much, he loved them all equally.

He had given Luna detention and forced her to come to his office where he had stunned her and moved her to the classroom. He had planned on using a blood ritual, on sacrificing her and her magic, and blaming it on Harry. The thought made Harry scoff slightly as he doubted Lockhart would be able to actually draw the correct runes required for a successful ritual, especially for something that complicated. Runes was an extremely complex concept, after all. The next part of his plan was that he was going to give Harry a detention, stun him, and force him to watch as she died before planting false memories in his mind.

He had planned to make Harry believe he had done the ritual.

Lockhart knew he would still be caught for being a fraud, but this way he would drag the Potter brat down with him! The memories would make the child think he was guilty and, even if he tried to hide it or cover up the crime, he would be caught, blamed, and thrown away just like he was about to be. It was perfect—not only would the brat suffer seeing his little girlfriend die, but he would end up in Azkaban as well.

With the plans found, Harry violently pulled out of the man’s mind, hoping to cause him the maximum amount of pain when doing so.

~
Harry felt his magic straining to release once he pulled out of the man’s mind. How dare he?! Wordlessly, he thrust his hand out and knocked the man out, but not before locking him in a nightmare. Lockhart would be trapped in his version of hell until Harry woke him up.

“I think I understand why rabbit and peacock go together so well, little moon,” he said after taking a deep breath.

Luna giggled. “I knew you would.”

Harry turned to the girl then and saw she was looking a lot better. “Did you know he would target you?” he asked, concerned with how she allowed herself to be hurt.

Luna tilted her head. “I didn’t not know,” she said softly, knowing Harry would be upset.

Harry prayed to Merlin for strength. “Luna…,” he said, drawing her name out.

“I knew he would try something but it wasn't clear until today! And I knew you would come for me, my Lord. I knew I would be fine.”

Harry sighed. “I will always come for you Luna, but promise me that you won’t put yourself at risk next time.”

Luna smiled a blindingly. “I can’t promise that. If putting myself at risk helps you then I will do it. I think we would all do it for you, my Lord.”

Harry tutted and walked towards the smaller girl. “I would never ask that from you or anybody else.”

“I know! That’s why you're so special, Harry.”

Pulling her into a hug, Harry turned and observed the slightly twitching form of their current Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher.

“How do you suppose we’re going to get him to the chamber?” he asked.

Luna giggled. “The map, silly.”

~

Levitating and disillusioning Lockhart’s body from the 7th floor to the 1st floor girls’ bathroom was actually easier than Harry had first anticipated. Luna held the map and directed them so they didn’t encounter a single person or ghost on the way.

Yet their luck didn’t hold out as they were greeted by Myrtle. The ghost girl stared at them before narrowing her eyes at Harry.

“What are you doing in here? This is a girl’s bathroom! Have you come to make fun of me, to bully me for my glasses?” she cried, not pausing for breath between her accusations.

‘Then again,’ Harry thought, ‘she doesn’t need to breathe.’

Before he could respond, Luna spoke up with a bright smile and a tilt of her head. “Hello again, Myrtle.”

“Why have you brought a boy in here?” she asked Luna, her tone on the word boy making it sound like an accusation.
“This is the boy I was telling you about, Myrtle. This is Harry.”

Harry watched their interaction with fascination. He knew the old Luna got on with most of the ghosts, but he hadn't known she also spoke to Myrtle. Harry had been lucky so far in all of his visits to the Chamber he had yet to meet the dead girl.

“Oh, you’re Harry,” Myrtle said, getting closer to him. A lot closer than he was comfortable with, actually.

Hiding his discomfort, he smiled. “Hello Myrtle, it’s nice to meet you.”

The ghost giggled and blushed. “Hello,” she said.

“Would you mind standing guard for us, Myrtle? We have something that needs disposing of,” Luna asked.

The ghost nodded, still giggling whenever she looked at Harry. “Of course, Luna! Anything for you and Harry.”

Harry held back his groan. Even in this life he was doomed to be stalked by the ghost.

“Thank you,” he said and watched as she disappeared with another giggle.

Sighing, he looked at Luna, who was also silently giggling.

“It’s not funny, you know,” he said.

With obvious effort Luna managed to straighten her face and curb her laughter. “Of course not, my Lord.”

Harry shook his head before muttering about stalker ghosts and evil Seers. Approaching the sinks, Harry opened his mouth and hissed, “Open.”

Luna let out a slight squeal at the used of Parseltongue—not one of fear, but one of delight. Turning to look at her, she looked completely unashamed and beamed at him.

“Stairs,” he said and watched at the slide transformed. Harry turned to Luna and said, “Follow me.”

Luna nodded and followed Harry down the stairs into the Chamber, keeping at a slight distance as the disillusioned body of Lockhart was floating behind him. Just before entering the main chamber, Harry flicked his wand and lit the torches. “Stay here for a moment while I tell Aithusia about you, I don’t want her to accidently harm you.”

Luna nodded and bounced on the spot. “Okay,” she said, her excitement obvious.

Harry shook his head. Most people would have a small amount of fear meeting a legendary Dark creature like a basilisk yet Luna looked like all of her dreams were about to come true.

“Aithusia,” he called out.

“Hello, youngling,” the snake said, appearing from one of the antechambers.

“I’ve brought you a present but first, I have a friend with me. She’s waiting outside, would it be okay if I called her so she could meet you?”

“Yes little one, bring in your friend. I will judge to see if they are worthy for being a speaker’s
friend."

Harry nodded and called out to Luna to join him.

Turning back to the snake he saw that her yellow eyes were focused on the still disillusioned Lockhart. With a wave of his hand the body became solid once again and Aithusia hissed.

"Is this my present, youngling?" she asked, the tongue scenting the man.

"Yes."

Luna appeared by his side, her blue eyes wide. "She’s beautiful, my Lord," she said, any hint of dreaminess in her voice hidden by her sheer awe.

Aithusia hissed in pleasure. "A smart friend, youngling, clearly she has great taste. You’ve picked well."

Luna looked at Harry. "What did she say, my Lord?"

"She says you're a good friend, little moon," he said, finding it funny that it took a simple compliment to win over a 1000 year old basilisk. Then again, she could probably smell Luna’s emotions and knew she was pure-spirited.

"Little one, why have you brought me a man as a present?"

Harry turned his attention back to the great snake who was still staring at Lockhart with unblinking fascination.

Quickly telling the snake what the man had done, Harry had to take a step back as she began hissing in fury; some of the words even he couldn’t make out. It was the first time the snake sounded anything less than human.

"Stupid man, eat him, crush him, poison him! Thinks he can hurt my youngling? My speaker child?"

"I take it she doesn’t like peacock?" Luna asked from her position hidden behind him.

"Shall I awaken him for you, Aithusia?"

"Yes!"

Harry almost felt sorry for the man. Almost.

Flicking his hand again, Harry watched as the man turned and grumbled about being bald and fat, making Harry snort as that must have been his nightmare. The man quickly gathered his bearings and he shot up after a few seconds. His blue eyes first focusing on Harry and then Luna, who was poking her head around him to get a better look at what was about to happen.

"Potter!" he growled before a loud hissing filled the air. Turning, he wasn't prepared for the sight that met him.

Harry watched as the man turned around and blanched. He had never seen somebody go so white so quickly and feared the man would pass out. Gilderoy looked at the giant snake in front of him and felt his bladder give, before blackness took over.

Harry wrinkled his nose at the scene and sent a Rennervate at the man.
“Pathetic creature,” Aithusia hissed.

Lockhart blinked twice before letting out a high pitched shriek and scrambling back. Reaching for where he kept his wand and panicking when he came up empty, he continued to scramble away. Seeing this, Harry whistled to gain his attention and pulled out he man’s wand.

Lockhart locked eyes on his wand and screamed, “Potter! Save me! Kill it!”

Harry laughed lowly. “Why would I kill her? She’s my friend.”

“It’s a bloody monster! Kill it, boy! Now!”

Harry’s eyes narrowed. “I don’t like it when people call me boy and she is not a monster. She is a beautiful basilisk, the familiar of Salazar Slytherin himself. Aithusia, don’t listen to the fool, you’re not a monster.”

Lockhart stared incomprehensibly. “Y-you’re a parselmouth?” he whispered, horrified by the discovery.

“Yes,” Harry said plainly.

“You’re a freak! A Dark monster!”

Harry felt his magic strain to let out. “Aithusia, I’m tired of his words; enjoy your meal and have a great Yule. I’ve asked some house-elves to make sure you’re brought some rabbits and other things to eat while I’m away,” Harry said, his voice strained even though he was talking in Parseltongue.

“Youngling, his words are meaningless. You are not a freak! You are a wizard beyond the dreams of many and he is nothing. Don’t let him affect you.”

Harry nodded. “Thank you. Enjoy your peacock.”

Luna seemed to understand what was going on even though she didn’t know the words and hugged Harry. “My Lord, the peacock is a fool. Like the old goat, his mind is full of nifflers.”

Harry laughed. “I know, little moon. Come on, let’s go, I think the rest will have probably sent out a search party by now.”

Luna hummed and skipped away. “Bye, Aithusia, have a great Yule and I hope you enjoy the peacock!”

Lockhart seemed to realise they were leaving him and tried to stand. “You can’t leave!”

Harry turned and sent him a cold look. “Watch me.”

The last thing he saw was Aithusia’s lunge before he led Luna out of the chamber.

“I still think ginger would have been a great starter for her,” Luna said, twirling around next to Harry, not bothered that she had just witnessed a man’s murder.

“Perhaps that shall be the summer feast?” Harry said eventually, barely holding back his laughter at her innocent viciousness.

~

By the time they reached the hall dessert was being served.
“And where in Morgana’s name have you been?” Draco demanded when they sat down.

Harry and Luna shared a look. “Did you know snakes like peacocks?” Luna asked.

Everybody paused and sent her confused looks.

“What?” Neville eventually asked.

Harry just laughed. “Sorry we took so long. It took us slightly longer to get back, but at least we made dessert.”

The rest still looked confused but nodded.

“Well, at least that’s something, but pudding isn’t a proper meal,” Hannah said, showing them two plates with actual food from the feast.

Sending the Hufflepuff a grin, Harry picked one up and tucked in. “You're a star, Hannah Abbott,” he said seriously.

“Oi, we helped!” the twins said in mock outrage.

Harry smiled and looked at his mismatched group of friends. “You guys are great.”

Draco paused in his eating and sent him a look. “You're being surprisingly nice.”

Harry smirked. “I'm always nice, Drakie.”

Draco looked horrified. “No, not again, please! I've only just gotten Blaise to stop.”

Hearing his name, the Italian looked up. “Stop what?”

“Calling our dear friend here Drakie.” Harry laughed.

After the feast, Harry returned to Ravenclaw tower with his roommates. All of them gathered their things and made sure their trunks were more or less packed; nobody wanted to rush in the morning before the train.

Getting done quickly, Harry pulled out his cloak and the map. He had one final thing he needed to do before going home for Yule.

~

22nd December 1992, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

The next day the group all met at the station. All of them were going home for the holidays.

“Are you excited for Yule, Harry?” Susan asked as they approached the train.

“Yes,” he said, and he was. He was mere days away from the first stage of the ritual that would bring back his soulmate - the thought that he would finally be able to meet Tom properly was nearly overwhelming. He had collected the diadem last night and even though it was locked in his trunk under heavy wards, he could still feel its energy pulsing.

“What about you guys? Are you excited?” he asked.

“Always,” Blaise said. “Mother wants to spend the season in Italy with my grandparents, so I won’t
be around but you will all receive your gifts.”

“I can’t wait to go home, it feels like forever since September,” Pansy said.

“What about you, Drake? Do you have any plans?”

“Other than the annual Malfoy ball, no.”

“Ball?” Harry repeated in horror.

“Oh yes, we hold one every year - it’s the social event of the season. You’ll be there, of course. You’re family and I swear mother likes you more than she likes me,” Draco joked, not realising he had lost Harry at ‘oh yes’.

“Morgana save me,” Harry said, his reaction making everybody laugh and drawing Draco’s attention.

“What’s that face for?”


“Well you’ll love ours, mother will be devastated if you don’t.”

“It’s okay Harry, I’ll be there,” Susan said finally, after her laughter stopped.

“And me,” Hannah agreed.

“Same here,” Pansy said.

Harry nodded and looked at Neville. “What about you, Neville? Got any plans other than spending a few days with me after Yule?”

They had decided to have Neville visit from the 27th until the 31st, meaning they would have already completed the ritual for the start of Tom’s return.

“Gran never attends the ball so I doubt I’ll be there. Other than Yule and seeing you, I’ve not got a lot on.”

Eventually the group settled in for the long journey back to London, Harry lulled into a doze by their peaceful chatter.

Chapter End Notes

If you've not seen the last chapter has been beta'd now so feel free to check it out. This chapter hasn't but 10 days without an update make me anxious, so there will probably be a few mistakes.
Updated - 13/08/17
Just posted the beta'd version, hope you like it!
Hope you enjoy & remember comments & kudos!
~ Annie
theft and compulsions all around

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

23rd December 1992, Dumbledore’s office, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Albus Dumbledore wasn't one to panic. No, he planned, manipulated, and succeeded. He did not panic; however, he would admit that he was… concerned. The fool Lockhart had vanished, but how? Albus didn’t know, but he needed to find him and quickly. The aurors lead by Bones would be here for him soon and Lockhart was gone. He couldn’t understand how! The man couldn’t spell his way out of a locked room, let alone a fully warded ancient castle, yet every spell Albus tried was coming up empty.

Gilderoy Lockhart was no longer in Hogwarts.

The news would have initially caused him great relief if it hadn't been for Sirius Black and Lucius Malfoy getting involved and forcing his hand. Now the wards were up and if Lockhart was caught, he would be ruined. He needed to find him fast and get rid of him; he knew far too much and he would bet his beard the fraud would sell out every secret he knew if it meant reducing his own sentence.

How he was managing to hide from him Albus didn’t know, but he was not impressed.

After another failed attempt, Albus let out a groan of frustration, barely containing his fury.

“Having performance issues, Albie?”

Twirling around with his wand in hand, Albus looked for the intruder before his eyes narrowed on the now-shaking portrait of Phineas Nigellus Black. The old man was smirking, his grey eyes holding an almost malicious glint as he watched the headmaster plot and fail.

“I thought I had silenced you, Black.”

The portrait smirked. “It’s okay, dear Dumbledore, many gentlemen of a certain age are the same.”
Narrowing his eyes, Albus let out a roar of fury, “Silence. I will not be mocked! I am the great Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, the defeater of the Dark Lord Grindelwald—”

“Oh, shut it,” another portrait grumbled, cutting off Dumbledore’s rant.

“Yes, we’ve heard it all before.”

Albus blinked a few times before brandishing his wand. “Silenceo,” he roared, making many of the portraits roll their eyes.

Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he barely had time to blink before his fire flared with green flames - the ministry was here and he still hadn’t found Lockhart. Quickly looking around his office, he restored it to its usual state, not wanting them to see the evidence of his frustration.

～

Amelia Bones would have said she was not looking forward to her day if one were to ask. That was, of course, a lie. She was very much looking forward to seeing Susan and having her back for Yule, but before she could go and pick up her niece she was going to have to go and deal with the headmaster yet again.

The current situation was ridiculous. The investigation had taken weeks as they had been stalled and mislead at every turn, no matter that the results were clear. Gilderoy Lockhart, formerly in possession of an Order of Merlin 3rd class, was a liar and a fraud. Amelia knew his books were ridiculous, the claims in them laughable, and even a child under 11 would recognise them as fake.

In one he claimed to have punched some vampire’s fangs out, making him only able to eat mashed up carrots for the rest of eternity. Ridiculous! Firstly, vampire teeth are nearly impenetrable to force and secondly, while a vampire can consume other substances other than blood most chose not to as they gain little from it. That didn’t even touch upon the fact that even fewer use their fangs to drink instead of using donated blood poured in glasses.

The claims in most of the books were all as ridiculous. However, prior to the investigation Lockhart got away with it as some of the claimed feats did happen, such as a slain mountain troll that saved a village in Peru. It did happen and Lockhart was there - though now it is clear that his claim to have been the one to do the feat was a lie and he modified the memories of those around him to get away with it. Amelia, like everybody else, had simply taken his other claimed victories such as the vampire as fiction to make his books more interesting, not realising he was manipulating and mentally damaging hundreds of people.

Feeling her alarm go off, she stood and let out a sigh. Walking to her door, Amelia paused when she heard knocking coming from it. Opening it, she saw Lucius Malfoy and Sirius Black.

“Gentlemen, what can I help you with today?”

“Madam Bones, with your permission of course, we would very much like to accompany you to Hogwarts,” Lucius said requested.

“In what capacity?”

“We’re both parents and members of the school board. It was also us who brought the concerns to light,” Sirius said, sounding strangely serious.

Amelia nodded. She didn’t mind and, to be honest, she wanted to watch more of the interaction between the new Lord Black and the headmaster. “Well then, feel free to join us. We shall be leaving
shortly, I just have to gather my men.”

The two Lords nodded and stepped aside.

“Shacklebolt, Green, McCallion! You’re with me,” she called out to gain the attention of the room, happy to see the three aurors that she had picked were already ready and waiting.

Turning back to the two Lords, she said, “Follow me.” as she walked to the DMLE’s main floo.

~

Once in the headmaster’s office, Sirius found his eyes automatically drawn to the portrait of Phineas. He had forgotten to talk to the matching one located in Grimmauld Place recently and realised that he should have - his ancestor probably knew most, if not all, of the old goat’s plans.

“Headmaster,” Madam Bones greeted professionally, if not slightly cold.

“Madam Bones, how good to see you—and of course your companions are also welcome,” the man said, his voice sounding genuine. It made Sirius want to curl his lip in distaste.

“Indeed. Headmaster, I have a warrant here for the arrest of one Gilderoy Lockhart,” she said, not wanting to waste time

Albus sighed and made sure to look sad. “I see. However, I am very sorry to inform you that it appears as though Mr. Lockhart has somehow managed to find his way out of Hogwarts.”

Sirius allowed an eyebrow to rise. “How unfortunate.”

Albus held back his snarl. “Forgive me, I do not see how he managed to accomplish this.”

Amelia didn’t allow her anger to show. “I was lead to believe you had locked him into the wards?”

“Yes, but—”

“—but?” Lucius interrupted, pleased to see the old man was no longer infallible.

“I’m sure that Sirius - I mean Lord Black can attest to there being a number of secret passageways into the castle that the wards do not completely cover. It’s not unbelievable to say Gilderoy may have managed to escape through one of these weakened gaps.”

Amelia allowed her scepticism to show. “You believe him capable of, not only finding these secret passageways, but also getting through the wards of Hogwarts? Even weakened?”

Sirius jumped in then. “I also find that hard to believe. The passageways are, as you say, secret.”

Albus honestly didn’t think it was possible, at least not with his help, but it was the only explanation. The man was gone and Albus hadn't had a damn thing to do with it!

“It is the only plausible explanation. The portraits and ghosts are unable to locate him and all of my spells keep coming back negative. He is no longer within the walls of Hogwarts.”

Sirius pondered that and realised Harry probably had something to do with the situation, however he couldn’t let it show. “That seems very convenient.”

He trusted his heir enough to know that he wouldn’t be caught. Well, hopefully.
“What are you implying, Lord Black?” Albus asked. He was insulted that his reputation was so diminished that a previously incarcerated *Dark* wizard could get away with questioning *him* so bluntly.

“Nothing, of course,” Sirius said, although the room knew that was a lie.

Amelia sighed before straightening out. “Headmaster, when was the last time Lockhart was seen?”

“I saw him at breakfast yesterday,” Albus said. He had been watching the man closely, trying to work out a way to get him out of the castle before he was arrested and potentially spilled his secrets.

“I see. And do you know the last time he was seen?”

“He was not at the Christmas leaving feast.”

“So he potentially had 24 hours to get away?” Amelia said, clearly not impressed with this news.

“Potentially.”

“And you didn’t think to inform the DMLE of this?”

Albus frowned. “I wasn’t sure he was missing; sometimes staff do not attend feasts.” He had the portraits watching him, but they hadn’t seen anything and the ghosts couldn’t find him.

“However, the man was bound to the wards and under criminal investigation. I would have thought you would want to keep a closer eye on him.”

“I understand, but I *did* have the portraits keeping a lookout, as well as the Hogwarts’ ghosts.”

“I see,” Amelia said, exasperated. She would now have to issue and find funding for a manhunt.

“Ma’am,” Auror Green interrupted, hesitantly.

“Green?”

“I think it would be beneficial to check the wards, just in case they have been changed,” he said, making Albus want to hurt the man. How dare he accuse him of changing the wards and letting Lockhart escape? He wasn't foolish enough for such an obvious ploy.

Amelia nodded. “I was thinking the same myself.”

Dumbledore held in his rage and stood to get the ward book. Handing it over, he frowned when Madam Bones not only read it, but cast multiple charms and detection spells, not trusting him.

“Everything is in order, I presume?”

Amelia admitted she was surprised when the ward book proved to be not tampered with. “Yes, thank you headmaster.”

Dumbledore contained his smug satisfaction. “If that is all, I’m sure you each have work you need doing?”

“Not quite. Green, Shacklebolt, McCallion, I want you to split up and search the castle top to bottom. I will go back to the office and round up some more aurors to join you.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the aurors said together, nodding their heads.
“My dear, that really isn’t necessa—”

“Yes, headmaster, it is. The manhunt shall start here if he really has escaped and each member of the staff shall be questioned to see if we can’t create a timeline of his exit.”

“Now see here—!”

“No, you see here. This is an official ministry investigation. We have to search the castle for a convict that was last seen here and bound to the wards.”

“But—”

“If you continue to argue headmaster, I will charge you with obscuring the course of this investigation.”

Sirius barely held back his smirk and shared a look with Lucius, who appeared to be having just as much trouble.

“Very well then, but do to try to remember that this is a school and that there are still children here. Your investigation will cause upset to their Christmas spirits.”

Amelia withheld her snort at the man’s flimsy excuse. “My aurors will be discrete. Now, if you could round up your staff so that they are here when I return, that should speed along the process.” With a nod, she turned and didn’t wait for Albus to reply.

Walking towards the floo, she stopped near Sirius and Lucius. “Gentlemen, if you would like to follow me I do believe you both have sons who will be returning home today.”

The two Lords nodded and sent glances at the now furious Dumbledore. “Indeed, Madam Bones,” Lucius said, following her back to the floo.

~

22nd December 1992, Platform 9 3/4, King’s Cross Station

When the train finally pulled up to the crowded station, Harry was glad to be home. It wasn’t that he didn’t love his friends, he did, it was just that being with them was exhausting. He was an adult and it didn’t matter how mature they were, they were still children to him.

“See you in the New Year, my Lord,” Luna said, pulling him out of his thoughts.

Harry smiled and nodded to the small girl. “Have a good Yule,” he said, watching as she seemed to melt into the crowd and disappear almost instantly.

Quickly grabbing his trunk, Harry followed the crowds out onto the platform and silently scanned for Sirius, not surprised when he saw him standing with Lucius. What did shock him was seeing him wear wizarding robes instead of the normal fashion he favoured.

“I see your father, Draco,” he said, nodding towards the man to show his friend.

Turning to the rest of his friends, he smiled. “I hope you all have a great holiday,” he said honestly before he started to walk towards Sirius.

“What’s with the get up?” he whispered while hugging Sirius in greeting.

“What? You don’t think I look dashing? I shall have you know that these robes are of the highest
quality and any witch or wizard with an ounce of taste shall swoon as soon as they see me.”

Harry couldn’t help but blink blankly at him before shaking his head. Sirius was... odd. “Sure;” he said, shaking his head at his guardian’s antics.

Lucius watched with an impassive face but inside he wanted to laugh. The dynamic between the two was intriguing to say the least, an almost role reversal.

“Harrison, I hope you had a good term,” he greeted.

“Hello, Lucius. Thank you, my term ended surprisingly well,” Harry said, smiling as he remembered Lockhart's fate.

“That is good to hear,” Lucius said, suspicion raising within him.

Sirius withheld his snort with some difficulty and instead placed a hand on Harry shoulder. “Come on pup, let’s get you home. I know Remus is dying to see you and I’m sure you have a lot to tell us. There are also a few things that still need setting up for Yule. Lucius, Draco.”

Harry nodded and sent smiles at the two Malfoys. “I shall see you both soon,” he promised before he felt the familiar tugging sensation in his naval and was enveloped in a world of disorientation and nausea.

Shaking his head when he felt his feet hit solid ground, Harry turned and gave Sirius an unimpressed look. “I hate side along,” he grumbled, fighting the queasiness it always gave him.

Sirius grinned at the look; Harry reminded him of an upset kitten. He knew that that wasn't the case here, that Harry was dangerous and Dark, but looking at him you wouldn't realise. He looked almost angelically cute with his slight pout and mushed hair.

“So… Lockhart?” Sirius asked immediately.

Harry let a smirk appear on his face. “Sadly I don’t think he shall be seeing the inside of Azkaban anytime soon,” he said solemnly.

Sirius snorted at the tone. “What happened to him?”

Harry hummed, “For some reason he thought it would be smart to go after Luna. I took exception to that.”

Sirius nodded and allowed his own anger to develop. Luna was just a little girl and although Harry was mentally and magically gifted, he still looked like a child.

“What did he do?”

Harry explained Lockhart's plans and watched as Sirius grew still. “That man! I can't believe he stooped so low as to attack innocent children—” hearing Harry snort at being called innocent, he corrected himself, “—well, children at least.”

“I’m sure he came to regret his actions by the end.”

“The end?”

“Aithusia apparently thinks peacocks tastes like chicken, but slightly stringier.”

Sirius frowned before remembering Harry mentioning the basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets was
called Aithusia. Realising what this meant, he paled slightly before shrugging off his guilt and barking out a laugh. “Remind me to never get on your bad side.”

“Why’s that?” Remus asked, walking into the parlour.

Harry shrugged before walking to the werewolf and giving him a hug. “I’m scary,” he deadpanned.

Remus smiled and pulled Harry in tighter. “Even if you’re terrifying we’ll still love you.”

Harry smiled into his cardigan before pulling out of the hug. “That’s nice. Also, Remus, how do you fancy teaching? The Defence Against the Dark Arts post has just become available.”

Remus blinked. “I’m not surprised. Has Lockhart been arrested?”

Harry grinned darkly. “No, not arrested; however, he has faced his judgement.”

Sirius burst out in more doglike laughter at that before telling Remus what Harry had done and why. By the end of the tale Remus’ eyes were flashing gold, showing just how Moony felt about his cub being threatened. The idea of teaching was immediately forgotten.

“A fair punishment, I’d say,” he all but growled out.

Harry laughed lightly. “I’m glad you both approve. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to unpack and have a quick shower before dinner.”

“That’s fine,” Remus said.

~

For Harry, the days leading up to Yule were filled with both a sense of serenity and anxiety. Remus, by leave of Sirius, had been left to collect all of the required ingredients for the ritual which would bring Harry one step closer to being reunited with Tom.

It was not an overly complicated ritual. It did, however, require the caster’s blood willingly given and them to be of pure heart—meaning they had to want the person who created the horcrux healed and made whole with their *entire* being.

“Are you ready for tonight?” Sirius asked. They had declined the Malfoy’s invitation to celebrate Yule together in order to perform the ritual at the correct time.

“I believe so,” Harry said, placing a mark in his book and turning to look at Sirius.

The dog animagus truly looked like a different man from the one he had known. His hair was thick and healthy, any traces of premature grey gone. His eyes, although still older than they should be, lacked the horror and pain they once held. His body was no longer gaunt and frail, instead he stood tall and proud, lightly muscled and tanned.

Smiling slightly, Harry considered his next words and their impact. “I believe we should bring Lucius in on a few things. He is a Dark wizard and a supporter of Tom’s after all, as well as being in close contact with us both.”

Sirius surprised Harry when he didn’t outright object - but Harry hadn’t seen them when they were alone together out of the public eye, when they didn’t have to maintain a certain level of decorum, so he didn’t know just how close their friendship had become.

“I think you’re right,” he said eventually.
Harry nodded. “Maybe Severus as well.” Sirius smiled at the mention of the Potion Master’s name, making Harry consider him for a second.

“They will probably be like you and Remus.”

“What?”

“I don’t think that Dumbledore will have limited himself on who he dosed.”

Sirius looked confused for a moment before a look of understanding and anger passed over his face. “There are probably hundreds of witches and wizards....”

Harry nodded. “I know,” he said, not concealing his disgust. An image of a young Tom Riddle filled his mind; he wasn’t sure, but he would bet his Gringotts vault that Albus Dumbledore was the reason behind Tom’s eventual unravelling and psychosis.

~

23rd December 1992, Grimmauld Place, London

Lucius was pleasantly surprised when he entered Grimmauld Place. The last time he had been inside, the townhouse was practically a cesspit; it had been dark, dank, and poorly kept. Narcissa had visited her aunt shortly before she had died, the old woman insisting on seeing the remains of her family. Now however, the house actually felt like a home, the furnishings clearly new and well-kept.

“Welcome, Lord Malfoy,” a slightly gravelly voice said, drawing his eye to an elderly house-elf. Before he could speak another figure emerged from the green flames.

“Lucius,” Severus greeted after flicking his wrist to rid himself of any dust the floo had left behind.

“Ah, Severus. I didn’t know you were also invited.”

“Indeed. Have you any idea what this is about?” The Potions Master asked.

“No, though I hope it shan’t take too long. I hate to leave Narcissa and Draco alone for long on such a holiday - Yule is a time to be with family.”

Severus rolled his eyes at the jab. The blond had been trying to get him to join them for such celebrations for years.

The opening of a door drew their attention and both looked up when Remus entered. The wolf looked much healthier than he had in years and Severus was reluctantly pleased about this.

“Gentlemen, thank you for coming,” Remus said.

“It’s no bother,” Severus said quietly. He was still slightly uncomfortable around the man.

“If you would follow me, I believe Harry and Sirius are waiting in the family parlour for us.”

~

Harry watched as Sirius paced. He loved the man dearly and he found his nervous anxiety humorous, but it was slightly annoying.

“You said you trusted them,” the preteen reminded.
“I did—I do, but….”

“Calm down Siri, it will be fine.”

“I know, but—”

Before he could worry himself further, the door opened and Remus walked in followed by Severus and Lucius. Seeing how worked up his friend was, Remus shook his head and asked, “Has he been pacing since I left?”

Harry snorted lightly. “Yes.”

Sirius pouted slightly and threw himself into an armchair, sprawling out yet somehow managing to look elegant.

“Please take a seat gentleman,” Harry said, indicating to the other chairs.

Once everybody was seated, Harry smiled. “Can I offer anybody a drink?” he asked, proper manners refusing to be ignored.

Lucius and Severus shared a quick look. “I believe we are fine for now, Harrison. Perhaps you should tell us instead why you asked us to be here?”

Harry nodded and quickly filtered through what he planned on saying before throwing caution to the wind.

“So, tell me, what do you know about horcruxes?”

Both men sat in shocked silence trying to take in everything they had just been told. Neither was surprised that their Lord had been less than sane in the end if he had really created so many of the abdominal things.

Harry watched as they both seemed to lose themselves in their thoughts. He had not told them about being Master of Death or returning and re-living his life - instead he spoke about the compulsions and binds Dumbledore had put on him, his soul bond, and how his soulmate had tried to become immortal through the use of horcruxes. He told them that they should go to the goblins and see about having themselves checked over for compulsions and how tonight he planned on starting the process of bringing Tom, their Lord, back.

“You really want to bring him back?” Severus finally asked, shocked that Harry of all people would want to bring Voldemort back.

“He won’t be the same man you knew,” Harry said, hoping to have their support. Lucius still looked shocked but Severus was clearly torn.

“But he killed your parents. Murdered Lily!”

Harry sighed and shut his eyes for a moment. “Even when insane he offered her a chance to move aside and live. She refused and sacrificed herself, saving my life.”

Severus sat back. “Then how can you consider bringing him back?!”

“I need to! Without him I will die. He’s my soulmate,” Harry said, stressing the words.
“Do you have all of his horcruxes?” Lucius said, finally forcing himself out of his panic.

Harry looked at him and smirked. “Yes, even a certain diary.”

Lucius gulped and paled considerably. “How…?”

“I have my ways,” Harry said, confusing the other occupants of the room. “Don’t worry, I can keep how I managed to gather that particular one secret.”

Lucius stared at the young man before him and felt a wave of relief. He still remembered his Lord’s instability and how curse happy he had been by the end. “Thank you,” he said honestly before continuing. “This ritual, it will return to our Lord both his sanity and his life?”

“Yes, he will be as he was supposed to be.”

Lucius nodded. He remembered the stories his father had told him about their Lord and his goals and, for the first time in a long time, he felt hope. He had honestly resented having the Dark Mark by the end of the last war; he had taken it as a teen, thinking it was a great honour, but the Lord his father had praised had been gone by that point and in his place was a mad man. If this ritual could restore the man his father had idolised, whose dreams and ideals he had grown up hearing about, then he would be honoured to help Harry.

“Then I will help you with whatever you need,” the blond vowed, bowing his head to Harry in a sign of respect.

“Thank you,” Harry said. “I honestly don’t need help with the ritual tonight, but your willingness to aid me is appreciated.”

Severus was still hesitant. “How can you forgive him?” he asked the teen.

“He wasn’t in his right mind. The Tom who I will be bringing back will not be Voldemort.”

Severus sighed and nodded his head in slight defeat. “I will stand by you in this,” he vowed. He had sworn to protect him and if Harry could forgive his Lord, then he would try.

“Thank you. Both of you,” he said.

“You really should try and see the goblins sooner rather than later as well,” Remus said, reminding the room of that.

“These compulsions and binds, how bad were they?” Severus asked.

“Well, mine made me hate anything remotely Slytherin and Dark in magic. They also made me reckless, careless, and oppose to authority. I was also made to hate certain people, members of my own family and even—” he cut off, looking at Severus, before continuing. “Now don’t get me wrong, I was always rather free thinking when it came to magic, but I was a Dark wizard and accepting of that until I went to Hogwarts. Then suddenly the slight resentment I held towards my parents grew to me hating everything Dark, my harmless pranks grew to me becoming a bully. My godfather bond to Harry was also blocked.”

The two men nodded. “I see,” Severus said, shocked at the emotion he saw in the animagus’ eyes.

Lucius looked contemplative. “You were the Black Heir, didn’t your ring protect you?”

Sirius blinked. “I didn’t have the ring when I got my Hogwarts letter. The Blacks, like most families,
don’t usually give the Heir ring until the Heir’s 13th birthday. Harry is the most recent exception as he needed the protection and he had already claimed it along with his other titles while I was… indisposed. I suspect that after I had it, I didn’t gain any new compulsions, at least until I ran away. I had left the ring here as I didn’t want to be associated with my family.”

“I see,” Lucius said, going silent as he thought about his own behaviour after he entered Hogwarts.

This time Remus spoke up. “Mine were similar in nature. I was made to be ashamed of myself, submissive, loyal, and grateful to Dumbledore. I also had a poison in my blood, making me weaker. It would have eventually killed me, probably within the next few years.”

That shocked the two men, leaving them completely baffled. Severus was disgusted at how far Dumbledore was willing to go, and confused as to why.

“You're fine now, though?” Lucius asked eventually.

“Yes, I was healed by the goblins.”

“My own compulsions were not as deadly. I was placed under a blood glamour, making me look like my father, and I had a magic binding on my core,” Harry added.

That caused the two men to react violently; both knew the danger of putting such bindings on children. They could cause irreparable damage to both their magical and physical development.

“He what?” Severus asked, his voice going cold and causing shivers amongst the other occupants.

“He bound my magical core and attempted to bind my other inherited magics. I also had a slew of compulsions similar to Sirius’ which would have made me a weak willed and feeble-minded Gryffindor, besotted with Dumbledore and easy to manipulate. I had them all removed when I re-entered this world, but the fact he tried sickens me. There is also the theft from my vaults which I immediately stopped.”

“He stole from you?” Lucius asked.

“A few thousand galleons, pocket change in the large scheme, but still.”

Severus was startled by this, though he hid his derision at the casual dismissal of such large sums of money in favour of letting his anger at the situation prevail.

“Why are you telling us all of this now? You have said that you don’t need our help, so I question your motives.”

Harry smirked at his question. “True, I don’t need your help but Tom is still your Lord and I wanted to test your loyalties as well as warn you of Dumbledore’s manipulations.” Harry focused on Severus for the last part, emerald green eyes boring into black.

Severus felt like his very soul was being searched before he nodded. “I see.”

“If that is everything, I think it’s best if we retire for the evening. You have your ritual to prepare for and Narcissa and Draco are waiting for me,” Lucius said after a beat of silence.


Chapter End Notes
Sorry that it's taken me so long to update, life is so manic at the moment! However I promise that this story has not and will not be abandoned!
Updated & beta'd 19/08/2017
Hope you enjoy the update,
Comments & kudos!
~ Annie
Harry Potter and the Shadowed Light

Chapter 29

Previously

“Why are you telling us all of this now? You have said that you don’t need our help, so I question your motives.”

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~

Harry took a deep breath as he looked at the collection of horcruxes he had gathered. The diary, the cup, the locket, the ring, and the diadem - each one called to him and enticed him. He was pleased that he had decided to start the ritual today as Yule signified rebirth. Hopefully this would make magic more willing to aid him and help bring Tom back. Reaching in, he picked up the diary, allowing his magic to gently caress the soul shard that rested within.

“I hope this works,” he whispered to himself, not noticing how his hands stroked the aged black leather of the cover nor how they lingered over where the name was inscribed on the front cover.

Standing, he carefully reconstructed the wards around the box containing the other horcruxes, not wanting to risk anything happening to them. Once happy that the box was secure, Harry carefully made his way to the ritual room. He had been surprised when he realised that the townhouse had a room specifically for rituals, although not rituals like he was about to perform. The room was originally for holidays and magical celebrations, such a Samhain, however it was easy for Harry (along with Remus, Sirius, and, surprisingly enough, Kreacher) to make the room suitable for the resurrection ritual. The house-elf had looked overjoyed to learn that they would be doing Olde magic; he had even listened to and obeyed Sirius without complaint.

Entering the room, Harry noticed how the air seemed to almost crackle with magic. As the moon moved into position, the circle seemed to emit waves of power, calling to Harry.

Allowing the magic to wash over him, Harry let his own aura swell, releasing the hold on his occlumency shields.

~
Sirius felt his eyes widen as Harry entered the room. The preteen had his hair unbound so it fell around his shoulders in waves, framing his face which was dominated by illuminating emerald eyes. His skin seemed to almost glow in the dim light - perhaps because of the contrast with both his black hair and robes. He was bare chested under the simple black robe and barefoot, wearing only grey trousers. But what was most eye catching was the power the boy emitted—it was both deadly and alluring, drawing Sirius to him.

Remus let out a breath when Harry entered the room. The overwhelming magical presence of their cub made even Moony pause for a moment. The boy before them was so different from the boy he had imagined over the years, but he couldn’t find it in him to be disappointed. No, instead he was proud of the person Harry had become. Yes, he was Dark, and that did admittedly frighten a small part of Remus, but he was also brave, ambitious, intelligent, and loyal. Everything that had happened since Harry had re-entered his life had made Remus realise that he wouldn’t change the young man before him; Harry had opened his eyes to the manipulations around him and for that Remus would be forever grateful.

Settling himself down, Harry shared a look with his two guardians - he wanted them to know he was prepared for this. Eventually Harry felt the magic in the room spike and knew it was time. Placing the diary in the centre of the rune circle, meticulously drawn by Sirius, Harry knelt down next to it and took a steadying breath. Harry flicked his wrist so that the candles surrounding it would light, basking Harry in their glow and making him seem even more otherworldly.

"Magicae matrem suam, det mihi ad sanandum potentiam et victus est quod perdidi," he chanted. The words spilled from him easily as he had studied them religiously, making sure his pronunciation was perfect, not wanting to risk even the smallest of mistakes. Next came the part he was most dreading. He had neglected to inform Sirius and Remus of this as he had known they would most likely refuse to help him, or try and find another even more complicated way.

"Vitam, mortem, irae et amor, sana qui pereunt." Sirius, who still easily remembered the cruel Latin lessons taught by his mother, lost his breath at the words. He stared down at the runes as the words ran through his head: ‘Mother magic, grant me the power to heal that which is broken and lost / life, death, anger, and love, heal who is lost.’ The words tugged at his soul, their magic potent and heavy. His eyes glanced back to Harry as the boy began moving.

Taking a breath, Harry drew out a purified knife and carefully placed the sharpened edge against his chest. Hearing a sharp breath being drawn he quickly looked up and shared a look with Sirius, who was now looking worried. Nodding his head to show he was fine, Harry carefully cut into his skin, breathing through the sharp pain which burned through him as he carefully engraved the runes he needed.

The rune Laguz, for life, memory, and love. To show he accepted who Tom was and forgave him, to show how he was willing to love him despite it all. The rune Mannaz for mental clarity and life, so that Tom would return sane and healed. And finally, the rune Algiz for protection of both mind, body, and, most importantly, soul.

Once done, Harry quickly picked up a glass vial and held it to the bleeding runes, allowing his blood to run until the vial was full. His magic was mixing with the runes and his blood, making it swirl with power and almost glitter in the candlelight. Once the vial was full he placed it down and allowed his magic to heal the cuts, although even his magic couldn’t stop them from lightly scarring.

"Sanguinem libenter dedi, sana et revivesco."
Harry uneasily breathed out as the sentence filtered through his head: ‘blood willingly given, heal and resurrect.’ His magic surged forth to reassure him and Harry could feel himself relax under its pressure, able to continue on.

The final step was the easiest and at the same time the hardest for Harry. Picking up the vial, he allowed exactly seven drops of his blood to fall on the diary. At first nothing seemed to happen. However, the diary soon started to smoke, the shape eventually warping until suddenly an ear shattering and, to Harry, heart wrenching scream was released.

“STOP! STOP IT!” A familiar but surprisingly young voice wailed.

Suddenly, instead of a diary, the ghostly form of Tom Riddle appeared, looking shockingly small and frightened in the middle of the rune circle.

“I'm sorry Tom, but you have to trust me,” Harry hissed, Parseltongue sliding on his tongue.

The soul shard seemed to narrow his wide and frightened eyes.

“You're killing me,” he hissed back.

“I promise, you will be fine. You're going to join back with your main soul and eventually you’ll be whole. I promise,” Harry said, allowing his emotions to shine brightly and clearly through his eyes.

“Why should I trust you?” the young soul shard demanded. Harry noted how it sounded weaker and knew the ritual was working.

“I'm your soulmate. I'm going to resurrect you, but I can’t do it yet. You need to be whole.”

“My soulmate?” Tom whispered in awe.

“Yes,” Harry said.

“Then why would you kill me?”

“I'm not killing you, I'm just making you more human.” Harry hoped the soul shard understood. Its’ consent didn’t matter as the ritual would work even without the shard’s willingness, but still this was the first time in this life that he was talking to Tom. Harry wanted him to understand.

“Humans are weak and disgusting.”

“I'm human.”

The soul shard silenced then and Harry noted how it was less visible now. “But - no... perhaps I was wrong?” it whispered very quietly, making Harry think it didn’t mean to be heard.

“I promise, you’ll be more powerful when the ritual is completed. You will be whole and we can be together,” Harry promised.

“You swear it?”

“I swear.”

“I always wanted a soulmate, somebody who would be mine,” the shard of Tom’s soul said, looking at Harry with a level of possessiveness and hunger that made Harry fight to keep from shivering.

Unsure what to say to that, Harry kept silent and after a few more seconds the shard disappeared.
entirely. With it gone, Harry was left breathing deeply, his magic seemingly draining as the ritual died down. Slumping forward, Harry let out a groan as it finished completely, taking with it a large chunk of his magical reserves.

Sirius, seeing him slump in exhaustion, quickly darted forward, throwing himself to his knees in order to support and catch him.

“Are you okay? What happened? What did you say?” he asked, firing the questions off quickly, his hands gripping Harry tightly.

Harry let out a weak chuckle as Sirius gathered him in his arms, happily tucking himself into the man’s strong chest. “I’m fine, I’m just tired. It was much more draining than I had originally anticipated.”

“But it worked, right?” Remus asked hesitantly. Although he had been present, he still wasn't sure what exactly he had just witnessed.

Harry smiled tiredly, closing his eyes. “Yes,” he said, breathing the word out, before letting himself go lax in Sirius’ arms.

Sirius was surprised when he felt all the tension in Harry’s body give, but quickly stood with the boy in his arms.

“He’s asleep,” Remus said out loud, more from shock than anything else.

“I’ll put him to bed, we can start the Yule celebrations without him in the main parlour. Harry said we couldn’t disrupt the rune circle in here until the ritual was finished and Tom was back.” Sirius said ‘Tom’ with a slight bitterness, as, although he was behind and fully supportive of Harry, he still found it hard to accept. However, he would do anything for the boy he saw as his child.

Remus followed Sirius as he carefully walked out of the ritual room, wondering if any of this was actually a good idea.

~

Harry woke up in his room feeling slightly groggy but magically restored. He wasn't yet 100%, but he could once again feel his magic responding to him. Casting a wandless tempus charm, he was surprised to see that it was 9:30 am as he usually woke around 8. He theorised that he needed the rest to restore his magical stores. After spending a few more moments in bed, enjoying the comfort of the silk sheets and warmth, Harry reluctantly stood and decided to have a quick shower before finding Remus and Sirius.

Entering the kitchen, Harry wasn't surprised when he saw both men nursing hot drinks. Sirius was opting for coffee, black with unhealthy amounts of sugar, and Remus had a cup of herbal tea.

“Morning,” he said, pouring his own coffee and joining them at the table with half of a grapefruit, opting to go healthy for breakfast.

Remus eyed his cup for a moment before shrugging. If Harry liked it, then he would let go of the notion that coffee was bad for children—or, at least, bad for Harry.

“Morning pup, you slept late. Are you feeling okay?” The genuine worry Harry heard in the man’s voice made he feel warm inside.

Harry nodded after taking a sip. “I’m fine, I think I just needed the extra sleep to restore my magic.”
“It really drained you that much?” Remus asked. He knew the ritual was powerful, and he didn’t doubt it would leave many exhausted, but Harry was so powerful that the concept of him being drained was hard to get his head around.

Harry hummed. “It was the rune and blood magic, the mixture was quite strong.”

Sirius felt his eyes narrow then. “Yes, about that - what the bloody hell Harry?! You never mentioned having to carve yourself up!” he shouted.

Harry winced. “I know, but it was necessary! Only I could do it as only I have the emotions and desire necessary to bring him back.”

Sirius sighed, his anger quiet behind his eyes. “I know but still. Seeing you bleed, knowing you were in pain, it just… it killed me.”

Harry nodded. “I know, and I'm sorry for not warning you, I just knew you would object - that you would both object.”

“Will you have to do it again?” Remus asked.

“No, the vial I filled last night should have enough blood to complete the entire ritual and bring Tom back. All that needs to be done now is for a new horcrux to be placed in the circle during each of the old holidays; that, along with seven drops of the blood being placed on it during the moon’s highest point, should bring Tom back. I don’t need to be present during the holidays so either, so either of you can do the ritual from now on. My blood holds the emotions needed for the ritual to work, all you have to do is say the ritual’s enchantment at the right time and make sure that seven drops of blood are used.”

“That means that we can continue the rituals while you're at school, right?” Remus asked, intrigued by the blood magic and its properties.

“Yes. The final ritual will be on the summer solstice and I will be home for that and therefore home for Tom’s return.”

“Well, you certainly have the Potter luck,” Sirius said, finally having come to terms with the fact that Tom would be returning.

“It’s part of my charm.”

Barking out his dog-like laugh, Sirius grinned and decided that he didn’t care about the whole soulmate business and instead he focused on the boy in front of him. He wanted Harry to be happy, to be healthy, and most importantly to know he was loved.

“So, how about we show you how Yule is really celebrated?”

Harry smiled. “Please.”

“So, normally you would have joined us last night in lighting the three candles on the Yule log, but after the ritual you were drained, so we had to do that without you,” Sirius said. He was sad that Harry had missed it, but also knew that the boy wouldn’t have wanted them to not do it just because he couldn’t join them.

Harry nodded. He knew this from the books he had read and speaking to his friends.

“The actual Yule ritual is simple: tonight after the candles have burned for exactly 24 hours, we all
simply add a drop of blood to the flames and ask Magic to bless and restore us, to allow us to be
reborn stronger in the coming year. Then the candles are left to burn out and we have the traditional
Yule feast.”

Harry smiled at the easy way Sirius spoke about the ritual.

“Today is about family and spending time together. It’s about remembering those who have come
before us and celebrating them and our traditions. Now, normally we would all sit together and share
stories - that’s how I celebrated as a child. We were taught the Black legacy and what being a Black
meant. And although that is important, and you do need to know it, we decided that for your first
Yule we could do something else, so we came up with a better idea.”

“Don’t be modest, it was your idea, Siri,” Remus said, smiling at his friend, proud of him and how
he had matured. He was turning into a real father for the young wizard.

Sirius grinned at Remus before looking back to Harry. “I know you never had a chance to meet your
parents and that your own memories of them are vague at best, so instead I thought that you like
might like to visit ours. We would still be celebrating our past and this way you can see how they
were growing up, and how much they loved each other and you.”

Harry stilled, his heart beating rapidly in his chest. “Really?” he asked.

Sirius nodded. “Come on,” he said, standing and leading the way to the family parlour.

Entering, Harry saw the large Yule log in the centre of the rome, the three candles burning away
happily. Sirius, however, continued towards the circle of comfy chairs in the corner, which Harry
noted now sported a pensive in the centre.

“We’ve added hours of our memories: from when we met to simple conversations, our adventures to
boring lessons. From when Lily would simply curse your father pink to when they held you in their
arms for the first time and everything in between,” Remus said. They had wanted to show Harry his
parents as they were, how Lily had a fiery temper as a young girl and how besotted James was; they
wanted him to get to know his parents and for him to be able to experience what they were like.

Harry nodded. “Thank you,” he said, his voice catching as he tried to convey just how much this
meant to him.

“Come on, pup,” Sirius said. “I want you to see your mum in her wedding dress. I swear Lils must
have had some angel blood in her, she was always beautiful but that day… that day she was
gorgeous.”

~

Harry didn’t even realise he was crying until he felt Sirius wipe his face. He was smiling so hard his
face ached.

“They would be so proud of you, Harrison,” Sirius said, using Harry’s full name to convey just how
serious he was.

Harry smiled and hoped the animagus was correct. “They were so in love, so happy.”

“They were. They were lucky in that regard.”

Harry nodded. Thinking about them made his chest ache to be with Tom, but it also tore him apart to
realise that it was thanks to his soul mate that his parents were dead. That the people he had spent the
past few hours watching were gone - the people who were so full of life, of joy and love. He had never really had a chance to get to know his parents; sure he had heard stories, but actually seeing them… he felt for the first time how deeply he missed them. For the first time he truly realised what he was missing.

Harry had watched everything from the first time the marauders met, both Remus' point of view and Sirius’, to the last time Sirius had seen his parents alive. A lot of the memories featured Wormtail and other people Harry despised, but he couldn’t bring himself to care as he took in everything about the parents he never knew.

Harry was shocked at how much his father had looked like the previous him—he truly had been a clone of James Potter. They had the same raven hair that defied gravity, the same crooked grin, and even their builds had been similar, though James had been much healthier and taller than Harry had ever been. The only difference were the eyes. Harry had Lily’s eyes, not just the colour but the almond shape, too.

His father had been confident, slightly cocky, but still he was young. Harry watched, fascinated, as the marauders were born on their first journey to Hogwarts. He didn’t even mind seeing a young and still snivelling Peter as it showed how his father treated people. James had taken the young traitor under his arm and more or less declared him under his protection.

He watched them be Sorted, how Sirius had been so nervous when he had gone into Gryffindor and how James had comforted him.

Harry watched in awe as his father fell in love with his mother and then in hilarity when his mother dismissed him and all of his attempts. Simple conversations between friends and cruel pranks, late night plotting and boring lesson -, Harry watched all of them with wonder.

He witnessed his mother curse his father pink, blue, green, bald and—well, she cursed him a lot over the years because of his antics.

He watched as his mother slowly started to respond to his dad’s unrelenting devotion, how her eyes slowly started to soften and her smiles became much less rare. He watched them slowly fall completely and utterly in love.

He watched how his father had spent weeks building up the courage to ask for her hand in marriage; how he had a whole speech planned only to bottle it at the last minute and practically throw the ring at her in fear of rejection.

He watched as his mother and father fought Voldemort and his Death Eaters in the first war, how they duelled together and complemented each other in battle.

He watched as they planned his nursery, how they argued over names, and how Lily eventually won and got Harrison instead of James, who wanted Harold. He watched them as he grew and saw how much they loved him.

He saw the pride and devotion in their eyes as he was born.

Eventually Harry, Sirius and Remus were all spat out of the pensive. Harry could feel the tears running down his face, but he didn’t care enough to brush them aside.

“Thank you,” he whispered, emotion clogging his voice.

Sirius and Remus were in similar states, the memories dragging up emotions long buried.
“It’s okay, pup,” Sirius whispered, pulling both Remus and Harry into a three-way hug. They had hardly spoken during the memories, instead letting Harry get the full experience.

Harry smiled, grateful for what they had done. Eventually the hug ended, all of them left feeling better for it.

Chapter End Notes

Its shorter than usual but I like this chapter and how it finishes.
Hope you’re enjoying the story & remember comments & kudos!
~ Annie
Yuletide

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the serious long update, its been almost 2 whole months I know!
In my defence however, I was in hospital for a week and ill around that, nothing serious
though so don't worry, updates should speed back up.
Hope you enjoy,
Comments & Kudos
Updated- 23/1/18
Annie

Previously

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~

December 24th 1992, Grimmauld Place London

Harry was awed as he felt his magic join with Sirius and Remus’. Their cores all seemed to expand
and rejuvenate as the flames sparked. It felt like his magic was alive as it danced around the room.
Eventually the out of body experience ended and Harry felt his magic return to him and settle,
leaving him buzzed and his sense heightened.

“Wow,” he whispered quietly.

Hearing a slight chuckle, Harry looked up and saw Sirius sitting on a chair with a blissed out look on
his face.

“I forgot how powerful a proper Yule ritual could be,” the animagus said.

“Is this your first one since you left home?” Harry asked.

“No, I celebrated with your father and grandparents while at school and then with your parents
during the war, but this is my first Yule since Azkaban.”

Harry nodded. He was sure that the ritual had helped Sirius even more than it had helped him.
Looking at him Harry noticed the dark shadows in his eyes seemed to have diminished further and
even his magical aura seemed more stable and content.

“I didn’t know the Potters were traditionalists,” Harry said, his voice questioning.

“Well they were purebloods and your grandmother was a Black by birth,” Sirius explained.

Harry made a noise of understanding. He murmured, “I see.” He remembered seeing that on the family tapestry but hadn’t made the connection. It made sense to him though.

“They were really traditional in most of their views, but they didn’t mind muggleborns or halfbloods.”

Harry nodded. “That’s good. It’s nice to think they would have accepted me.”

Sirius spared Harry a bittersweet smile. “They would have loved you. They tried for so long to have children and simply adored James and even me when I ran away and ended up living with them. They were wonderful and very doting parents - you would have been the most spoiled grandson in the whole of the wizarding world if they had gotten the chance to meet you.”

~

Malfoy Yule ball, 24th December 1992

“Come on Harrison, we’re going to be late if you don’t get a move on,” Remus called up the stairs.

Sirius leaned up the side of the wall next to him with a slight pout on his face. He too had been forced by Remus to get ready and look presentable but, unlike Harry, he was given little leeway in what he was allowed to wear. The werewolf had given him implicit instructions which he had to abide by as he was the current Lord Black, meaning he was left wearing black and silver robes as a nod to the Black family colours, with the Black family crest and house motto on the left side of the robe.

Upstairs Harry sighed as he straightened his robes. He couldn’t say he hated the dressing up part of the evening, in all honesty he thought he looked rather good in his formal robes: dark grey trousers, a white shirt, with a dark emerald robe lined with silver. Harry had also allowed his hair to fall in its natural waves for the night, making him appear like a proper little heir.

With one last glance at his appearance, Harry quickly picked up his wand and placed it into his holster.

~

Arriving at the Malfoy's, Harry was struck by how grand the manor was. He had visited it a few times since returning to the past but never had he seen it so done out. The white marble walls seemed to glitter and the Yule decorations, although simple, played well with the Malfoy's more exuberant decor.

“Welcome Lord Black, Heir Potter-Black, Mr. Lupin, to Malfoy manor. May we wish you a happy Yule and may magic bless and renew you,” Lucius said. Narcissa and Draco stood next to him, both bowing their heads in greeting.

Sirius nodded. “Thank you, Lord Malfoy. May magic restore you and your family.”

Harry nodded to them all and exchanged similar formal greetings before smiling at his friend.
“Have a good Yule, Draco?” he asked. The present-giving tradition that magicals had adopted from the muggles wouldn’t be until the 25th of December but Harry hoped that the Malfoy’s own Yule ceremony had been as fulfilling as his own.

“Yes, thank you. It was pretty normal. How was your first Yule?” Draco asked curious.

Harry grinned slightly. “Magical,” he said, thinking not only of the ceremony but also Tom.

Lucius, subtly eavesdropping on the conversation, smiled at the insinuation and made note to get either Black, Lupin, or Harrison alone later to find out if the ritual had been a success.

~

Once they had entered the ball, Harry looked around for familiar faces and was glad to see a few. However, he still wished to be anywhere but here—already he could hear whispers about not just himself but Sirius as well.


With a sigh Harry gradually floated towards a corner, hoping to hide until it was time to leave.

“You do know you can’t hide there all night, right?” an amused voice said, drawing Harry out of his thoughts.

Turning, Harry met a sight that shocked him to the core: Standing before him with hair was Quirrell.

Unsure what to do and if the man was aware of what had happened to him, Harry stood staring.

“Professor?” he said eventually, the word coming out as a question.

The man smirked slightly. “Well, technically not anymore Mr. Potter. Sorry, Potter-Black.”

Harry nodded slightly, confused. ‘What does he know? Did Tom know who he is, did Quirrell?”

“So, professor, how have you been since leaving Hogwarts?” Harry asked. He wanted, no, needed to know more.

Unlike in his first life, the man hadn’t interacted with Harry much in his first year beyond their classes. He was a Ravenclaw who was very rarely alone and didn’t get detentions and hadn’t fallen for Dumbledore’s ploys. Yes, he had felt himself being watched, had felt the man’s assessing gaze on him multiple times, but he hadn’t felt the overwhelming hatred Voldemort’s stare had once held. To put it mildly, Harry hadn’t really cared about Quirrelmort being around in his first year after he had gained the stone. The man, spirit, shard, whatever, had seemed to be holding back on attacking him.

Harry had simply assumed that Quirrell had gone down through the traps at the end of the year and been caught trying to steal the fake and died once again in some manner, not stealing the fake stone or just simply going into hiding after failing his master. Harry had thought that Dumbledore had hidden this fact and the fact the stone was stolen in order to maintain control and keep face.

The man gave Harry an assessing look for a moment before seemingly coming to a conclusion.

“Well, I thought I would try my hand at a new branch of magic—much more obscure, alchemy. Perhaps you have heard of it?”

Harry was surprised by the frank answer. “Yes, I have heard of it. Although I find myself surprised by your interest, first Muggle Studies then Defence Against the Dark Arts, now this….” Harry trailed
off, wanting to see where the man would take the conversation.

“Yes, I find myself restless. It was though I have lost my purpose for the moment. I need to find it or perhaps more correctly I need to find somebody to tell me what to do with myself.”

Harry nodded. Was the man admitting to trying to bring back Voldemort? Or was it something else?

“I see. Well from what I have read alchemy is a hard subject to master; what about it struck your interest?”

“I have always been fascinated with powerful magic, powerful people. Recently I heard talk of the Flamel’s—it sparked my interest.”

Harry sent the man an assessing look. “I see, then I wish you success in this new endeavour.”

‘Perhaps he had yet to realise the stone is fake? Then again I couldn’t sense the soul shard on him so I’m not too sure.’

Frustrated, but making sure to hide it with his occlumency shields, Harry turned and made his way out into the surrounding guests.

~

July 15th 1992, Quirrell’s Office, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Quirinus Quirrell knew he wasn't the most skilled wizard in the world, however he liked to think that he was adept in certain areas - certainly more so than the average fool. Yet standing now, he felt like he could take on Merlin himself.

He had served his Lord faithfully from when he was still a teenager until his Lord had been defeated by that retched halfblood brat. His loyalty and devotion never wavering during the ten years his Lord had been lost, not even once. Yet now he could feel his undying allegiance was faltering; he had borne his Lord’s spirit for a year, willingly and even eagerly, but now he was torn.

The Philosopher’s Stone: a priceless, one of a kind magical artefact, was within his grasp quite literally. The foolish old man’s feeble traps and protections had been nothing to him and now he stood holding one of the world’s most precious substances, the key ingredient to the elixir of life and the sole object capable of making gold out of anything.

‘I could do anything and be anybody with such a powerful artefact,’ he thought. However, as soon as the thought entered his mind it also vanished, a pain not unlike the Cruciatus curse quickly taking its place as his Lord made his anger at the traitorous thoughts known.

“Such treachery,” the leathery voice rasped out.

Quirrell quickly remembered his place. “Never, my Lord.”

“The Philosopher’s Stone… with it I shall be reborn!”

Quirrell felt a rush run through him. His Lord reborn. In that moment any fleeting plans he may have had about the stone vanished as he knew he would do whatever it took to help his Lord return to his former glory.

“Yes master, soon you shall take your place once again above us all. You shall have your revenge on the Light and that brat Potter,” Quirrell said, hoping to regain his Lord’s favour. Instead he felt a rush
of fury before it was masked.

Quirinus had been confused when he had met Harry Potter. The boy was nothing like what he had been expecting. He was quiet, smart, and most surprisingly a Ravenclaw. Where was the Light’s noble little lion? Their little Light Lord? The boy he had met was honestly somebody he could see growing up to be a fine wizard, however his loyalty to his Lord had kept him at bay. He refused to harbour fond thoughts about the brat who had caused his Lord’s downfall - that’s what he kept firmly in his mind every time the child would do something he approved of.

Yet, slowly, this strict notion of hating the child dwindled; he had felt his Lord’s fascination with the boy from the moment Harry Potter had been read out during the child’s Sorting. He had felt his Lord’s hunger to observe his so-called defeater, the Boy-Who-Lived. At first, out of loyalty to his master, he had planned ways to do away with the child, but not only were opportunities scarce with the brat’s little collection of friends always hanging of him like mindless drones, he felt his Lord’s captivation with the first year continuously grow.

“The child is… not a concern…,” the serpentine voice rasped out, the sound sending chills down Quirinus’ back. It wasn't the words that caused the reaction and caught his attention, however, it the feeling that he got from his Lord. He didn’t know whether to feel sorry for the child or not, as his Lord was intrigued and felt almost possessive over the young Ravenclaw.

~

Ten years as a spirit, lost and wandering untethered, had not been part of Tom’s plans for Lord Voldemort or the Dark side. That was one of the few rational thoughts that managed to filter in through the haze of anger, pain, and madness.

~

Harry Potter. Such an ordinary name for the boy who had brought about his destruction.

~

Eyes the colour of the killing curse.

~

The thoughts filtered through Tom’s consciousness, more clearly now than ever before. Before he had joined onto his follower’s mind and possessed his body, Tom’s thoughts had been scattered and hazy. Now he was able to make sense of his thoughts and the world around him. It was hard, exhausting, but slowly he drew to some set conclusions.

He had been defeated. Him. By a baby.

He couldn’t quite remember why yet, but he knew he would eventually.

~

He shall be marked as his equal.

~

Quirinus watched as the Potter-Black Heir moved through the crowd with easy grace, silently navigating away from him. The crowd seemed to part for him naturally, people often not even noticing their own deference to the small boy.
He had watched the boy from afar since his master plan with the stone had failed. It had been a fake, a well-crafted imposter of the real stone.

He had done everything right for the ritual, hoping to restore his Lord and when he had failed he had feared his Lord’s reaction. Instead his Lord laughed, manically at first before it turned genuine, something Quirrell had never heard before. Finally, he had simply ripped himself free, promising Quirinus that he would be rewarded for his aid. After that Quirinus wasn't sure what had happened. The pain of their separation had been too much. He had never felt anything like it—it was a never ending, all-consuming darkness that he didn’t think he would escape from. However eventually he had, slowly able to pick himself up, his body shaking with effort and his magic dangerously drained.

~

Malfoy Yule ball, 24th December 1992

Harry walked away feeling the eyes of the man who had helped his soulmate practically burning into his back, but he didn’t stop. The man left Harry with multiple questions buzzing around his head, however this was not the time or the place for such endeavours. Making sure his masks were firmly in place, Harry instead focused on the other guests, watching with interest how the most influential members of the wizarding world all interacted with one another, lies and manipulations falling from lips as easily as flattery and bribes. It was fascinating to watch.

“Enjoying the show?” a smooth drawl asked, drawing Harry’s attention but not surprising him as his magic had felt the man’s approach.

“Indeed. I'm surprised you have left them. Such a fun game, politics,” Harry said, sending the man next to him a small smirk.

Lucius returned the smirk. “Only if the players are interesting,” Lucius said, looking around with barely concealed disgust.

Lucius felt like a new man since he had visited Gringotts yesterday morning and had himself checked out for compulsions and charms. Although nowhere near the level of what he had been fearing after speaking to Harry, Sirius, and Remus, the Malfoy Lord was enraged when he received his results. He had been made to hate muggleborns and halfbloods, to act more prideful than was gentlemanly, to be arrogant, and to not question orders. Small things that he already did to a slight degree in some cases, but with the added compulsions made it so he was a more than willing follower. Without them the Malfoy Lord questioned if he would have so easily followed his Lord as a teenager. He didn’t regret his decision now as he knew that with Harrison’s help the Dark and his Lord would be reborn - but still, the slight doubt he had enraged him. He was a Malfoy and Malfoys didn’t get manipulated.

Harry snorted delicately, enjoying the man’s dry humour as it was rare for people to use such with him at his body’s current physical age.

“Father, have you seen—oh there you are!” Came a softer version of Lucius’ voice. Draco appeared next to his father and sent Harry a quick smile before his pureblood mask slipped back on.

“Draco,” Harry greeted, almost regretting being found as he was enjoying Lucius’ company.

“Harry,” the blond greeted.

Lucius sent his son a soft look. “I shall leave you boys to it. Do remember to come and see me before you leave tonight, Harrison.”
Harry nodded. “I shall. Enjoy your evening, Lucius.”

Draco snorted and said, “It’s weird watching you with my father.”

“Oh?” Harry hummed.

“He treats you like an adult - it’s like he respects you. He doesn’t respect anybody! What makes you so special?” Draco asked, sounding petulant. However, Harry could tell the boy wasn't truly upset, just merely confused.

Harry sighed. He had feared this and although Draco was much more mature this time around, he was still rather spoilt and, well, a child. A child who idolised his father and saw Harry as a potential threat for the man’s affections.

“Really?” Harry said, acting shocked. “It’s probably because of everything that’s happened with Siri and Dumbledore, and us being friends.”

Draco didn’t look fully convinced but his eyes did soften slightly and his pout lessened. “Yeah,” he agreed.

Harry let out a breath. “So where are you taking me?” he asked, following the slightly taller boy through a set of double doors.

“To where the actual fun is,” Draco said, opening a door and revealing a room full of people their age or there about. Harry recognised a few people slightly older and younger than his yearmates.

“You found him!” A female voice said, drawing Harry’s eyes to Susan. She was standing up from her place where she had been sitting with Hannah and the two Greengrass sisters near a chessboard.

“Yes, he was in the main ballroom with the adults,” Draco said.

Harry looked around the room and saw that it was set up with various games and snacks.

“Would it be too much to hope we’re staying here all night?” he asked. He wouldn’t mind this as it was like a regular party.

“Yes,” Draco said, smirking. “But we will be in here for most of it. However it is expected of us to go in for an hour at around 8 - a house elf will let us know when.”

Harry groaned lightly but was relieved that he didn’t have to stay at the ball all evening.

Hearing giggling, Harry saw that Pansy had joined him and Draco. “I don’t see why you hate dancing so much. You’re so graceful, I’m sure you’re a wonderful dancer,” the girl said, smiling lightly at Harry.

Seeing the girl dressed in pale blue robes, Harry smiled before bowing lowly and kissing her hand. “You look lovely this evening, Miss Parkinson. However, I’m sorry to inform you that you’re wrong. A drunken hippogriff would be a better dance partner than me,” he said, making the girl blush at the compliment before she laughed.

~

Sirius was bored. Not only was he bored but he was uncomfortable.

He had always hated parties like this and they were even worse now that he was an adult. Everybody here had an agenda or a motive—they were looking for gossip, weaknesses to exploit, or
endorsements. It was a giant game of politics that Sirius didn’t want to play.

“You look utterly miserable, mutt. What’s wrong? Did the wolf forget to give you a flea bath this week?”

Hearing the melodious and snarky voice, Sirius grinned, “Now, now, Sevvie, you know it’s not me who forgot to bathe.”

Severus glared at the Lord in front of him but he felt no heat behind it. He was honestly, Morgana save him, starting to tolerate the man.

“Really? I didn’t notice,” the potions master said, letting his eyes drag slowly up the Lord’s body. He was unwilling to admit to himself just how good the man in front of him looked. His skin held a healthy glow that it had previously been missing, his grey eyes and black hair standing out against his fine quality robes.

Sirius thought to keep a smirk off his face as he felt the black eyes rake across his body, lingering in certain places. ‘How interesting.’

“So, have you visited the goblins yet?” Sirius asked.

Severus felt any good humour he had previously felt dry up and die in an instant. Yes, he had visited the goblins.

~

22nd December 1992, Gringotts Bank, London Branch

Severus didn’t know what to think. Voldemort was Harry’s soulmate? That monster, the man that had killed his first friend, who had branded him, tortured him, and tried to destroy the world… he couldn’t quite believe it.

Still, he knew better than to doubt the words spoken. Harry had been honest - his eyes had told him that. Yet he still had reservations. How could a Potter be fated for a Dark Lord? For now he would accept it; if what Harry said was true then perhaps the Lord he served was just a lie—manipulated and sent mad.

Shaking his head, Severus stalked forwards. The late night crowd was thin, most people at home with family on such a day. Severus wasn't most people. He wanted to know what, if anything, had been done to him and he needed the proof before his eyes. He didn’t want to believe Dumbledore had manipulated him, didn’t want to think of all the implications such actions would have on the world.

“Yes?” A harsh voice snapped, drawing Severus out of his turmoil.

“I need to see a healer. I was sent by Harrison Potter-Black,” Severus said.

The goblin was silent for a moment, the beady eyes scrutinising Severus. After what felt like years it nodded and stood before it came around from behind its desk.

“You will follow me.”

Severus nodded and moved quickly. Turning down twisting tunnels, Severus was surprised at how far they were walking. After about ten minutes they eventually came before a set of double doors. Knocking, they open immediately and Severus followed the goblin inside.
“You will wait here for a healer,” the goblin said before walking back out of the doors which closed loudly with a clink indicating they had been locked.

Severus felt himself stiffening. The reaction was a byproduct of the last war—as a traitor-turned-spy any unknown situation made him uneasy.

Looking around the room, Severus noticed it was a ritual room and that there were potion ingredients and equipment set off to one side. It looked like an anarchic healing room but Severus supposed that this was perhaps the standard of goblin healing. He couldn’t be sure as he knew nothing of the art himself; goblins were, after all, notorious for keeping their magic and culture hidden from outsiders.

During his scrutiny of the situation he failed to notice the doors open.

“So he’s sent me another one?” a female voice asked.

Severus stiffened and turned quickly, barely suppressing his want to draw his wand.

The female goblin noticed his twitch and grinned at the reaction, “My name is Healer Maeve. Shall I be expecting any more visitors in the coming days?”

Severus willed his body to loosen. “One more I suspect.”

“So tell me Severus Tobias Snape, why are you here?”

Severus once again fought the urge to twitch. He hadn't given his name.

“Harrison Potter-Black suggested I may be under the effects of compulsions and other such charms. I find the possibility unsettling and wish to know.”

“I see. Do you know the full purpose of a Gringotts blood inheritance test?”

“Yes.”

“Then you know it will show you all inherited Lordships or Lordships gained through either birth, marriage, conquest, or those bequeathed to you. The test includes any adoptions, muggle, magical, or blood and any magical qualities, abilities, or bonds. This also extends to all vaults available to you. It can also show any magical blocks, compulsions, and interferences such as potions as well as give the date any such potions or blocks were first administered and it can also show any creature blood or inheritance,” the goblin said.

Severus felt his eyes widen. He knew they showed titles, vaults, and inheritances but he hadn't known the full scale of the test or just how in depth they were.

“I see. I wish to undertake such a test,” he said with finality in his tone. He needed to know.

The female grinned, flashing her small fangs. “Nothing is free.”

“What is your price?”

“5 galleons.”

Severus nodded. He wasn't obscenely rich like his lordly friends but he was very comfortable with both his teacher wages and the income he got from developing potions and having potion patents. “I accept.”

With a nod the female goblin clicked her fingers and a golden parchment appeared. Handing it over
she instructed, “Three drops of blood. No more, no less.”

Withholding his sneer, Severus focused on his finger and sent a weak cutting hex, allowing for a paper cut sized wound to appear. After the blood fell Severus focused his magic and let the wound heal, before focusing on the words on the page.

~

Name:

Severus Tobias Snape

Born:

9 January, 1960, Spinner's End
Cokeworth, Midlands, England, Great Britain

Parents:

Eileen Moira Snape nee Prince (Mother)
Tobias George Snape (Father)

Lordships:

Lord of the Ancient and Noble House of Prince (Maternal)

Vaults:

Severus Snape vault: 89,234 galleons, 119 books, 21 artefacts
Prince family vault: 3,123,789 galleons, 1274 books, 1923 artefacts

Magical abilities and blocks:

Core magic – Dark (20% blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)
Hereditary blood magics (50% Blocked, Albus Dumbledore, November 1st 1981)

Wandless magic

Magic sensitivity

Properties:

4 Spinner's End, Cokeworth, Midlands, England
Prince Manor, Wiltshire, England
Prince town house, London, England

Magical bonds:

Godfather bond – Draconis Lucius Malfoy, 6th June 1981

Magical compulsions:
Due to subject’s occlumency some compulsions have been partially broken over time*

Shame keyed to home life (Albus Dumbledore, September 1st 1971) *broken 40%

Distrust keyed to Gryffindors (Albus Dumbledore, September 21st 1971) *broken 10%

Resentment keyed to James Potter (Albus Dumbledore, September 21st 1971) *broken 60%

Resentment keyed to Sirius Black (Albus Dumbledore, September 21st 1971) *broken 70%

Resentment keyed to Remus Lupin (Albus Dumbledore, September 21st 1971) *broken 60%

Isolation from peers (Albus Dumbledore, September 1st 1972) *broken 10%

Belief in blood purity (Albus Dumbledore, September 1st 1973) *broken 80%

Loyalty keyed to Albus Dumbledore (Albus Dumbledore, January 3rd 1980) *broken 60%

Loyalty keyed to the Order of the Phoenix (Albus Dumbledore, January 3rd 1980) *broken 40%

Resentment keyed to Harry Potter (Albus Dumbledore, October 31st 1981) *broken 90%

Reading the findings, Severus made sure to keep his face blank. The results were both surprising and not; he supposed a small part of him had been holding out hope that this would all turn out to be a mistake. Yet now he had the proof, laid out bare in front of him.

“Shall we continue?” Maeve asked, her eyes holding no pity.

“Yes,” Severus said.

~

Malfoy Yule ball, 24th December 1992

Finally free from the party, Harry let out a breath as he followed Sirius and Remus into Lucius’ office along with Severus. He had enjoyed the party more than he thought he would but that was mainly down to his interaction with Quirrell. Feeling the office wards snap into place, Harry allowed himself to relax his hold on his magic. He liked being able to release the rigid hold he had on his core now that more people were aware of him.

Hearing the tinkling of glasses, Harry was for a second tempted to ask for some fire whiskey before he remembered his body was that of a 12 year old.

“So, I take it from your jubilant moods the ritual to start our Lord’s return was a success?” Lucius asked after serving the drinks.

“It was,” Harry said, giving the tumbler one last fleeting glance before his resolve hardened. “Have you visited Gringotts yet?”

The two men in question shared looks before allowing their displeasures to shine through. “We have.”
“And?”

“Although not as bad as any of yours we both had compulsions and blocks placed on us.”

“Mine made my... less than savoury personality traits more pronounced,” Lucius said, taking a sip of the amber liquid, “I believe they made me more susceptible to both my father and the Dark Lord’s wishes. I cannot say they are what made me join but without them I think I would have been less passive in my blind support.

“I believe they also made me less tolerant to things I previously did not care about, such as muggleborns. I cannot say I love them but I used to be a lot more open towards them as a child. I only disliked the fact our culture and heritage was dwindling, yet at Hogwarts my views changed towards hating them. Now this could easily have been because of the culture at the time, especially in Slytherin, however I think that the compulsions helped this monumentally.”

Harry nodded. He hadn’t expected Lucius to have had as many charms or compulsions. The idea of Dumbledore dosing everybody was ridiculous and if he did he would have been caught long before now.

“I take it your magic was left alone?” Remus asked.

“Yes, I had no blocks on my core,” Lucius confirmed.

“Well that’s something,” Sirius said, taking a large drink.

“What about you, professor?” Harry asked Severus who looked to be nursing his drink.

“I had multiple compulsions affecting my personality. I believe they made me less social with my peers and may have contributed to my delving into the Darker arts of magic. I believe they also contributed to my attitudes towards certain individuals and groups of people. Unlike Lucius, I also had a 20% block on my magical core and a further 50% on my inherited blood magics, which in the Prince family is spell crafting.”

Harry blinked at the no nonsense way Severus spoke, hearing the underlying fury.

“It makes you wonder how he is getting away with this,” Harry mused.

“Oh?” Severus said.

“Well, the tests show clearly what's been done and by who. It concerns me that this hasn’t come out,” Harry explained.

“I don’t know many people who would take the test,” Sirius said.

“Muggleborns are muggleborns, therefore they are coming into a new world. Everybody else knows who they are or at least what family they come from. It’s actually very rare for people to take inheritance tests. It’s usually halfbloods or orphans who suspect they're halfbloods who take the tests and I doubt Dumbledore has much use for such people.” Lucius said.

Harry nodded. That made sense, but he was still amazed that Dumbledore had gotten away with this for so long.

“I suspect he picks people from families he knows are involved in politics or who he thinks he can manipulate easily. He picks the outsiders as the ones he can fully twist and shape into the puppets he wants,” Harry said, thinking about Dumbledore's reasons.
“I agree,” Remus said, thinking about his own situation. He had been blinded by his gratitude towards Dumbledore for years - he hadn't thought to ever question the man or his motives. He was his saviour.

Eventually the small meeting died down as they shared their theories about Dumbledore's plans.
Previously

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~

Grimmauld place, December 25th, 1992

~

Waking up Harry felt a small smile build on his face, although they celebrated a traditional Yule, the giving of presents was still something that he liked to participate in.

Stretching, Harry allowed himself a moment to enjoy the peace and quiet. However, that soon shattered when he felt Sirius arriving, his sensitivity to magic in particular Sirius with whom he shared a bond was growing. Allowing his magic to be free was showing Harry just how stifled he had been in his last life and just how much he keeps hidden behind his shields when he is at Hogwarts. His magic was growing and developing in leaps and bounds, and Harry along with it.

"Wake up Harry! We have PRESENTS!" Sirius shouted, his excitement clear before turning into Padfoot and jumping into the bed, smothering him.

Laughing at his antics and trying to avoid the dog’s sloppy kisses, Harry eventually freed himself by sending a freezing charm at Sirius.

Hearing laughter, Harry looked up in time to catch the blinding flash of a camera.

"I see he decided to wake you in a similar fashion as he did me," Remus said, putting the camera
"He's like a giant child," Harry said, smirking when he saw Sirius's eyes narrow.

"A puppy," Remus said in agreement, making Harry laugh more.

"Come on, unfreeze him so we can all eat,"

Without a thought Harry waved a hand, unfreezing the animagus, the wandless magic coming easily to him.

Sirius shook out his fur before turning back into himself, and launching himself at Harry.

"Who needs food when we have presents?"

"I do," Remus deadpanned from the door.

"We can eat later," Sirius said in a decisive tone, before standing and dragging Harry bodily towards the door.

Remus shook his head lightly as he watched them, glad that Sirius was behaving how he had when they were younger. He had always been the most excited about Yule and giving presents when they were younger, and he had been worried that the damage Azkaban had done to his old friend would be too severe. He was glad his worries were proving to be unfounded. Hearing a crash followed by Harry’s unmistakable laugh, Remus sighed and quickly caught up to the pair who were in the informal sitting room, surrounded by brightly wrapped presents and a sullen Kreacher.

~

Harry smiled at the things he had been brought, his friends had all sent him things, but his favourite gift had been something given to him by Luna, for Aithusia. Opening the gift, he had laughed so hard he could hardly breathe, startling both Sirius and Remus. It was a box of stomach soothers for reptiles, with a note

‘Just in case the peacock didn’t go down smoothly.’

~

27th December 1992

Harry smiled as Neville stumbled slightly exiting from the fireplace, it made him glad that he wasn’t the only person who struggled with the floo. Even with his magical core fully unlocked and his absolute control over his magic, wizarding transport methods still caused him problems. That smiled widened when he saw Neville quickly recover and move aside so his grandmother could exit after him. He was happy that his friend that the was being treated better and accepted by his family a lot earlier than in his last life. Neville deserved to be accepted and loved.

Stepping forward Harry smiled at his friend and offered the dowager lady a smile, before taking her hand and placing a kiss above it.

"Thank you for allowing Neville to visit with us Dowager Longbottom. I wish you a great yule and pay Lady Magic grant you strength in this coming New Year,"

The old lady smirked lightly, accepting the formal greeting, ‘May magic bless and renew you heir Potter-Black. However, I have told you call me Augusta or Gran, none of this Dowager Lady
business, you might be able to charm everybody else but I'm on to you mister,”

Harry smiled and laughed lightly, “Of course Augusta,”

Neville watched this with fascination, he was still shocked by the changes in his grandmother. She was different now from what she had been like when he was growing up. Much freer with her emotions and easier to talk to.

Harry turned and grinned at the slightly stunned looking blonde boy, “Have a good Yule Nev?” he asked.

Neville soon found himself easily talking to Harry about his yule, visiting his parents and what presents he had received, the boy thanking Harry for the necklace he had received. Harry had given all his friends a necklace that acted like the galleons he had used before for the DA meetings, they could all be modified and acted like beacons, so they would be able to find each other.

~

After Neville eventually gave in and fell to Morpheus’ thrall, Harry was left to his thoughts. When Neville had spoken of his parents Harry realised how much others had suffered at the hands of his soul mate- he had, in the past had some fleeting thoughts but until he had heard Neville speak so emotionally he’d put them to one side and focused single-mindedly on getting Tom back. But thinking on it he realised that just from his close friends, Neville had lost his parents, Suzie hers whilst Fred and George had lost their uncles and after viewing the memories of his parents he felt their loss more keenly. He now had an idea of what it was he was missing.

He didn’t know how to broach the subject of his soulmate to his friends, he didn’t want to lose any of them, yet he knew that he couldn’t give up Tom.

~

Meanwhile

~

**Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry, Dumbledore's office.**

~

Albus Dumbledore was not having a good week. No, he wasn't having a good year, and he knew exactly who to blame- *Harry. Potter*. He didn’t know how, or when, or even why, but he just knew in his gut that the brat was to blame for this latest fiasco with Lockhart disappearing. If the child had just listened and done as he had planned, then Albus wouldn’t be dodging calls from the DMLE and facing possible charges.

It was all the brats fault.

Albus had been forced into taking unnecessary risks just to verify that Lockhart was dead. He had done a dark blood ritual, using some of Lockhart’s blood that the fool hadn't known he had stolen. He had had to do it, he couldn’t risk the man being free and potentially spilling his secrets, luckily it confirmed that he was dead. Which was just as distressing as he didn’t know how… yes, he knew about the curse on the DADA position but usually there was some sign, some sort of build-up. He didn’t even have a body as proof! Now he was left without a teacher and with a criminal investigation being lead by a woman he had no sway over and who seemingly had an axe to grind if
her persistence was anything to go by.

He was going to have to allow the ministry to fill the position for him, better them than the governors who seemed to be all too willing to follow Malfoy’s lead. He had considered offering the job to Sirius for a moment, he needed to get that reckless mutt back under his control, but he had thought better of it. The Black lord had obviously given in to his inherited evilness and been swayed to the dark. Unsurprising really given his family. Perhaps though he still had a chance with Remus. Yes, next year… The wolf was always easier to manipulate, he did after all owe Albus his schooling and future… he could use him to get Harry back into his sphere of control.

He needed that damned brat. He had put much into this plan to give up now. He refused to lose. He was Albus Dumbledore, the most powerful wizard since merlin himself. He wold not let Harry bloody Potter destroy plans he had spent over half a century putting into place. He had already lost the philosophers stone, he couldn’t afford to lose anything else.

~

In the middle of an Albanian forest- wandering aimlessly

~

What was happening? A soul mate… Where am I? So cold… The one with the power…

Where was Quirrell? The ritual should have worked… the stone…

No, The Stone was a fake, a clever fake that Tom didn’t even notice until the last moment. Yes, he remembered that…

Pain, so much pain.

Tom fought for focus, trying to get his mind to stay latched onto a single idea… He Was Lord Voldemort… he had been defeated, by a baby. No, by Harry potter. But Harry wasn’t his enemy… he was his… his soul mate?

A piece of paper- soul bond-? (unknown match)

But how? Why? Goblin blood inheritance test…

More thoughts filtered in, clearer than before, surprising Tom as he hadn't been able to focus this clearly in years… he was still weak, shockingly so, he was without form or real magic, but it was like he had regained something… something he had lost…

~

4th January 1993, The Great Hall, Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry

~

Harry sighed as he sat down in his seat at the Ravenclaw table. Listening to Dumbledore blather away giving his usual speech about unity, integrity and the usual hidden light propaganda made him want to gag, that or curse the man.

“And finally, it is to my great dismay that I have to announce that professor Lockheart will not be re-joining us for the remainder of the year…”
At this news the whole room broke out into whispers, students all sharing conspiracy’s and a few exchanging galleons, having bet on how long this year’s DADA teacher would last.

“Wonder what did it?”

“Vampires, I bet it was vampires looking for Quirrell,”

“Knew he wouldn’t last,”

“I wonder if he knows his peacock was poached,” Luna said dreamily from next to Harry, staring at Dumbledore with her large eyes slightly unfocused.

Harry hummed, “If he knows or not I have no clue, but still we should all take care, I doubt that the headmaster is done scheming,”

Continuing, Albus spoke over the increased volume, “instead please join me in welcoming seasoned auror and former Ravenclaw student, Kingsley Shacklebot. He has agreed to teach Defence against the dark arts for the remainder of the year while on medical leave from the DMLE.”

Harry watched as Kingsley stood tall and bowed at the polite clapping he received. The man looked similar to when Harry knew him, if not slightly paler, which Harry assumed was from pain as his eyes held some that he had not quite managed to hide.

“Thank you,” his deep baritone voice filled the room, “I look forward to the task,”

~

Ravenclaw common room

~

“Did you enjoy Yule My Lord?” Luna asked from her position in front of Harry. Harry was carefully adding small braids to her hair, tying them off with small bells.

“I did, I feel more connect to my magic. Revitalized.”

Luna hummed, “And your mate?”

Harry stilled his hands for a moment, shocked. “Luna?” he said, questioning what she knew.

Luna hummed again, “I can’t see clearly what the future holds but I know that together you’ll be powerful, and that you’ll change the world.”

“I see.”

“You’ll do great things Harrison Potter,”

“Great but terrible things,” Harry muttered, thinking back to the first time he ever met Mr Ollivander.

“Maybe, but change is never simple there will always be opposition.”

“Do you know who he is?” Harry asked

Luna tilted her head, trying to focus on the stray wisps of magic that would whisper to her, “I can see what he could be, with your help,”
“Then you’ll accept him?”

“I will, but remember My Lord I'm yours.”

Harry carefully finished off her hair before running his fingers through it and listening to the bells as they chimed gently.

“I'm glad that I will at least have you by my side Little Moon.”

~

The rest of the school year seemed to fly by, with Harry focusing on ignoring the younger Weasleys attempts at infiltrating his life. The worst was Valentine’s Day, without Lockheart Harry was sure that he would not have to suffer through anything like Ginny’s attempt at romantic poetry, honestly…

“His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad, His hair is as dark as a blackboard. I wish he was mine, he’s truly divine, the hero who conquered the Dark Lord. However, he should have known his luck would not hold out forever.

~

February 14th, 1992, The Great Hall, Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

~

Harry and his followers as Luna called them, were sitting with the Slytherins at their house table, discussing the class options that they would have to pick for their 3rd year. The twins were giving them their opinions, but they admitted that they just messed around in classes. Harry already knew he would be taking Ancient Runes and Arithmancy this time around, not only where they new subjects for him, but the teachers had no allegiance to Albus beyond their jobs. Harry had taken up studying runes in his free time, having studied them for his ritual to return Tom’s soul and body, therefore he knew the class would not challenge him, but he looked forward to it no the less. Both subjects were also the most useful in getting jobs, unless one wanted to work with animals or using animal products, or naturally had some predisposition towards the sight like Luna. Not that this swayed Harry too much as he doubted he would ever work a proper job. He would most likely help Tom and maintain his estate and businesses.

Neville had decided to join Harry in Ancient Runes and take Care of Magical Creatures. He was unsure still about what he wanted to do when he was older, whether he would take up the Longbottom lordship and live like a peer or work like his father had chosen to do, but with his affinity towards plants he thought animals may be useful to learn about. And no other subject apart from runes had interested him, he had contemplated Divination as he had heard it would be an easy O but decided against it with Harry's help.

Draco was going to be with Harry in both Runes and Arithmancy, he was however also taking Care of magical creatures, meaning he would have less free time next year. Like Harry Draco knew that he would not be working, he would follow in his father’s footsteps and hopefully grow the Malfoy fortune, dabbling in politics and business like his family had done for generations. He had picked his subjects for the same reason as Harry, but also selected care as he did surprisingly like animals.

All three girls had decided to take divination, making Harry want to groan. Only Hannah had the slightest inclination towards the sight, but even then, she didn’t possess the gift like Luna. However, all three looked forward to the class and wouldn’t listen to Harry and the rest of their groups protests. They thought the subject was mysterious and would help them see what their futures would hold. Susan had also picked Ancient Runes, Hannah Muggle studies, and Pansy Ancient Runes and
Arithmancy.

Blaise however would be with Harry for everything, as he was taking Ancient Runes and Arithmancy, saying the other subjects were useless and that Hogwarts options were so limited it was ‘tragic’.

“I agree,” Harry said thinking about the classes that had been discontinued by Dumbledore.

“It’s a shame,” Neville agreed, “My gran said her favourite class was spell creation, it used to be offered to 5th year Ancient Rune students but it was cancelled in the 60’s by Dumbledore.”

“Father always did say Dumbledore was the worst thing to happen to Hogwarts,” Draco commented, making Harry stifled a snicker as it reminded him of the Draco from his old life.

“You take that back! You slimy snake!” an outraged voice said, drawing their attention to a red-faced Ronald Weasley who was standing near them obviously eavesdropping.

“Why I don’t think I will,” Draco drawled in reply.

“Dumbledore is the greatest wizard since merlin himself!” Ron said

“…Sure, he is,” Harry said, not bothering to hide his sarcasm.

“And you- you’re just a traitor! Dumbledore could have made you great, helped you to be a hero but instead you’re just a coward!”

“And how am I a coward?” Harry asked.

“You’re not a Gryffindor!”

“I see. Brilliant deduction Ronald.”

The group snickered when Ron looked confused by Harry word choice. However, Harry ignored that instead rose an eyebrow at the flustered redhead. “I would recommend leaving now,”

“Yes, do get going little Ronnikins,” the twins said

Harry laughed, “You wouldn’t want to upset your brothers now would you Ronald? I hear they’re quite good with charms,”

The words seemed to snap something in Ron and he launched himself at Harry. “You’re supposed to be my friend. You could have been a proper hero! Somebody who fights slimy snakes, instead you’re friends with them! and to make it worse you’ve turned by brothers into cowards like you!”

Harry seeing Ron’s fist coming his way, Harry moved swiftly focusing his magic on the boy and causing him to freeze. He was fed up or dealing with Ron’s childish antics, he was fed up of acting like a child and he was fed up of people thinking he was so easy to manipulate and control. Feeling his control slip Harry let out a fraction of his power.

Ron felt the pressure of Harrys magic wrap around him and it made him want to shiver, it was so cold and foreboding. It felt like static, the calm moment before lightning strikes in a storm.

“Erm Harrison, you may want to let him go,” Blaise said, the first of his group to pull themselves out from their shock. They hadn’t felt Harry’s magic like this before, and Blaise being who he was recognised it for what it was, dark.
Harry allowed his magic to settle and drew it back, leaving Ron on the floor panting and looking at him with scared blue eyes. The red head had lost the red in his face and now looked close to passing out.

“I would suggest you go now,” Harry said his voice glacial.

Weasley seemed to finally realise he had lost this round or whatever and gracelessly hurled himself away from the group which had started to gain attention from those around them.

“Harry, that was…” Neville said before drifting off, unsure of what that was… it had felt powerful and scary.

Draco and the rest of the Slytherins however shared knowing looks, not entirely surprised, they had been feeling Harry's magic slowly seeping out recently. Even the twins recognised the power.

Standing Harry focused on re-building his shields, he had a theory about why he was struggling but he wasn’t sure…

Walking towards the door leading out of the hall Harry didn’t check to see if his friends were coming, he didn’t need to as he could feel their aura’s following him. He could feel eyes on him, but he contained himself, walking as calmly as he cold away from the great hall.

~

Moments later.

~

The Headmasters Office, Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

~

Albus sat in his chair and pensively thought about the power he had just felt coming from the boy. This just would not do, he had placed blocks on the boy and had thought they had held but know he was unsure…

“You need to get him under control Albus. Ron’s been telling me that he's managed to manipulate the twins. Oh, my poor babies!” Molly ranted as she sat opposite the wizened old wizard. Her moods quickly flipping between raving mad to worried and back in the matter of seconds.

“Yes, but the boy is protected-” Albus said, hating the words and the truth they held. Harry knew of his position in their society, he was an acknowledged heir to at least two notable houses, and his had friends with equally powerful parents and guardians.

“He's a child! Do something!” she interrupted. Refusing to have all she had worked for and been promised squandered!

“I shall, but we must be smart about this, patient.”

“If you get rid of that scoundrel Black then Harry will be forced to rely on you.” Molly said, the bitterness she felt towards Black not having ebbed away. She blamed him for the taint on her precious little girls record, her permanent record!

Albus hummed, he had been considering the option more and more recently. Sirius was becoming too much of a problem and his growing friendship with Lucius Malfoy was the least of it- he had
reclaimed his Wizengamot seat and taken to actively participation in votes, he was becoming a thorn in Albus’s side, choosing to vote against him and actually use his family name for the considerable power it held and the influence it still possessed. He was also using his new found political command to sway others against him… Yes, Black would have to go, he needed Harry under his control and he needed the world to stop questioning his greatness. Yes, the *prophesy* would be fulfilled and he, Albus Percival Wulferic Brian Dumbledore would once again be the hero of the wizarding world.

~

Phineas watched from his portrait as the headmaster plotted the death of his heir and current head of the Black family. Oh, how he wished he could curse the man, wished he could show him why the Black family was so feared. But he knew his heir wouldn’t let him down, he would show the speckled old coot why one should never mess with a Black.

Reappearing in his counter portrait in the London town house, Phineas summoned the elf Kreacher to fetch his heir or the wolf...he would warn them of the headmasters plans.

~

**Grimmauld Place, London.**

~

Sirius sighed as he looked at the door to the ritual room, he and Remus had performed the ritual for Harry two weeks ago on Imbolc, the holiday celebrating the first day of spring. His feelings towards the matter had not mellowed, he was still torn but he knew he had to do this for Harry. He also knew that he had bigger things to worry about, such as Albus Dumbledore and his new decision to kill him.

He knew that the man was serious and honestly, he did feel some trepidation, but he knew he couldn’t stand down. He would be there for Harry, no matter what or who stood against him.

~

**Back to Hogwarts.**

~

Harry led his friends to the room on requirement, they often came here to escape from the two youngest Weasleys or just to hang out.

“I think its time you told them my lord,” Luna said, speaking so softly only Harry heard and even then, he had trouble hearing the words.

Thinking about it though he knew she was right, he had to tell his friends now before Tom returned if he had any hope of them accepting him. He wanted them to accept him, to remain with him.

“I think it’s time that I told you guys a story but first, as I know not all of you are capable of occlumency, I’m going to cast a secrecy spell. It will keep what I'm going to tell you hidden, you will not be able to discuss what you learn with anybody who doesn't already know, and it will be impossible for anybody to force the information from you.”

The group looked shocked at the serious tone and implied nature of conversation, but all agreed to Harry casing the spell. Susan being the most reluctant, which didn’t shock Harry as he knew that she was always practical, and didn’t want to be put in a situation where she would have to betray her
aunt or her own values. The twins however were most impressed with the spell.

“The story begins years ago, in a muggle orphanage where a young witch died after giving birth to her only son whom she named, Tom Marvolo Riddle. Tom after her Muggle love and his father, Marvolo after her father…”

Harry told them about how Tom grew up, bullied and abused before he discovered his magic. He didn’t sugar coat Tom’s violent reactions, but he did explain how Tom had never had a single person show him love or happiness, right from wrong.

“Eventually, the boy turned 11 and he received his letter of acceptance to Hogwarts. But like most muggleborns he thought it was a joke until he was visited by the deputy headteacher, Albus Dumbledore.”

He spoke about the little he knew from Toms years at school, how he entered Hogwarts and was sorted into Slytherin, how he was a gifted student and eventually head boy. He also spoke about the muggle war that was going on alongside the war with Grindelwald and how Tom begged to stay at school out of fear. But mainly he focused on the distrust and fear Albus showed towards the boy, the blatant prejudice. Harry didn’t mention his fears or thoughts about how Albus had something to do with Toms first horcrux, or his descent into madness.

“But Tom wasn’t just a gifted half-blood, no he was a descendant from one of the greatest wizards there ever was, Salazar Slytherin.”

The group let out gasps now, as they realised that Harry had been talking about The Dark Lord. they had been wondering why Harry was talking about a student from over 50 years ago, about why he felt the need to cast such a strong secrecy spell and now they knew.

“Wait, The Dark Lords a half-blood?” Draco said, shocked.

“Tom Riddle, was a half blood.”

“But you just said that Tom Riddle was the heir of Slytherin.” Susan said.

“Yes, Tom did eventually become the Dark Lord Voldemort, but it was a slow process.”

“What do you mean?” Neville said, his face pale, making Harry almost regret having him here bur he deserved to know.

“When Tom was sixteen something happened… He did something, that changed him…” Harry said hesitantly. He wasn't sure if he should mention his fears or thoughts about how Albus had something to do with Toms first horcrux, or his descent into madness, however, he had a feeling he was right.

“He created a horcrux,” seeing the blank looks Harry was reminded that his audience were innocent children.

“A horcrux is a container for a piece of your soul,”

Shocked gasps met his words.

“Creating one makes you, in theory, immortal, but it also breaks you. Your mind, magic and emotions all become twisted they diminish and even fade completely.”

“And he created one of these when he was sixteen?” Blaise asked
“Yes. Though I have my doubts that he did it willingly or at least that he did it knowing the consequences.”

“That’s why he became Voldemort?”

“- Because he made one?” the twins spoke, looking vaguely disgusted at the thought of splitting their souls.

“He made several.” Harry said

“Why?”

“I’m not sure. Suspect foul play, he had a solid plan for his ideals. He was handsome, charismatic, magical powerful and from a strong family line.”

“You sound like you admire him,” Susan bit out, outraged.

Harry winced. “I hate what Voldemort did, but I admire who Tom Riddle was and could have been.”

“They’re the same person though,” Susan said again.

“Yes and no. the horcruxes twisted and destroyed who tom riddle was or could have become.”

“You said foul play?” Blaise said, looking thoughtful.

“Tom Riddle was a genius. He could have easily changed the wizarding world. he had already collected close friends who later became his followers. He didn’t need to become a radical terrorist. He lost everything creating his horcruxes, he become a monster from nightmares.”

“You think he was tricked into making his first one?”

“I do.”

“Why does this even matter? He was a monster you said so yourself Harry!” Neville finally said, his whole body shaking. Reminding his that he and Susan had lost the most to Voldemort.

“It matters because Tom Riddle is my soul bonded,”

…

The room was silent before panicked giggles erupted from Draco.

Harry rose an eyebrow at the blonde.

“I’m s-sorry, its just this is insane.” Draco bit out, a bit hysterically.

“Your soul bonded?” Hannah said, speaking for the first time.

“I discovered this while I was at Gringotts. I took an inheritance test and found out many things.”

“Your soul mate is Voldemort.” Neville repeated looking so confused Harry wanted to hug the boy.

“Tom Riddle, not Voldemort” Harry insisted. He would kill Tom again if he one again become Voldemort.

“Does this mean you’re going to die?” Pansy said. She had read many stories about soul bonds, they were so romantic.
“What?” Neville said getting over his shock for a moment, Harry was his first and best friend he couldn’t die.

“It’s just, in all the stories soul mates can’t live without each other. When one dies the other follows,” Pansy said, looking heartbroken for Harry.

“I’m not going to die,” Harry reassured them, making everybody even Susan who hadn't spoken since his announcement sigh in relief. “Like I said, Tom make several horcrux’s,”

“but what does that mean?” Draco asked.

“It means Harrys going to bring his soul mate back silly,” Luna said.

Harry turned to the girl who was leaning against him, “One day I will work out how it is you know these things,”

“She’s joking, right? you can’t bring him back. He killed my parents, my brothers. He killed your parents!” Susan shouted.

“I'm not going to bring back Voldemort. I'm bringing back Tom Riddle.”

“They're the same person!” she screamed.

“No, they're not. Tom will not become Voldemort this time. He will have e, and I will not allow it.” Harry said calmly.


“The Black library is very informative. Tom, when he returns will be sane.”

“Is it necromancy, some-”

“Why Harry? How could you?” Neville uncharacteristically interrupted, unlike Susan who was red with righteous fury Neville was pale, his eyes looking suspiciously glassy.

“I'm so sorry Neville, Hannah, everybody. I'm so, so sorry for everything the Voldemort and his followers did to you. I'm so, so sorry for all of those who lost somebody. But I need him. Without him I can't live, Pansy wasn't wrong about that.”

“But my parents Harry…”

“I know Neville and I understand if you hate me from now on, if you all hated me.”

“I don’t hate you Harry. I just…”

“It’s okay Neville. I told you because you're my friends. You deserve to know.”

“I don’t know if I can let this go Harry,” Susan said.

“I understand.” He said solemnly.

“I want to understand, I do. But it’s just…”

“It’s okay Suzie,”

“It’s not though. He’s your soulmate, you've lost just as much as us but you're being so accepting!”
“I’ve had time to deal and come to terms with it,” Harry said. He was also much more emotionally mature and in control in comparison to the preteens in front of him.

Susan nodded, before standing, “I see. I think- just give me sometime Harry. I don’t know if I can accept this, not really… but I will always accept you.” With that she walked towards the door.

“You should go after her,” Harry told Hannah who was fidgeting, looking at her friends back with concern.

“Thanks Harry, for trusting us with the truth.” She said standing and rushing after her best friend, “and just so you know, I’m with you as well,”

With them gone Harry turned an eye to the rest, the twins, the Slytherins and Neville, who looked like he was calming down.

“They’ll come around my lord,” Luna whispered from her spot next to him.

“I just wish they didn’t have to, that Susan hadn't suffered so much.”

“It’s not your fault,” Neville said, shocking Harry because he hadn't thought the rest would be able to hear them.

“But-

“No, it’s not your fault. And if I'm to accept this, to accept him, then you need to accept that.”

Neville said, gaining confidence as he spoke.

Harry nodded, “Thank you,” he said softly.

“Well, I'm not exactly going to criticize you, we’re family after all.” Draco said, “and anyway My family, as you all know, isn’t exactly light.”

“Really?

“-We would have

“-Never,

“Ever-

“Known, had you not told us” the twins said, their faces slightly paler than normal.

“Are you two okay? I know you also lost a lot to Voldemort,” Harry said, thinking about their uncles.

The twins shared a look before Fred spoke. “We understand Harry, and we accept what you’ve got to do.”

“We’ll stand by you.” George added,

“No matter what.”

“You see us for ourselves.”

“As individuals.”
“We know there's more to this than what you’ve told us. But we can wait,"

“We trust you Harry.”

Harry nodded, happy he was occluding as the words would have probably made him cry.

“Thank you,”

“I will support you,” pansy said, sitting straighter. Her family had always willingly served Voldemort, and she was honorand by and in awe of Harry for being his soul mate.

“As will I, my family remained neutral during the last war, but I shall stand with you Harry.” Blaise said solemnly. He had a feeling that harry would bring about a change in their world, and he wanted to be there with him when he did.

“Look My lord, you’ve gained an inner circle,” Luna said, making Harry choked slightly, the others however didn’t hear her.

“I'm not a Dark Lord Luna,”

“Yet,” the girl said smiling happily.

Chapter End Notes

This hasn't been abandoned.
I'm sorry that it's been so long. I've had a lot going on and to be honest I simply didn't have the time or motivation to write. One of my oldest friends was in a accident and passed away, so i'm going to dedicate this to him.
RIP Rhys, the sky has gained another star.
Thank you all for your support & kind words! It honestly mean so much to me, I can't express how grateful I am.
This chapter has yet to be beta'd so there will probably be some mistakes.
Hope you enjoy!
~ Annie

Previously

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“Yet,” the girl said smiling happily.

~

The remainder of the year past with little fan fair after Harrys announcement. Susan kept her word and didn’t abandon Harry, but she did pull away slightly, taking Hannah with her. Her decision left Harry slightly troubled, but he understood her choice and reluctantly respected it. They would still sit together in lessons, but the pair would often stick together and often chose to study and eat with their other friends, such as Terry Boot, who had disappeared from Harrys group of friends when Draco and the rest of the Slytherins became more permanent features.

Harrys only source of true excitement came from his letters to Sirius, who had continued to complete the ritual returning Toms sanity and soul.

~


~
Sirius stood shocked as the soul fragment from Ravenclaw’s Lost Diadem slowly became visual. Even though he had done this before he was still stunned at the power of the ritual. This shard seemed more… whole? It left him relieved as it seemed like the ritual was working, not that he doubted Harry. But he still he was limited in what he knew about this type of magic and doubted he would feel completely comfortable with it any time soon, if ever. He was a dark wizard, yes, but he had spent so long suppressing that part of himself, to be surrounded by such strong and pure dark magic was overwhelming.

“Who are you?” the cultured voice asked, this piece appeared to be in his late 20’s.

“I am, Lord Sirius Black the 3rd.”

The slightly red eyes narrowed briefly, a look of confusion setting on Tom’s face.

“What are you doing?”

“Harry asked me to help him. He’s bringing you back.”

“Harry?”

Sirius nodded, this soul piece was saner than the piece which appeared when he used the ring during the Imbolc ritual, but still there was something clearly missing in the gleam of the soul pieces eyes.

“I’m less, but, I’m also… more…” Tom said.

Sirius refused to think about him as anything other than Tom. Hearing what the shard said he just nodded again, he didn’t know what to say to the part of Tom he was stuck with, and didn’t want to do anything that could cause problems if later Tom remembered the rituals.

“I was defeated.” The word Harry kept repeating in Tom’s broken mind. Harry, Harry, Harry...

This statement drew Sirius’s attention back to the soul shard, it was the first clear statement that Sirius had understood.

“Err, Yeah. I mean yes, you were defeated.” Sirius said, stumbling over his words in his shock.

The shard nodded, pieces of memories were coming back purer now, it was fuzzy and difficult to latch onto just one train of thought, but it was also the clearest his mind had been in what felt like years. Forcing himself to focus, Tom could feel the rune circle’s power lessening. He knew he would be gone soon, but thoughts kept flashing in his mind. Red, pain, hope, Green flashes, Harry, green eyes, broken...

“I apologise.”

With those final words the shard was lost, and the ritual ended successfully, Sirius however was struck dumb and didn’t know what to think. What was Voldemort- no Tom, apologising for? and to whom?

~


~

Sirius pulled at the burgundy robes he was forced to wear to show that he was a Lord.
“Stop fussing. You're a Lord, act like it.”

Making sure to blank his face and pull his pureblood mask on, Sirius turned to Lucius, who managed to make the mandatory robes look elegant.

“Lucy.” Sirius greeted, just to see the vein near the blonde’s eye twitch.

Sighing Lucius forced himself not to react, “Sirius,"

Seeing that he wouldn’t get more of a reaction Sirius looked around at the gathered Lords, “so what’s today about?”

“If you read the notes sent to you beforehand, you would know the answer to that,” Lucius chided.

“I read them,” Sirius argued, before amending himself at Lucius’ sceptical look, “sort of, there were a lot of pages.”

Sighing once again Lucius suppressed his need to roll his eyes, he did genuinely like the Sirius, and found his natural intelligence and charisma admirable but the man was infuriating at times.

“It’s a half session, we’ll be reviewing the proposed laws and amendments that we will vote on during the full summer session. This is a chance to get some struck down before they’re put forward to vote.”

“I remember seeing one put forward by Umbridge, something about tightening restrictions on those with creature blood or status.”

“Yes, Dolores Umbridge. A vile woman, she’s firmly in Fudges pocket, having been promoted to senior undersecretary last year. She tried months ago to pass a similar bill but failed. It’s not surprising that she’s trying again.”

Sirius remembered Harry talking about the woman and knew she was not somebody who he would want to remain in power.

“The law would make it impossible for people with creature blood or status to live in our world, it would also make it legal for them to be hunted and attacked.”

Lucius nodded, impressed Sirius was able to see the true implications the law would bring about.

~

Sirius waited with bated breath for Umbridge’s creature law amendment to be brought forward. He had mainly kept silent during the session so far, listening and watching who voted and when. Picking up their habits and who was allied with who.

He had noted that while announcing laws Dumbledore, who was still the chief warlock, would subtly hint towards his opinions.

“Next is a law put forward by our senior undersecretary, Dolores Umbridge. This amendment that is outlined in the documents provided to you, redefines the current laws and provides additional security measures.”

Sirius scoffed at that, he wasn’t surprised Dumbledore was supporting the amendment, nothing the old goat did anymore shocked him. he didn’t know why Dumbledore was so against creatures, but he had a few suspicions.
“Now has anybody got any think to say about this amendment or should we move forward?”

Sirius stood then, surprising people as he had yet to make a stand in any of the previous sessions, he would usually only speak out in support or to argue against others stands.

Albus narrowed his eyes at Sirius. He wasn’t surprised to see the Black Lord sitting amongst the dark families and those who had supported Voldemort.

“Lord Black,” Albus said as he was forced to acknowledge the man.

“Chief warlock,” Sirius said managing to make the title sound mocking.

“The floor is yours Lord Black.”

Sirius withheld his anger at the tone Dumbledore used and focused on the situation at hand.

“My fellow lords and ladies, my proposal is to dismiss this bill now, before it is called into a full vote. This ‘new’ bill is fundamentally the same as the one previously put forward to and rejected by this body, by Madame Umbridge months ago.

“The laws this bill is trying to change would make it impossible for those of creature status to remain part of our world, which we know is not something feasible. Magical creatures are a part of our world, from the crumps we buy our children to the ingredients in our potions, to the goblins who manage our money.

“It’s an atrocity, it would create tensions not just with other magical races but other magical communities. The proposed law amendments would strain our already tenuous relationships with multiple countries. Most notable our closest ally France, a nation with a large population of veela, who hold significant power in their government. Damaging such relationships would cause difficulties with our international trade and revenue.

“Finally, as you will all know if you read the prophet, research has been done to prove that the number of Dark creature attacks on wizards and muggles increased only after restrictions were put in place. In the times before such restrictions were put in place, and those we classify as creatures had more rights, there were less than ten attacks a year. These were usually performed by rogues and outliers, who were often dealt with by their own laws.

“I find the fact the madam Umbridge is once again trying to pass such laws to be disgraceful. Not only is she relentlessly persecuting people who in some cases were forced into becoming creatures and are victims of tragic circumstances, but she is damaging our international relationships and causing racial tension not just here to worldwide.”

With his speech finally finished, Sirius made sure to look around the room and make eye contact with as many people as possible, making sure he looked calm and in control. He saw that his words had caused people to think. He knew that many of the lords and ladies truly didn’t care about creature rights, however he hoped his mentioning of international and financial backlash would stir them into action.

~

At the end of the session Sirius watched with glee as the toad like woman scuttled out of the hall, he had won his vote with a clear majority. Dolores had been red faced throughout it all, and her darted looks towards fudge and Dumbledore showed she hadn't expected to be so thoroughly trounced.

“You're brilliant at times,” Lucius commented, watching Sirius with curious eyes.
Sirius grinned a shark like grin, “Only sometimes?”

“It’s during times like this that I wonder why you were not sorted into Slytherin.”

Sirius snorted, “I’m more of a lion than a snake, but recently I’ve found I can be rather cunning.”

Lucius hummed, “Yes, I can see that. Still, bringing finances into your argument was inspired. There’s nothing that gets most of these old fools motivated quite like the risk of them loosing galleons.”

Sirius grinned again, happy that he had won, especially when he caught sight of Dumbledore storming through the crowd towards the floo. The man hadn’t been able to hide his anger from Sirius who had been studying him like a hawk does its prey.

~

May 31st, 1992, Dumbledore’s office, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

~

Albus sighed as he pulled out a vial of headache potion. He seemed to be living off the things recently, yet they did little to help the pounding going on inside his skull. He needed to find a way to get rid of Sirius Black. The man was becoming a serious problem. Drinking the vile tasking potion, he noted he would have to get Severus to brew him some more, he was running low.

A loud chime from his floo system drew his attention back to the present.

“Albus... Albus!”

Hearing Molly’s screeching voice, Albus held back a groan as his head gave another flash of pain.

“Come in dear,” he said, waving his wand to open the connection.

“Albus you must have some idea how to get rid of that mongrel Black!” said the clearly upset redhead.

Intrigued as to what had piqued her anger Albus started to investigate, “What has happened my dear?”

“That man!” Molly fumed, “I was in Diagon getting some potions supplies when I overheard people talking about him. Saying how inspirational he is, how he’s a good role model for Potter! They think he’s a bloody saint, re-entering our world after being in Azkaban!”

Albus hummed, it was true, Blacks public image was astonishing to him. The man had regained his previous popularity and then some. Black was now seen as one of the most, if not the most, eligible bachelors in their world, his new-found fame was going to be a problem. Especially his standing in the Wizengamot, it was impeccable. He schmoozed with the other Lords and ladies and curried their favour like he had been doing it all his life, quickly gaining not just fans but more disastrously allies. Albus had hoped that the stigma from him being in Azkaban would hold out, but he had apparently hoped in vain.

Blacks recent success in getting the latest creature law amendments struck down was a blow Albus hadn’t expected. He didn’t want dark creatures infecting his world with their tainted magic.

“I see, this is troubling.” Blacks popularity and fame was making it harder for Albus to get rid of
him.

“And what’s worse, they were speaking about you as well!”

With that she had Albus’s full attention.

“And what exactly was it that you overheard?”

“Just whispers, nothing concrete, but I heard talk of how you’ve… grown old... They- they said that you’re- incompetent!” the red head wailed, having had to stop multiple times, almost as if she couldn’t bear to repeat the words she had overheard.

Albus barley held back his magic as it tried to escape and lash out in his anger. How dare they? He was Albus Dumbledore! He deserved their reverence not this, this betrayal.

“I see.” Albus said, barley keeping his tone in check.

Thinking Albus started to go through ideas quickly, dismissing some and pondering others. If he couldn’t kill the black Lord just yet, he needed to at least damage his reputation and standing… Suddenly an idea hit.

“Tell me Molly, do you know if Harry has all of his social work checks done yet?” he knew the woman was good at collecting gossip when out in Diagon and other alleys.

“No, he still has another check with the Children’s protection office, I believe the head Lady Joanne Mirwood is personally overseeing it.”

Dumbledore hummed, he didn’t have anything to hold over the former Hufflepuff, but he knew the woman would never allow Harry to stay with unsuitable guardians, so he didn’t worry about his lack of influence over her. All he had to do was make sure she found Black and Lupin to be unfitting, and it would be easy all he had to do was plant the seeds of discontent, and what better way than to destroy the bond Harry and Sirius had before planting evidence of dark arts and forbidden magic.

“Excellent! Tell me Molly, have you heard of a book called “Mortem Magicae,”

The redheaded with sucked in a harsh breath, “Yes, but Albus that book is banned. It’s one of the darkest books in history, just owning it could get you the dementors kiss.”

Forcing himself not roll his eyes Albus nodded, “Yes, it’s perfect for what I have planned. If I slip it into Harrys trunk before he goes home to that mutt he will never realise its there. then when its found during the inspection Sirius will not just be found incapable but most likely be put back into Azkaban.”

“But how will you make sure that it’s found?”

“I’m sure an anonymous owl could find its way into Lady Mirwood’s possession.”

~

Defence Against the Dark Arts Classroom, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

~

Kingsley was bored. His injury was healed to the extent it ever would be, meaning it was now just a scar on his abdomen that even scar removal potions wouldn’t be able to help as it had been caused
by a dark curse. Still he was bored. Teaching, while a new challenge wasn't his passion he had
discovered after his first day. The older years were slightly better, at least what he could teach them
could be interesting but even then, it was repetitive and Morgana, the younger years… they were
honestly frightening in how simplistic they appeared.

There were of course a few exceptions to this rule, they main one being Harrison Potter-Black. That
boy, to be frank, scared Kingsley slightly. His eyes seemed so old at times and so haunted. It wasn't
so much that the boy scared Kingsley, no, what caused his apprehension towards the young
Ravenclaw were his eyes. Whatever it was that caused that haunted look to appear every now and
again in those green eyes, caused Kingsley concern. Kingsley had seen the same look in his older
colleagues, people who had seem true atrocities and the thought of this young man having seen
something similar was daunting.

The first time he noticed it had been back when he had met Harrison for the first time in
Dumbledore's office during the 'love potion fiasco'. It had only been a brief flash, but still Kingsley
had caught it, he was a trained auror after all and it was his job to notice these small details. Later he
would observe it at random intervals, Harrison could be just sitting with his odd group of friends in
the great hall, or be in his lessons when it would flash by only to be quickly hidden by familiar a
blank mask that Kingsley recognised so well as impressive occlumency shields.

The boy was a mystery, in lessons he sat with both Gryffindor's and Slytherins, seemingly oblivious
to the divide that had been going on for decades. He apparently got on well with all of his year
mates, the only obvious diversion from this being his problems with the youngest two Weasleys.
Those two seemed obsessed with Potter-Black, they would follow him and his friends around like
shadows, seeming to both love and hate the Ravenclaw.

The other thing that Kingsley observed about Harrison was that while he would answer questions
perfectly, he’d only do so when called upon, he never offered his own by raising his hand in class.
His answers were also never direct quotes from textbooks either, but responses that showed he knew
what he was speaking about. And that was only his verbal responses, his practical results where
astounding, every spell he would perform with ease, never overpowering or underpowering them,
his control flawless.

“Sir?” the voice drew Kingsley from his musings. Making sure to not react outwardly Kingsley
smiled slightly, looking up to see the first-year class.

“Yes, Miss Lovegood?” Luna Lovegood was one of Harrison’s little gang, the youngest one…

“I was wondering, what's your opinion on the ministries secret army of heliopaths?”

… she was also the strangest little girl Kingsley had ever met. Blinking, Kingsley wondered briefly
where she got her odd ideas from, before shaking his head.

“I'm sorry, I do not know how to answer that. But if I ever find something out about it then you’ll be
the first to know miss Lovegood,” he promised the small girl, who beamed at his answer seemingly
happy with his reply. Seeing the class were all staring around in a mixture of either distain, confusion
and boredom Kingsley quickly cleared his throat…

“Right then class, who can tell me the most important tactic in a duel?”

~

Ron knew he should wait for his mother or Dumbledore to get back to him, but he couldn’t stand
this. Harry Potter was supposed to be his friend, not some snake loving pansy boy! He didn’t even
look like a hero! He had long girly hair like all the pureblood prats and he wore fancy robes, he didn’t even look like his father like Dumbledore said he would! No, Harry Potter was a girly, prissy, coward who didn’t deserve to be worshiped as their saviour! He would have been a much better Boy-Who-Lived and hero!

Hearing soft but fast footsteps approaching his hidden spot, Ron tensed fearing the twins had found him but was relieved when it was only Ginny who appeared. She looked flushed, cheeks matching her red hair.

“Did you find it?” Ron asked.

“Yes,” Ginny replied scathingly.

Looking around, the smaller red head reached into her satchel and pulled out a small leather book, so old the title was half worn away, ‘Broken Bonds and Beyond’.

“And you're sure this is the book Bill spoke about in his letter?” Ron asked. Their brother had just qualified to be a curse breaker and often spoke about his work in his letters home.

“Of course, unlike you Ronald I actually read the letters from Bill!”

Looking slightly flushed from being scolded by his younger sister, Ron reached for the book. He knew it would hold the spell he needed. He would break Harrys bond to Sirius and then he’d be able to sway the boy back to the light, where he belonged. He just had to get Harry away from the bad influences in his life like Black and Malfoy.

~

Walking back towards his rooms, Kingsley noticed one of the tapestries moving slightly and recalled from his own school days that there was a hidden space behind it. Singing, thinking that he would find a young couple taking advantage of the pseudo privacy, he flicked his wand and was mildly surprised when the two youngest Weasleys appeared.

Ronald was shocked when the tapestry suddenly moved and quickly went to hide the book. Seeing this Kingsley narrowed his eyes.

“What have you got there Mr Weasley?”

Keeping the book hidden, Ron tried to look nonchalant, “Nothing, sir,”

With a sigh Kingsley summoned the item, surprised when a book landed in his hand.

“Nothing? Are you sure you wouldn’t like to try again Mr Weasley?”

“You can’t do that!” an indignant Ginny said, shocked that a teacher would summon something from a student.

“I think you will find that I can indeed do this Miss Weasley, there is nothing against it in the school charter.”

“But-

“Now, why don’t you tell me why you tried to hide this book, Mr Weasley?” Kingsley said, before looking at the worn leather-bound book in his hands, ‘Broken Bonds and Beyond’.
He had not heard of the book but just from glancing at it he knew it would contain material not suitable for the two children in front of him.

Watching the two children share looks of panic, Kingsley let out a sigh, “Where did you get this book from?”

Sharing another look with his sister, Ron tried to think of a way out of their current problem.

“Erm… I found it?” he stated, more of a question than anything else.

“Did you really?” flicking it open Kingsley scanned the page, eyebrows raising at what he read, “and where did you find this?”

“Near the Ravenclaw common room,” Ginny said quickly.

Ron looked confused before suddenly nodding, “Oh yeah, I mean yes. That’s where I found it,”

Kingsley kept his face in check, not showing his disbelief.

“Well then I’m sure you wouldn’t mind if I took this then,”

“No!” Ron exclaimed.

“Oh?”

“Yeah, I mean I think I saw Potter reading it, so I’ll just give it back to him,”

“Potter? Harrison Potter?”

“Yeah him,” Ron grumbled.

Kingsley once again found himself fighting not to sigh, he didn’t know what these two had against the Potter heir, but they were consistent.

“Well then I’m sure he will be grateful to you when I tell him who found is book, after I give it him back,”

The pair shared a panicked look.

“But-”

“Now then, you two best-be off. It’s almost dinner,”

Looking both disgruntled and defeated the two scuttled off, leaving Kingsley with the book.

~

“You asked to see me professor?” Harry said entering Kingsley’s office. He hadn’t interacted with the man outside of his classes, so he wondered what the man wanted. He didn’t think that he had done anything to gain the man’s attention nor did he think that the auror was in Dumbledore pocket.

“Yes, thank you for coming Mr Potter,”

“Call me Harrison, or Harry sir,”

“Harrison then, I was wondering if you had seen this book before?” he asked pulling out the book he had confiscated.
Harry looked over the worn leather, seeing the title he felt his intrigue grow. He had heard of the book, but he hadn't read it.

“No sir,”

“I thought not,” Kingsley muttered.

“Do you mind me asking sir, what is this about?”

“It’s nothing to worry about Harrison, somebody thought that they had seen you with this book and that you may have misplaced it,”

“No sir it’s not mine,”

“I suspected it may not be, but still I had to check. It’s not a book that should be left out, it contains some powerful and in some cases questionable material. I think that I should hold onto it for now.”

Harry nodded, “is that all sir?” he asked.

“Yes, thank you Harrison, I'm sure you have better things to be doing than sitting with me,”

“Not at all sir, but I will leave you to the rest of your evening.”

After Harry left, Kingsley took the book out and looked at it again. He knew he should probably hand it into Dumbledore but for some reason he couldn’t bring himself to do it, a part of him didn’t quite trust the headmaster and his intentions. He had seen the Albus watching the young Potter Heir, had witnessed their interactions and each one of them struck him as odd. He didn’t know what Dumbledore wanted with Harrison, but he knew it wasn't good.

~

June 4th, 1992, Malfoy manor, Wiltshire

~

Lucius smirked as he twirled the glass of scotch in his hand. His life was nearly perfect, he had a loving wife, a charming son, a powerful reputation, more galleons than he could ever spend and too top it all off his Lord would be returning, and this time they would be triumphant.

“You know you look like you're about to start randomly cackling when you pull that face.”

He just needed to train Black in how to act like an adult.

“Really Sirius, are you incapable of behaving like an adult?”

Sirius just grinned and downed his glass of scotch, “only around you Lucy dear,”

Remus snorted at their interaction, to outsiders it would look like the two men didn’t get along, but he could see the sparks of amusement in their eyes and smell the fondness they held for each other.

Before Lucius could respond the floo sparked and out of the green flames Severus emerged.

Seeing the scowling potions master Sirius grinned, snapping his fingers he summoned an elf and got Severus a glass.

Taking the glass Severus took a large gulp before seating himself.
“Is there a reason for this get together, or did you simply summon me to cut into the precious few hours a week I get free of the snivelling dunderheads?”

Sirius snorted at the acidic tone before sending the potions master a wink, “why Sev, one would think that you don’t enjoy shaping the minds of our children,”

“I don’t.”

Before their banter could continue Lucius interrupted, “as much as I enjoy listening Severus bemoaning the tragedy that is a teacher’s life, I do want to know what is happening about our lords return,”

Sirius rolled his eyes slightly, “your Lord, not mine,”

“Sirius,” Lucius said.

Holding his hands up Sirius continued, “I'm just saying, he's your Lord not mine. I've not got one of your dandy little tattoos.”

“Black,” Severus warned.

“Sorry, sorry.” Sirius said seeing that both marked supporters looked ready to hex him, “as long as nothing goes wrong during the last ritual, then your Lord is going to return on the Summer Solstice.”

Lucius let out a breath he hadn't even realised he was holding. “What are your plans for after his return?”

“I'm not too sure, I will need to talk to Harry. Its for him that I'm doing this,” Sirius said, “I swore to Harry that I would help him, so that means I'll probably have to join the tattoo club,”

Severus scowled, “not necessarily. If the Dark Lords sanity is indeed returned then he would probably allow you to support him without taking his mark, you are after all his soulmates father.”

Sirius sent the man a grin, “look at you being all optimistic,”

“Shut it, mutt.”

Remus smirked, he could practically see the attraction between the two men. “Like Sirius I've sworn to help Harry, and will follow his lead.”

“Admirable sentiments.” Lucius said, “has Harrison shared any of his plans with you yet about the summer?”

“I know that he wants to perform the final ritual alone. He wants to see if it has worked properly and I know that he has a few issues to work out with Tom.”

“Yes, I do image that he has many things that he needs to discuss with my lord,”

Sirius snorted, “that’s an understatement if I ever heard one Lucy. I also know that Harry is planning on using his friendship with the goblins to help smooth over toms transition back in to society.”

Glaring at the name Lucius shot the man a look that promised retribution, “I know I have already offered but, if you at any point need my aid don’t hesitate to ask.”

Sirius nodded and sent the other lord a grateful smile, “I will, but honestly its Harry who’s planning everything. I'm just a glorified babysitter who’s not really needed.”
Lucius shook his head but didn’t comment, “Now in other news, Severus, how is Dumbledore faring?”

Severus allowed his usual sneer to turn vicious, “it would seem the old fool is suffering for continuous migraines. Not even my potions can help relieve him from the pain,”

Sirius barked out a laugh, drowning out Remus's quiet chuckles.

“Good, hopefully that will keep the old goat off my back.”

“Oh?”

“He wants Harry back under his control, not that he's ever been under his control. He thinks the only way to do this is to have me offed,” Sirius said, shocking the two men

“How do you know this?” Lucius asked, surprised at how casually Sirius spoke about the old man’s plots.

“Phineas Nigellus black.” Sirius said proudly.

Looks of mutual understanding bloomed on the two Slytherins faces, “he spies on Dumbledore for you?” Severus asked.

“Yup,” Sirius said, popping the p. “It’s quite amusing how much he loathes the old man. I think it’s because he's so fond of Harry, it’s hilarious how he’s managed to charm everybody, even my mother’s portrait like him.”

“Are you not concerned for your safety?” Severus asked, he couldn’t fathom Blacks attitude. If Dumbledore was actively trying to see him dead, he would not be so blasé.

“His current plan is not so imminent or dangerous.” Remus explained, trying to put their worries to rest.

“What does this plan entail?”

“He wants to plant a copy of “Mortem Magicae,” in Harrys trunk.”

Both Severus and Lucius gaped, being who they were they both knew of the book, but they couldn’t believe that Dumbledore was able to get a copy of it. It was not only extremely ancient but beyond dark and dangerous.

“He hopes that Harry won’t notice it, and it will be found by Lady Mirwood during her inspection. As you know owning that book is an instant trip to Azkaban and I have no doubts that if I were to find myself back mon the island I would get the kiss. I don’t doubt he will send an anonymous note to Joanne to insure she knows what to look out for.”

“How does he even have that book?” Lucius finally asked, he had tried for years, discreetly of course, to get a copy but even he with al of his contacts couldn’t get one of the rare remaining few.

Severus sneered in disgust, “he hordes rare books, objects and artefacts, light or dark it doesn't matter. He thinks himself above the laws. Him owning a copy of a dark and forbidden book is fine and him knowing such curses is acceptable as in his mind he could never be dark. He is the pivotal player to the light and he can do no wrong.”

Sirius snorted, it was such an idiotic idea, yet he knew that what Severus said was most likely true.
“Harry is actually excited for them to plant the book.” Sirius said with fond exasperation, “he was thrilled when I wrote and told him of Dumbledore's plans. He said that such a rare book would be a great addition to the library.”

Severus smirked at that, “it shouldn’t surprise me. The boy is in Ravenclaw after all, even if I think he's secretly a snake.”

Remus grinned, “how much more cunning can he get, to be a snake but still able to persuade the hat to put him in another house?” he said, proud of his cub.

“Indeed,”

June 21st, 1992, The Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Harry could scarcely contain his excitement as he sat down with Luna for the end of year feast. In just two days’ time he would be reunited with his soul mate.

“…and so, another year has come to pass, and I find myself once again having to say farewell to our seventh years,” Dumbledore said, standing up to give his typical end of year speech.

Harry drowned out Dumbledore’s false words with his own day dreams, focusing on what he wanted to say to Tom. He only jolted back into the present when his house table exploded into cheers, looking around he saw that the banners now held the blue eagle emblem of Ravenclaw. Apparently, they had won the house cup this year, something that had never happened in Harry’s past life.

“I think my lord, that the old goat is hoping to use sugar to trap his prey,” Luna said, she was currently sitting next to Harry and enjoying dipping her celery sticks into a giant bowl of chocolate pudding the house elves had thoughtfully provided.

Harry nodded his head slightly to show he had heard, “I do believe you're once again correct my dear,”

Luna grinned and went back to munching her lunch as Harry looked up and caught twinkling blue eyes with his. He felt a slight pressure against his occlumency walls for a moment before it vanished and slowly drew his eyes away from the old goat. Making sure to subtly scan his food and drinks Harry ate his food and shared his is housemates joy.

“Mr Potter, I was hoping for a quick word with you before you depart for the summer,”

Hearing the voice of the man he had been waiting for, Harry turned and locked eyes with the gaudily dressed Albus Dumbledore.

“Of course, headmaster,” he said wiping his mouth before standing and following the old man out of the great hall.

Entering his office, Albus soon turned to face the boy he would soon have under his control. He was sure that with Black gone he would be able to gain custody of Harry once again, and once that was done he would be able to persuade the boy to remove his heir rings and transfer his proxy votes back to him. yes, he his plans would soon be back on track.
“You wished to speak to me headmaster?”

“Yes my boy,” Albus said eyes twinkling as he thought he had won. “I know that this past year we have had our fair share of disagreements, however I wish to put them all behind us with the end of the year. I want the new school year to begin with a clean slate for our relationship Harry, so that we might move forward and put all of this unpleasantness behind us.”

Harry fought not to roll his eyes and instead ducked his head in feigned modesty, “I think that would be great headmaster.”

“Excellent, now why don’t you pop back off to your friends. The train will be leaving soon, and you wouldn’t want to forget anything,” he said, he had kept the boy long enough for the book to be planted.

Standing, Harry wished the headmaster goodbye before re-joining Luna who was waiting for him just down the corridor.

“So, My Lord, what are you planning on doing with the old goat’s present?”

“Well, it would be rude not to appreciate it,” Harry replied smirking.

He was looking forward to reading the book, it contained ancient knowledge lost to most of the world. He already knew how he would hide it just in case anybody did go searching for the book, he had found wards that would be untraceable and make it impossible for anybody to discover what was hidden behind them.

“Excuse me Harrison, I was wondering if I might have a word with you?” a rich baritone voice said drawing the pair’s attention.

“Certainly professor Shacklebot,”

“its auror Shacklebot now. I’m finally back on the ministry’s payroll now that my injury has healed.”

Harry smiled, “you were a great teacher, auror Shacklebot.” It was true, the man had made the lessons interesting and he had taught without bias.

Kingsley smiled slightly and inclined his head in thanks, “high praise indeed from the starter of the infamous boycott,”

Harry smirked, “I can neither confirm nor deny such accusations. I’m sure you’re aware auror,” he joked.

Kingsley smiled before he remembered why he wanted to talk to the young man in front of him, “I wished to speak to you to pass along my concerns,” he said

“Concerns?”

“Yes. I do not know what is going on between you and the headmaster, but I can tell something is and I just wanted you to know that if you ever need me I am willing to aid you to the best of my ability.”

Harry was shocked, he hadn't really interacted with Kingsley, only in class and that incident with the book, but he had noticed the dark-skinned man watching him occasionally.

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said.
“I know you probably won’t, but I wanted to offer you my aid anyway.”

“Harry,” Luna’s soft voice broke the serious atmosphere, “we need to get going Harry, if were to make it to the carriages on time,”

“Don’t let me keep you Mr Potter,” Kingsley said, sending them both nods before moving on down the corridor.

“Now that was interesting,” Harry muttered as he took Luna’s arm and started walking towards the castle doors.

Pushing the possible reasons for Kinsley’s pledge out of his mind Harry focused on what was to come. He had a soul mate to make whole.
Call me Marvolo

Chapter Summary

Sorry for the slow update, its been a tough few weeks. I proms this story wil be finished its just going to take longer than i initially planned. Thanks for sticking with me & to everybody who reviews you're all gems! I do read them all I just very rarely reply. Anyway, at long last Tom is back! ~Annie

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Previously

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~

June 21st, 1992, The Hogwarts Express
Harry allowed his magic to flow and gently surround his friends as they sat in their compartment on the train. He had wanted to give them this chance to relax as he didn’t know what would happen once Tom was back. He hoped that Tom wouldn’t re-start the war in the same way he had previously. Harry didn’t want senseless violence, nor for his friends to be forced to grow up to quickly like he had had to previously.

Eventually however the calm Harrys magic had created faded and Harry was drawn into their conversations, allowing for his magic to return to him.

“So Harrison, do you have any plans for the summer?” Pansy asked.

“I do,” Harry said, “I will be bringing Tom back.”

Hearing this the compartment fell silent as everybody thought about what that would mean. They had all spent time processing everything Harry had told them about ‘Tom’ but they still couldn’t quite believe it.

“Are you sure that you want to do this Harry?” Neville asked hesitantly after a few moments had passed.

He had come to terms with the thought of the Dark Lord returning but he still had some reservations. He didn’t want another war, and a small part of him felt like he was betraying his parents. However, he trusted Harry, his friend, his first true friend, who had stood by him, supported him and helped him. If Harry said that this time would be different and lead to a better future, then he would stand with him.

Harry sent his friend a sad smile, “yes, I'm sure. I know the risks and I'm prepared for them, but Tom will return.”

Hearing Harrys ominous words, the group once again fell into silence, them each considering what the Dark Lords return would mean to them personally.

“Does my father know of your plans?” Draco asked.

Harry smiled, “he does, he is good ally to have.”

Draco nodded his head slowly, before a look of realisation took over his face.

“That’s why he talks to you like an adult and acts like he does around you!” the blonde said suddenly, having worked out why his father treated Harry with the respect he did.

Harry nodded, he hoped this would help Draco with his jealousy. The boy was growing up and Harry was shocked at how mature he was being in comparison to his old self, but still Harry could sometimes see the hurt and envy Draco tried to hide.

“You’ve been planning this for a while, haven’t you?” Blaise observed.

Harry nodded, “I have.”

“I still don’t understand how you've managed all of this Harry,” Pansy said.

Harry just smirked, “I know.”

The dark-haired girl let out a huff of frustration, “you're not going to tell us, are you?”
Harry let his smirk fall, he did trust is friends, but he couldn’t have the information getting out. The more people who knew the more likely it was that the information would be discovered. “I can’t,” he said, “just trust that I did most of it with help,”

The twins sensing Harry was uncomfortable quickly spoke up, breaking the slight tension that had appeared in their compartment.

“Such a mysterious Lord-”

“A powerful, mysterious Lord-”

“A charming, powerful, mysterious Lord,”

Harry snorted at his, “yes I’m certainly charming,” he said dryly.

“You are according to ‘Witch Weekly’ polls- You’re Europe’s 2nd most eligible bachelor under 17,” Blaise said without missing a beat. The fact he knew this not shocking anybody as the boy truly did know the gossip about everybody in Hogwarts.

“Only 2nd?” George mock gasped, “outrageous!”

“Scandalous!”

With that the tension was broke as everybody started to laugh, even Neville, whom Harry knew was struggling the most with the news Tom would soon be returning.

Harry rolled his eyes, “I should get new friends,” he grumbled good naturedly.

Luna giggled at this, “but my Lord, we will be such good minions.”

Ignoring Luna and her jabs, Harry once again allowed his mind to wander to the things he still needed to get into place. He had a few things he needed to set up before Tom retuned in two days’ time, most importantly was his meeting with Ragnok at Gringotts.

~

May 14th, 1992, The Owlery, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Ragnok,

It has been too long since I last saw you my friend, but I trust that this letter finds you in good health and that your mind is still as sharp as your blade.

As you know from my previous letters, the ritual for Tom’s return is due to take place on the summers solstice, so if magic wills It, I shall soon be reunited with him. It is this that I am writing to you about, I know I asked months ago but I wished to check on the progress of setting Toms new identity up, and inquire if you needed my help.

I shall never forget the aid you have given me. The support from you and your nation has truly been a blessing.
May magic grant you power over your enemies,

Harrison James Potter-Black

~

Harry had sent the letter so that he could finalise the plans for Tom’s return as he knew that it would be useful for Gringotts to have the base work down for Tom’s ‘legal’ return before he was resurrected. Harry had thought long and hard about the best way to go about Tom’s re-entry into society and had decided to falsify a will to ensure Tom regained his former vaults, thinking that would be the easiest option.

The harder part was coming up with Tom’s new identity. He knew Tom hated his name, but Harry didn’t, so Harry was struggling with what to call Tom’s new persona. Not only that, Harry was also struggling as he wasn’t sure how old Tom would be after the ritual, would he look like his true age which would be around 66, or would he be younger? The soul shards appeared to be young and would Harry’s adolescent blood have an effect on the ritual? These thoughts kept circling in his head and made creating an identity difficult.

~

Harrison,

I thank you for your words my friend, indeed it has been too long.

We at Gringotts have created the documents needed for you and I believe that you should come and see them once you have returned for the summer. I do believe you will be happy with the results.

I am glad that your plans have come to fruition and that you will soon be whole, perhaps then Maeve will stop fussing about you. How you managed to charm her I don’t know, he despises everybody, even me.

I anticipate that I shall see you soon my friend, so that we may finalize any details for your mates return and talk of your plans for the future.

May your enemies cower before you,

Ragnok

~

June 21st, 1992, The Hogwarts Express

Seeing the scenery start to change, Harry realised that they would soon be pulling into Kings Cross station. Standing, he gently levitated his trunk down from the overhead carriers, causing his friends to look up at him.

“What are you doing Harry? We’ve still got some time left,”

“I know Nev, there’s just something in my trunk that I meant to lend to Luna for a few weeks.”

Opening his trunk, he allowed his magic to flow and found the book Dumbledore had placed amongst his possessions, he also found a few hidden compulsions placed on his clothing. He had deliberately not warded his trunk so that Dumbledore’s minions would be able to plant the book, and found the fact that the man couldn’t resist planting compulsions as well to be ridiculous. If his trunk
has been warded be doubted that even Tom would be able to break into it.

Pulling out the book Harry scanned it with reverence, not quite believing he was holding one of the rarest Tomes in the world. He couldn’t believe Dumbledore would risk using it in one of his hairbrained schemes, not only was it priceless but the knowledge it contained was beyond comparison. The fact the man had given it to Harry was incomprehensible.

Shaking his head at the headmaster’s stupidity, Harry quickly went about warding the book to keep it not only hidden but safe from theft and damage. His ward would also make impossible for the book to show up on scans, meaning it wouldn’t be found by anybody but Harry and those he keyed into the ward. Finally, he placed an untraceable glamor over the cover, before handing it to Luna who looked at the book with admiration.

“I will keep this safe My Lord,” she vowed, before gently placing the book into her carry bag.

“I know little moon,” Harry replied. He trusted Luna, she knew the importance of the book.

Having felt Harry's magic when he was warding the book the others all lent closer to catch a glimpse of what he was doing.

“What book is that?” Draco asked, seeing the glamoured cover but not seeing what it had been previously.

“Mortem Magicae,” Harry replied.

“What?!” the Slytherins all shouted out at the same time, confusing Neville and the twins as they hadn't heard of the book.

“How do you even have a copy of that book?” Blaise asked.

Harry smirked, “a gift from the headmaster.”

“A gift?”

“He planted it on me, hoping that it would be discovered and therefor get Sirius into trouble. He shall be so disappointed when it’s not found, and he realises he's lost his only copy.”

“What's so bad about the book?” Neville asked.

“There are less than 10 copies of this book left in the world. It contains rituals and spells that predate even the founders.”

“That doesn't sound so bad.”

“What Harry didn’t say was that this book is banned in not only Britain but most of Europe and America. The spells and rituals are all dark. They're mainly necromantic and blood based,” Pansy said factually.

“Oh. Why do you want it then Harry?”

“I am a dark wizard, but even if I wasn’t the knowledge this book contains should still be acknowledged and appreciated. I may not be a necromancer, but I have no issue with the art and I find blood magic to be very useful. Just because they're classified as dark doesn't mean they're evil, after all my mother did use a blood ritual to save my life when Tom attacked, sacrificing her own life and magic for me.”
“So, they're not all evil?”

“Not at all,” Harry replied, “what matters is your intention. You can harm someone just as easily with a light spell as you can with a dark spell. Britain’s classification of magic is so biased it’s ridiculous.”

Neville nodded his head, his face showing he was considering Harry’s words and what they meant for him. The twins similarly had looks of wonder on their faces, but Harry didn’t have great concerns about then as he knew they were naturally magically neutral and tended more towards dark when pushed.

~

Arriving at Kings Cross, Harry felt his friends lingering near him, reluctant to go off towards their respective adults. He wondered if it was his magic that was drawing them to him, he could feel it pulsing restlessly behind his shields or if they knew that no matter happened, life wouldn’t be the same again.

“Have good summers,” he said to them, his voice carrying clearly even over the ruckus surrounding coming from the other students them.

Sharing looks between them, Harry’s friends all seemed reluctant to move.

Seeing this Harry smiled, “I swear to you I will keep in touch and keep you all informed.”

“I’m so happy for you my lord,” Luna said, bouncing over to Harry and throwing her arms around him before leaning in and whispering, “it’s only the beginning, but I trust that you will end up winning this game,”

Unsure of what she meant at first, Harry soon noticed the direction of her gaze and found that he was being watched closely by Molly Weasley. Her brown eyes narrowed as she took in his and Luna farewell.

“I never did like losing much,” Harry said, before walking to where Sirius and Remus stood.

~

Grimmauld Place, London

~

“So how was your final term pup?” Sirius asked as they entered the house.

Harry however took a moment before answering as he handed his trunk over to Kreacher. The house elf practically shaking I his joy now that his true master was here, he disliked serving the mutt and his wolf but would continue to do so if it made his little master happy.

With his trunk gone Harry sat down with a sign, “it was fine. Dumbledore once again tried his hand and failed, and I received an interesting offer of alliance, or at least aid.”

Hearing this both men felt their interest piqued, “alliance?” Remus asked, waving his wand to get a pot of tea started.

“kingsley Shacklebot,”

“Kings?” Sirius repeated.
“You knew he was teaching, correct?”

“Yes, but I never thought he would offer you something so blatant,” Sirius said, “I knew him back when I was still an auror, when he was just starting out. I can’t say I know him well but I know he’s not a man who would commit to an alliance with the dark.”

Harry allowed an eyebrow to raise, “since when am I the poster child for the dark side? Offering me aid doesn’t make him dark.”

Snorting, Sirius rose an eyebrow to match his sons, seeing this Harry continued…

“He is an intelligent man, I think it’s because he saw how far Dumbledore had fallen that he came to me, he doesn’t like or know how far the man is willing to go to get what he wants. I doubt Kingsley would ever be a follower of the dark but I could see him as an ally. He has strong beliefs and morals, not to mention he is an auror of considerable skill. Once he sees that the dark is different this time I doubt he would object to much,”

“Look at you, gaining followers and alliances,” Sirius joked but Harry could see the hint of panic in his eyes.

“I am not Tom, and it will be different this time,”

“That’s good, did you know it’s hard to get blood out of the carpets?” Sirius joked before his face suddenly turned serious, “talking about your soul mate, are you sure you’re ready for this Harry?” Sirius’ sudden switch shocked Harry but he felt a smile blossom over his face at the thought of being with Tom soon. He had felt restless in recent weeks; his magic was harder to contain and his control over it was quick to slip if he wasn’t careful.

“I am. I need to go and see Ragnok soon to set about the final touches for Toms legal return but I am ready.”

Remus nodded and sent Sirius a look that made the animagus sigh silently in defeat. The wolf inside Remus could feel the peace coming off Harry, for months he had sensed how Harry was becoming increasing restless, yet now had felt the youth feel truly at ease and knew it was because Harry and Tom would soon be reunited.

~


~

Harry walked confidently through the bank, ignoring the eyes which naturally fell on him. His magic was fluctuating beneath his skin wildly, drawing the attention of those sensitive enough to feel it and making him appear larger than he was.

Quickly entering the back halls, Harry followed the familiar path to Ragnoks office, greeting the goblins he passed with respectful nods. He had asked Lucius to meet him here, and wasn’t surprised when he entered the office to find the blonde lord already sitting.

“Harrison,” Ragnok greeted, smiling with too many teeth and making Lucius flinch internally. Seeing this Harry held back a grin, the sight of a goblin smiling was truly terrifying.

“Ragnok my friend, it has been too long,” Harry said, crossing his arm across his chest with a fistled hand and bowing slightly.
“Lucius, thank you for coming,” Harry said, taking a seat next to the blonde.

“I would do anything for my lord,”

“Yes, what I need is your expertise in wizarding laws,”

The blonde nodded and watched as the goblins laid out what they had prepared for Harrison. What they could do fascinated Lucius, the documentation was flawless. Without hesitating he jumped in and together they worked out any kinks he found with the goblin forgers, until the end results were completed.

“What set shall you be using?” each identify created was faultless but they varied in ages and status.

Harry hummed as he looked through the different identities. “All of them potentially, or just one.”

“My lord?” Lucius questioned, not realising his use of title.

“I can’t be sure how Tom will return or what his physical body will be like. Each one of these identities could potentially be used.”

“You don’t know?”

“The ritual was vague and the previous participant had not delved as deeply as Your Lord, I can’t know for sure if that will affect the result.”

Lucius allowed himself a moment to think on that, the youngest of the identities was just 18. He couldn’t imagine his lord as every being so young, then again, he could hardly picture him as human and not the snake-faced tyrant he had served in youth. He hoped that what Harrison had promised was true, and that when is lord returned the dark would finally be lead out from the shadows.

“You can be there tonight if you would like,” Harrison said, drawing Lucius from his thoughts.

Blinking at the offer Lucius nodded, he could hardly believe the honour he was being bestowed.

“Yes, of course. Thank you, Harrison.”

“I would like it if you would bring Severus as well. I don’t know how Tom will be when he returns and Severus I know has at least some medical training.”

“Of course. I know he will be pleased to help with our lords return.”

Harry hummed at that, he knew that Severus like Sirius had some doubts but he hoped that seeing Tom return would be enough to persuade him that it would be different this time. That it wasn’t the return of the cruel master he once knew but the person Tom could have and should have been.

~

Grimmauld Place

~

Returning home Harry could practically taste the magic in the air, the final stage of the ritual was almost ready now all he needed to do was wait for the correct moon position to come about before he could complete it.

“You okay there, pup?” Sirius asked as Harry restlessly paced back and forth, seemingly not noticing
his movement.

Blinking, Harry sent a smile at his father, “yes, I’m just nervous.”

Sirius nodded and for once looked solemn instead of mischievous. “You know its okay to be nervous, right? And even if I’m not 100% sure about him I’m with you no matter what, I will always be here for you.”

Harry sent him a grateful smile.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Sirius asked.

“I’m afraid that nothing will change. That even sane, Tom will return and be just as bad if not worse than my memories. I fear what Dumbledore will do next, what will happen to those I love, I can’t bear to lose anybody again Sirius, I don’t think I could handle it. If this doesn’t work out how it’s supposed to I won’t survive, I can feel my magic getting restless Siri and at times it’s almost too much to keep it contained, I’m so tired of it all…” Harry said, seeming to deflate as he spoke, almost as though admitting it out load made it worse.

Sirius held back his gasp at how harry seemed to deteriorate in front of him, seeing the dark circles under Harys emerald eyes suddenly stand out in sharp contrast to pale white skin.

“You’ve been wearing a glamour?” he asked, voice conveying both shock and hurt.

Harry shrugged half-heartedly, “not really, my magic has been fighting the effects of being without Tom for so long and trying to keep me going. I think it may have been hiding some of the physical side effects but I haven’t consciously been putting a glamour on.”

“Well, you suddenly look like death kid.”

Harry smirked but it had not real fire in it, “I know that I don’t look like death.”

Sirius rolled his eyes, “funny,” he deadpanned.

“I try.”

~

Severus and Lucius arrived together and were not surprised when they entered the receiving room and saw that Remus stood there waiting for them.

“Good evening gentlemen,” the wolf said softly.

Severus nodded curtly, he had let go of his anger towards Remus but still held a slight bitterness towards him that no matter what he just couldn’t seem to shake. Severus put it down to the incident with Remus at Hogwarts been the cause of his fear of werewolves, a fear he still to this day had.

“Is everything prepared?” Lucius asked after saying his own greeting.

“Yes, Harrison has seen to everything being ready.”

“How is he?” Severus asked, he had honestly come to care about the boy since getting to know him and seeing that he was nothing like his father had been.

“He’s nervous. He hasn’t said anything to me but I think he and Sirius talked about it.”
“It’s only natural. His life is about to change, all of our lives are about to change,” Severus pointed out.

“I’m sure he has prepared for this,” Lucius said

“I have,” came a soft voice drawing their attention to the two who had entered.

Harry stood next to Sirius in soft grey trousers and open white robe, his hair was free and his feet bare.

“I’ve had Kreacher prepare rooms for Tom to recover in, however I think that when he is strong enough he would be best staying with you Lucius,” Harry said.

Lucius nodded his head, “of course, I would be honoured to help my lord,”

“How?” Severus asked.

“Dumbledore is in the process of trying to get the house searched for dark artefacts. I don’t think it would be wise to have your lord here for that, especially when Dumbledore’s search turns up empty. The old goat will be very displeased.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, he’s misplaced his copy of *Mortem Magicae*, a first edition copy.”

Both Slytherins felt their eyebrows rise, expressing both their shock and appreciation at how Harry had turned Dumbledore’s manipulations round and prospered from it.

“You have a copy of that book?” Lucius asked.

“I do.”

Seeing the calculated look in the blonde’s eyes, Harry didn’t try to hide his smirk, he had heard of how hard the blonde lord had tried to get his hands on the rare book.

“It is hidden well?” Severus asked, always practical.

“Of course. I know how bad it would be if it was discovered that I had a copy of that book, not that they would ever believe it was mine, no Sirius would be blamed which I know was Dumbledore’s goal all along. He can’t have his precious weapon for the light being blamed for having a dark arts book.”

Sirius snorted, “you can tell the old coots getting desperate. It was a poorly thought out plan on Dumbledore’s part. We have an entire library of books that are banned or illegal however the aurors wold never be able to penetrate the wards surround them to actually discover them.”

Harry nodded his head, “still to be safe an associate has it for now. When Tom is more recovered I’ll probably give it to him.”

~

After spending a few more moments talking with the two death eaters Harry felt Kreacher’s magic building before the house elf popped into the room.

“Master Harrison, it is time for you to enter the ritual chamber now,”
Harry stood and re-centred his magic that had lashed out at the reminder of how close he was to having Tom with him.

Feeling Harry's magic the others in the room shuddered. It was so alluringly powerful and pure yet it held an iciness that sent shivers down their spines and reminded them that beneath the angelic appearance Harry sported there was a wizard who was not to be trifled with.

“I wish to be alone for the ritual however once it is completed I will sent a Patronus for you, Severus I trust you have brought any potions you think will be necessary?”

“I have,”

“Are you sure Harry?” Sirius said remembering Harry's concerns and how he looked when his magic stopped hiding his fragility.

“Yes. I don’t know how Tom will be when he returns and I don’t want to overwhelm him,”

Lucius and Severus sent each other looks of mild disbelief, they couldn’t picture their lord being overwhelmed.

~

Harry slowly stopped funnelling his magic into the glamour he had placed on the locket around his neck, the locket he hadn’t removed since he had gained it from Kreacher. It was Harry's belief that the presence of Tom's horcrux so close to him was one of the things that had kept him going for so long. Removing it Harry felt a tug at his magic and a wave of exhaustion hit him, it wasn’t the horcrux draining him but his own magic fighting to stay near to his soul mate.

Taking a breath to try to stop the shakes suddenly racking his body Harry placed the final horcrux into the rune circle and waited, feeling the magic in the air. With a wave of his hand he light the candles precisely when he felt the energy levels spiking and knew that the time had come.

“Magicae matrem suam, det mihi ad sanandum potentiam et victus est quod perdidi,” he chanted, in perfect replica of the words he had spoken when he started the ritual over yule.

“Vitam, mortem, irae et amor, sana qui pereunt.”

Finally, Harry pulled out the vial of his blood that he had used as sacrifice and opened the vial. Although the blood level was lower than it had been, not surprising since Sirius had used it in the previous rituals, Harry could still feel the power coming from it, wild blood magic.

Allowing his magic free Harry directed the vial over the horcrux and tipped it so seven drops hit the locket.

“Sanguinem libenter dedi, sana et revivesco.”

The effect was instantaneous, Harry felt his magic strike out and rush out from him before it returned tenfold. Unable to do anything against the vast pressure Harry allowed his eyes to close and hoped he wasn’t screaming as he felt like his body was being ripped apart and put back together simultaneously. Harry could see nothing and hear nothing against the blood pounding in his head.

Finally, after what could have been hours or simply seconds he sat up, conscious of how his body ached however his magic, for the first time in months didn’t fight against his occlumency shields.

“Well that sucked.” He muttered to himself.
“Apologies master, I didn’t think to warn you of the discomfort,”

Jumping slightly at the monotone voice Harry turned his head wincing at the pain the motion brought, “Death,” Harry greeted.

“Master,” the timeless being said, bowing in way Harry felt was mocking but didn’t know why.

“Why are you here, I didn’t summon you did I?” he didn’t know, he could have very well called out for death in the haze of pain the ritual brought.

“Io master, but wouldn’t miss this, the magic you are playing with is in my domain. Your soul mates return is with my blessing.”

Harry hummed and tried to find the will to stand up, however a pained groan soon filed the air and with-it Harry’s pain disappeared. Standing and stumbling slightly, Harry approached the form huddled in the centre of the rune circle.

“Tom?” Harry asked, his voice hesitant yet it caused the hunched body to wince.

Seeing the expanse of skin on display Harry noted abstractly that Tom was naked and blushed when he realised he was staring. With a wave he summoned a robe he had placed in the room earlier in preparation.

“Tom can you hear me?” he asked again.

“Where am I?” a scratchy voice asked.

“Grimmauld place-” Harry said

“The ancestral home of the ancient and noble house of Black,”

“Sure,” Harry said, surprised at tom’s recall of that random fact.

“My head,” Tom said, sitting up and piercing Harry with a red eyed glare that was less hostile and more pained and confused. “I have memories but they’re mumbled, what has happened? Why am here? Who are you?”

Harry winced at the tone and with caution he sat down, fighting the wince as he felt his strained muscles protest.

Looking at Tom Harry saw he looked to be in his early 20’s which wasn’t surprising since the horcruxes where all young, the youngest being 16 and the oldest 30. This was probably the middle age of them all. He had dark brown hair that was longer on top and was falling slightly into one eye, eyes that where, Harry noted ruby red. Although it was hard to be accurate Harry could see that Tom was tall and from the looks he had given fit, lean muscles covered his pale body.

Realising he had been silent for more than a few moments as he scrutinised the man in front of him unashamedly Harry withheld a wince, “My name is Harrison.”

“Harrison, Harri- Harry,” a light seemed to go off in Tom’s eyes and he stared off into the distance with dazed eyes or a few moments.

“I’m going to send a patronus for some aid, some of your followers are here. Severus Snape is with them, he has potions that can help you.” Harry said, drawing Tom out of his daze.

“You’re my soul mate.” Tom declared sounding exactly like the soul shard Harry had interacted
with. Possessive.

“You can remember? What can you can remember?”

“Yes and no… my mind, my memories they’re jumbled. I need to meditate and sort them, nothing makes sense. My plans, my goals, ambitions, everything is so skewered…”

Harry nodded, “do you remember Severus? he and Lucius are two of your most loyal followers,”

Tom seemed strained as he tried to make sense of the mess that was his mind, “yes,” he eventually said.

“How do you want me to summon them?”

Tom seemed to realise his position and his apparent weakness. With a sneer he attempted to stand and Harry watched as he struggled before managing, albeit on shaky legs.

Pulling the robe more securely around himself, Tom looked around the room with interest, however he knew he was moments away from collapsing and he refused to do so in front of somebody else. Seeing a sturdy looking chair, he walked towards it with long strides hoping that his quivering legs would make it across the distance.

Harry watched this and was Harry the chair he had summoned send to appease Tom.

“How?” he asked hesitantly as the man collapsed into it.

“Why do you call me by that filthy muggle name?”

Harry held back the harsh wince that threatened to overtake him. True he didn’t like muggles but he dint hate them like tom did, “it’s your name, I refuse to call you my lord like one of your followers.”

Seeing the fire in the young green eyes Marvolo nodded, he could see his mate was not a follower, no he was a lord in his own right, albeit one in the making. However, he didn’t want to be known by that filthy muggles name, he was better than that man would ever be. He was the dark lord.

“No, you would never bow and scrape to anybody, my Harrison.” He said silkily “however I would rather you call me Marvolo.”

“Marvolo then.” Harry agreed, the whole conversation was surreal to him. He didn’t know what to expect from Toms return but I hadn’t been this, however he saw the possessiveness in tom’s eyes, fighting with the softness that would appear and the confusion and knew he couldn’t blame To-No-Marvolo for it.

Waving his hand Harry softly said the incantation for the patronus charm, “expecto patronum.”

However, it wasn’t his usual stag that appeared but a sleek panther that prowled around the room, coming close to Tom and giving him a rumbling purr before returning to Harry and awaiting his wished. Seeing the cat made hurry’s heart give a slight twinge, he would miss prongs but it didn’t surprise him that his patronus had changed, he had changed so much from being the golden boy of Gryffindor.

“Please go to Sirius and tell him and the others that they may come in now, Severus please bring extra strength pain relieving potions.” He said to the cat before watching it prowl off.

Tom watched his mate in fascination and only now realised how young the boy was, he was still a
child. The thought made Tom wonder briefly about his own appearance before his attention was
snapped back to Harrison. He had just cast the Patronus charm, not he had just cast a *wandless*
Patronus, a *wandless corporal* Patronus, ad he had done so easily it was like the boy was
breathing… just who was his little mate?

*The one with the power…*

*Born as the seventh*

“*Please not Harry!***”

Shaking his head from the stray thought that he didn’t yet understand he noted the boy’s appearance.
He was young yes, but not as alarmingly so as Tom had first thought, his slim and petit build had
first made Tom think the boy was still a child but he would guess Harrison was at least in in second
or third year of Hogwarts. He had pale gold skin, and black hair that fell into waves around his
shoulders, but what was most striking where the piercing green eyes that were now bring into him.
He could see faint scars on the bys body, which did nothing to ditract from the beauty of him but
only added to the allure.

“You can cast without a wand?” he said finally, breaking away from his assessment, he could see the
boy was beautiful or at least he would be but at his current age Tom felt no romantic notions towards
him.

“Yes,” Harry said, he had been struggling not to squirm as Marvolo had divested him with his eyes.

“Just who are you, my Harrison?”

“He’s my master,” Death said causing Marvolo to turn his head sharply and on reflex reach for a
wand that wasn’t there, Harry however jumped before rolling his eyes.

“Death,” he said chiding himself slightly for forgetting about the being’s presence. How he had done
so he didn’t know as the aura Death gave off was stifling.

“who are you?” Marvolo hissed, being taken by surprise as he didn’t think there was anybody else in
the room.

“I am what you fear most, Tom Marvolo Riddle. I am the last thing people see, the silent shadow-”

Harry rolled his eyes at this and cut off Deaths poetic speech, “this is Death, the embodiment,
guardian, being, whatever you want to believe.”

Marvolo had gone shock still and white as he stared at Death in horror before his panicked gaze
found Harry.

“I think you have some explaining to do my little mate.” He said, although Harry thought it sounded
more like a threat when those red eyes latched onto his.

Chapter End Notes

Not beta’d so there may be mistakes, I'll get around to fixing them at some point...
Hope you enjoy!
~Annie
Hey, so like it's been a while...
Sorry guys, I've not abandoned this, but it's hard to find the time to write and update, it
will be finished though so don't worry, and I plan to do faster updates!
~
Annie

Previously

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found Harry.

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him, Harry thought it sounded more like a threat.

~

Making sure to keep the glare he wanted to send hidden, as master or not you didn’t want to piss off
Death, Harry turned to the being in the corner of the room.

“Thank you for coming Death and for allowing Marvolos return. I am truly grateful but I think it
would be best if you vanished for now. If I need you or you wish to talk further on the ritual then
come to me again but now is not that time.”

“As you wish master,” Death said before turning to Marvolo, “until we meet again.” With that the
being slowly seemed to melt into the shadows, taking with it some for the heaviness in the air.

“Talk Harrison.” Marvolo said, his voice coming out slightly strangled as his eyes darted around the
room, lingering on the shadows with suspicion.

“I suppose I should, but first I think it best if you recover yourself a bit more, I swear to you I will tell
you everything when you’re well enough.” Harry said slowly, he could tell Marvolo’s mind wasn’t yet clear and he didn’t want to add to that burden.

“I am fine,” Marvolo insisted, he didn’t care about the pain or the confusion, no what he cared about was how his mate had conquered death itself, something he couldn’t do. He wanted, no, needed to know how. Feeling his mind going off on a tangent he tried to focus, how easily his mind slipped into madness was disturbing him... he could tell something wasn’t right.

“If you’re in half as much pain as me then I know that’s a lie.”

The words caused Marvolo to still and finally break through the haze that had started to build up, he didn’t want Harrison in pain. The idea of it made him uneasy, which itself perturbed him as he wasn’t used to caring about other people’s needs or wants. Yet he wanted Harrison to be well, he needed it.

Looking now he could see the strain in those expressive green eyes and the slight sheen of sweat on Harrison’s brow, that he hadn’t previously noted them made Marvolo frown.

“You are in pain.” Was said as a statement, rather than a question.

“I’ve had worse,” Harrison said, the pain was fading now, his muscles aching but in a dull way.

The words cause the frown to deepen and Marvolo wondered on them, he would find out exactly what or who had caused his little mate pain and he would make them regret it. Briefly his eyes tracked the faded scars he could see on his mate and he vowed to himself that for each one the people who caused them would suffer a year in his care.

Seeing the gleam in Marvolo’s eyes Harry felt a fleeting moment of pity before it disappeared, he recognised that look from his life before but instead of it filling him with fear and dread, Harry felt a tingling of anticipation.

“Harry?” Sirius’s voice called out before the door opened slightly breaking the tension in the room.

Turning Harry sent Sirius and Remus tired smiles, Marvolo however narrowed his eyes and watched the two men approaching him like a hawk, before his eyes found Harrison again. He wanted to corner his mate and get answers, not deal with other people... Also, who was ‘Harry?’ such a common name was not acceptable, no his little mate was Harrison, a much more fitting name.

“My Lord,” the revered tone drew his attention from Harrison’s interaction and he noticed that the two who had followed in behind now lay before him with their heads bowed. Seeing the servitude sent a fleeting pulse of pleasure through him before it was drowned out by repulse. He didn’t want weak snivelling sycophants, but strong followers who would and could, support and spread his ideals. He needed soldiers not servants.

Not bothered about keeping his displeasure hidden, he sent a fleeting glance to Harrison who was now drinking what looked like a pain reliever and a was holding an empty bottle of a muscle relaxer. Seeing his mate was being taken care of sent a wave of relief through him and he turned his attention to the two men in front of him who seemed both awed and terrified of him.

“Stand, you’re the Lords of your houses. You shouldn’t kneel and scrape on the floor like common street rats.”

The tone of words jolted the men and it took them a few moments to process what their Lord had said, Severus being the first stood warily, not willing to risk looking his Lord in the eyes. He didn’t want to draw any negative attention to himself and suffer the consequences.
“Severus, Harrison said you would be here.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“And you Lucius, though I am not surprised as your family has continuously been faithful.”

“Always my Lord,”

“Can you give him pain and muscle potions Severus?” Harrison’s voice rose over the room.

Severus seemed to be knocked from his stupor hearing this and quickly reached into his robes pulling out various vial before approaching Marvolo hesitantly, as if moving quickly would break the almost calm and respectful atmosphere.

Taking the vials Marvolo allowed his magic to reach out and test the potions within them, follower or not, he was the dark Lord and he trusted no one, especially as he couldn’t quite recall everything that had happened. Feeling that the potions where pure and of the highest quality Marvolo took them in quick succession, the relief he felt not showing on his face even as he basked in being pain free.

*A flash of green light and so much pain*

*Darkness, pain, longing*

“My Lord?” Severus asked hesitantly.

He couldn’t believe this man was the Lord he had followed in his youth, if it wasn’t for the aura of darkness and his pure presence, he would have thought the ritual had failed. The only thing his man shared with his Lord physically were the blood red eyes that Severus still sometimes had nightmares about.

“Leave me.”

Harry hearing this stood with the help of Remus. He knew that Marvolo was in pain and didn’t want to be seen as weak, but he didn’t want to leave him on his own just yet.

“I’ve had rooms prepared for you, perhaps it would be best if you were to recover there?”

Sending his mate a nod, Marvolo braced himself to stand. Even with the potions now dulling the pain, he didn’t know if he would be able to make even a short walk.

Knowing how he felt, Harry summoned Kreacher, “Kreacher, could you please take Marvolo and I into the rooms I had prepared earlier.”

Kreacher nodded, sending Sirius a fleeting glare before taking Harry’s arm and turning to the man his human indicated to. Feeling the magical aura around the man Kreacher warily approached, it was so vast and so dark yet oddly familiar. It took a moment for him to recall it before he recognized it.

“Master Dark Lord, sir,” the house elf said bowing.

Standing Marvolo placed a hand on the elf’s free arm and allowed himself to be transported, glaring one final time at the other occupants of the room.

~

With the Dark Lord and Harry leaving it felt like a weight had been lifted from the room.
“So, is it just me or does anybody else think that having a Dark Lord who looks younger than we are is weird?” Sirius eventually said, breaking the tension in the air that their departure had caused and gaining incredulous looks from the two Slytherins. Remus however couldn’t stop and fell into helpless laughter after seeing the looks on the others faces.

“It is disconcerting having our Lord appear so human, however I don’t believe anybody will be mistaking him for an average light wizard any time soon.”

“Ppft, as if they could, I thought he was going to AK me for breathing. I swear he was less scary last time, now that he has a pretty face its disturbing, pretty people shouldn’t be that scary.”

Silence descended as the Slytherin’s froze in horror and looked around, as if they expected their Lord to appear and punish the Black lord for saying such things.

“…Did you just call the Dark Lord pretty?” Severus finally asked after a few moments, the others were still too socked to speak.

Seeing the incredulous looks Sirius huffed with a pout before petulantly saying, “well, he is pretty.”

~

Arriving with a near silent pop, Harry immediately started walking towards the arm chairs placed near the fire, seeing this, Marvolo followed at a comparatively slower pace, proving to Harry the man must be in some pain.

“Kreacher, could you please ensure we are not bothered unless it is an emergency?”

“Yes, little master, Kreacher shall do so,” the house elf promised, eyeing Harry with the adoration he had come to expect from the creature.

With their privacy settled, Harry sat and watched Marvolo join him with easy grace, the only indication he was in pain being a slight flashing of his eyes.

“Perhaps talking should wait until your feel better,” he said, it wasn’t that he necessarily wanted to postpone the chat- which he did, but he was concerned for Marvolo’s health.

“No. You will speak now,” the word was said firmly and with a touch of coldness that hard Harry heckles raising slightly.

“You do not get to make demands from me,” Harry said, steeling himself for a fight but not willing to bend his neck on this, he wouldn’t not be a push over or allow his mate to walk all over him.

Seeing the steely determination in the emerald eyes that he found so strangely mesmerising Marvolo fought to push down his urge to punish his mate for his impertinence and tried again, “I apologise…”

The words tasted foreign and wrong in his mouth, “my mind and emotions are fighting, nothing makes sense. I know I can trust you and yet parts of me fight it, I have urges that I am finding… difficult to control.”

Some words where said oddly, some off them stressed and dragged out and eventually Harry realised something that shocked him, the Dark Lord looked uncomfortable. After a moment, Harry realised the inner turmoil Marvolo must be going through, having emotions, memories and urges that didn’t make sense, His mind must be in chaos. For a man who had always strived for perfection, such mental lapses were probably infuriating.

With this in mind, Harry conceded- he could always tell Marvolo the details again in the future if he
Harry continued when he noticed the slight frown increasing on Marvolo’s face.

“It went something like this, ‘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 his 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 ...’”

Hearing this Marvolo stiffened, the urge to kill the beautiful child in front of him was almost overwhelming and he felt his hand itching to move to where he usually kept his wand. The fact he was currently wandless didn’t immediately penetrate his mind, nor did the fact that the boy was his soul mate. However, after a few breaths his thoughts cleared and he realised he was now gripping the chair’s arms harshly, fingers digging painfully into the lush material.

Seeing some sanity return to Marvolo’s gaze Harry continued, having paused when he noticed Marvolo’s lack of awareness.

“...After my birth, my parents realised that I alongside their close friends the Longbottom’s son Neville, fit the prophecy. Because of this my parents went into hiding, using the ‘Fidelius Charm’ and entrusting Peter Pettigrew to be their secret keeper after deciding Sirius was to obvious a choice…”

“For months you continued your attacks on both the muggle and magical worlds. You gained many followers and the lights support slowly dwindled, either, killed, frightened off or converted. It’s safe to say you were winning and because of this Pettigrew came to you and took your mark, selling my parent out…”

Marvolo listened to his little mate speak and allowed his mind to focus on the words. Falling into a trance like state as he meditated and sorted through the memories the story was recalling. He withheld an internal grimace as he remembered how out of touch with his original goals and ideals he had become, how insane and blood hungry. Although he would loath to admit it, he almost didn’t regret his defeat as before he had before a monster set on only destruction.

“...You came to our safe house in Godric’s Hollow, on the night of October 31st, 1981. My father stood against you first and fought you, knowing he would die but trying to buy my mother and me time. After you killed him you came after my mother and me who were in the nursery. Severus had asked you to spare her life so you asked her to move aside but she refused, three times she begged you not to kill me. You killed her. Then you turned your wand on me…”

Harry said this without inflection but inside he was in turmoil, ever since he had view the memories of his parents he felt like he knew them, he understood more than ever what he really lost. How
different his life should have been, filled with love and parent who cherished him and their friends.

“…Because of our bond and the sacrifice my mother made, when you cast the ‘Avada Kedavra’ it turned on you, making you lose your body and forcing you to wander as a wraith. However, that is not all that happened that night, a part of your soul, already weakened by your previous horcrux’s broke away and attached itself to me, or more specifically my scar. It’s my belief that it recognised me as something similar, so when your body was destroyed it went to the next closest thing and because of this I became your horcrux…”

Hearing this Marvolo opened his eyes and focused his magic on his mate, it was slow to react and weak but eventually he was able to brush his magic against Harrisons and feel for himself that what his little soul mate was saying was true. He was a living horcrux, his horcrux.

“…After you were destroyed, Sirius was set up by Pettigrew and sent to Azkaban without trial. I believe Dumbledore played a role in this, but I haven’t any proof yet. I however was sent by Dumbledore to my remaining relatives. After he had placed magical blocks and charms on me to make me look like my father. I grew up not knowing my name, I thought it was ‘boy’ or ‘freak’. My relatives thought they could starve or beat the magic out of me. I was malnourished, defeated and utterly unprepared when I received my Hogwarts letter…”

Harry felt his eyes harden as he remembered his childhood, he may be an adult now mentally but he wasn’t over his relative’s treatment of him. He was angry,

“…I had been taught that magic wasn’t real, Beaten and abused whenever my accidental magic caused something ‘freakish’ to happen. Therefore, when I received my letter, I thought it was a joke, but then I saw how my relatives reacted… They tried to stop me from going to Hogwarts, they ran from the letters however eventually one of Dumbledore’s loyal dogs caught up to us and I received my letter properly. It was Hagrid who took me around Diagon Alley the first time, he who introduced me to the magic world…”

Marvolo grimaced at the memories he had of the half giant oaf. Hagrid had always been sickeningly loyal to Dumbledore, it had been one of the reason he had targeted him to take the fall after the chamber of secrets incident. The boy had been a spineless coward who reported everything he saw and heard to Dumbledore and hung of his every word like gospel. He was a mindless drone who believed all Slytherins were dark and that Albus Dumbledore was the second coming of Merlin. It also helped that the fool genuinely did go around sprouting on about how much he loved magical creatures, even dangerous ones… realising what he had thought Marvolo grinned slightly, his memories were returning.

“…It was this biased introduction paired with the numerous potions and charms on me that shaped my view of or world. I hated anything dark, Slytherin or different. I was the perfect little pawn for Dumbledore’s manipulations. I was just a scared little orphan, beaten and abused who had suddenly been rescued and shown to a quite literally, magical world. I believed my heir vault was my only vault, and I had no idea that I was heir to the houses of Potter and Black. I knew nothing of our world and my place in it…. I knew not our customs or laws. I was a clueless child thrust into the world for Dumbledore to manipulate…”

Hearing this Marvolo fought back his urge to snarl. He hated that Harry had been forced to grow up like he had, but what he hated more was the role he had played in everything.

“…Eventually the summer ended, I was ill-prepared for school, my books and wand had been locked up by the loving relatives as soon as I returned so I had nothing to base my expectations on, no knowledge about the subjects or magic. I didn’t even know how to get onto the platform. Fortunately for me Dumbledore had already set into motion on of his schemes and I met the Weasley
family outside platform 9 ¾, they showed me the way onto the platform and eventually I ended up sitting with their youngest son Ronald on the train. He became my first friend…”

For a moment Marvolo wanted to scowl, befriending a Weasley? However, a memory hit him, it was weak at first but the more he focused on it the clearer it became. He had observed his little mate while he was possessing Quirrell, he had been drawn to him, fascinated by the calm and intelligent child. He knew that Harrison Potter-Black was not friends with Ronald Weasley, nor was he under Dumbledore’s thumb for that matter. Realising this Marvolo opened his mouth to question Harrison. Seeing this the black-haired boy sent his mate a quelling look, silencing Marvolo before he even had chance to voice his observation, before continuing his speech.

“…It was after that train ride I met my future adversary Draco Malfoy. Eventually we reached the castle ad the sorting began. All I had heard about the four houses came for either Hagrid or Ronald. Slytherins were evil, Voldemort had killed my parents, only dark and evil wizards go into that house. Whereas Gryffindor was full of brave, noble wizards, my parents had been in Gryffindor and didn’t I want to be just like them, good loyal little light followers. So, when the hat wanted to put me into Slytherin I argued, I couldn’t possibly go into such an evil house, so eventually I was placed into Gryffindor…”

Marvolo at this point could only describe his mind as muddled, he was sure Harrison was in Ravenclaw yet his mate was saying different and he knew the boy had no reason to lie. Yet had memories showing Harrison in blue and bronze robes, admittedly they were fuzzy memories, but still he remembered his little rave. Also, he couldn’t picture his little mate as a Gryffindor.

Ravenclaw… he always sat with the Longbottom heir- Neil? No, Neville and those two Hufflepuff girls…

“…My first year passed quickly. I befriended the mudblood Granger after Ron and I rescued her from the troll Quirrell released on Halloween. Together the three of us discovered Dumbledore’s plan for protecting the stone and realised somebody was after it, we assumed it was Severus as he fit what we believed was the evil stereotype- slithering and dark. However, we were wrong, after confronting Quirrell and by default you, the stone was destroyed and you were banished once more. Proving to Dumbledore that I was a good noble little light wizard, who he could manipulate…”

At this point Tom was not just confused but slightly concerned as his memories were not matching what he was being told. He did not like the feeling of confusion, it was disconcerting.

The ritual had failed… The stone was a fake… Clever little Ravenclaw…

“…The summer after my first year was one of the worst I had. My family not only feared me for my freakishness but they loathed me because of what Hagrid had done to Dudley. That was one of the few times I genuinely feared my uncle would kill me. After he was done, I was locked into my new room, bars were placed on the windows and a cat-flap was installed to feed me, admittedly very little. I took me weeks to recover fully, yet eventually I did, only to have a demented house elf turn up and warn me away from Hogwarts. I didn’t listen and returned for my second year, only for The Chamber of Secrets to be opened…”

Tom was raging inside and for once he didn’t mind his insanity as it showed him numerous creative ways he could and would torture this uncle of Harrison’s… however his mind stilled as he finally digested everything his little mate had said, The Chamber of Secrets!??

Harry however was hit with a pang of regret when he thought of dobby he was sure the little house elf was loyal, yet he hadn’t met him in this life so far. The thought made him pause, hopefully dobby would be somewhere in Malfoy manor? He had seen how their elves were treated and although not
great it was a far-sight better than it had been. Something which Harry was proud of as he was almost positive that it was his influence that caused the subtle change.

“…Your diary managed to find its way into the cauldron of one Ginevra Weasley. It possessed her and Aithusia was released resulting in several students including Hermione and even a ghost being petrified its surprising really that nobody died. During this fiasco I was blamed, people believing I was Slytherins heir as I am a parclemouth. Me and Ron discovered the location of the chamber after Ginny was taken down to it by your horcrux. I fought and killed Aithusia, before stabbing your horcrux, not knowing what it was. Ginny was saved and once again I was a hero, Dumbledore's little puppet who had stopped you returning…”

Marvolo felt ice grip his heart at the thought of one of his precious horcruxes being destroyed. His hand twitched to lash out and kill, to defend himself until he realised that this wasn’t true, his diary had been safe…

…I'm sorry Tom, but you have to trust me… I promise, you will be fine. You're going to join back with your main soul and eventually you’ll be whole. I promise… I'm your soul mate…

“…My third year was my least dramatic. During the summer, Sirius escaped from Azkaban, putting the world on high alert and resulting in dementors being posted to Hogwarts. I took divination and had my death regularly predicted by the fraud Trelawney. Eventually Sirius captured Pettigrew who had been hiding for the past 12 years in his Animagus form as the Weasley family pet rat. Remus unfortunately transformed and Pettigrew escaped resulting in Sirius being on the run as nobody believed he was innocent…”

Harrison hadn’t yet had his third year… he was only a second year... and Sirius wasn’t a convict, he was innocent…

“…Fourth year was the most challenging. You returned with the help of Pettigrew and Barty Crouch Jr. Pettigrew found you and together you worked out a plan to get the Triwizard tournament reinstated and entered me against my will with Barty's help. Barty kidnapped Alastor Moody, who was that years DADA teacher and Polyjuiced as him. The whole school turned against me, believing I had cheated my way into the tournament. For the first task I had to fight a dragon, the second I had to rescue Ron for The Black Lake and for the third, I had to navigate my way through a maze and find the Triwizard cup. In the end Cedric Diggory, Hogwarts true champion and I both touched the cup at the same time. You had had Barty turn it into a portkey, which took up to the cemetery in Little Hangleton. Peter killed Cedric and you used my blood to resurrect yourself using a ritual I believe you created yourself. We duelled and I managed to escape taking Cedrics body with me…”

At this point Tom didn’t know what to say. He wanted to deny what his mate was saying but he could see that Harrison was telling no lies. His eyes held a level of truth and had enough jaded shadows that he recognised as somebody who had survived untold horrors.

“… That summer Dumbledore's Order of The Phoenix was restarted, with loyal little sycophants following the Oldman. Meanwhile, the ministry stated a smear complain against Dumbledore and myself, they didn’t want to believe you were back. They called me crazy and everybody but a rare few turned by me. The ministry, fearing Dumbledore’s influence over the students and wanting a spy in Hogwarts, decided to send Dolores Umbridge to be the defence teacher. She spent the year refusing to teach anything and torturing students with a blood quill…”

I must not tell lies

With that memory Harry clenched the hand that formerly held the cursed scars from that quill. He no longer bore those scars, and he never would, but he could still remember the pain as they were
carved into his body. How his hand ached and burned as each letter was engraved deeper and deeper. The fact he not only allowed himself to be manipulated but maimed by his own hand disgusted him slightly, he loathed how naive he had been. He would not let such a thing happen again.

“… I eventually set up a defence club and started tutoring students as we were learning nothing in class, the DA, it stood for defence association but many called it Dumbledore's army. The year continued and eventually Dumbledore was driven from the school. Being the good little light sheep that I was I thought this was the worst thing in the world. Through the connection created by being your horcrux I experience a series of visions. You used this connection to lead me into a trap, resulting in Sirius falling through the veil inside the chamber of death. He died to protect me. The prophecy orb about us was destroyed, so neither of us got to hear the original. The minister walked in on you battling Dumbledore and finally realized their mistake, thus the 2nd wizarding ward really started…”

Marvolo stared at his mate. He didn’t quite understand and that frustrated him, but he knew better than to interrupt- He could feel the power coming of his mate subtly as he spoke, it was intoxicating, dark and oddly alluring. He had only just started to pick up on it, his senses magical and otherwise slowly starting to come back online. He could now feel his mates’ magical aura, notice how it teased against his and how when combined they seemed to pulse with even more power.

“…Dumbledore revealed your horcruxes to me and we started to hunt them down. The curse on your ring however got him and he was dying. Eventually he and Severus who was a double agent came up with a plan and he was killed how he wanted to be, making it so you didn’t doubt Severus’s loyalties and I was manipulated into to avenging him. Like last time the order of the phoenix tried to fight you, but you eventually took over the ministry and even managed to infiltrate Hogwarts. I was forced to go on the run as ‘Undesirable Number 1’ alongside Weasley and Granger. Together we hunted down and destroyed all of your horcruxes, bar the one inside me which I didn’t realise I had…”

Harry touched his scar then, a delicate caress of the soul shard he contained. Watching this, Marvolo's eyes narrowed on the scar, subtly feeling the piece of him it contained. He was still too weak to do much more than focus his magic but concentrating, he could make out the magical caress, to him it felt like peace, home and love… feelings utterly alien to him.

“… The final battle arrived, The Battle of Hogwarts. Weasley, Granger and I snuck back into the school, and together with the ‘light’ students and staff we got rid of your followers. The battle started and it was chaos. Children were fighting, some just 13 years old. We tried to keep them locked in their common rooms but some snuck out. So many people died, on both sides. You killed Severus, thinking he had won the allegiance of the elder wand, but before he passed I found me, even though I thought me was a traitor I still didn’t want him to die. It was then that he let me know I was your final horcrux…”

Harry once again subconsciously caressed the scar on his forehead, before he continued.

“… Both sides fought hard. You announced that you would stop fighting and give us a chance to see to our dead, you also said you would spare everybody If they would surrender me to you so that I could to die. You didn’t know about you horcrux inside of me. Knowing this I set it up so that your horcruxes would be destroyed and I walked willingly into the forest. I had the resurrection stone on me, and I called my parents and Sirius to me. Siri, he told me not to be afraid, that dying was quicker and easier than falling to sleep…”

Marvolo couldn’t believe what he was hearing, but the emotion in Harrison’s voice as he spoke told
him wonders. He might not be able to replicate such emotions, but he was a master at recognising them, he had to be in order to manipulate people.

“…You sent the killing curse at me. I didn’t try to dodge it or fight you, I accepted my death, hoping that my friends would be able to use what I had told them to defeat the remain horcruxes and win the war. To be honest, a small part of me was relieved; I was so tired, tired of the war, the loss and the pain, I think a part of me also wanted to be with my family again. I died. But I didn’t remain dead, I woke up in Kings Cross Station, but it was different, I saw Dumbledore there. He told me he was proud of me, and that I had done what was right, he then showed me the horcrux inside of my mind. I killed it, or rather you Avada Kedavra killed it. I woke up then in the same spot you had killed me, you Crucioed my body, after having Narcissa Malfoy check if I was dead. She lied to you. Eventually your horcruxes were destroyed and we ended up duelling. I defeated you…”

As Harry spoke he felt himself fall into a monotonous pattern, loosing himself to the memories of pain and suffering. He could practically feel the adrenaline, taste the stale air, feel the cuts and curses.

“…The war was over, the light triumphing. But I didn’t feel victorious, I felt lost. At first, I thought it was because of how much was lost, but slowly this longing grew. After a few weeks I ended up at Gringotts, where I did a blood inheritance test. The results showing our bond, as well as a multitude of behavioural and magical blocks and charms. It also revealed the titles I had gained, through inheritance and conquest. Dumbledore had manipulated me from the started, stole from me, bound my personality and magic and turned me into the perfect little light sheep. I was riddled with charms and glamor’s… after having them removed I started to realise things about myself and my past- How I thought, how I felt even my memories changed. I developed a good relationship with the goblins. They even named me goblin friend, which worked to my advantage after I realised that being deaths master gave me powers that were beyond what I had ever dreamed…”

Tom felt a part of him shiver at that, it wanted to grab his little mate and force the power from him. He needed it. Him. He was the dark lord, the greatest- shaking his head he allowed his rational mind to take over once again.

“I take it there is more?” he said

Harry nodded, “…I was angry, no furious, yet also strangely calm. I knew I wanted revenge but a part of me was almost accepting of this fate. I believe our broken bond caused my slight apathy. Still I plotted until I learned I could come back with Deaths help. I decided to return to when I gained my letter and set about changing our future. I refuse to be manipulated or used.” He aimed that at his mate, making eye contact to show how serious he was.

“…I had Siri released, Peter imprisoned and have set about ruining Dumbledore's reputation. I don’t just want that man dead, I want to watch as everything he has built crumbles to dust around him, his precious reputation destroyed before his eyes. I will have my revenge on the people who have wronged me, and we will make the wizarding world into something great…”

Marvolo blinked before letting out an almost maniacal laugh. He could hardly comprehend what he had heard yet he knew that his little mate was perfect for him.

“I do believe Harrison that you still have a lot left to tell me, but for now I fear I must rest and regain what I have lost.” He knew his mind was repairing itself, but he was self-aware enough to realise he needed time to restore order.

Harry nodded and stood, “nobody but I can enter these rooms, you can of course call Kreacher to you if you need anything.” Walking past him mate Harry stilled before giving into whim and leaned forward to press a chaste kiss to the man’s cheek, “for now rest, and if you need me send Kreacher,”
straightening quickly Harry left the room, before Marvolo could react.

Marvolo stilled at the soft press of lips and the ensuing sensation they brought, not just the physical but the magical. His whole soul sang out at the press to his cheek and it left him reeling, enough that he didn’t even notice his mate leave. Standing he made his was slowly towards the bed, deciding he would punish his mate for his escape when he was able to actually move without pain and think without lapses into madness.
Relocation

Chapter Notes

This story is still going on, I know updates have been so slow recently & I can't promise that they'll be much faster but I swear I won't abandon the story so bare with me please. Also thank you all for the continued support, it means so much to me! Hope you enjoy the update, Comment & kudos very much appreciated.  
~Annie

Previously

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~

Harry didn’t know what had possessed him to give into the urge, but leaning against the door he had rushed through, he couldn’t deny the results were worth the risk. His soul was humming with joy and his magic was practically buzzing. In comparison to the apathy and general lethargy he had been feeling it was almost overwhelming. With a smirk which was rather out of place on his currently 12-year-old body, he pushed off from the door and made his way back towards the ritual room, he was sure the rest would have questions for him, and if not, well he was finally feeling alive and he didn’t want to waste the feeling simply standing around.

~

Walking back to the ritual room Harry couldn’t help but to smile lightly, Tom was back- No, Marvolo was back- it was going to take some time for him to think of Tom as Marvolo, but he was sure he would manage. Entering the room, he noted how Severus and Lucius both flinched before relaxing marginally when they saw it was only him.
“Is everything okay?”

“Yes, however I fear that the dementors damaged the mutt more than we initially suspected,” Severus sneered, looking at Sirius with narrowed eyes however his gaze didn’t hold the animosity Harry used to see.

“Oh?”

“It’s nothing, little Lord,” Lucius interrupted, hoping to not bring his Lords wrath down upon them if he ever found out what Sirius had said about him.

Harry quirked a brow at the title, “Harrison is fine Lucius, I’m no Lord.”

“I believe my Lord would prefer us to speak to you with more respect,” Harrys paused then about to argue but realised Lucius may be right, he wasn’t sure just how Marvolo would react, in all honesty he wasn’t sure yet just who is soul mate really was.

“Is our Lord recovered?” Severus said, seeing that Harrison had been silenced by Lucius’s words.

“Yes, the ritual was a success, I’ve left him to recover himself in peace. I doubt he will call on you today so if you need to you can leave, I am grateful to you both for being here.” Harry added the last bit sincerely, knowing that both had held some reservations about returning the dark Lord to life. Severus more so than Lucius, but still they had both shown their loyalty and Harry was grateful as he knew the next few months and possibly years would be trying.

“I shall return to my manor then, little Lord. If you need anything do not hesitate to contact me, I shall have rooms prepared for my Lord, that is if you still think it’s best for him to move there?” Lucius asked.

“Please do, it might be a few days before your Lord is well enough to be moved, but I fear Dumbledore has been to silent this summer.”

“It shall be done, little Lord.”

Rolling his eyes Harry nodded to the blonde as he exited. Watching him walk out Harry was surprised when Severus remained, merely saying farewell to the blonde Lord.

“What about you? Are you okay pup?” Sirius questioned, suddenly a lot closer to Harry.

Sending a tired smile to his guardian, “I am quite well. My magic is more at peace than it has been for moths. I hadn’t realised how strained I was until it disappeared.”

“Shall I prepare a sleeping drought for you Harrison?” Severus asked.

“I think I will be able to sleep without one, thank you. I am exhausted, the ritual was draining.” Severus hummed and quickly assessed his condition. “Are you still taking the potions prescribed to you last year?”

“I am, only once a week now. why?”

“I am merely curious. I am glad to know you’re recovering well.”

Harry nodded, the answer didn’t feel quite right but his exhaustion was catching up with him.
“Right then,” he replied awkwardly, “I'm going to go and rest before I fall down.”

“Let me help you,” Remus said, sensing the weakness the young teen felt and wanting to help his cub as best he could.

“Thanks, Remy,” Harry said sending the werewolf a smile. “You two behave,” he added, sending the two remaining men sharp looks before accepting Remus’s arm and being lead from the room.

~

After Harry and Remus were out of ear shot, Sirius turned to Snape, “what was that about?” he demanded, his protective instincts over Harry coming out.

Severus fought his urge to bite out an almost automatic scathing response and instead took a breath, “I truly was curious. More so to know if the damage is still bad but also to know how Harry has healed.”

“How?”

“I fear the actions our Lord will take when he realised his soul mate has suffered abuse. He is not a man who tolerated the abuse of children. If he had to our Lord would kill a child, but always quickly and painlessly, he couldn’t stand to torture or abuse one. I am afraid of what our Lords reaction will be.”

“Your Lord,” Sirius childishly pointed out.

Sighing Severus sent the dog Animagus and unamused look, “I know Harrison has hopes that my Lord will be sane and that his return will not be so violent, but I have doubts. I was merely inquiring as to his health as I know the dark Lords reaction will be… shall we say explosive when he knows the extend Harrison suffered”

Sirius nodded, a dark look crossing his usually carefree face, “is it wrong that I find myself not truly bothered by that?”

Severus shot the man a surprised look, “you were always so firmly on the light’s side. I know you will follow Harrison, but I had thought you neutral more than dark.”

Sirius laughed, the sound coming out quiet and rather bitter, “I was strictly light and look where it got me.” He spat out, “no, I am done pretending, I am a dark wizard Severus and I would honestly be delighted to help the Dark Lord get revenge on those muggles that abused my son.”

Seeing the shocked look Sirius laughed again, this time sounding more like his usual carefree self, “don’t look so shocked Sevvie. I am a Black, the Lord Black in fact. Dark magic, that is what naturally call to me. I tried fighting against my nature, I turned against what I had been brought up to believe, our traditions, my own family, all it brought me was ruin. I am done denying who and what I am.”

Severus allowed his eyes to drift over the man as he spoke, the strong determination making Sirius seem taller, righter, simply… more.

“What about James? He was a light wizard,” Severus said, seeing for a moment how Sirius seemed to flicker before the determination once again took over.

“I think that if James was alive now, he would be standing right here with us, Lily as well.”
Severus took a breath, “I betrayed the dark for Lily.”

“I know.”

“I loved her.”

“I know that as well.”

“I am a dark wizard, but for my sister I betrayed myself and my Lord.”

“I think, given all that has happened, that you should forgive yourself.”

“Lily died!”

“And It was not your fault.”

Severus reared back like he had been struck, “I know that!” he spat.

“Do you?”

Severus turned in frustration and strode away only to come back, leaning closely into Sirius, “how do you do it? How can you forgive that monster! He killed them! He killed so many people!??!”

Sirius leaned back slightly, adding to the distance between them before he let out a breath, “you think it’s easy for me?”

“Yes! You act like you don’t care!”

“I care!” Sirius shouted back, “But I also realise what and who is to blame!”

“It was the dark Lord who killed them!”

“His wand, but was it his will?” Sirius shouted back before calming himself, he didn’t want to disrupt Harry’s rest, or merlin forbid the dark Lords, “I know it’s hard, but he, like us has been manipulated.”

Severus seemed to crumble then, making Sirius panic and quickly reach for him, drawing him into a slightly awkward embrace.

“It is easier to hate him than to acknowledge how much of a fool I have been. I believed Dumbledore, I followed him like a lost lamb and betrayed myself and my friends.” He whispered softly before realising their current position and stiffly pulling out of Sirius’s arms and trying very hard not to think about how good it felt to be in them, surrounded by the man’s scent and magic; protected.

“You are many things, a sarcastic and somewhat evil bastard, to give examples, but you are not a fool Severus” Sirius said, his voice soft yet unyielding even as he joked. It hurt him to see the usually composed man so distraught, he wanted to do something, anything, to make the situation better- a thought he decided not to dwell on as the repercussion and insinuations… yes, best not to read too much into his sudden desire to protect Severus from the world and from his own self despairing thoughts.

~

Sirius sighed as he took a sip from the glass in his hand, he had allowed himself a rather large helping of fire whiskey after Severus had made a hasty get away. The usually dower man had
practically ran from the room after their ‘moment’, and Sirius was sure he had even spotted a faint flush on his cheeks as he fled.

Walking into the parlour, Sirius took a moment to consider his drink, twirling his glass before downing it. An appreciative whistle sounded from the door and Sirius looked up to see Remus entering the room.

“Don’t supposed you’ve got another one of those?” the werewolf asked.

With a wave of his wand, Sirius summoned another glass before sitting down heavily on one of the lounge chairs.

“So, I heard some raised voices…” Remus said, his tone of voice inquisitive.

“Did you?” Sirius replied innocently, before refilling his tumbler.

Remus snorted, taking a sip of his recently poured drink, “so, what did you and Severus argue about this time?”

“It wasn’t an argument…”

“…” Remus didn’t speak but sent Sirius a look.

“…It wasn’t really an argument, Severus needed somebody to rant to I think…” Sirius sounded unsure.

“And he picked you?”

“Yes?” Sirius once again didn’t sound sure of himself.

“You two don’t have the best history,” Remus explained.

“Yeah, well, different times, different people.”

“That’s true, so what was this none-argument about?”

“He’s worried.”

Remus hummed and drank deeply, “we all are.”

“He’s worried about his former betrayal and how the Dark Lord will punish him, and I think he’s still struggling to accept him being back.”

“It’s hard.” Remus agreed, drawing the words out, “but it is the reality we now face- He is back.”

Sirius snorted at that and drank deeply, “yes he is.”

The sat in silence for a time before Sirius began to speak again, his tome sombre as he tried to give voice to the confusion and emotions he felt… “I sometimes think, that the world as we know it will cease to be, and I feel guilt because of that- not because of the struggles or the war we will most definitely face. no, I feel guilt because I don’t care about the world anymore, I don’t care who has to suffer of die as long as it’s not my son. Voldemort can burn it to the ground and rebuild it however he wants, and I simply wouldn’t care, as long as Harry is safe and happy.”

Remus hummed and drained his glass be before raising it in a mock salute “as long as Harry is happy,” He agreed, speaking the words like a vow.
“We are awful people, aren’t we?” Sirius asked.

“Most defiantly, but I can think of worse and to be honest I can’t bring myself to feel too bad about myself any more. We will survive this coming war, for Harry, for James, for Lily, and for Dumbledore.” The last name was spat out.

“Dumbledore?”

“We will survive to show his how his plans have failed. He will die knowing Harry has won.”

“Why Moony, that’s positively evil of you, very Slytherin.”

“If were done being overly maudlin I think I will retire, tomorrow will be interesting enough without me being overly tired.”

Sirius snorted, lifting his glass in a toast before finishing it, “yes, interesting.”

~

Harry hovered for a moment before entering the room he had left Tom to recover in. All night he had tossed and turned, sleeping only a handful of hours because of the restlessness he felt regarding his newly returned mate. He didn’t know how he would be received by Tom, or if it would be Tom he would meet, so steeling himself for any possibility, he knocked before entering.

“So, the little raven has returned to me.”

Harry turned to the voice and saw Tom was sitting in a chair by an open window. The early morning breeze causing the chestnut hair on his head to flutter slightly.

“Good morning Marvolo,” he said, speaking softly and remembering the man’s preference about his name.

“Is it?”

Harry frowned and saw that beneath the dark blue eyes were equally dark bags, Harry noted this and felt himself frown slightly in concern.

“Did you not sleep well?”

The laugh that he got in response was chilling and full of loathing, but Harry sensed it wasn’t aimed at him.

“No. My mind is full of holes; my memories, my magic, even my emotions- what little I have, are suddenly beyond my control. I feel like a bloody first year Hufflepuff girl.” The last part was spat out and Harry found himself smirking.

Seeing the smirk Marvolo stiffened making Harry snort. Quickly trying to cover it up, Harry bit his lip as he tried to contain his mirth but Marvolo clearly wasn’t convinced if the narrowing of his eyes and the angry hiss he released was anything to go by.

“There’s nothing wrong with Hufflepuffs,” Harry having overcome his mirth, countered eventually while thinking about Hannah and Suzie. Even if they had parted on less than ideal terms he still considered them his friends.

“Yes, you are friends with some. I remember them from when I was… with… Quirrell…”
“Processed is more accurate, but yes, I have friends in Hufflepuff, Hannah and Suzie.”

Marvolo scoffed then, “meaningless sentiment.”

“Did you ever have any had real friends?”

Marvolo stiffened, “friends are weakness.”

“What about me?”

“What about you?”

“I am your friend, or I hope to be.”

“No. You’re mine.”

“I'm not an object for you to own or control.”


Harry startled but fought to rein in his own anger and instead sighed when he was the mad glint in Marvolo's eyes. “Yes, I am, just as you're mine,” He said instead, speak softly.

Marvolo hissed again, closing his eyes he wrestled the urge to scream and cause his little mate harm. “I apologise, I am not myself still it seems.”

“It’s okay, I don’t expect you to be fine in a day. The progress you have already made is remarkable.”

“I am weak,” the man scoffed, his self-disgust palpable.

“No, you're the strongest wizard I know.”

Marvolo turned away from him then and closed his eyes, winning the war within him, “I do not wish to argue with you Harrison, I am tired.”

Harry winced then, he had been caught up in the moment and forgotten how his mate was suffering. “I can leave you if you wish?” he offered even though he didn’t wish to leave him.

“No, you can stay, I however wish to meditate. I will gain control of myself in short time.”

Harry smiled slightly, it seemed his mate didn’t want him to leave either.

Sitting Harry allowed himself to relax slightly, Marvolo still had his eyes closed and body turned away from him slightly, but when Harry focused on him he could see the man’s magic was reaching for his. With a sigh he allowed some of his magic to react and watched as their magic clashed and curled around each other in greeting. The feeling was indescribable, what he imagined unconditional love and acceptance felt like, he could feel all of Tom, his very soul was bared and laid out for Harry to see. A soft gasp drew his attention from the magic, and he saw the look of bliss and awe of Marvolo's face as he too experienced their magic merging, seeing Harry's soul.

“Incredible,” the word was whispered.

Harry hummed and slowly withdrew his magic, he missed the feeling, but he knew Marvolo needed to focus on his occlumency and fixing his mind.
Marvolo sighed and drew his magic back to himself, he hadn’t noticed it reaching for his little raven, but he was glad it had. Such raw power and potential and it was all his. he didn’t notice the whispered word falling from his lips of the look of devotion he sent to the younger wizard.

~

Cracking his neck, Harry let out a slight groan. He had been sitting for hours reading an advanced rune book while Marvolo meditated, not noticing the time going by but looking out the window he judged it was well after lunch.

“Kreacher,” he called out, focusing on his bond to the elf

“Little master called for Kreacher.”

“Could you bring us some light refreshments? please.”

The elf popped away and Harry saw that Marvolo now had his dark blue eyes focused on him.

“Yes?” he inquired.

“I know that elf.”

“Kreacher has served the Black family for many years,”

“I remember him, he was in the cave.”

“Yes,” Harry agreed, amazed by the progress Marvolo ad made in such a short amount of time.

“I’m impressed you managed to retrieve all of my horcruxes, the enchantment I had placed on them were advanced and one of a kind.”

“It was easier this time, I knew what they were and where. Last time though it was a struggle, it took me and my… friends… a year, though I could have, maybe, improved on our time had I not been declared ‘Undesirable Number One’ and you and your minions had not been casing us down.”

“I see,” there was a slight frown on his face.

“Honestly if it helps the mummification curse you invented did get Dumbledore last time, he couldn’t resist your compulsions, and was in considerable pain before his death. He also drank that rather ingenious potion you had surrounding the locket, which I still don’t know the name of, was it you own creation?”

Marvolo smirked slightly, “It does and yes. The recipe was something I developed during my travels after Hogwarts. I derived it from an old potion created by the Mayans. It makes you live your nightmares over and over, manipulating your fears all the while causing physical and magical damage to the mind.”

Harry nodded, “it was impressive to watch. Of course, at the time I was horrified but looking back? Very remarkable.”

“Yes, you mentioned the manipulations placed on you. I take it they were extensive to create such a vast difference in your reactions.”

Harry scowled subconsciously, his magic mimicking his rage causing the temperature to drop. “Yes, I can get a copy of them for you but suffice to say they were many and caused me to be a loyal little light lamb who was fully prepared to walk to the slaughter house.”
Marvolo noted the change in Harrison's magic and felt his own anger at the response, “that’s man will pay.”

A pop broke Harry's train of thought. Seeing Kreacher standing there shaking slightly because of the pressure caused by his magic he fought to regain control.

“Thank you Kreacher,” he said after a moment.

The elf nodded, mumbling about powerful masters and unworthy elves before popping away and leaving a few covered trays and a pot of tea with cups.

“You're too polite to it.” Marvolo muttered looking at the spot Kreacher had just vanished from.

Harry rolled his eyes, “house elves are very underappreciated. Their magic is powerful and if you can gain a house elf’s true loyalty, then you have not only an valuable asset but a friend.”

Marvolo suppressed his rage at having his mate roll his eyes and snorted, “you would befriend such a creature?”

“I would, I have.”

“Your sentimentality will get us killed.”

“A house elf saved my life. Twice in fact.”

“Emotions are weaknesses.”

However, Marvolo noted he didn’t quite believe the words, he remembered the fierce determination of a young Lily Potter as she stood in front of her son, his mate, he remembered the love she felt, and he could his own newly awoken emotions.

“Emotions are not weaknesses, they can give us strength, will, hope.”

Marvolo didn’t automatically shoot the idea down as it resonated something in him as he looked at his mate, taking in the bright green eyes that seemed to bore into his very soul. Yes, perhaps he could believe in emotions. Still… “Maybe so, but really Harrison, a house elf?”

Harry snorted lightly, “at least I have friends dear,” the pet name slipping out without thought.

“what need have I of friends when I have you, little one?”

Rolling his eyes at the nickname, Harry grinned lightly, “we should eat, I can’t imagine how hungry you are.”

The words caused Marvolo’s stomach to growl and the man to nod. Standing Marvolo moved closer to Harry before removing the lids from the food and tucking in.

~

Days rolled into one as Marvolo mediated and recovered his mind and magic. Each new snippet of memory causing emotions he didn’t even know he could feel too well up. Looking back at his own madness and at how far he digressed from his goals made him cringe, and he was grateful to his mate for this second chance.

Thinking of his mate made Marvolo smile slightly, the boy, no young man, was a surprise. He was smart, perhaps not to the degree he himself was, but Harrison's mind was truly intoxicating, he
continuously surprised and amazed him. Harrison had been with him constantly, sitting silently while
he meditated, offering conversation and explaining his ‘past life’, and letting him know every detail
of the world he know found himself in. What the green-eyed youth had accomplished was
astounding, he had literally reshaped the world to bring him back, such power and foreknowledge,
well Marvolo was actually looking forward to the future now- Dumbledore and his foolish followers
wouldn’t know what hit them.

“You look younger when you smile.”

Looking up Marvolo caught his mates’ eyes and hummed when a thought hit him, “I do not know
how old this body is physically.”

Marvolo had investigated this new body in excruciating detail, it was his body, the body he had once
had as a younger man but it also different, perfected in the way only a new-born was. It didn’t hold
the scars of his past or the blemishes of living through the war, it was strong and healthy. What he
could have been had he grown up with the correct food, clothing and attention.

Harry allowed his eyes to wander the body of his soulmate, he felt attraction towards him but his
own body he knew wasn’t quite old enough to really react, however he would admit his mate was
gorgeous; Pale skin contrasting with slightly tousled dark brown hair and dark blue eyes that seemed
to flash red more often then not. The demonic colour didn’t detract from the beauty of Marvolo but
enhanced it, the red eyes were dangerous but enticing.

Marvolo internally preened at his mate’s appraisal, he couldn’t say he was attracted to him, Harrison
was still too young for that, but he knew that he would be. He could see that Harrison would grow to
be beautiful, his mate was already lovely, but in the way of a child not a potential lover, not yet. No
what he felt for Harrison was more the stirrings of affection, not yet love or lust, but the beginnings
of a much deeper bond

“I would say you appear to, be around 23, you could pass for slightly older or younger, but early
20’s definitely.”

“I would agree. You're 12 now, yes?”

Harry nodded, thinking of the date, “physically yes, my birthday is coming up soon. However, I am
around 19 mentally.”

“10 years… it would be improper for me to court you openly. And 19 is hardly old, you're still
decades younger than me little one.”

Harrison felt an eyebrow raise, it was easy sometimes to forget how old Tom was, “you plan on
courting me?”

“Of course, you are mine. However, I shall have to wait until you are older, 15 perhaps…”

Harry nodded slowly, he should have expected Marvolo to insist on something like this, but to hear
the words shocked him.

“I suppose it makes sense, I don’t need such things though. It is as you said, I am yours as you are
mine.”

Marvolo smirked then, the twist of his mouth looking slightly wicked, “yes, but if I don’t claim you
publicly then people would still try for your attention and I would have to… deal with them trying to
take what is not theirs.”
“I am not a possession.”

Marvolo smirked again, causing Harry to surpass an eye roll another, “of course not dear,”, he responded, sounding smug and not at all believable.

“I had various alias’s set up for you, if you’re interested in looking at them?” Harry offered, not wanting to get caught up in banter with Marvolo, which was surprisingly easy to do.

Marvolo nodded, he recalled Harrison telling him about his bond with the goblins but seeing his mate summon the goblin forgeries he was amazed. The high quality of the work was astounding, and to have so many forgeries done to such a high degree? His mate was holding a fortune in his hands without even realising.

“The best one, or the one I think would be the most believable is on the top.”

Marvolo hummed, taking the documents from Harrison however not before casually running his hand over his, causing a shiver to race down his spine as their magic connected briefly.

Reading through he couldn’t help but notice that his alias had a life that was eerily was similar to his own, knowing that Harrison knew his past was something that kept catching Marvolo out. He wasn’t used to being known, see for who he was and not the mask he presented.

“The given name has been left blank,” he mused out loud, the last name however was Gaunt, something he was not terribly impressed by, but he knew that it was the most believable persona. He was going to be his uncle’s grandson, his own second cousin if he wasn’t mistaken, a half-blood whose parents died when he was still a baby.

“Yes, Lucius agreed with me when I said that you would rather pick your own name, I wasn’t sure you would want to go with Tom,” seeing the eye twitch Harrison covered his smirk, really his mate was too sensitive about his name, “so we left it blank, once you know the name you want it will be easy to have the documents solidified and put into the correct places. Nobody will even know you’re not who you claim to be,”

“Marvolo Salazar Gaunt,”

Harrison did roll his eyes then, “Marvolo I can understand, it’s the name you prefer, but Salazar really?”

Feeling indignation Marvolo glared at Harrison, “Salazar Slytherin was one of the greatest wizards to live, I am proud of my ancestor.”

“He was a great wizard, yes. But really, it’s so… so predictable and old.”

“It’s a classic name that not only shows familial pride but follows wizarding tradition.”

“If we ever have children I am not letting you have a say in the naming process.” Harry said with a decisive nod, Salazar, really?!

The comment threw Marvolo who quickly covered his gaping up with a derisive snort, “whatever you say dear, Now, if you’re done making a scene about my name, I do believe you had more you wished to discuss today.”

“Yes, you seem to be recovering well,” Harry commented, looking at his mate softly. He didn’t want to get into this topic, but he knew he had to.
“I am.” Marvolo agreed.

“Then I think it might be a good idea if you were to move to Malfoy manor.”

“Oh?” Marvolo let out a sound of inquiry, he knew from what Harrison said that Dumbledore was too interested in Harrison’s life and was determined to gain control of his little mate but still the thought of leaving the little raven was unappealing.

“Dumbledore won’t stop, and his twinkling gaze is on me constantly- Your being here isn’t safe, you need more time to recover and plan before he knows you’re back, with Lucius you can do that.”

Marvolo was silent for a moment, he knew his Harrison was correct, but he didn’t like it.

~

Malfoy manor, Wiltshire

~

Draco re-read the letters he had received from his friends and fought not to pout as he realised he still hadn’t heard from Harry, nobody had as far as he knew. He wanted to know what was going on, and if the Dark Lord had returned; Waiting was killing him. He was proud that Harry had told them, that he had trusted them enough with such a huge secret, it made him feel important.

Meanwhile

Lucius startled as his mark burnt, it wasn’t the agonising sensation it once was, but it was surprising to feel after so long. Seeing Narcissa turn to him as he stumbled slightly he sent his wife a soft smile and excused himself. He knew that she suspected something, but she was too smart to question him on it or his actions. Plausible deniability was any shrewd witches or wizards ally after all, and his lady wife was anything but stupid.

Pulling out his wand he quickly apparated to his Lord, not surprised when his saw Harrison sitting next to him. Seeing his Lord as he was now was still a shock, he was a very handsome young man, which was something surreal to Lucius as when he thought of his Lord he thought of the sadistic snake-like monster that had haunted his dreams, not this velvet toned youth, with aristocratic features and a sinful smile.

“My Lords,” the blond said, dropping into a respectful bow before straightening.

“Hello Lucius” Harrison greeted warmly, smiling lightly at the blond Lord.

Marvolo but nodded his head in greeting.

“Please sit,” Harrison said indicating to the chair.

Lucius sat and took a moment to look at the two powerful wizards in front of him. Their very aura’s so commanding that Lucius couldn’t help but feel cowed being in their presence, yet he wasn’t afraid, he knew with certainty that either of them could kill him easily and without hesitation, yet he felt no fear, no, he was in awe of them. Their magic was so intoxicating, their bond even new was shining brightly between them.

“You summoned me my Lord,"

“Yes Lucius. Harrison has informed me of everything that has happened in my… absence,”
Lucius nodded his head, he didn’t dare to speak or interrupt his lord.

“I am pleased with what you have achieved, my slippery friend. You escaped imprisonment in Azkaban and have managed to instil yourself as a paragon of society. You have the ministers ear and considerable sway in the ministry. Yes, my friend, you have done well.”

Lucius fought down his pride and pulled his pureblood mask on tightly as he basked in the praise of his Lord, “thank you my Lord.”

Marvolo nodded his head, waving away the thanks, he didn’t need to be thanked, he was their lord and he would reward such ingeniousness.

“Harrison has informed me that he thinks it would be best for me to relocate to your manor, tell me Lucius, do you agree?”

Lucius stilled for a moment, speaking one’s opinion to the Dark Lord was always risky and, in the past, often resulted in unimaginable pain. However, he took a breath and focused, pushing past his fear to answered.

“I do my lord. Harrison has most likely told you about Dumbledore’s obsession with him, your being here could easily result in that old fool finding out about your return before you wish for it to happen.”

Marvolo hummed and nodded, hands drumming on the arms of his chair was he thought, “very well, I will agree to this relocation. Tell me, are your wife and son aware of my return?”

“No, my lord. I would not inform them without your permission.” Lucius answered, his thoughts briefly going to his son, his son who was the same age, technically slightly older, than the boy sitting in front of him, which was shocking to think about. However, Draco was not like Harrison, not that his son wouldn’t one day be a great wizard, but his son was still a child in his mind, not like Harrison.

Harrison as if sensing the blond lord’s inner turmoil spoke, “I trust Draco. He will be able to keep this secret.”

Lucius could help but want to protest, to protect his son.

“Trust me Lucius, I will protect Draco…” Harry said with conviction, and he would, Draco was his, he along with the twins, Blaise, Pansy and Luna, they were all his and he would protect them.

“…Draco will find out. Marvolo will be in your home. Draco will need to know, and I trust that he will be able to deal with this news.”

Lucius nodded, he believed his Little Lord, but he couldn’t help but ask “how can you be so sure?”

“I know because he is already expecting it. I told them about my plans before we broke up for the summer,” Harry said, shocking Lucius but not Marvolo who knew this from Harrison telling him everything he had missed.

“My son already knew of our plans?”

“I trust him Lucius,” Harrison said, “he is one of mine.”

Lucius nodded, he couldn’t help but think of what that meant though.
Marvolo however was fighting to keep his glee hidden, for all his mate claimed to not want to stand by his side and rule as equals, he didn’t seem to mind building his own inner circle.

“Very well my lord.” He agreed, not noticing the smugness that doubled inside the dark lord or the exasperated look Harrison shot his self-satisfied mate.
Previously

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~

Draco watched as his father returned with suspicion, he looked conflicted, which was shocking in itself as his father usually hid his darker emotions from them, not wanting to burden them with his troubles. Everybody assumed that Slytherins, Malfoys in particular, were emotionless. That wasn’t true, they felt, perhaps more so than most, they just knew the power emotions had and knew better than to wear theirs out in the open for all to see and manipulate.

“Father?” he called out hesitantly.

Hearing his son Lucius allowed a small smile to show on his face, “Draco,” he greeted.

“Are you okay father?”

Lucius felt his smile soften; his son was trusted by his young lord; he already held a position of power and he didn’t even know it, however such power came with many difficulties, opposition and jealousy. Yet, at the same time he was still his son, yes, he was spoilt, Lucius wasn’t blind to that, but he was still his son, innocent and fundamentally good therefore Lucius was torn looking at his child, he was proud but wary.
“Yes Draco, I am fine. I just have some arrangements to make. We’re going to have a guest staying with us for a while.”

Draco narrowed his eyes, “a guest?”

“Yes, somebody very important.”

“Who is this guest father?”

“Somebody you haven’t met yet, Marvolo Salazar Gaunt. He’s a close friend to Harrison,” Lucius said, hinting but not saying the truth. However, he didn’t need to, he watched as Draco’s eyes grew wide before he masked it. He knew Harrison would share the details or at least what details he wanted to share with Draco at a later date, so he felt no need to provide his son with any more information, Plausible deniability was after all one’s ally.

“I see, so Harrison’s plans for his… friend worked out then?”

“They did,” Lucius confirmed.

“What’s this about a guest Lucius?” came a soft feminine voice.

Turing Lucius smiled at his wife, “come my love, I have news to share,” he said, offering her his arm.

However, before they had left the room Lucius turned to his still smiling son, “perhaps Draco, you should write to Harrison, I’m sure he would be willing to fill you in on how his summer has gone.”

~

Narcissa blinked as she took in what her husband had told her. The Dark Lord was back. She didn’t know how to feel about that, she had lost everything, almost everything thanks to him, her cousin was dead, her sister and brothers-in-law were in Azkaban, and the only reason her husband wasn’t rotting in that hell hole with them was because of deep pockets and well-placed threats. No, she didn’t know how to feel about this news…

“You’ve been keeping too many secrets from me Lucius.”

“I know my love however, I did not have leave to speak of it.”

“I am your wife, we keep no secrets from each other.”

Lucius cringed under the icy gaze of his lady wife, it was easy sometimes to forget Narcissa was born a Black, her delicate mannerisms and fair hair so different from the norm, but at times like this it was very clear from which family she hailed. Narcissa Malfoy was not a witch to be taken lightly, she was just as deadly as her infamous sister Bellatrix, she just hid it better, under a calm and subtle façade. She knew not to ask questions where it concerned what he had to do, but keeping his lords return from her, that wasn’t something she would take lightly.

“Yes dear,” the blond lord agreed, knowing better than to argue.

“He is sane?” she asked

Lucius nodded, “he is.”

“…And you’ve offered up our home, the home where our son, our only son and heir lives, for him to stay?” Narcissa asked in a carefully controlled voice.
The tone of that question made Lucius still, that tone never boded well for him, “Draco will be safe I swear it, the Dark Lord is different, not only is he sane but Draco also has Harrison's protection,”

Narcissa let out a breath, “to think a child hold such power,”

“He is so much more than a child,”

“He had better be, if he is sworn to protect my son.” Narcissa said, never let it be said that she didn’t love her son.

With that she stood, straightening out her dress before moving to walk out of the room.

“Narcissa?” Lucius called.

“Yes?”

“You're okay with this” he asked, he wouldn’t stop supporting his lord and his goals but if his wife asked he would pull back. He didn’t want to, but his family would always come first.

Narcissa stilled, “I am torn, but I will act appropriately as is expected of me as your wife and a daughter of the house of Black. He is your sworn Lord and Harrison's soul mate.”

Lucius sighed, he knew that was the best he would get from his lady wife, hopefully however once she was reintroduced to his Lord she would see how different he was, and her attitude and acceptance would change. He knew Narcissa agreed with their Lords goals, she was just stuck reminiscing on how wrong everything went and the consequences of the last war.

“Now if you’ll excuse me, I have rooms to prepare. I can’t have our Lord thinking we are providing him with anything but the best.”

“Yes, my love,” Lucius agreed, knowing that Narcissa would be the perfect hostess to their lord, reservations or not.

~

**Meanwhile**

**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Headmaster’s Office.**

~

Dumbledore shook in rage as his tracking spells on the book failed. *How? Why were they failing? could the boy have found out and destroyed the book?* No, he wouldn’t destroy such a precious artefact. Still Dumbledore was dumbfounded, he had placed those spells himself to ensure the book wasn’t lost but they were showing up empty. The only plausible reason he could think of was if the brat had destroyed the book upon discovering it but that thought wasn’t something he wanted to entertain, even if the magic the book contained was dark it was still priceless- and a great wizard like him wouldn’t be tainted by using it, he was the paragon of the light.

Perhaps the boys school trunk hadn’t yet been opened and the book was hidden because of that…. *Yes, that was a much better thought.*

Calming himself Dumbledore stroked his beard, he would make sure to drop the hint off about the boy’s trunk off to the aurors who would be searching the house this week.
A sad cry drew Dumbledore's attention.

Fawkes, his once magnificent phoenix looked wretched. The bird he was so famous for having as a familiar, who proved that he was the strongest wizard since merlin, was as depleted as a phoenix could be without burning. Their bond had never been the strongest, Dumbledore had held it by sheer force of will however it had snapped completely a few years ago, on the 31\textsuperscript{st} of July to be exact. He had gained the bird after his defeat of Grindelwald, but it had been a fragile bond that withered quickly- confusing him as he deserved to have such a powerful familiar, it showed the world just how magical he was.

“What?” he growled out at the fire bird.

A quiet trill was all he go in reply.

“If you would allow a new bond to form I would release you,” he lied, hating how the bird refused him again and again.

The phoenix sent him a baleful glare, flaring his once brilliant feathers which were now dull and brittle, before opening his mouth to once again trill sadly.

“Stubborn bird,” the man growled before waving his wand and reengaging the wards that hid the stand, holding the bird hostage and hiding him from the rest of the world.

He had developed the chains when he realised how weak their bond was, he hadn’t imagined that he would need them, but he was prepared for it. They kept the bird from teleporting and kept him bound to the stand. He couldn’t have the bird free after all as Fawkes was a vital part of his image. He could outlast the stubborn bird.

~

Hooting drew Harrys attention when he entered his room that night, looking up he saw Hedwig on her perch, an ever-growing collection of letters and notes by her side. Quickly opening them and reading the letters from his friends left him feeling slightly guilty, he hadn’t thought of them much since Marvolo’s return, having been so focused on him and his recovery. Grabbing some parchment, he quickly wrote out a basic reply that he would send out to everybody.

~

\textit{Hey guys,}

\texttt{I haven’t had a chance to sit down and write to you all individually, so I thought I would save myself a job and a lot of time by writing a joint letter.}

\texttt{I promised to keep you all up to date so I am keeping my word- My plans for the summer have gone well and I’m happy to say that my friend is staying with me for now as he’s returned from his journey. He seems to have recovered well if not fully yet. However, I am positive that with some time he will be both physically and mentally strong, unlike when he left.}

\texttt{I know that you’re all probably anxious to meet up and see for your own eyes that I’m fine, but I can’t say when I will be free. However, I promise that I will arrange something or better yet sometime for us to meet, perhaps after our book lists have been owled out. I will also aim to do something for our birthdays Nev, don’t think I’ve forgotten about us turning 13.}

\texttt{Luna, I was wondering if you wouldn’t mind keeping hold of the book I lent you for a little longer.}
Draco, I think that you’ll be having a house guest soon.

Gred and Forge, this summer pay close attention at home, Dumbledore will probably be around more as his plans are starting to fall through. See if you can’t help brighten up his day with some of your newly developed products and remember, if you manage to get him, send me a copy of the memory.

Everybody else, keep your ears open guys for any whispers about Dumbledore and his plans.

I hope you're all having great summers, I will try to write more to you all individually but no promises.

Harry

A few days later

~

Grimmauld Place, London

~

Marvolo looked around with curiosity as he was lead from his rooms, the house wasn’t anything like he remembered. Gone were the dark and drab furnishings, the elf heads and troll club stand’s, instead the house was bright and airy, it actually felt welcoming even with the hum of dark magic still saturated in the air.

“Such a difference. So many things have changed since I’ve been gone.”

“Perhaps, but not necessarily for the better, everybody has been anxious for you to return,” Harry said, leading Marvolo into the sitting room where, they would be meeting Remus, Sirius, Severus and Lucius.

Marvolo hummed, he found it hard to believe. He had wandered for years without his followers coming for him, only Quirrell had tried to find him and succeeded. As if sensing his annoyance Harrison turned and shot him a look of concern.

“You shouldn’t dwell on anger. Your followers will return to you, most out of loyalty and respect. Those that return because of fear are useless.”

“I know that,” he snapped, instantly regretting it at the hurt in Harrison's eyes, sighing he rubbed his face in annoyance, “I apologise. It is hard to think that nobody but Quirrell even attempted to find me.”

“I know, but you're different now anyway. Not all of your followers will support you, you will lose some of them but gain many more.”

“Still those that abandoned and betrayed me shall suffer.”

Harry nodded, tightening his hands into fists as he thought about his past life. He understood exactly how Marvolo felt about traitors, they were not people he could stand. Ron, Ginny, Hermione, Molly, Dumbledore, Hagrid and countless more...
“They will, I’ll even help you make them regret their actions.” Harry promised, releasing his white knuckled grip when he felt his nails digging into his palms.

Marvolo smirked darkly at that, knowing that such a pretty and delicate person hid such dark power was intoxicating to him. His little mate was so deceptive, hiding his true nature from the world. Beautiful…

The door opening drew their attention and Sirius’s head popped in, seeing Harry he grinned madly and dashed into the room without hesitation.

“Pup!” he shouted, ignoring the Dark Lords presence as he focused on searching Harry for any sign of hurt or discomfort.

Harry sighed and patted Sirius before attempting to wriggle out of the man’s arms. Feeling eyes on him Harry looked up and noticed Marvolo glaring murderously at Sirius. Rolling his eyes as he extracted himself, Harry shot his mate a pointed look. Honestly, his jealousy was ridiculous.

Feeling Harry worm free, Sirius took a moment to realise they were not alone. Looking up sheepishly he bowed his head, “My lord,” he greeted, looking discomforted by the title.

“Black,” Marvolo replied, still shooting daggers at how close the man was to Harrison.

The sound of quickly approaching footsteps drew their attention as the door opened and a harried looking Remus appeared.

“Sirius,” he hissed, glaring at his friend.

Laughing lightly, Harry motioned for Remus to come in properly.

“It’s okay Remy, I don’t expect great manners from him.”

“Still, I apologise my lord,” Remus said addressing Marvolo with less hesitance than Sirius.

“Its fine,” Marvolo said, although his tone implied differently.

Less harried footsteps announced the arrival of Severus and Lucius.

“My Lord,” they simultaneously greeted, both bowing low before straightening up.

“Now that everybody is here, shall we sit?” Harry said, motioning for them all to join him.

Once everybody was seated Harry took a moment to bask in simply being here. He had worked so hard for this and now his plans looked as though they were coming together.

“Lucius is everything prepared for your lords stay?”

Lucius straightened up at being addressed.

“Yes, little Lord, both my wife and son have been informed about the situation.”

Hearing this Severus turned to his long-time friend.

“Draco knows?” he asked aghast.

“Yes,” Lucius verified.
“He’s a child-!”

“He needed to know,” Harry said, cutting in, “Draco will not be in any danger nor will he be expected to take part in anything. He is a child and to be protected.”

Severus stilled, the face showing his waring emotions before he nodded, “very well then.” He conceded, although it was clear he wasn’t happy.

“Draco has known this was coming for a long time Severus. I trust my friends.”

“They all know?” he asked incredulously.

“Those who I trust, Draco, Neville, Luna, Blaise, Pansy, the twins, Susan and Hannah.”

“The twins? Weasleys, Bones and Abbot?!” he asked horrified, they were all from staunch light families.

“I trust them and even if I didn’t, do you think me a fool? I took every precaution before I told them anything, they couldn’t speak about it or betray me even if they wanted to.” Harry said, getting annoyed at being questioned. The scorn brought back memories from before, when Harry was weaker and naive.

Severus seemed to realise Harry was getting irritated and realised he might be pushing his luck. He knew Harrison was a smart child, incredibly so, he also knew that the boy was incomprehensibly powerful. Still, to trust children, Severus wasn’t sure he agreed.

“Enough Severus.” The curt tone stilled any further comments from the group. “Harrison can trust his followers.”

Both loyal Death Eaters froze at the tone, survival instincts screaming at them to hide as they remembered the pain that would usually follow such a harsh command, however no pain followed only silence that was eventually broken.

“They are not my followers!” Harrison stressed the word, “they’re my friends.”

“Whatsoever you say dear.”

Rolling his eyes Harrison glared at the occupants of the room, who all had varying degrees of shock on their faces, whether from the prospect of him talking back and arguing or due to the fact the Dark Lord called him ‘dear’ he didn’t know.

“Severus has Dumbledore contacted you?” Harry asked.

“No, although this isn’t unusual, he usually gives me a few weeks peace in the summer.”

Harry nodded, “I see, have you heard anything about him at the ministry Lucius?”

“No, although there has been more activity in the DMLE, nothing obvious but whispers about more raids.”

“We knew there would be,” Remus pointed out, “will your manor be spared?” he asked the blonde lord.

“Yes, you will be safe at my manor my Lord. Although they’ve hidden it well, I’ve still heard whispers. I’m not the target this time, from what I’ve found out Dumbledore has whipped up suspicion against Sirius. Putting doubt into the light bootlicker’s heads that he’s guilty and a danger
to their precious saviour, it’s clear they’re after you Little Lord.”

Harry hummed, knowing that Marvolo would be hidden in Lucius’s manor was a relief as the fear he would be discovered by Dumbledore early had been plaguing his thoughts. He didn’t want to be separated from Marvolo, but he knew that in the long run it would be worth it. Their plans were not yet concrete, and Harry knew that Marvolo wasn’t yet ready for the world to know of his return, therefore hearing this made him breathe easier.

~

Harry withheld his snarl as the aurors tore through the house. He knew it was coming, but still, seeing his home invaded so was both degrading and insulting.

“Is that really necessary?” Remus asked as a group of young aurors started to go through Harry’s wardrobe, pulling out his clothes and tossing them to the floor, ignoring both of them and a distraught Kreacher who had reverted back into a stuttering mess with the destruction of his home.

“It’s in the warrant,” a young wizard said, he hadn’t been taking part but observing and casting detection spells on everything.

“My clothes?” Harry snarled dubiously.

“The entire contents of the house is to be searched.”

Harry growled under his breath, he couldn’t place the wizard but there was something very familiar about him.

“And what is it you're hoping to find?” asked Sirius who had just appeared, he had been detained by the aurors, not that they used that word, no the simply had to talk to him.

“As I'm sure my colleagues told you Mr Black-”

“-Lord Black.” both Harry and Sirius interrupted together, smirking when they saw the look of loathing cross the young man’s face.

“My apologies- Lord Black, as I’m sure my colleagues told you, it’s just a routine check-up. After you release from Azkaban and with your families past, The Ministry thought it would be best to come over and have a look around. Nothing to worry or be suspicious about I assure you. We just want to be sure that everything dangerous has been removed, we wouldn’t want anything to happen to you or young Harry.”

Sirius crossed his arms and with a glare that would have made his mother proud turned his nose up at the man, “I can assure you that this check-up as you call it will find nothing. I would never endanger my son by having unsavoury objects in our home, and as an upstanding, law-abiding citizen I would report and hand in any illegal objects,” He drawled.

The auror bristled at the tone, but he had been promised that they would find something, and he wouldn’t let the light down by failing to find the dark objects Black had hidden. He hated Black, he hated all death eaters and he didn’t care how Black pretended- he was a death eater. He had seen him and Lucius Malfoy together at the ministry, seen them cosying up with all the other death eaters who managed to whore and bribe their way out of Azkaban. Black getting released and declared innocent proved nothing, no, Black was guilty and now he was here polluting Harry Potter with his dark and evil ways- it was an outrage.

~
Harry rolled his eyes as the aurors shifted uncomfortably, they had of course found nothing. All of the less savoury books and artefacts were hidden behind blood wards and impenetrable enchantments. Now they were standing behind their boss looking like puppies with their tails between their legs about to be scolded.

“I trust your search is finally over?” Sirius asked with such self-entitlement his mother would have wept tears of joy.

“Yes,” the head auror growled out, finding nothing was always bad.

“Then I kindly ask you to leave my home,” Sirius replied, his tone icy.

“Of course, Lord Black. I apologise for any inconvenience on behalf of the auror office and The Ministry.”

“I’m sure,” Sirius said, staring the man down.

Watching Harry couldn’t help but smirk, for all Sirius hated it, he played the part of pureblood lord very well.

As the last of the aurors disappeared Harry turned to his guardians, “was it just me or were some of those men familiar?”

“I recognised some, but I don’t know them,” Remus said, “then again I try to avoid the ministry, what about you Siri?”

“The head auror is Michael Jones, Hestia Jones’s younger brother. The young one you spoke to upstairs Harry, was their cousin Sebastian. They’re firm light followers, fully in Dumbledore’s pockets.”

Harry nodded, he could see the family resemblance now it had been pointed out to him.

“Are you going to complain to the ministry about the search?” Harry asked

Sirius smirked, “of course, we can’t have the auror department thinking that it’s okay to do pointless and unfounded searches on upstanding citizens like ourselves home’s, now can we?”

Harry nodded, “I would be interested to know if Amelia knows about the search. She is the head of the DMLE after all”

“I’ll let you know.” Sirius promised, “now why don’t you start talking, I know here was more behind this search than you’ve let on,”

Harry grinned, “as I told you before the holidays Dumbledore misplaced a valuable book.”

“Do you think he’s going to give up trying to find it?” Remus asked amused.

“Wouldn’t you? the book is priceless let alone nearly extinct, to misplace such a rare relic is outrageous. It’s a vital piece of magical history.”

Sirius snorted, “yes I’m sure your interest in such a book is purely for its historical and cultural significance.”

“Don’t be silly, it holds such lovely curses,” Harry said grinning innocently as he batted his eyelashes making both men snort.
“Yes, lovely.” Remus said, shaking his head.

“No, I’m sure Dumbledore will probably be making an appearance soon. I know I wouldn’t give up the book without a fight, so I doubt he will,”

“You never did say where you had hidden the book,”

“It’s safe with my most loyal friend,” Harry told them, true Neville might be his best friend and right hand but Luna, Luna was his most faithful.

~

Meanwhile, somewhere in the middle of the Swedish countryside a small blonde witch sneezed before grinning angelically. Her lord was going to be so happy.

“Daddy, I think that today will be the day we finally find a Crumple-Horned Snorkack,” she said, her joy obvious and contagious while dancing up to an equally blonde man.

~

Marvolo stepped out of the fire and looked around at the lavish room with concealed amusement. He found the Malfoys overly opulent decor humorous, as a younger man he had found it distasteful, he was jealous, having come from that awful orphanage where he had to fight for scraps to manors such as this left a bitter taste in his mouth but now he found their over indulgent décor amusing, they were like children showing off their wealth to the world. Not to his tastes but certainly not repugnant.

“My Lord,”

Looking up Marvolo saw Lucius standing rather stiffly by the entrance way, the blonde hid it well but Marvolo could see he was nervous. Behind him was his wife, Narcissa Malfoy nee Black, who like her husband was trying to conceal her emotions. He remembered them from the last war, Narcissa he hadn’t known to well, she was a background player overshadowed by her husband and sister, but he knew the witch was a strong and resourceful woman. Somebody he wouldn’t overlook again.

“Lucius, Narcissa, thank you for opening your home to me,” he greeted.

“You honour us my lord,” Lucius replied, bowing once again.

Narcissa followed her husband’s lead, surprised at the image her Lord presented. She was relieved to see that he was nothing like the monster who she had known in her youth. No this was a man both familiar yet new to her.

“I have had rooms prepared for you my Lord,” Narcissa said upon straightening, “would you wish to view them?”

Marvolo nodded, extending his arm in invitation, shocking both purebloods momentarily, “of course lady Malfoy,”

“Please my lord,” Narcissa said, covering her shock, “call me Narcissa.”

Marvolo smiled charmingly, gently placing Narcissa’s arm in his, “well then Narcissa, shall we?”

~

Draco paced his room waiting for Harry’s reply. The Dark Lord was going to be living with him. The
Dark Lord. *Here. In his manor. Where he lived.*

He had written to Harry a few days ago and gotten a quickly penned reply that hadn’t answered any of his real questions. Now he was left wondering what to do, Harry had said *Marvolo*—the Dark Lords very name had made Draco stop short for a moment—was recovering well and would be safer with them. Yet that hardly settled Draco’s nerves, he still didn’t know what to do, how to act, so now he was forced into hiding from His Lord leading to him taking refuge in this room, not wanting to embarrass himself and his family or Harry.

“Young master,” a quiet pop drew Draco’s attention, “your lady mother wishes for you’s to be joining thems for dinner,”

Draco nodded and quickly double checked his robes, dinner with the Dark Lord, *oh Merlin*. Walking into the dining area he didn’t know what to expect, however the handsome young man sitting at the table wasn’t it. Stumbling slightly, he walked quickly to the table hoping that nobody noticed his fumble.

Marvolo suppressed his smirk when he saw the Malfoy heir trip, such gracelessness from a Malfoy was rare and something to be savoured.

Looking at the blonde child in front of him Marvolo couldn’t help but make comparisons. It was strange seeing proof of how young his mate was, Draco and his Harrison were the same age physically but comparing them was like comparing a trickle of water to a geyser. Harrison dominated those around him, his magical aura and charisma making up for his lack of physical age, it compelled people to him and warped their perception of him, making it easy for the world to forget that he was physically a child. Draco however couldn’t be seen as anything but a child, yes, he had potential and would one day be great, but he had a certain innocence and fragility that Harrison lacked even though technically his mate was physically younger than the Malfoy heir. Thinking of his little raven made him frown slightly, he wanted his mate here with him.

Forcing himself to stop thinking about Harrison and the ache in his chest that their separation caused him, Marvolo focused on the child in front of him.

“Young Draco,” he greeted, pleased by the widening of eyes and shock that momentarily flashed on the young heir’s face.

“My lord,” the boy said, bowing quickly.

Smirking at the reverent tone, Marvolo waved away the bow, “stand up young Draco, there is no need for such formality when it is just us. This is your home after all.”

Draco nodded, Harry had said that the Dark Lord was recovering well and that he would be fine with him as long as Draco remained polite and respectful, but still Draco was cautiously wary.

“Thank you, my Lord,” he said, sitting down.

Marvolo nodded and continued to wonder what it was about the young heir in front of him that had Harrison so protective, he didn’t seem like much, but then again nobody could compare to his little raven.

~

Neville re-read the letter again and fought with his emotions. On the one hand he was happy, Harry, his best friend, *his first friend*, was now whole. He was with his soulmate, he wouldn’t die from his soul pining for its missing half. Yet on the other hand- *Voldemort*, The Dark Lord was back, the man
that was ultimately responsible for his parent’s torture had returned.

Shaking his head, Neville left his room and walked down towards one of the many greenhouses hosted on the Longbottom property. Digging through the soil he thought about what Harry had promised, the Wizarding World united, Dark and Light together as equal. Magic being celebrated, tradition and culture returned and allowed the small bud of hope inside him to bloom. He didn’t think he could forgive those involved in the last war, not completely, and merlin help him if he ever saw the Lestranges or Crouch, but for Harry he would try. The world Harry painted was a world that Neville wanted to be a part of, that he would fight to see become a reality.

With that decisive nod Neville focused on the plants in front of him, not noticing a bond forming in his magic, tying him to his promise and to Harry.

~

Blaise lounged across the chaise as he re-read his letters. He was glad that Harry’s plan had worked out, truly he was, yet he wasn’t sure yet if he was looking forward to the repercussions of the dark lords return. His family was neutral officially, meaning they didn’t ally themselves outwardly to any party, politically or socially. Yet he felt drawn to ally himself to Harry, which would draw his family out into the open. He was the heir; the future family head and it was his responsibility to look out for the future of the Zabini line. Their magic was predominantly dark with the odd neutral mixed in, yet they didn’t scorn the light. No, the Zabini family knew that to scorn one would weaken magic in its whole, something that wouldn’t do.

Putting his letters down he closed his eyes and focused on his magic. It wasn’t well known but the Zabini family had produced a number of seers and psychics throughout the generations, Blaise couldn’t claim to be either himself, but he was more sensitive compare to others, his intuition often being the reason for his decisions. Focusing on Harry Blaise felt a tug, opening his eyes he knew what to do. He would stand with Harry, ally himself to his friend and the world that he promised, for better or worse he would stand with the dark.

~

Hannah looked at the letter in her hand as she followed the house elf into Susan’s room, both relieved and worried when she saw a matching letter in her best friend’s hand.

“He wrote to you to?” Susan said, seeing the letter in Hannah’s hand as she entered.

“He did,” she replied.

“I don’t know what to do,” Susan confessed. She had been thinking about what Harry said ever since the day she walked out on him. She just couldn’t see it, Harry, her Harry, having the dark lord as a soul mate, but she knew that it was true.

“What would you like to do?” Hannah asked.

“I would like to go back to how things were before I knew.”

“That isn’t possible.”

“I know that,” Susan said, sounded dejected. And she did know, she just couldn’t see herself following a monster like Voldemort, accepting him. She said as much.

Hannah was silent for a moment as she thought about what Susan said, “I don’t think that Harry would make us follow Voldemort, and if his letter is to be believed then Voldemort is back, he’s
“Gone. Tom Riddle is back.”

Susan nodded, “I want to be there for Harry.” She confessed, “I want to be able to celebrate Samhain and Yule without fear, I want to be able to celebrate being a witch without fear that I will be locked up.”

Hannah nodded encouragingly, she hadn’t wanted to walk out on Harry to begin with, but she knew that Susan had needed her more than the Potter-Black heir. Her friend was stubborn when she wanted to be, and rigid in her beliefs of right and wrong, yet Hannah had harboured hope that she would come around, a hope that it would seem wasn’t pointless.

“Can you accept him, accept who Harry will become with him at his side?” Hannah asked.

Susan stilled for a moment, thinking hard before she answered. “Yes,” she said decisively.

Hannah smiled at her friend glad that they would be returning to Harry’s fold, neither noticing the slight shine which surrounded them.

~

Pansy practically skipped around the manor when she read Harry letter, she was so happy for him not only was he finally reunited with his soul mate, a concept that she was slightly envious over, but their lord was back, he would be able to take his rightful place as the leader of the dark and hopefully lead them into a new age of magic.

She didn’t feel guilt over his return, her family had always been staunch followers of the dark, allying themselves with multiple dark lords and ladies throughout the generations in the hopes of dark magic being accepted, and none had come as close as Voldemort before his fall. Not his defeat at baby Harry’s hand, but his loss of sanity. This time, with his soul mate by his side Pansy was sure that the dark would rise, and magic would finally be free. She couldn’t wait for it and was proud of her role standing beside Harry.

~

The twins snorted as they heard Ron whine to their mother about their latest prank. They had enchanted all the mirrors in the house insult him whenever he was alone. The spell work had taken them weeks of research and many failed attempts, but they had finally managed it a few days previous, something that they were very proud of. They still couldn’t believe their mother believed them to be failures, she saw their pranks as useless and easy, ignoring the complexity of the charms and potions they created. It was one of the reasons that they had rebelled so strongly, after realising she didn’t see them as anything other than nuisances. Their father at least tried, he found their charms ingenious and showed interest in their progress, even if it was only barely.

They had read Harry’s letter as soon as it had arrived before destroying it, not wanting to risk their family or Dumbledore getting their hands on it. It wasn’t unusual for the twins to get mail, Lee would often write to them, and sometime Angelina and Oliver but this summer they had noticed how their mother watched their mail like a hawk and they hadn’t wanted to risk it. It was one of the reasons they had stepped up their parks, they had needed the distraction.

They knew that standing with Harry would alienate them from their family, perhaps not everybody but the majority. They would be disowned, but they couldn’t find in within themselves to care. Harry promised them a world they could be free to practice magic without repercussions. They weren’t
dark, but they weren’t light either, and they didn’t want to have to pretend to be. With Harry that
didn’t matter, he saw them, and they saw him. He was one of the few who could tell them apart.

Hearing their mother yell, they grinned at each other before running out of the back door, neither
noticing the bonds growing within them.

~

Luna twirled around to a song only she could apparently hear. The hum of the magic around her was
beautiful and she couldn’t help but be moved by it. Her lord was happy and nearly complete. Soon a
new chapter in this tale would begin and a new age of magic would reign…

Giggling at the thought Luna hummed, she couldn't wait for the future to start. With that, she
quickened her dance, waving her arms above her head to help clear the air of dark energies that
caused nightmares.

Chapter End Notes

A new chapter finally! Hope you enjoy it and I'm Sorry for such a drawn out wait, hopefully it was worth it.
Also on another note, I have some absolutely gorgeous fanart here created by myrkky, so check it out if you get a chance.


~Annie
Part Two

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Harry Potter and the Shadowed Light

Chapter 37

Part 2 of the story.

~

I hope you all enjoyed part one and don’t judge me for having a little hiatus before starting part two, not only did my muse leave for a while but sadly real life does have to come first. Hopefully you’ll enjoy the second part of the story as much as the first. Also a massive shout out to all of the lovely people who comment and review the story, you’re all stars and I love each and every one of you for your continued support and encouragement, it means so much to me as a writer.

~

Quick overview of the story so far... not detailed but hopefully it will jog some memories without you having to re-read the entire story.

~

Harry upon winning the war discovered that Dumbledore and the Weasleys alongside Hermione had betrayed him and were only using him for his power and fame, having drugged and compelled him into being a hero. He discovered that Voldemort had been his soul mate and with his death he would have eventually died having not been for him having won the allegiance of the deathly hallows, instead he was suffering. Realising this he returned to his 11 year old body with Deaths help to get revenge and save his soul mate.

He got Sirius released from Azkaban with the help of the goblins who know about his time travel and status as MOD, they also named him goblin friend. Pettigrew was imprisoned and Dumbledore realised Harry wasn’t his pawn, many hijinks ensued as the old goat tried to regain control of his weapon with the help of the youngest two Weasleys and Molly. Sirius teamed up with Remus, Lucius and Severus to help Harry complete his goals after they realised that Dumbledore had been using compulsions on them.

Also during his first year he was sorted into Ravenclaw, befriended, Neville, Hannah Abbot and Susan Bones, eventually adding, Draco, Blaise, the Weasley twins, Luna and Pansy to the group. He allowed Hermione to face the troll on Halloween without intervention and Stole the Philosophers Stone. He started the ritual to return Marvolo’s soul and has just got him back.

Marvolo is currently living with the Malfoy’s as Dumbledore is obsessed with getting control of Harry, who is about to enter his 3rd year.

~

Warning there will be a time skip in the next chapter.
Previously

Luna twirled around to a song only she could apparently hear. The hum of the magic around her was beautiful and she couldn’t help but be moved by it. Her Lord was happy and nearly complete. Soon a new chapter in this tale would begin and a new age of magic would reign…

Giggling at the thought Luna hummed, she couldn't wait for the future to start. With that, she quickened her dance, waving her arms above her head to help clear the air of dark energies that caused nightmares.

~

Harry schooled his features as he sat down with Ms. Mirwood in the parlor. He truly liked the woman, she was passionate about her job and truly wanted to help children, which Harry genuinely respected however he was finding it increasingly difficult to keep up his façade of innocence and maintain his childlike mannerisms. He had never truly had a chance to be a child and often wondered if his mask was truly believable, however going from her positive response he guessed it was working. With an internal sign Harry plastered on a naive grin while mentally going over plans he needed to implement and the many things he still had to do before returning to school.

“Tell me Harry, how have you been since I last saw you?” she asked.

“Fine, thank you,” he replied.

“How are you enjoying school? You're going into your 3rd year, right?”

“It’s good, I enjoy being with my friends. And yes, I am.”

“Are you excited to start your chosen subjects?”

“Yes, I picked Ancient Runes and Arithmancy.”

Joanne smiled at that, raising an eyebrow, “not the easiest of subjects,” she commented.

Harry snorted lightly. “Hopefully they’ll keep me engaged.”

“Ahh yes, I’d heard that you're somewhat of a prodigy,”

Harry did allow his eyes to roll then. “Hardly, I just pick things up quickly.”

He hated being thought of as a prodigy, he wasn’t, not really. He was just older than his peers, he’d already learnt everything being taught in classes, he’d lived through a war where he was taught how to fight and survive and now, he was able to study whatever he wanted. Yes, his memory was considerably better and he retained the knowledge he learnt but he was not a prodigy, not like Marvolo and even Dumbledore, though he hated to admit that.

“Well Harry, I can honestly say that I have no concerns about you or your situation.”

Harry smiled, “so this’ll be it? Nobody is going to try and take me away for Siri?”

“Nobody is going to take you away,” She confirmed.

Harry grinned; he was genuinely pleased with the result.
Meanwhile

The burrow, Ottery St Catchpole, Devon

“And you're sure that this will work?” Ginny asked her mother, eyeing the potion boiling in the cauldron.

“Yes dear, it’s an old family recipe,” Molly said, concentrating on timing the stirs just right, it was a delicate brew.

Meanwhile, hidden from view their plans were being spied on. Fred turned and shared a grim look with George. Their mother had been brewing on and off a lot more this summer but hearing this confirmed their fears, she was planning something, and they doubted that the results would be good.

“But the last potion didn’t work!” Ginny whined, “You promised he would be mine!”

Finishing the final step Molly took a step back before turning to her daughter.

“I know my dear, he will be yours. This potion isn’t like the last few; it doesn’t cause compulsions or fake love. It simply plants the seeds. You’ll need to build a relationship, make him fall for you.”

“But he’s gay!”

Molly turned sharply, her face contorting in fury. “He is not gay! He’s just confused. You will make him fall for you, the potion will help, don’t worry darling, you’ll be Lady Potter.”

Ginny nodded, a sick look of pleasure crossing her face, “good.”

The twins stilled at that, they couldn’t believe their mother had turned into this person, but at the same time a small part of them wasn’t shocked. She had always been overbearing, controlling and quick to judge, not just them but everybody, but they had ignored the signs growing up as she was their mother and therefore had their love and loyalty, but now…

Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire

Marvolo signed and rubbed at the ever-growing headache he had developed since he had started to read the documents gathered by Lucius and Severus. He had started with their reports on his supporters, hoping that like Lucius, most would have be smart enough to keep themselves free and out of jail, yet it seemed that many of his faithful had not had the Malfoy lords keen sense. Only a small handful of his skilled followers remained free and even fewer of those had recovered their positions within society. Sighing once more, he snapped his fingers to summon an elf.

“Master Dark Lord Sir called for an Elfie.” A young elf squeaked, physically shaking in terror when it looked at him.

Eye twitching at the sound of the high pitch squeak, Marvolo fought to keep his temper. His control
over himself and his emotions was getting better by the day, yet he found that when he was
annoyed, he was quick to take action without thought. Like now, his wand was already in his hand
and pointing at the creature on reflex, causing its eyes to widen impossibly further and its shaking to
double. Reluctantly slipping it away, he turned and faced the window, clenching his fist as he felt the
hum of his magic die back down.

“I require a headache reliever and a pot of tea,” he said briskly, as his magic settled itself.

The elf squeaked and popped away, mumbling ‘yes sirs,’ and ‘right away, sirs’ almost incoherently
under its breath.

Placing the documents on the desk he stood and walked to the window allowing the summer breeze
to caress him for a moment. He had so much to fix and get back on track before he could even think
about making a move towards his goals, most significantly himself.

Hearing a pop, he turned and saw the tea and potion had been placed on a table and left for him.
Turning away from the breeze he moved and picked up the potion. Allowing his magic out to test it
before opening the vial and sniffing it, one couldn’t be too cautious. Finding nothing wrong he
downed the vial, letting out a hissed breath when the throbbing in his head slowly dissipated.

~

The British Ministry of Magic, Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Amelia Bones’
office

~

Amelia grimaced as she fought the pounding headache that was rapidly building in her temple as she
read the mess masquerading as a report in front of her. A raid. An illegal raid. On the home of a
Lord- but not just any Lord; No, the recently acquitted and shockingly powerful Lord Black. Great.

She had been shocked when she received Sirius’ Patronus, telling her about the raid after it had been
done. She hadn’t known about or authorized it; she certainly wouldn’t have allowed it. This was the
4th raid on ‘dark families’ in the last few months that had occurred without her authority and she
wasn’t impressed. No, she would get to the bottom of this.

~

July 31st, 1992, Malfoy manor, Wiltshire, England

~

Stepping from the green tinted flames, Harry allowed his eyes to roam briefly before they landed on
the impeccable figure of his mate. Their separation, although it hadn’t been long, had been harder on
him than he had anticipated. Seeing him standing there, Harry allowed is magic to flare slightly and
sighed in contentment when he felt Marvolo’s own magic rise within him and flash to meet his. The
combination was intoxicating, and to Harry it felt like coming home.

Entering the room properly Harry noted it wasn’t the usual receiving room he had entered.

Seeing the confusion on his mate’s face, Marvolo answered the unasked question.

“I redirected your floo connection, making it so that you would land here.”
Harry nodded, confused at why his mate would do something so needlessly complicated without reason.

“‘I see…’” he replied, drawing out the word in question.

Smiling at the confusion Marvolo showed his hands, which had been hidden behind his back. In them was a small wrapped parcel.

“I wanted to give you your present while we were alone.”

Smiling bashfully Harry stepped forward and took the parcel, stroking the paper almost reverently.

“You didn’t have to get me a present.”

“No? I disagree; have you not given me my very life?”

Harry tilted his head in contemplation, “I did that for myself, you just happened to benefit as well.” It was true, without a soul mate Harry was dead, that it happened to be Marvolo was inconsequential.

Marvolo smirked at the reply, how very Slytherin of his little raven, ”and benefit I have.”

Harry snorted at the response, “shall I open it now?” he asked holding the small package up.

Nodding, Marvolo watched Harry open the gift, taking care not to rip the paper. The hesitant touches of his mate’s actions, reminding him of the fact that Harry didn’t get gifts or presents growing up.

Placing the paper to one side, Harry looked at the small box it was too big to be a ring box but not by much. Opening it he saw a platinum pocket watch, with himself, Sirius, Remus and Marvolo on. It was a smaller version of Weasleys family clock.

“This is amazing,” Harry said, stroking the intricate design on the front. It was a thunderbird seemingly doing battle with a phoenix.

Marvolo felt his lips twitch at the happiness his mate’s green eyes showed. “I am glad you like it, charming it was surprisingly easy once I got the basics down.”

Harry rolled his eyes lightly at that, “for you I’m sure,” he said, smiling slightly to ensure his mate knew he was joking.

Stepping up to him, Harry hesitated for a moment before hugging the man. Feeling him tense before relaxing Harry smirked, before pulling away.

“Thank you, this is truly an amazing gift.”

Marvolo nodded once, a sharp jerk of his head. His mate had hugged him. Him. He couldn’t remember the last time he had been hugged. Had he been hugged?

Seeing Marvolo’s internal dilemma Harry reached up and grabbed his hand, giving it a soft tug.

“Come on, we should go meet up with the others. I’m shocked that Sirius isn’t screaming the house down trying to find me.”

Pulling himself from his shock, Marvolo noted the hand in his and gave it a light squeeze before allowing Harrison to drag him out of the room. He had another surprise for his little mate.

~
Neville twitched as he looked around the opulent manor he was standing in, he was used to Longbottom manor, which was rustic and homey.

“Don’t look so scared Nev,” said the surprisingly silky voice next to him.

“That’s easy for you to say, you’ve practically grown up here.” Neville hissed through clenched teeth as he once again scanned the room, eyes lingering on the blonde portraits hanging on the walls which seemed to be staring right back at him with equal amounts of curiosity and distain.

Blaise hummed, “true, but you’re Harry’s guest. Nothing will happen to you,” the boy replied easily.

Neville nodded his head. He trusted Harry. He did, but this was Malfoy manor, if his gran knew he was here she would skin him, cure him and then do it again for good measure.

“Don’t worry boys, we’re safe here; our Lord is very protective of us,” Luna sang, appearing from seemingly nowhere.

“Luna?” Neville asked, “I thought you were in Sweden all summer?”

“I was until a few hours ago, but daddy decided to let us return early.”

“Did you have a fruitful time?” Blaise asked the vibrantly dressed girl whom he had come to love as a friend.

“I was so sure I would find a Crumple-Horned Snorkack, but no matter where we looked they kept hiding.” She sighed, pouting at the end and scrunching her nose up sadly at her lack of Snorkack.

Both boys shot each other looks of amusement before making sympathetic noises, used to their friends’ oddities and loving her more for them.

“Why is it at every gathering I have to search for my friends who hide in the corners?” Draco asked rhetorically as he approached the group.

“Hello Dragon,” Luna said, smiling blindingly before latching herself on to her fellow platinum blonde.

“Hello Luna,” Draco replied in slight exasperation. Her limpet impression nothing new and something he resigned himself to after the first time she had declared him comfortable.

“Hey Dray,” Blaise said, nodding his head at his fellow snake.

“Blaise, Neville.” Draco greeted in turn.

“So... the dark Lord,” Neville said, hoping for some details.

“He’s...” Draco broke off, “he's not like I was expecting but at the same time he is?” he said sounding unsure.

He didn’t know how to say the man was utterly petrifying but he wasn’t afraid of him, not really, no, he was in awe. Never had Draco felt power like the Dark Lords, the closest was when Harry lost control and even then Draco knew that he had never felt the full force of his friends’ magic. Being around the Dark Lord was surreal, his power intoxicating and terrifying. The man wasn’t the monster he had feared growing up but he did fear him slightly, he was so powerful, he was the embodiment of darkness Draco thought whimsically. He could hardly imagine the charming man he had come to
know as anything but what he was, a dangerously powerful, handsome and cunning wizard, yet he knew the man had been a monster before Harry had intervened, and knew the potential for it to happen again was still there. The man was lord Voldemort, yet not the Voldemort the wizarding world knew from the last war; No, he was much more.

“Helpful that.”

However before Draco could try to put into words how his summer with the Dark Lord had been the doors opened, and Harry appeared; *Holding hands* with the *Dark Lord*... actually looking close it was more dragging him by the hand, arguably much worse and much more surreal in Draco’s humble opinion.

~

Marvolo didn’t pull his hand from Harrison’s as his little mate dragged him through the manor, content with the small physical contact. He also enjoyed the shocked looks on the faces of everybody in the room they had just entered when they noticed the small contact. The children in the corner looked delightfully terrified, with a dash of incredulity mixed in to add to his enjoyment. Well apart from the oddly dressed blonde girl who was hanging off the Malfoy heir, who he assumed was the Lovegood child, she was beaming brightly at their hands and bouncing on the spot slightly.

Seeing his friends Harry smiled, “another surprise,” he said, squeezing Marvolo’s hand in thanks.

“I thought you would enjoy the company of your friends so I had Black invite them.”

“Thank you, with everything going on I haven’t had chance to see them this summer. I even missed Neville’s birthday.”

Marvolo nodded, he didn’t really understand Harrison’s obsession with friends, but if they made his little mate happy then he would indulge him.

Letting go, Harry walked and greeted them, leaving Marvolo as he doubted his friends were up to introductions just yet. Even Draco who had been living with the man looked slightly fearful at their entrance. As soon as he was within distance Harry had an armful of blonde as Luna launched herself from Draco onto him. Expecting this Harry hardly faltered at the added weight and simply hummed a greeting, petting her hair and allowing his magic to surround her.

“Little Moon,” he greeted.

“My Lord” she replied, practically purring and arching into his touch like a cat.

“How has your summer been?” he asked

“Not as productive as yours it would seem,” the girl said, smiling brightly when she saw how relaxed her lord was. He felt lighter to her now, his magic freer and his eyes clearer.

Harry felt his smile brighten, “yes, I have been rather busy,” he agreed

Hearing a snort Harry looked up at the others gathered.

“Rather busy?” Blaise repeated, shaking his head at the understatement.

Harry smirked, “a tad.”

Neville grinned watching them, like Luna he noticed the small changes in his friend, grinning at how
much healthier Harry seemed.

“Happy Birthday Harry” he said in greeting.

“You too Neville, sorry I missed your gathering,”

“It’s okay,” the boy insisted and it was, he understood how hectic Harry's summer had been, between The Dark Lords return and Dumbledore's interference.

“Did you get your present?”

Neville grinned, “I did, I still can’t believe you got my gran to agree into letting me have a pet.”

“She was surprisingly quick to agree. Have you been to pick one out yet?” Harry asked, he had noticed Neville often stopped to pet cats around school so he had found a lady who bred kneazles with muggle and other domestic cats for Neville's birthday and simply pre-paid for Neville so he could go and pick whichever one he bonded with.

“Not yet, but I'm going to go before we go back to school.” Neville replied happily, excited about getting a pet which he got to pick. Trevor, his old toad had been a gift from his uncle and had vanished during their first year. Only to be found in greenhouse three, Neville saw him every now and again during Herbology but didn’t have the heart to take him back.

Harry smiled, “I'm happy you're pleased, you’ll have to let me know what you pick out.”

“Talking of happy,” Blaise cut in, “you look much better.”

Harry nodded, “a healed bond, even one that is incomplete is indescribable.”

“Well he certainly looks different from the stories,” the Italian said.

Harry nodded, “yes, the pervious lack of nose has thankfully he rectified.”

“And he’s... healthy?” Neville asked pausing on the world as he wasn’t sure how to ask if the man was still a megalomaniac hell bent on racial cleansing and genocide.

Harry snorted at his polite friend, “he’s healthy.” He verified.

Neville let out a breath, “I'm glad.”

Harry nodded; he knew how worried his friends were about Marvolo's return, especially, Neville, Susan and the twins. Thinking of them he wondered where the rest of their friends were, or at the very least pansy, the twins he could understand being missing and even Hannah and Susan.

“Where’s Pansy today?” he asked.

“Her parents have taken her to France until the end of the summer, etiquette lessons,” Draco explained, before adding “the twins for obvious reasons couldn’t be here but send their regards and a request for you to and I quote ‘unleash hell on the old goat’, and our resident Hufflepuffs send their apologies but felt being here would be too much too soon, however they sent along your presents and said to save them a seat on the train.”

Harry nodded, happy that Hannah and Suzie where coming around.

“Come on my lord, we have things for you,” Luna said suddenly, dragging Harry over to a table that held an assortment of brightly wrapped presents.
Laughing at her enthusiasm, Harry noted his book on the table, Luna had stuck a giant muggle bow on it in Slytherin green. Shaking his head at her antics Harry allowed himself to indulge in the childish moment.

~

After spending a few hours talking to his friends and catching up on everything that had happened a tired Harry returned to Marvolo content. His impromptu party had been a surprise, he knew Marvolo didn’t understand his need for friends, having never had any himself so Harry appreciated the gesture all the more.

“You look happy,” Marvolo commented.

“I am. Thank you for today,” Harry said, sending his mate a warm smile.

“I’m glad having that blonde hanging off you pleased you.”

Harry snorted then, “Being around Luna was amazing as always I’ll admit, but you have nothing to be jealous of.”

Marvolo stilled at the word jealous. Jealous. He wasn’t jealous. He just didn’t appreciate strange blonde girls dangling off his soul mate. His.

“I am lord Voldemort. I don’t get jealous.” He hissed out, eyes narrowed when he noticed how amused his little raven looked.

Harry finding the whole thing hilarious simply agreed, “Of course not dear.”

Taking a breath Marvolo stilled as he realised that he was being ridiculous. He knew of their bond, and he knew Harry was his. He didn’t doubt his raven at all.

“You’re humouring me,” he said, happy his mate took his foolishness with such patience; truly he was blessed to have Harrison.

Harry grinned, “even if I didn’t have you, I would never be with Luna, She is my sister. I love her completely but it is 100% platonic.”

Marvolo grumbled under his breath, his slight bouts of irrationality where rare now, his occulmency and meditation had nearly healed his psyche but still seeing the blonde girl hang from his mate had sent a bout of rage through him earlier. It had taken a moment for him to rein it in and not to attack her for touching what was his. Was this jealousy?

Before he could respond a small hand appeared and grabbed his, “remember, I quite literally came back in time for you.”

Marvolo squeezed the hand, “I know. It would seem that my emotions are still not 100%.”

Harry hummed in amusement, a small part of him pleased that his mate was jealous.

“You’re getting better every day.”

“I’m weak.”

“How many others would have recovered as much as you, in such a small amount of time? You're amazing, what you’ve achieved is beyond the scope of even the strongest of wizards.” Harry countered with sincerity.
Marvolo hummed, noting a swelling of something warm inside himself as his mate passionately argued against him.

“Come, we have a lot to discuss with the others.”

Harry nodded, birthday or not there was a lot to do before September.

~

“Did you like your surprise?” Sirius asked, once they had reached them in Lucius’s study.

Harry smiled, “I did, thank you all,” he said, sending smiles to the gathered adults, and noting with surprise that Narcissa was amongst them.

“Come and sit,” Marvolo said, leading him to a chair before taking a seat next to him.

For the next few hours Harry watched in fascination as between them they mapped out his mates return. He had never known just how much sway Narcissa had in the social circles until this point. He was honestly in awe and more than slightly wary of the blonde woman. She knew gossip about everybody and had blackmail on even more, he had though Lucius was a good social manipulator yet compared to his wife he was a novice.

Seeing his face Sirius laughed.

“What did you expect from a Black?” he asked, grinning with pride at his cousin. At one point this level of manipulation would have horrified him, but now he could appreciate the delicacy of it. Why fight a war with spells when you can win it with a few well placed words?

By the end of the night they had a game plan, and Marvolo was set to slowly rejoin the world starting with the new season of the Wizengamot where he would re-claim the Slytherin lordship and seats.

Chapter End Notes

*Hides for taking so long to update*

Enjoy!

Annie

Works inspired by this one: [Part for Harry Potter and the Shadowed Light](https://archiveofour.org/work/2910397) by myrkky

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