A Tale of Two Letters

by startabby

Summary

It’s that time of year, the time when potential students are formally invited to attend school in the upcoming term.

What happens when the time comes for Harry’s Hogwarts letter to be sent out?

Notes

This is set roughly six years after the previous story and takes place during the summer that Harry (and Dudley) turn eleven.

Chapters will bounce in time as we switch between characters, so dates are included inside the text.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Minerva McGonagall sat in her office, a hot cup of tea and a plate of biscuits set to one side of the wide oak desk before her, while stacks of parchment filled the opposite side. Despite the time of year, her work load was as full as ever.

The spring term of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry had just ended a few weeks before. Since then, the faculty and staff had sent the students on their way to their homes. Now was the time for them to do all the little tasks postponed back when school was in session.

For Minerva, many of her summer tasks came from her secondary position at Hogwarts, namely her responsibilities as Deputy Headmistress. Working directly under Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, she took on the administrative management of the school. It was a thankless job, full of small, tedious and time consuming tasks. Summer, being a time when her responsibilities as Transfiguration Professor and Head of Gryffindor were minimal, was the perfect time to do these tasks. This was why the middle-aged witch was sitting cooped up in her office doing paperwork in the middle of the Summer Hols.

On this particular afternoon, however, the next task on her to-do list was one which Minerva enjoyed. “Invitation letters,” she murmured, excited, as she took a sip of her tea. Having checked the rosters for returning students, it was now time to compile and send out invitations to the potential incoming class of first year students.

“What new children should I expect come September?” Minerva commented to herself as she tapped her wand against her closed mouth.

The invitation letters were Minerva’s first glimpse each year into the new challenges and individuals that the year’s class might bring.

“Step one: Check the Book of Names.”

An ancient and extremely complex artefact of the school; the Hogwarts Book of Names was used to identify prospective students. The Book was connected to the web of ley lines that encompassed the geographic boundaries of the British Isles. From there it registered every incidence of wild or ‘accidental’ magic above a certain threshold occurring inside said boundaries. If the magical signature that performed the wild magic had not been previously detected by the Book, the magical signature and birthdate of the caster and their current approximate location were added to its records. Otherwise, the Book merely updated the approximate location of the caster.

The contents of the Book were a carefully guarded secret. This was because the unscrupulous could use it to identify and locate magical children while they were still uneducated and vulnerable. As Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, Minerva could access the Book once a year. Even then, all that she was allowed to do was pull the information on those students whose birthdates fell in the
appropriate range for starting school in September.

“Hogwarts. The time is nigh for a new school year. Let the Book of Names be read.”

By reciting the incantation, Minerva triggered the magic that unsealed the book. She laid out a blank sheet of parchment on the centre of her desk, and then placed an inkpot with a beautiful Golden Eagle feather quill beside it. As the magic from the Book activated, the quill rose without any support and began writing out the list of names in the woman’s own handwriting.

As she watched the list being compiled, Minerva smiled. She recognized a number of familiar surnames appearing on the parchment. Many of the potential students from the Book had parents, older siblings or other relatives who had been under her tutelage in the past.

There was young Ronald, the latest Weasley scion. Many of the Weasleys had passed through Hogwarts gates in recent years. Included in that list were Ronald’s five older brothers, three of whom were on Minerva’s returning student roster.

Then there was Frank and Alice’s son Neville, the Longbottom Heir. Augusta would be relieved to see that letter arrive, Minerva knew. She had heard rumours that the poor boy might be a squib, but seeing his name recorded on the parchment, she knew that the rumours were false.

Of course, there was young Harry Potter, the-boy-who-lived. James and Lily’s son was finally of an age to re-join the Wizarding world. Minerva was thrilled to see the son of two of her favourite former Gryffindors, though her brow wrinkled as she leaned back in her scarlet and gold upholstered chair, took another sip of her tea, and wondered where the boy had been for the past ten years.

With a set of archival charms, Minerva compared the list that had just been copied from the Book to the records sent over from the British Ministry of Magic. The charms took the single list from the Book and sorted it into different categories. Said process was a curiosity to watch as the names written just moments before by Minerva’s Golden Eagle quill moved and rearranged themselves into four distinct columns. Each column contained the names of those prospective students who would receive their Hogwarts invitation through one of four specific processes.

The most complex invitation process was the one used for the Muggleborn students. Muggleborns, or first-generation Magical children, were identified in one of two ways. Either they had had at least one incident of accidental magic that required Ministry interference, which added them to the Ministry rolls; or their name was entirely absent from all previous Ministry records but their magical signature was still recorded by the Book.

Those who had interacted with the Ministry generally had a place of residence, Muggle Guardian, and sometimes even a Magical Guardian on record for Minerva to use. For the rest, the Book of Names would supply Apparition coordinates for a particular ley line node. The provided location was the nearest node in Britain’s Magical web to the child’s latest bout of wild magic inside the confines of the British Isles.

To find the specific address, Minerva or her proxy would travel to the indicated node in person. Once at the node, the ‘postal’ magic that the Book placed on the envelope of the Hogwarts letter would be triggered by proximity. If the child still lived within range, the address written on the letter would be updated to their current place of residence.

“It was always a thrill,” Minerva mused, “to watch the name on a Muggleborn invitation expand to include an address.”
“I hope none of the Muggleborns this year are exceptions, though,” she added to herself. “There was that one boy last year, what was his name? Oh, yes, Evan Cooper. His family had moved from outside Cardiff to London’s East End after his last bout of accidental magic. The poor house-elves spent days popping from ley line node to ley line node before they finally located his Magical signature and the address on the envelope was updated.”

Since the Hogwarts invitation were usually the Muggleborn students’ first introduction to the Wizarding world, Minerva or one of her proxies would make a home visit to present the invitation. By doing so, they were able to prove to both the students and their parents or guardians that the packet and its contents were true. Minerva also used the home visits to ensure that the Muggleborns had all the information that they needed to make an informed decision about attending Hogwarts.

Glancing at the list, Minerva saw that there were eight names that year. With a wave of her wand, she copied the names to the Muggleborn packets that the House-elves had assembled for her. Between herself, Pomona (Sprout), Septima (Vector), and Bathsheba (Babbling), they should be able to cover all the visits in short order. Provided nothing went wrong, they would be done by the end of the week, even with providing chaperonage for school shopping if the parents’ desired. Of the Muggleborn list, it appeared that five of the students had received a visit from the Ministry at some point and already had some inkling that the letter would be coming. As the most experienced of the four, she made sure to assign the more ‘mysterious’ of their children to herself and Pomona.

The remainder of the children who would receive an invitation had Magical ancestry and records at the Ministry. Thus, they didn’t need an in-person visit. However, the addresses for these children came in three distinct flavours, each requiring separate handling.

The first, default category, was easy. Children in this column had Magical Guardians and addresses that were registered Wizarding properties in the British Isles. Therefore, it was assumed that the children and their Guardians were well aware of Hogwarts. The names on this column were added to the simplest of form letters [see canon Harry’s letter], which included only a second sheet of parchment with a supply list, as the administrative paperwork would be sent separately to their Magical Guardians after Minerva received a response accepting the invitation. There were a couple of dozen odd letters in this category, and Minerva got through them quickly, sending off the addressed letters in bulk to the owlery, where they would be collected for delivery by one of Hogwarts’ flock of post owls.

The second, more complex, category had an extra step in the addressing. Children in this column had British Magical Guardians, but their Ministry records indicated that they would prefer not to receive mail via post owl. Such children had listed addresses that were either not registered as Wizarding properties or were in the midst of Muggle neighbourhoods where post owls would pose a problem for the Statute of Secrecy. The children who fell into this category, approximately ten this year, were usually half-bloods whose parents lived and/or worked in the Muggle world.

Like the previous set of children, these invitations were sent using basic form letters. However, instead of being sent off with individual post owls, Minerva bundled the letters, sealed and with student names listed on the outside of each envelope, together into a single packet. Along with the letters, Minerva added a cover sheet containing a list of the Muggle style post addresses that matched to each name. From there, a Hogwarts owl delivered the packet to the British Wizard Muggle Post Interface Office nearest Hogwarts, which happened to be in Edinburgh. At the BWMPI office, letters
were transferred between the two postal systems.

Letters [and packages] delivered by owl, like the Hogwarts invitations, were sent directly to one of the half-dozen BWMPI branch facilities. Once they were received, workers placed the Wizarding mail inside Muggle-safe envelopes [wrappings]. Then, the appropriate addresses and stamps were applied to the outside of the envelopes [packages]. At specific times of day, the workers at the BWMPI would do a bulk drop off to the nearest branch of the Muggle British Post Office, where the letters [packages] were processed and added to the Muggle system of postal distribution.

Of course, letters [and packages] could also go through the BWMPI Office in the other direction. To do so, the sender placed their letter [package] inside two nested envelopes [wrappings]. The outer envelope [wrapping] followed the Muggle procedure. For the ‘to’ address, the sender used the Post Office Box owned by the BWMPI Office. Items sent to this box were automatically transferred to the BWMPI facility. Once claimed by the BWMPI facility, the outer envelope [wrapping] was removed by their workers. Then, the inner envelope [package] with its Magical address was sent out via one of the BWMPI owls. Users paid for the BWMPI Office’s service using vouchers purchased in advance and tucked between the two envelopes [wrappings].

The third and final category was the most unusual. Children in this column had Magical Guardians who were not current residents of the Magical British Isles. In these cases, the children on the list had either done accidental magic while visiting the British Isles or were from families who had moved out of the country at some point after the child’s first instance of accidental magic.

While very few of these students accepted their Hogwarts invitations, it was still expected that the offer be made to them. For the children on this list, the Hogwarts invitation packet not only contained a cover letter and a list of supplies, it also included an overview of Hogwarts and its general details. This was meant to help the potential students compare Hogwarts to any other Magical education choices that they might be considering.

To deliver letters to the international students, Minerva followed Hogwarts’ usual routine. First, the entire batch of addressed envelopes was sent to the British Ministry of Magic’s Department of International Magical Cooperation. From there, the letters were separated by country. Each letter was then included in the diplomatic correspondence with the relevant Magical government. Reciprocity agreements meant that delivery within the country was handled by the local Magical government.

Minerva looked over the international list with curiosity. This year there were an even half-dozen names on the list.

“Let’s see. We have the normal few names from Magical France: Marguerite Despereaux, Armand Costas, Adeline Avignon. Those students are probably already enrolled at Beauxbatons.”

Over the years, Minerva had observed that it was fairly common for there to be crossover between Hogwarts and Beauxbatons invitation lists. This was thanks to the fact that the countries that the two schools catered to were physically and politically close. Thus, the opportunities to travel for vacations, intermarriage, etc. between the two regions were common. However, Beauxbatons started their program with students a year younger than Hogwarts, so most of the students from France who received letters were already enrolled at the other school.

“As for the rest… Oh, interesting, we have a Heinrich Warner from Germany, a Su Li from China, and a Harrison Grim from America. I don’t recognize any of the surnames from past students, but maybe one of them will decide to attend.”
Minerva worked her way through her piles, signing the duplicated letters that the house-elves had prepared and adding names and addresses to the appropriate envelopes. Then she reached Harry Potter. He was on her original combined list, but when she split the names into columns, his name moved to the bottom of the parchment instead of going into one of the columns. Apparently, the protections on him defied the archival charms’ ability to provide an address.

Jotting a quick note, she summoned one of the Hogwarts house-elves.

“Bitsy, deliver this to Albus. Tell him that I need a response before I finish sending out the rest of these letters.”

Neatly dressed in a clean, white tea towel and standing beside the desk, the house-elf waited until Minerva finished speaking before nodding her head in agreement.

“Yes, Mistress,” she squeaked. Then she took the scroll and disappeared with a pop. A minute later, she returned.

“The Headmaster be saying that youse should be making young Mister Harry Potter a normal letter. He is being taking care of delivery as the child’s guardian.”

Minerva nodded an acknowledgement. Taking the appropriate letter and addressing it as requested, she folded the letter up and sealed it inside an envelope. Minerva then added the boy’s name to the outside of the envelope. From there, she handed it to Bitsy, who returned to the Headmaster.

‘I suppose that Albus is still being particularly cautious about little Harry’s safety,’ she thought as she watched the house-elf disappear. ‘After all, the advantage of hiding Harry with those Muggles is minimal if someone tracks his Hogwarts letter back to their home.’

Dumbledore had not informed Minerva that he was hiding Harry behind a Fidelius charm. So, as far as she was aware, the man trusted her to know where Harry had been sent after Voldemort’s fall. Thus, her idle thought didn’t strike her as surprising. Instead, she merely shrugged and continued her work, pondering what life was like for Harry with THOSE Muggles.

---

**Headmaster’s Office,**

*Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*

*Scotland:*

*Monday, July 15th 1991*

Up in the Headmasters’ office, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore sucked on a lemon drop as he stared pensively at the letter on the desk before him. What would be the best way to re-introduce young Harry Potter to the Wizarding world?

Albus frowned as he pulled out Arabella’s letters. Going through the correspondence, she never mentioned evidence of accidental magic. Still, the boy did show up in the Book so he was a Wizard
and not a squib.

‘Now then,’ he thought. ‘How do I make sure that young Harry sees me as an authority and someone to trust? Besides, I need to make sure that he is ready to fulfil the rest of the prophecy. Then there are the rumours that Tom’s shade is actively looking for a way to regain his corporeal form.’

“What to do,” Albus murmured, stroking the end of his beard.

He thought of the letter that he had once received from a young Petunia Evans. The girl had begged to be allowed to come to Hogwarts with her sister. It was too bad that he had to disappoint her hopes. Still, she ought to be excited to see her nephew following in his mother’s footsteps.

“Yes. An owl delivery should do just fine.”

Summoning one of the Hogwarts post owls, Albus charmed the letter. As the Secret Keeper, he used the Magical signature linked the Fidelius that he’d placed to provide an address. Then he sent the owl on his way.

“Wait for a reply,” he instructed the owl before allowing him to leave through the open window.

Albus Dumbledore, celebrated and powerful Wizard that he was, failed to notice something strange happening to the letter that he had just charmed. When an address shimmered into place on the envelope in brilliant green ink, something else also happened. The name written above it changed from Harry Potter to Dudley Dursley.
While Dumbledore was sending off the charmed letter to ‘Harry Potter’, another Hogwarts post owl was winging her way to the headquarters of the British Ministry of Magic. Secured to her talons was a bundle containing a half-dozen sealed and addressed Hogwarts invitation letters. The bundle also contained a cover letter explaining the contents and addressed to Bartemius Crouch, Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation. The hours passed as she soared, flying over lighted towns and darkened woods, following a river’s course at one point, and taking advantage of a train corridor at another. Eventually, the rural lands shifted into suburbs and the copses and meadows became houses and parks.

The sun was just beginning to peek over the horizon when she reached downtown London. With the familiarity borne of frequent practice, the grey-brown owl soared between skyscrapers until she reached her final destination, the owlery of the British Ministry of Magic.

One of the few parts of Ministry Headquarters that remained above ground, the owlery was a squat building well hidden behind a combination of notice-me-not and Muggle repelling charms to prevent investigation by passers-by. At first glance, it appeared to be a tall brick wall that stretched between two Muggle buildings in the middle of downtown London. To casual view, the wall appeared to be a remnant of some older building, one that had long ago been demolished to make way for newer construction.

Like Platform 9 ¾ at Kings Cross Station, Ministry workers entered the owlery by walking through a specific point along the wall. The access point for the building was an alcove in the wall, hidden from casual view and requiring an especially charmed badge to be permeable. For Magical post owls, however, the building roof was easily visible and full of comfortable perches where they could land.
Settling herself down on one of these perches, the large grey-brown Hogwarts owl stuck out her foot imperiously. In response, one of the junior Ministry workers came rushing over. He collected the package that she carried, offering an owl treat in exchange. Then he stuck out his arm at the level of the perch, a leather bracer strapped to his forearm.

“If you would care to accompany me, my lady, I will escort you inside. There you can rest before your return journey.”

Having finished her treat, the owl acquiesced to his request. With owl on one arm and package on the other, the man was well burdened. Still, this was just another part of his regular routine, so he smoothly made his way from the outer landing toward the large, domed aviary set up for owls – visiting or Ministry – to rest and sleep during the day. Inside the aviary, minimal light was provided through a circular hole at the apex of the roof, while the thick brick walls were lined with small alcoves just large enough to hold a single owl. It was to one of these alcoves that the Hogwarts owl was carried.

Around her sat other owls of a wide variety of species. Some, like the majestic eagle owl in the nook beside her, were obviously visitors to the space. Others appeared settled in and at home. She preened herself and gave a sharp ‘preek’, then allowed the Ministry worker to pet her beak before he turned to leave, proceeding to the next part of his task.

Now that he was no longer burdened with the heavy owl, he was able to move much more swiftly. Walking towards a door on the opposite side of the room from where he entered, the man left the aviary and headed into the distribution centre of the Ministry mailroom. There, letters and packages delivered by owls and other feathered messengers were sorted into the bins which lined the walls of the room. Each bin was labelled with a particular Department within the Ministry.

After checking the label written on the outside of Minerva’s package, the Ministry employee tossed it into the bin marked Department of International Magical Cooperation. Then he left the room and headed back outside, where he would repeat the procedure for the next feathered arrival. As the Hogwarts package waited in its bin, a number of other packages and letters were brought in from the landing and sorted into the appropriate Department bin. At the same time, several rolling carts carrying baskets of outgoing letters and packages were brought up to distribution centre. These letters were sorted by destination in preparation for the bulk departures of Ministry owls in the evening.

Several hours passed before the bin containing the Hogwarts package was finally moved. It was after lunch when one of the rolling carts that had been delivering mail to the distribution centre was loaded up with bins marked for a number of Departments located in the same part of the Ministry’s massive labyrinth. Having filled up her cart, the Ministry worker who collected the Hogwarts package then made her way down the hall towards the lifts.

Given that the owlery was located at the uppermost floor of the Ministry, it was unsurprising that the elevator stood empty when it arrived at her level and she leveraged the cart into the cabin. Before long, however, it filled up with people coming and going on the various floors between the owlery and her assigned delivery sites. By stationing her cart near the back of the elevator, she was able to keep out of the way of both the other occupants coming and going and the paper airplane memos that hovered above them on their way between floors.

Eventually she reached level five, where the Department of International Magical Cooperation was based. Calling out, “excuse me,” she nudged the people in front of her until they parted and she was able to extract herself from the elevator. Shaking herself to resettle robes compressed by the crowds, she sighed, then started walking down the hall. As she passed open doors, she flicked her wand to levitate packages and deposit them on the appropriate desks. It was only when a door was closed that
she had to do more work.

One such door was labelled: Department of International Magical Cooperation, main office. When she opened it and walked inside, it was rather like being hit with a wall of sound. There were a number of desks scattered around the large room, each one having a Witch or Wizard seated at them surrounded by stacks of parchment. The sound came from a large array of communications mirrors. Plaques below the mirrors were labelled with the names of countries and displayed similar offices to the one in which she stood. Several of the mirrors were in use, as a British worker stood deep in conversation with one of their counterparts. While there were muting bubbles around the mirrors where active conversations were occurring, the rest were broadcasting. This contributed to the noise in the room.

The mailroom worker made her way through the chaos toward the back of the room, sending packages to desks as she went. Once there, she reached a door marked: Bartemius Crouch, Department Head. As the door was ajar, she knocked once and said “Mail call,” before heading into the office.

“Good afternoon, sir,” she said as she entered. Unlike before, she made special effort to hand Mr. Crouch his packages instead of simply levitating them.

“Thank you, Greene,” was the short response, before the man himself turned back to his work. Thin, and pale, with a thinning hair, a sharp moustache and a permanent scowl, in appearance Bartemius Crouch was the epitome of a career bureaucrat. In fact, despite being a Department Head Bartemius Crouch was a deeply disappointed man. Formerly a rising star in the Ministry, his reputation had taken a major hit with the arrest and conviction of his only son for being a Death Eater nearly ten years before. Since that time, he had devoted his life to making amends for his ‘failure’ by ensuring that his Department ran smoothly.

Seeing the package from Hogwarts in his stack of correspondence, he murmured. “That time of year again, is it?”

Minerva and Bartemius were far from close, so he expected little from the package. After all, the woman had been friends with his late wife Charis. Given that Bartemius’ authoritative tendencies, which had made him successful in his career, were not so well managed in his home life, this was hardly shocking. During their marriage, Bartemius had been verbally abusive towards Charis, especially in the aftermath of their son’s trial and incarceration.

However, despite their personal antipathy, Minerva and Bartemius knew how to be professional in their working relationship. Therefore, he opened the cover letter inside the Hogwarts package with little trepidation.
Mr. Bar temius Crouch,

Department of International Magical Cooperation

British Ministry of Magic

London, England

Crouch,

Here is this year’s crop of international Hogwarts letters. There are three going to the consulate in Paris, one for the Imperial Ministry in Shanghai, one for the Chancellor’s office in Berlin, and one for MACUSA at the Woolworth Building in New York. See to it that they are delivered promptly to the appropriate locations as is customary.

Sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall,

Deputy Headmistress

‘Short, and to the point,’ he thought.

Stepping out of his office into the ‘bullpen’, he dropped off the letters off to the members of his department assigned to the specific countries mentioned in Minerva’s letter. He did make note of one name: Su Li. The girl was the younger daughter of a former Imperial Ambassador to Britain. He would be unsurprised if her father chose to accept the invitation and send her to Hogwarts. Crouch was sure that the man had brought the child with him to London during his residence in the country with that result in mind. After all, having a personal connection to the children of Britain’s Magical upper class was a useful resource for a man of the former Ambassador’s ambitions.

Caught up in thoughts of Chinese ambition, he scarcely noticed the name on the letter he set on the desk of the MACUSA liaison.

Looking up from the file that he was working on, Daniel Parkinson noticed a new article of mail in his inbox. The note attached to it explained what it was, and instructed him on the normal procedure
for the letters. Specifically, the letter was to be included in the next diplomatic pouch that he sent via the International Mail Floo to his counterpart in America. From there, it would be up to them to send it along to the named individual.

‘Well,’ he thought. ‘I suppose the reverse is how cousin Pansy received that Beauxbatons invitation last year.’

Then he shrugged, wrote out a brief note to his American colleague and placed both note and envelope in a larger packet. Now that he thought about it, the name on the letter did sound familiar. Daniel snapped his fingers in recollection. Oh, yes, Goldstein had mentioned that his Great Uncle Newt had taken a new protégé with that last name a few years back. Perhaps this Harrison was the man’s son.

He’d have to ask Goldstein the next time that they talked. Pulling out his wand, he levitated the sealed package over to the Diplomatic Pouch marked MACUSA. It would go out first thing tomorrow morning. Then he went back to work, reviewing the recent Wizengamut debate over tariffs on goods coming out of MACUSA territory. Hopefully he could get his report finished before close of business that day.

As the day wound to a close, a few more parcels and letters were added to the MACUSA pouch. Eventually, though, the diplomatic pouches were sealed for the day and the office went quiet. Normal working hours were at an end. Nearly everyone in the office headed home, except for the on-call night workers. These workers monitored the international communications mirrors in case something urgent came up outside the British Ministry’s normal business hours. On this particular evening, however, the wall remained quiet.

Still later, in the early morning hours before the rest of the staff arrived for work, the mailroom did their first collection of the day. This included diplomatic pouches like the one containing the Hogwarts letter for Harrison. Once again, the letter, this time inside a pouch, ended up on a cart directed by one of the Ministry staff as it rolled down the halls of the Ministry. The International Mail Floo was a dedicated network with a small number of outlets, each one at a Ministry or similar government office. It was designed to circumvent issues with the various Magical countries’ practices on post and allow long distance packages and letters to be delivered more efficiently.

The International Mail Floo was a long, narrow room. Along the long walls, mail carts for incoming and outgoing correspondence were installed. At one end of the room was the entry to the rest of the Ministry, while the opposite wall was filled with a large, ornate fireplace. The various diplomatic pouches were added to the outgoing bins while at the other end of the room a team of workers were unloading the mail which had just come through from Paris. There was only a short delay before the outgoing MACUSA cart where the pouch containing Harrison’s letter was collected by the workers and pushed through to its destination in New York City, New York.

---

*Magical Congress of the United States of America (MACUSA) Headquarters,*

Woolworth Building,

*New York City, NY, USA:*

*Wednesday, July 17th 1991*
On the other side of the International Mail Floo, the cart of mail from the Brits was rolled into a sorting room similar to the one where it had just left. One difference, though, was that the MACUSA mailroom was staffed with goblins instead of human workers. Still, the procedure for sorting mail was the same, as the diplomatic pouch went from the British cart into a bin where it was processed and sent through MACUSA’s pneumatically driven, Magically assisted network of tubes. From there, it raced through the building until it reached the main office of the MACUSA State Department, where it was dropped, still sealed in the inbox of British MoM liaison. That liaison, the previously mentioned Mr. Goldstein, had the responsibility of unsealing the pouch and sending the contents along to their recipients both in and outside his department.

Given the time difference between Britain and New York, it was a few hours before Isaac Goldstein arrived at work. As was his normal routine, the first thing he did was open the pouch and check the contents for any urgent messages. When he came across the packet from Daniel Parkinson containing Harrison’s Hogwarts letter and read the note, he raised an eyebrow. Like much of his family, he had been let in on the secret of Patrick and Harrison Grim’s true identities, so he recognized the significance of the letter.

‘Curious that we only received this one, and not one in little Harry’s original name,’ he thought as he set the letter aside. He would deal with it when he took a coffee break later in the day. Meanwhile, he had the rest of the diplomatic pouch to sort through.
Dudley’s Letter in Transit

Chapter Summary

The journey of Harry Potter (Dudley Dursley)’s Hogwarts letter as it makes its way to its recipient.

Chapter Notes

How can we tweak the canon letter incidents to fit the changed circumstances?

Locations Note: I had to improvise the places I used that are not direct references from canon. They were sourced purely using google, as I’m not British and have never been to England. My knowledge of the country is mostly through fiction, so I apologize if I have mischaracterized a location. If you are familiar with the locations, keep in mind the setting is nearly thirty years ago, so things like the Chunnel didn’t exist then.

Council Flats, Newham,

London, England:

Tuesday, July 16th 1991

After being dispatched by the Deputy Headmaster, the Hogwarts owl bearing the letters bound for the Ministry flew alongside another owl for most of its flight from Scotland. It was only as they reached the outskirts of London that the paths of the two owls diverged. While the owl that Minerva had sent headed for the comfortable, familiar owlery at the Ministry, Dumbledore’s messenger had a much less comfortable destination ahead.

He was following the Magical signature from the letter he carried, which was leading him to the east of downtown London. Dudley Dursley’s current address was far from the staid suburbia in Little Whinging, Surrey where he had been born. Instead, he and his mother Petunia now dwelt in a squalid little council flat in Newham, a suburb on the east side of London.

Shortly after the Dursleys had left Surrey and Privet Drive, Vernon Dursley had been demoted in his job at Grunnings. Wanting to blame someone other than himself for his misfortune, he had latched onto Dudley as the new target for his temper. Thanks to the subtleties of Dumbledore’s Fidelius charm, when it transferred to Dudley, the charm caused Vernon to doubt that the boy was actually his son. Of course, the idea made both Dudley and his mother Petunia now dwell in a squalid little council flat in Newham, a suburb on the east side of London.

Eventually, Petunia decided that it was no longer safe for her and Dudley to remain with Vernon. They separated, and, after a short delay, filed for divorce. Vernon was ‘generous’ enough to pay
child support for Dudley, but what he gave wasn’t enough to cover even the bare minimum that mother and son needed to live comfortably.

Having married right out of college, Petunia had few marketable skills and no real work experience. This meant that finding a job proved difficult. For quite a long while, she supplemented Vernon’s checks with Welfare. Eventually, though she managed to scrape up some work. She started picking up shifts at one of the neighbourhood pubs. It was a smelly, exhausting job but it was better than nothing.

Meanwhile, Dudley had been attending the local public primary school. Thanks to his size and aggressive personality, he was a leader in the gang of young thugs who terrorized the residents of their block of flats and the general neighbourhood. Dudley and his friends spent far too much time scaring the other children and very little time actually doing their schoolwork. As a result, Dudley was only barely passing his classes.

This was the family to whom Dumbledore had inadvertently sent a Hogwarts letter. Curiously, Dudley, who would have fallen on the squib side of the line in another universe, had displayed at least one significant instance of accidental magic after the anchor for Dumbledore’s spells had been transferred to him. However, the Fidelius had kept his name from appearing in the Hogwarts Book of Names until Dumbledore had adjusted the charm to send ‘Harry’s letter.

Petunia and Dudley’s flat was part of a massive, blocky concrete structure, with each flat in the structure having a front door that led directly to an exterior walkway. This meant that the post owl was able to drop his burden on the mat in front of the door. Then the poor owl flew off with the dawn, seeking out a comfortable roost where he could rest, hidden from sight, while keeping watch for any sign that a response to the letter had been written.

The first person to see the letter – sitting front and centre on the mat – happened to be Petunia. She had been on her way out for an early shift at work and was still waking up. However, she was not lethargic enough to avoid giving out a shriek of recognition. The distinctive green ink and formal handwriting were all too familiar to her. After all, every year around this time when she was a girl her freakish sister had received letters from that same school.

“No, no, no,” she murmured, shaking her head in negation. “We got rid of the freak; there’s been no sign of those” – shudder – “people, why now?”

Picking up the letter and bringing it close enough to read, she gave out another little shriek. “Dudley!”

Her precious baby just couldn’t be one of those freaks. It must be a mistake. Quickly, she hid the letter away in her purse before locking the door behind her and heading out.

It wasn’t until the evening that the letter finally made its way into Dudley’s hands. The boy had gone into his mother’s purse to raid it for cash, when he found this fancy letter with his name on it. Opening it, he was surprised to read the following:
Mr. Dudley Dursley,

Largest Bedroom,

Flat 420

Tennyson Court, Newham

London, England

Dear Mr. Dursley,

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

He assumed that it was some kind of gag invite to a flash party, probably one of which his mother didn’t approve. ‘Well,’ he thought. ‘Maybe I can pick up something from the posh blokes who sent this. Now, how do I send an owl?’

Being an intensively lazy boy, when Dudley couldn't immediately work out how to send a reply he decided to give it up as a lost cause. Instead, he grabbed about twenty quid from his mum’s purse and went off with his friends, forgetting all about the letter that he left behind. He did leave the opened letter on the kitchen table, nearly giving his mother a heart attack when she saw it sitting there and realized that he had read it.
When the owl failed to return with a response to Harry's letter, Albus Dumbledore was certain that the problem was something simple. “Perhaps, Petunia merely needs a reminder that young Mister Potter belongs in our world,” he commented to himself as he planned his next move.

Dumbledore decided to repeat and intensify the contact started with the first letter. To do so, he sent off two duplicates of the original Hogwarts letter. In addition, he placed a time-delayed Gemino charm on the letters. Each day that a response was not sent, double the number of letters would appear. Dumbledore then assigned one of the Hogwarts house-elves to handle the deliveries.

“Make sure that each set of letters reaches the boy. You may use whatever magic necessary to ensure delivery.” The orders that Dumbledore gave were simple in definition, though execution of the orders would prove to be more complicated.

The first day, the house-elf dropped off the pair of letters in the same place as the owl-carried letter. Specifically, they were deposited on the front doorstep of the flat.

Again, Petunia was the first one to see them. She fumed when she spotted the letters lying innocently on the mat when she got home from her shift. This time, she grabbed the letters, tore them to pieces, and threw the shreds away before her precious Duddikins could see them. It was her hope that Dudley would forget the letter he had read, or maybe think it was a prank that one of his friends was playing on him.

Over the next several days, an exponentially growing number of letters were dropped off at the flat. They were found wedged in the cracks of the doorframe, and even slid through the vents. The letters were soon the highlight of the block gossip. Everyone wondered who might want to speak to Dudley, and why Petunia would be so upset by the communication.

“Maybe it’s something to do with her old husband,” commented Mrs. F--, who lived two flats to the right. She was talking to her friend Mrs. S--, who lived in the flat below Petunia and Dudley’s. “You know, she claimed that he wasn’t treating them properly before she left him.”

“I don’t blame him,” her friend replied. “Petunia Dursley is a bit of a shrew, y’know.”
“Besides,” another neighbour added. “She dotes on that boy of hers, thinks he needs far more protection than the brat deserves.”

Eventually, just like her former husband did in another universe, Petunia Dursley nee Evans (she had kept her married name after the divorce) snapped. Unlike Vernon, though, Petunia was methodical in strategizing their escape. First, she had to convince her son that her plan was a good idea.

“Dudley… Diddikins…” she said while serving up dinner that night. “I’ve heard some unfortunate rumours down at the pub. There has been an upswing in the number of muggings in the area recently.”

Petunia winced when all that her son did when hearing the news was smirk. While she didn’t like to admit it, she knew that her son and his friends were not the most well behaved children. Still, she persevered. “It seems recent activity has drawn the attention of the authorities and they’re planning on some kind of push in the near future.”

This idea seemed to disturb Dudley, so Petunia continued her ‘conversation’.

“I was thinking, Diddikins, that we should take a little vacation before you start at the upper form. We can’t afford to go too far, but maybe we can visit another part of the country for a bit. What do you think?”

“Fine,” he said shortly.

Pleased at even this little agreement, Petunia continued. “I already packed for you; we’ll take the train in the morning.”

Dudley merely grunted an agreement, and then went back to eating. He’d spread the word to his friends to keep a low profile before he left.

In the morning, Petunia got rid of the latest letters before she and Dudley headed down into the London Underground. Spending several hours going in circles by transferring between trains, Petunia hoped that they would lose whoever the ‘freaks’ had spying on them. Eventually, however, they stopped for supper before finally settling in for the night. Their residence for the evening was a grimy room in a disreputable motel located in a sketchy neighbourhood somewhere in Clapham, on the outskirts of London.

Unfortunately for Petunia, her assumption that the ‘freak’ spying on them had to keep watch directly was incorrect. Instead, their ‘watcher’, the Hogwarts house-elf assigned by Dumbledore, had hooked a temporary tether to Dudley’s magical signature. As long as Dudley didn’t hide himself magically, the house-elf could follow the tether to his ‘charge’s current location regardless of his movement since the last time the house-elf had visited.

Early in the morning, the clerk at the dumpy little establishment placed a call up to Petunia and Dudley’s room.

“’Scuse me disturbing you, ma’am, but there’s been a delivery made at the front desk.”

“What is it?”

“Well… you had best come down and see.”

When Petunia arrived at the desk, she was once again confronted with the sight of unwanted letters. This time, the address on the letters read:
With the doubling of the Gemino charm, there were several hundred letters in the pile left at the front desk.

Startled and not entirely awake, she shrieked at the poor desk clerk.

“Get rid of them, we don’t want them,” she yelled, before storming back up to her room.

She spent the next several hours making plans and discarding them while waiting for Dudley to get out of bed. By the time he was up and moving, she had decided. Extreme action was called for in this case. They were going abroad.

Gathering up their belongings and checking out of the hotel, Petunia and Dudley headed south. Using public transportation, they headed towards Dover, where they could take the ferry across the Channel into France. ‘Hopefully,’ she thought, ‘if we are in another country the freaks will stop chasing us.’

Petunia’s agitated state and Dudley’s complaints meant that they had a great deal of difficulty finding their way. Several times over the course of the day, they ended up having to loop back or sit and wait after taking the wrong train. Eventually, though, they made it as far as the port in Dover. By that time, the last ferry of the day had already left for France. Resigned, Petunia checked them into a hotel near the docks. They would catch the first ferry in the morning.

As she settled into bed that night, Petunia sighed. ‘There will probably be another early morning call about letters,’ she thought before wishing her pouting son a good night. The fact that it happened to be her freakish nephew’s birthday the next day had completely dropped from her mind.
Responding to Harrison's Letter

Chapter Summary

How Harrison, his family, and others respond to the Hogwarts letter.

Chapter Notes

There’s a lot of information being thrown at the reader here, but I felt the info dump was important for setting the stage and filling in the gaps caused by the time jump from the previous story.
Reminder: Patrick (or Pat or Paddy) Grim is Sirius Black and his son Harrison is Harry Potter.

Main House,
Scamander Reserve,
Rural Northern West Virginia, USA:
Wednesday, July 17th 1991

It was a cozy group that sat around the lunch table of the main house at the Scamander Reserve. In one corner of the table, Remus and Percy were discussing the latest problem with the Reserve’s accounts. Namely, an increase in price of feed used to supplement the natural grazing found in the Graphorn habitat. With the increase in price, the cost of supporting their expanding herd had pushed that section of the reserve’s budget into the red.

“You may need to increase the amount that you charge the potions supplies distributors who purchase Graphorn-related products the next time we renegotiate their contract.” Percy commented as they worked.

“Either that, or we look into finding another supplier for the feed, one which charges less,” Remus nodded in agreement.

At the other end of the table, Newt and Patrick were discussing the latest news sent by some of their friends located in the American Pacific north-west. A group of them had just returned from an expedition hunting for the elusive Sasquatch. They had successfully identified a number of sites, which the beasts had used in the past. In addition, they had also had a number of possible sightings, though they hadn’t managed to get close to the wary creatures.

Newt and Pat had a difference of opinion over the current population size indicated in the researchers’ findings. Newt tended toward the optimistic estimate, which claimed that a large
population numbering in the thousands had managed to conceal themselves in the forests of the Cascades. Pat, on the other hand, thought that there were at most a few hundred of the beasts currently dwelling in the area. He was convinced that the creatures needed a larger area of forest per individual animal. Still their discussion was all in good fun, and the debate prompted a discussion with Harry about the role of deforestation in maintaining creature habitats in the wild.

Discussions were just wrapping up, as everyone prepared to return to their work, when the dining room’s public Floo chimed. This indicated that someone was trying to call the Reserve. After a short conversation conducted entirely out of facial gestures, Percy nudged Remus, commenting:

“These old bones aren’t really comfortable kneeling at the Floo these days, do you mind?”

Shrugging his agreement, the younger man pushed back from the table. Walking to the fireplace, he knelt down to activate the Floo, and then leaned back as a face emerged.

“You’ve reached the Scamander Reserve. This is Remus Lupin, how can we help you?”

“Remus? It’s Isaac Goldstein, I’ve got international post to pass on, if I can send it through?”

The rest of the table exchanged glances as Remus asked, “Are you alone?”

“Of course,” came the quick response. “Everything’s been certified.” They all knew that meant the post had already been checked by MACUSA for tracking charms, international portkeys or other potential problems.

“Would this have to do with our youngest resident?”

“Yeah, Patrick’s son.”

After getting approval from Percy, Remus adjusted the Floo to accept packages. “You’re good to send.”

Moments later, a letter came flying out of the fireplace. With a wave of his wand, Patrick redirected the projectile’s trajectory so that it landed on the table in front of him, face up.

Across the middle of the letter, in luminous green ink, was the name Harrison Grim.

“Isaac. Did any other letters come with this one?”

“Nope.”

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that Tina’s cover was still holding.

“Thanks, Isaac.”

“Not a problem.”

At a gesture from Percy, Remus added, “you’re still coming for the dinner next Sunday, right?”

“Wouldn’t miss it. See you then?”

“Sounds good. Have a good afternoon.”

“You too, say hi to the rest for me, especially Harrison.”

“Will do.”
With that, the Floo went dark.

Remus got up and reclaimed his seat at the table.

“Well,” he began, and then paused, looking at Pat and Harry. “Aren’t you going to open it?”

Shaking himself almost like a dog trying to dry off after a bath, Pat reached out and took hold of the envelope. Using his wand, he delicately sliced open the top and extracted the pages folded inside.

The topmost page read as follows:

---

**HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY**

**Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore**

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

**Mr. H. Grim**

**United States of America**

**Dear Mr. Grim,**

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, located in Magical Scotland under the aegis of the British Ministry of Magic. Please find enclosed the details of our educational institution and 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
“Well,” Pat breathed, before passing the letter to Harry. “It seems that the Brits have indeed bought the fiction of Harrison Grim as someone separate from Harry Potter.” He glanced through the other pages before passing them on to the rest of the group.

“It looks like the rest of it is just the normal documents for international students, supply list and Hogwarts details.”

Everyone perused the various documents as Harry continued to stare at the main letter.

“Paddy?” he finally asked. “What does this mean?”

“Well, pup, it looks as if you have one more option for your education than we originally thought.” Pat ruffled Harry’s tousled black locks until the boy ducked and set the letter down.

“Stop it, Paddy!” he complained.

“What’s your idea, Pads?” Remus asked, distracting the other two from their play fight.

“Given this letter, we could petition for Harry to attend Hogwarts in the same way that we talked about doing with Ilvermorny, having Padfoot along as a ‘helper’ animal. It would be admittedly a bit trickier, as we would have to be more rigorous about keeping my identity and Harry’s a secret, but it is an option.”

Percy frowned at his adopted son. “I’m not certain that’s a good idea, Pat. I know you’ve been officially exonerated through the ICW, but you’re still on the books as a felon in Britain.”

Pat shrugged. “Harry should at least have the choice.”

“Very well. Harry, add it to your list. When are you making your announcement again?”

“At Sunday dinner with the family.”

“We’ll postpone our discussion until you reveal your preferred school, then.”

Scamander Reserve,

Rural Northern West Virginia, USA:

Wednesday, July 17th – Saturday July 27th 1991

Over the next several days, Harry pondered what he’d like to do about his Magical education. He
discussed the Forbidden Forest and the grounds around Hogwarts while vanishing Hippogriff dung with Newt. He argued over which Ilvermorny house he might be sorted into while reviewing wand movements with Percy. He listened to Remus wax poetic about how the architects of Hogwarts used Arithmancy in the design of the castle to reinforce the Magical Wards while he watched the man touch up the Wards around the Reserve. He even debated the need for flexibility in his studies with his Paddy while they worked to get an update on how far they could separate when Harry was doing active magic without their complex bond being visible to others.

Then there were the other children.

“Do you have any idea what you want to do after you finish school?” Ingrid asked as she tossed a chunk of meat high up into the air. Along with Harry, the twin children of Newt and Tina’s oldest daughter Artemis, were helping train foundling griffins as part of their summer internship at the reserve. The meat was a lure for the foundlings to leave the ground and achieve flight in an effort to beat their siblings to the treat.

As the griffins cubs squawked, shrieked, and fought over scraps, Ingrid and her brother Rolf revealed that their challenge in choosing a school was in selecting one that fit for both of their interests as they wanted to stay together for school. Rolf was interested in following in his Grandpa Newt’s footsteps and pursuing a Mastery in Magizoology, while Ingrid was fascinated by her parents’ careers in politics, along with diplomacy and law. Ilvermorny had a great program for Rolf, but due to its location in America did not have the networking opportunities of the European schools. Hogwarts, on the other hand, had very little to offer Rolf, with only the single Care of Magical Creatures course. It would have been a good choice for Ingrid, but she was willing to give way to fit her brother’s needs. Fortunately, the twins found a compromise choice in Durmstrang Institute, their father Wilhelm’s alma mater.

Having just finished their third year at the school, Ingrid had found her niche with the Slavic and Scandinavian students as they watched the shifting politics in the mundane countries of the region and argued about the impacts on the corresponding Magical nations. Due to the focus in the Magical Creatures program at the school, Rolf was focusing his attention on those animals that thrived in colder climates. His work with the Reserve’s Graphorn herd over the summer would be written up for credit with his favourite professor there.

“Well,” Harry finally said, responding to Ingrid’s earlier question. “I think I want to work with helping kids. After everything with my,” he shuddered, “relatives, I don’t want anyone else to have to live like that. I mean, I got lucky that Paddy was there and willing to help so much, plus Grandpa Newt, Grandpa Percy, Uncle Remy and the rest of you. Most of those children aren’t.”

“The problem,” he admitted after chucking a piece of his own, “is people. You remember the incident with the anti-werewolf protestors, right?”

Rolf and Ingrid nodded.

In an interview with the *International Journal of Magical Zoology* earlier that summer, Newt had made casual reference to the Reserve’s practice of hiring werewolves who needed a safe space to adjust to their – often – new condition. The news propagated out into the larger Wizarding community, given the man’s status as an International celebrity. As a result, a group of anti-werewolf protestors got together and tried to storm the Reserve the day after the next full moon.

Unfortunately, they tried to come in through the Reserve’s public Apparition site right when Harry, Ingrid and Rolf were there helping Remus and Pat shift a load of animal feed that their suppliers had
just dropped off. The sight of dozens of screaming Witches and Wizards charging at them with wands and silver daggers held at the ready was enough to trigger an Obscurus flare-up.

Watching their tiny cousin scream and appear to explode as jets of black smoke shot out in all directions was absolutely terrifying. Or at least, it was until the twins noticed that the jets moved with purpose, impacting each of their attackers and knocking them off their feet in quick succession. It was only once all the threats were eliminated that they saw Pat engulfing Harry’s obscured form in a protective embrace while emitting a bright white light that dissolved the smoke where the two effects intersected.

Mere moments later, a number of the Reserve staff, including Percy, appeared. They had been alerted by the Wards that there was an incident. The bevy of unconscious Witches and Wizards were healed of any minor damage taken when they were hit by Harry’s Obscurus, Confounded, and Obliviated so that all they remembered was being taken down by the Reserve’s defences. Percy then summoned a team of Aurors from the Pittsburgh DMLE office to collect the incapacitated villains.

“The odds of that severe a trigger happening again are slim,” Ingrid pointed out.

“Still, it is risky. Paddy and I have done a lot of work on control, but it’s not perfect. If word got out about what I am, even if people don’t know who I am, it could be a disaster!”

Harry stopped before he started yelling. The three continued to work in silence for several minutes before the younger boy finally continued. “I’m just not sure I’m ready,” he said quietly.

Ingrid reached out and gave him a one armed hug.

“It’s okay to be scared,” she said. “Just don’t let that keep you from living. That’s what Great Uncle Theseus always says.”

Main House,
Scamander Reserve,
Rural Northern West Virginia, USA:
Sunday, July 28th 1991

The Summer Sunday Dinner, or ‘School Decision Day’, was an annual tradition among the Clan – a large family grouping centred around the Graves/Scamander/Goldstein triad. It had started when the oldest child of the triad, Artemis, was preparing to start her secondary education. Since her parents had attended different schools, Hogwarts for Newt and Ilvermorny for Tina and Percy, she was eligible for both institutions. Then there was the fact that with all the traveling she had done with her parents she also received invites to Castelobruxo in South America and Uagadou in Africa. In order to give her the freedom to make her own choices, the family agreed to give her time to consider all options. Then, the Sunday before the response letters were due, she would tell the family which
school she had chosen and why she had chosen it.

She ended up choosing to go to Hogwarts, and as each of her sisters reached the same age, they had demanded the same privilege. The second daughter, Athena, had gone Ilvermorny as it was a better fit for her interests, while the youngest, Eris, had actually decided to start a new tradition. Like her sisters, she had invites from several schools. Since she had a hard time deciding between them, she declared that she should be able to change her mind on any given year. Eris ended up starting at Ilvermorny, spending her third year at Castelobruxo, returning to Ilvermorny to sit her OWLs, and then finally running off to Uagudou for her NEWTs.

On this particular year, there were three members of the extended family, or Gramander Clan, who were expected to make a school announcement.

The first, obviously, was Harry, who was a member as Percy’s adopted grandson.

The second was Anthony ‘Ant’ Goldstein, youngest grandson of Tina’s sister Queenie Goldstein and her deceased No-Maj husband Jacob Kowalski. Ant and his family were visiting from Britain for the week in part because of the Clan tradition.

The third, funny enough, was Draco Malfoy. When Sirius was officially exonerated by the ICW back in 1986, a year or so after his escape from Azkaban, he received a surprising letter, sent through Tina and the MACUSA DMLE. It was from his paternal grandfather, the aged Lord Arcturus Black. The elderly Wizard had been living in seclusion at Noir Castle, the unplottable Black Estate in Northumbria, since his wife Melania’s death in 1972.

However, when one of his old friends from before the Grindelwald mess sent him the transcript of Sirius’ ICW trial, it was just the push he needed to start getting his Family’s affairs in order. He decided that Sirius deserved some Family recognition of his accomplishment, and knew that such a message would never be sent by his deranged daughter-in-law. As Sirius’ memory remained patchy, he was able to respond to his grandfather’s letter without the residual anger he would have had in his earlier years. The two men struck up a frequent correspondence, which culminated in Arcturus naming Sirius as the Black Heir Regent in his will.

Basically, Sirius’ Guardian Godparent bond meant that the former prisoner couldn’t be Lord Black because his first priority was permanently claimed by Harry. However, Arcturus felt that the same limitation, as well as his memory loss, clever actions, and new alliances, made him the perfect candidate to take the Heir Regent role. On rare occasions, a Magical Lord would name an Heir Regent instead of a regular Heir in his will. The practice was used when the potential Heir was either unborn, underage, or there were multiple candidates that needed to be evaluated after the current Lord’s death. As Heir Regent Black, Sirius was charged with selecting the next Heir and had oversight of the family until the Heir was named or reached his Magical Majority – turned seventeen.

Wanting to do his grandfather proud, Sirius reached out to his allies (particular the Clan), for advice. The Clan historian, Newt’s brother Lord Theseus Scamander’s son Demetrius, checked the lineage with the help of Arcturus Black’s archive. He found that in terms of distance from the main line, the closest relatives were the three Black sisters, the daughters of his mother’s younger brother Cygnus Black. As the Black title was patriarchal, none of the three women was directly eligible. However, one of their sons, if willing and fit, could take the Black name and title.

Bellatrix, the oldest, was obviously out. Not only was she insane and a rightful Prisoner of Azkaban under a life sentence, but she was also infertile. She had made the decision to sacrifice her childbearing ability during certain Dark magic rituals that she had performed while in Voldemort’s service.
Sirius had ABSOLUTELY no hesitance in the thought of naming a son of his – according to Remus – favourite cousin, the middle Black sister Andromeda, as Heir Black. However, so far Andy and her Muggleborn husband Ted Tonks had only managed to birth one child, a daughter with the unfortunate name of Nymphadora. Unless that changed, Sirius would need to have another plan in place.

That left the youngest Black sister, Narcissa. Married to Lucius, Lord Malfoy, she had already borne one son, Draco, a couple of months before Harry. Draco was not eligible to be Heir Black without giving up his title as Heir Malfoy – British Wizarding Law stated that no one individual could hold multiple Lordships. However, like Andy and Ted, there was the possibility that the pair could have a second child.

At first glance, Sirius was leery of considering a child of Lucius Malfoy, given his known allegiance to Voldemort. However, when he asked Demetrius, as well as the rest of the British dwelling Clan members, they did some further digging. It turned out that Abraxas – and later Lucius – had joined the man because they shared his stated political goals, but not his preferred methods. Of course, once you’re in the ‘Dark Lord’s’ service, you’re stuck there. Still, Lucius managed to avoid participating in the worst of the Death Eater activities as well as official recognition as a Death Eater. This was because he played the political face of Voldemort’s cause as well as spy in the Ministry/Wizengamut instead of being a front-line fighter.

In accordance with his ‘cousin’ Artemis’ suggestion, Sirius decided that he could use Malfoy as an ally as long as the man swore an Unbreakable Vow to put the goals and well-being of the Black Family and their allies above all other allegiances. The family would then be brought into the Clan and, with the addition of Neutral allies as a regular part of their lives, the Malfoy children could grow up to make wiser choices than their father and grandfather had done.

To that end, Sirius and his Allies reached out to both Black sisters and their husbands, along with their father Cygnus, who had made a career out of being the Black Proxy on the Wizengamut. With the offer of a son/grandson as the future Lord Black, Lucius and Cygnus were willing to fall in line under Sirius’ leadership. As a part of this offer, Draco and Nymphadora – Dora – especially were incorporated into the Clan. This was how Draco, and his mother and toddler brother Rigel, were part of that year’s dinner ‘theatre’.

---

**1991 Gramander Clan Summer Sunday Dinner Party**

*Attendees are as follows:*

**The Triad:** Newt Scamander, Tina Goldstein, and Percy Graves

**The Daughters:** Artemis Scamander (with her twins, Rolf and Ingrid), Athena Wakefield (with her husband Roger and children Penelope, Ulysses, and Hector), and Eris Ramirez (with her husband Carlos and baby son Alberto)

**The Grims:** Patrick (Sirius), Harry, and Remus Lupin

**The Goldsteins:** Queenie (with her second husband, Theseus Scamander), her sons Isaac (with wife Elaine nee Graves and sons David and Gawaine) and Judah (with wife Peggy nee Abbott and children Rachel and Anthony), and Theseus’ son Demetrius
“All right,” Percy called out the large group of Scamanders, Goldsteins, Graves, Blacks, and others settled into the specially expanded community room after a massive Sunday dinner. “Let’s get our students going. I haven’t heard from any of our older students saying that they’re planning a change, so I guess we just have our eleven-year-old…”

“All right,” Percy called out the large group of Scamanders, Goldsteins, Graves, Blacks, and others settled into the specially expanded community room after a massive Sunday dinner. “Let’s get our students going. I haven’t heard from any of our older students saying that they’re planning a change, so I guess we just have our eleven-year-old…”

“Or almost eleven,” Rolf hollered.

“Or almost eleven-year-olds. We’ll go oldest to youngest. Ant, you’re up first.”

“Right.” Despite his discomfort with public speaking, Anthony climbed to his feet and took his place at the front of the room. The fact that he was in front of family and allies, not strangers, helped him stand his ground and state his case.

“Right… I had letters from Hogwarts and Ilvermorny. Um… I decided to stick with Hogwarts as my choice for two main reasons. I think I want to do something with Warding and Ancient Runes, and of the two schools, Hogwarts has the better reputation in those subjects. Besides that, I think I want to live in Britain after I graduate. All my… um… closest family is there, especially with Rachel already being at Hogwarts.”

Having said his piece quickly and succinctly, Ant happily ceded his spot at the front of the room to the next victim – student – as everyone applauded his bravery and the Hogwarts alumni cheered.

Since he was a month and a half older than Harry, Draco was next on the block. Unlike Anthony, he had no problem getting up in front of a group and talking. He announced:

“We got letters from Hogwarts, Durmstrang, and Beauxbatons. Father has suggested Durmstrang since it would give me a broader network beyond my British peers, while Mother would prefer that I stay closer to home. I’m leaning towards sticking with Hogwarts, since I want to follow in Father’s footsteps and become a leader in the realm of British politics.”

He smirked, “Besides, the stories I’ve heard from the Clan suggest that I can take a year or more at Durmstrang, Beauxbatons or even another school if I find it to be a good idea later.”

Everyone laughed, especially Eris and others who had followed her example.

“Too true,” she agreed. “I certainly have found the variety of school experiences an advantage in my networking.”

“I expect that I’ll be a Slytherin, so I will be primed to investigate what’s going on with the Dark families from the inside too… I’m going to be Harry’s spy, you know.”

“Your sacrifice is much appreciated,” Harry replied with a laughing bow. The two boys had become quill-friends after the Malfoys had been brought into the secret, and they kept in regular correspondence despite the distance.
“Come on, cousin, it’s your turn.”

“Fine, fine, I’m coming.”

Harry took Draco’s place in full view of the Clan members in attendance. Pat and Remus gave him a thumbs up from their corner of the room.

“Right… well, you all know I’ve got a two part decision. The first is where I want to go, and the second is who I want to go as.”

“I’m sure all of you can guess my preference on the second question…”

Shouts of “Harrison Grim,” came from multiple groups.

“Yup. I don’t think it’s the right time yet to reveal Harry Potter. I’d rather not get mobbed by excited fangirls and fanboys.”

This triggered another laugh.

“I think I have a better chance of keeping the secret at Ilvermorny, so I’d like to go there.” Cheers came from the grown-up alumni of that school, and a few knuts were exchanged between bettors.

“…However,” the qualifier stopped the noise. “I don’t think I’m ready to be there full time yet. I need some more time and space to keep working with Paddy on my control, especially at night. I know that Principal Graves knows the truth and said she would be willing to make flexible arrangements. Do you think we could get a multi-use port-key and commute for some classes while I do the rest here like before?”

“That should be workable,” Newt nodded. “You know I use a similar system for when I guest lecture up there for the NEWT classes, and so does Percy.”

“Thanks, Grandpa.”

“We’ll be your bodyguards”

“as needed, of course,”

Isaac’s two sons, Senior David and Junior Gawaine, mentioned. “Grandma Graves will let us help.”

“…and Padfoot will be there, of course,” Remus called to laughing nods.

With the decision announced, Harry sent his ‘Uncle Isaac’ back to New York that evening with a polite rejection letter to send on to Professor McGonagall.
Responses to Dudley’s Letter

Chapter Summary

How Dudley, Petunia, and others handle the revelations exposed by ‘his’ Hogwarts letter.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a bit scattered, but I wanted to give some idea of how various people dealt with ‘Harry’s absence.

Inexpensive Hotel,

Port of Dover, England:

Wednesday, July 31st 1991

‘Bang… bang… bang.’ The thud of a very large fist against the hotel room door woke both Petunia and Dudley.

As was her wont when startled, Petunia let out a shriek. Her son, on the other hand, merely blinked stupidly. He was unsure what was happening and was not awake enough to process the unexpected event.

Before either of them could do anything further, the bolt on the door gave way, causing it to swing open with a bang. Silhouetted in the light from outside stood a huge figure, whose size exceeded the dimensions of the door. Bending its head, the figure pushed its way inside.

In response, Petunia shakily reached out and switched on the bedside lamp. With the additional light, the pair could better observe their visitor. He was an extremely large man whose wild hair and beard obscured most of his features.

“’ere now, then. This is a queer room,” the man stated as he eyed the bed. “Havin’ the bed righ’ by the door.”

He reached behind him and shut the door behind him with a thud. “Don’t suppose there’s any ‘ope of a spot of tea?” The man smiled hopefully. “It’s just it was a rather rough trip down here, you know.”

At that, Petunia had regained enough composure to respond. “Who… who are you?” she cried.

“The name’s Hagrid, Rubeus Hagrid,” came the reply, as the man himself took a seat on the small settee that stood under the window beside the entry. The furniture groaned, but surprisingly managed
to withstand the assault of the man’s not insignificant weight. “Keeper o’ the keys and grounds at Hogwarts.”

“An ye must be young Harry Potter.” He smiled at Dudley, who by then had huddled up against his mother for protection. “Mind, ye do look quite a bit diff’rent from wha’ I remember,” he added.

Naturally, the comment set off Petunia. “My son is not that... FREAK!” She spat. “He ran off with one of your kind long ago.”

“Wha?” Hagrid asked, confused. “But Professir Dumbledore said he were here.”

“That... that old...” Petunia sputtered. “He made us take in the FREAK all those years ago, caused nothing but trouble.”

“Then wha...” Hagrid pulled yet another Hogwarts letter from one of his many pockets, squinting at it nearsightedely.

“Who’s... Dudley... Dursley?”

Curious and emboldened by his mother’s willingness to confront the giant man, Dudley piped up. “That’s me.”

“Well then,” Hagrid said as he scratched his head, completely ignoring Petunia’s diatribe from before. “I guess I must’a grabbed the wrong letter by mistake.”

He looked down at the letter in his hands. “Never thought I’d be th’ one to say this ta anyone, but yer a Wizard, Dudley.” Hagrid held out the letter in his hand and Dudley snatched it before his mother could.

“It’s real then?” Dudley glanced over at Petunia, who had regressed to shaking her head soundlessly. “This invite. I thought it was just a gag.”

“Course not,” Hagrid responded cheerfully. “Yer mum seems ta know about it already.” He frowned. “Why migh’ tha’ be?”

“Because my... sister... got one of those letters, too,” Petunia snapped. “Mum and dad were so thrilled to have a witch in the family. But I knew better. You’re all a bunch of good for nothing freaks, just like her. And now you’ve gone and infected my poor Duddikins with your... freakishness. Well, I won’t have it.”

“Sister, eh?” Hagrid scratched his beard, ignoring the last bit of Petunia’s rant. “Tha’ explains it, then. Yer a Muggle, though?” He added.

“Muggle?” Dudley asked, confused, even as his mother sputtered at the term she despised.

“Non-magic folk,” Hagrid explained as he pulled a flask out of his pocket and took a swig. “Well, then, since I’m here, do ye wan’ me ta help ya with th’ lad’s shopping? We can head over ta Diagon in tha’ mornin’.”

“Shopping?” Dudley asked, before Petunia interrupted.

“You will be doing no such thing. My son will not be going to your freakish school and I want you out of the room this instant!” She climbed out of bed, wrapping her dressing gown, which had been lying at the foot of the bed, around her with a huff as she marched over to the door.
Hagrid shrugged, not really understanding what was happening, but willing to comply. He climbed to his feet as the settee below him gave another groan, this time one of relief.

“Don’ suppose I could kip ‘ere fer th’ night,” he asked. “It’s jes tha’ its late and tis a long way back ta Hogwarts.”

“That is none of my concern,” came Petunia’s sharp response as she chivvied him out the door. “And tell that blasted Headmaster of yours to stay away from my family!”

She slammed the door behind him and leaned against it heavily. Dudley eyed her, surprised by his mother’s strange reaction.

“So… magic?” He began.

“Don’t say that word,” she snapped, before realizing who she was yelling at. “Mummy’s sorry, Duddikins. It’s just something that the Freak or one of his friends did. You should forget about it. They won’t be bothering us again.”

Dudley scratched his head. He only had vague memories of the time when Harry lived with them, back when his father still loved him.

“Mum,” he asked. “Is it my fault?”

“What?”

“That man said that I’m like the freak. Is it my fault that Dad left?” While Dudley was hardly a deep thinker, like most children of broken homes he had worried that what happened between his parents was his fault.

Petunia took Dudley into her arms. “Of course not, Duddy. I think one of those freaks must have put some curse on us. They ruin everything. That’s why I just want you to forget all about their freakish school.”

They sat like that for a while, and then Dudley asked. “Are we still going to France, then?”

His mother gave a watery laugh, and then shook her head. “I guess that I didn’t fool you, my smart boy. No, I suppose we can just go home. I’m sure that you’d rather be back with your friends instead of being stuck alone with just your old mum.”

“Okay,” Dudley shrugged, unconcerned.

Mother and son lay down and went back to sleep, hopeful that the disruption of the past few days was finally coming to an end.

---

Diagon Alley,
London England:
Wednesday, July 31st 1991
Unlike the Dursleys, Hagrid was not having a good time in the aftermath of his encounter. Fortunately, the Thestral that had given him a ride down to Dover hadn’t yet gone too far and he was able to call it back. Climbing onto its bony back with a groan – Thestrals were far from the most comfortable of rides, given their narrow torsos and lack of anything other than skin to cushion the passenger’s seat – he directed it to fly to London. From there he could Floo to Hogsmeade.

When he reached the Leaky Cauldron, though, he changed his mind. Having failed to carry out one of the tasks that the Headmaster had charged him with, he could at least take care of the other one. Still, a little pick-me-up beforehand couldn’t hurt.

“’Ere there, Tom. Can ye pour me a pint?” Hagrid called as he thumped his way up towards the bar. “I’ve jest had a bit o’ a rough ride.”

“Where’ve you been, then?”

“Perfessor Dumbledore gave me a special task he did,” the half-giant answered in a conspiratorial tone. He gulped down half his pint in a single gulp, then thumped it back on the bartop. “Sent me ta help some un who weren’t gettin’ his Hogwarts letters.”

He finished off the remainder of that first pint and stared into its depths as Tom served him another round.

“I take it that things didn’t go too well,” the bartender offered sympathetically.

“Yeh could say tha’, yeah. He weren’t e’en there. I made ‘im a cake an e’rythin’, but it were some un else.”

Hagrid pulled a squashed chocolate cake out of one of his voluminous pockets, showing a glimpse of the words ‘Happy Birfday Harry’ before they were wiped out as the depressed man began consuming his pastry.

“Harry?” Tom asked, having seen the name. “Would that be Harry Potter, then?”

His words caught the attention of the other guests lingering over their late night drinks.

“It were,” Hagrid confirmed. “I hadn’t seen the mite since the Perfessor let me help him after tha’ horrible day.”

All other noise in the room vanished as everyone else recognized the sound of juicy gossip. “But tha’ lad whose letter the Perfessor gave me to deliver weren’t Harry, it weren’t. It were some Muggleborn, name o’ Dudley… somethin’. His mum didn’ let me stay, though, e’en if it were late.”

Then Hagrid noticed the many observers and muttered into his – now third – drink. “Shouldn’ a said tha’.”

Sensing that the juicy bits were over, the rest of the drinkers resumed their low conversations as Hagrid mumbled to himself over his drinks, cake, and the plate of bangers and mash that Tom had placed before him. Before too long, the sodden man was poured into one of the upstairs rooms that the proprietor kept for just such a purpose.
the stairs to seat himself at the bar.

“Mornin’ Hagrid, feel better?” Tom asked with a grin. He knew that the large man was probably still feeling the effects of his drinking.

“Breakfas’ and tea, please, Tom,” Hagrid said as he dropped a few sickles on the table. “And make it quick, will ya’, I’ve got lots ta do today, and it’s already late.”

After finishing his breakfast, Hagrid headed through the gateway and made his way through the crowds in Diagon Alley on his way to Gringotts’ front entrance. Along the way, he spotted Professor Quirrell, standing near the bank entrance, as he passed. Hagrid headed up to one of the tellers, used the letter from the Headmaster to pick up the package from Vault seven hundred and thirteen, then walked back to the Leaky Cauldron. From there, he used the public Floo to reach the Hogshead Bar in Hogsmeade, an easy walk from Hogwarts.

By the time that Hagrid made his way up the hill to the castle and reached the Headmaster’s office, rumours had already begun to circulate up and down the alleys and throughout the underbelly of the Wizarding world.

‘The Headmaster may have – misplaced – the-boy-who-lived.’

---

**Council Flats, Newsome,**

*London, England:*

*Friday, Aug 2nd 1991*

---

Petunia Dursley was settling down for a cup of tea when she heard a knock at the door to her flat.

It had been two days since her last encounter with one of those freaks. After a disturbed night’s sleep in the Dover hotel following Hagrid’s departure, she and Dudley had been relieved to find no further letters waiting in the lobby when they checked out. Instead, they were able to head home, hoping that the lack of ‘freakish’ events would continue.

The continued absence of letters allowed Petunia to head off to work that morning with confidence. Those good-for-nothing freaks were finally done bothering her poor Duddikins.

Upon her return home from work, she poured a hot cuppa and sighed in relief and comfort. She was just about to raid her secret stash of chocolate biscuits – hidden from Dudley’s endless appetite. This was when her visitor arrived.

While she was grateful that the… person who knocked on the door wasn’t as forceful as the freak who had met them in Dover, the sight that she found wasn’t much better. An old man stood there, his long white hair and beard standing out in a dramatic contrast to the peacock blue leisure suit he wore. His blue eyes twinkled behind half-moon glasses.

A condescending smile appeared on his face when Petunia opened the door.

“Ah, young Petunia. I am Albus Dumbledore.”
“You!” The sheer level of fury in Petunia’s voice startled Albus, enough for her to continue uninterrupted for a minute. “This is all YOUR fault. You dumped my freakish nephew on us, which ruined my life! And now you’ve come back to do it again! Leave. Us. Alone.”

She slammed the door in his face.

With a simple wordless ‘alohamora’, Albus unlatched the door and followed her inside, ignoring her sputtering protests.

“Now then, my dear girl, there’s no need for such vehemence. My colleagues were merely doing their jobs.”

He sat down in the seat that Petunia had just abandoned and began drinking her tea. She gave a wordless shriek of rage, which he failed to mind.

“I understand from Hagrid that your nephew no longer lives with you. When did that happen?” Albus caught Petunia’s gaze as he spoke, activating a passive Legilimancy scan.

“Another freak claimed the boy several years ago. He took him away after doing terrible things to my family and robbing us blind.” As she spoke, Albus caught glimpses of a blurred figure using magic to restrain her and a man and boy who he assumed were her husband and son, before leaving her house with a child Harry in his arms.

“Everything went wrong after that.” Petunia collapsed into the seat opposite Dumbledore’s even as her face dropped into her hands almost involuntarily. “We had to leave our home after poor Vernon lost his job. Then he started claiming that I cheated on him and my poor Duddikins wasn’t even his son…” She sobbed for a moment, and then continued. “When he hit my baby, I, I had to leave. We ended up here. Things were finally calming down, when those… LETTERS… started arriving.”

She looked up at Albus, glaring through her tears. “What do you mean, sending my Dudders a Hogwarts letter. He’s not a freak!” She paused for a moment. “And even if he was, shouldn’t someone have come to visit like they did for Lily?”

Albus Dumbledore was confused. If anything, Petunia’s interview had raised more questions than anything. Still, at the very least he could sort out what was going on with young Dudley.

“And where is your son, then?”

“Out.”

“Out?”

“Yes. Out, with his friends. He needed a break after the last couple of weeks.”

“Well, then, we’ll just have to wait until he returns so I can check him.”

Petunia huffed, and the pair sat staring at each other as Albus drank the tea and ate the chocolate biscuits that the woman had set out for herself. Finally, the silence was broken by the sound of Dudley pushing his way in through the front door.

“Mum, I’m home, and I’m hungry. And some of the neighbours are staring at the door again. Did we get more…” He stopped speaking when he spotted their visitor.

“Another one,” he whined. “Mum… you said the freaks were finished bothering us.”
Petunia gave her son a strained smile. “Dudley, darling, this is… Professor Dumbledore. He’s here to explain what’s happening to you.”

“Ah, this would be your son then. My dear boy, it’s a pleasure to meet young Harry Potter’s cousin.”

“Mum, who’s he talking about? The freak?”

“Freak? My dear madam… don’t tell me you called your nephew by such a foul name.” Albus had caught a glimpse in Dudley’s memories of a tiny boy who he used to get to beat up.

“Well… that is…”

While Petunia was sputtering in embarrassed rage, Dumbledore took out his wand and cast a set of diagnostic charms on Dudley.

“Fascinating,” he murmured. “It appears that the protections I placed on young Harry somehow transferred over to your son at some point. Tell me, madam, do you remember any particularly magical incidents before your nephew was taken?”

Ironically, Petunia’s memory of the Obscurus incidents, which were what Albus Dumbledore was looking for, had been inadvertently removed when Sirius had modified her memory to blur his identity. This meant that even with his Legilimancy, Albus was out of luck.

Recognizing that he wasn’t going to get any further useful information there, Albus prepared to leave. “I understand from Hagrid that you are not interested in having Dudley attend Hogwarts, is that correct?”

Petunia gave a sharp nod, while Dudley shrugged.

“Then I will leave you both in peace.” He cast a silent ‘finite’ to cancel the spell work that had been transferred to the boy and moved to his feet. As he prepared to leave, he offered a card to Petunia. “If you change your mind, or remember anything that might be useful, you can contact me by tearing the card in two.” His mind had already moved on to his next task, visiting Mrs. Figg and Little Whinging.

As mother and son watched, he bowed slightly, then disappeared with a crack like a car backfiring.

Over the next several weeks, Petunia and Dudley would observe a number of changes caused by Dumbledore’s actions. Since it was no longer being consumed by the tap that had previously powered the various Wards and monitors, Dudley’s limited magic was now free to be accessed by the boy. Given the usage to which it had been tuned over the years, the path of least resistance for Dudley’s magic was in monitoring or passive protection. Dudley’s personality and goals led to him developing a magically enhanced, almost preternatural sense of the locations and observational status of police and other adult authority figures.

This helped to balance the loss of ‘protection’ from the Fidelius, which had previously made him difficult for witnesses/authorities to identify and detain. Most noticeable, though, was the impact on Vernon Dursley. With the removal of the Fidelius, his doubts about Dudley’s parentage disappeared. With that change, he voluntarily increased the stipend he sent for child support. In addition, Vernon and his sister Marge actively reached out, wanting to spend time with Dudley. Vernon even offered to push for a last minute enrolment at Smeltings.

Who knew what their future would hold, but Petunia hoped that it would remain free of those Freaks
from that point onward.

---

**Staff Meeting Room,**

**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry,**

**Scotland:**

**Saturday, Aug 10th 1991**

“Thank you, all, for coming.”

Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, holder of many extensive titles, swept through the large wooden door. In front of him, seated around a number of small wooden tables covered with tea and biscuits, were a group of adult Witches and Wizards. Many of them had been members of Albus’ Order of the Phoenix back during the Voldemort conflict.

Included in the group were the following: Minerva McGonagall, perched in her favourite hard backed chair near the front. Arthur and Molly Weasley were seated together near the centre of the room, having left their third son Percy at home in charge of his younger siblings. Severus Snape, ‘dungeon bat’ and Hogwarts’ potions master, sat in a high backed chair in the corner glaring across the room at Remus Lupin, who had just arrived from the United States. Near the back of the room, leaning on a high stool that let him take some weight off the stump of his missing limb without hindering his movements or view, stood Alastor Moody, Senior Auror for the Ministry of Magic. Moody had been a friend of Albus’ since the Grindelwald affair, where he’d been one of the youngest members of the British Magical regiment. Mundungus Fletcher, career criminal, sat as far as he could get from Moody, shifting in his seat every time the man’s Magical eye turned his way. Beside Minerva, discussing her latest litter of half-breed kneezles, sat Arabella Figg, squib and supposed watcher over Harry.

Before conversations interrupted by his arrival could resume, Dumbledore continued speaking.

“Many of you know why I have gathered you all here, but for those who are unsure I will summarize. Just over a week ago I received the most troubling of news. A child, who I had left in the care of his family, along with a number of protective safeguards, was no longer to be found where he had been placed. Instead, this child had been kidnapped by Wizards unknown several years before. The villains were clever in their approach, hiding their actions through a series of feints and misdirections such that the disappearance was not discovered until the magic of the Hogwarts Book of Names failed to produce the correct Hogwarts invitation letter. The missing child is, most unfortunately, our beloved boy-who-lived,” those not in the know already gasped, “Harry Potter.”

Albus waited until the whispers died down, and then continued. “A number of you have been out over the past week, exploring various leads. Tell me, what have you learned?”

First to speak up was Albus’ squib watch-woman, Arabella Figg. She spoke with a quavering voice, still trying to process exactly what had gone wrong. “I was assigned to watch over the boy from a distance, as a kindly old neighbour. As far as I knew, I had been doing so correctly, sending Albus updates regularly.” Her voice lowered almost to a whisper. “But, it turned out that I had been
watching the wrong child for years.”

Here Dumbledore interrupted. “I’ve been working with my dear Arabella, and from what we’ve managed to piece together, about six years ago there was a visitor to the home of the boy-who-lived. Somehow, no doubt through dark magic,” at this Severus and Remus exchanged a significant glance, noticed only by Moody. “They managed to bypass the protections that were in place on the home. Unfortunately, it has been too long and the magical traces are too muddled to determine exactly what means were used. What we do know is that the monitors and Wards, which I had placed on young Harry, were transferred to his cousin, a near-squib named Dudley. In addition, the entire neighbourhood appears to have been confounded, including poor Arabella. Her attentions were redirected towards one of the boy’s friends, a Muggle boy who she has been keeping watch over and reporting to me about ever since.”

“So we have someone powerful enough to break your Wards, and clever enough to modify them so as to not alert the watchers.” Alastor ‘Mad-eye’ Moody mused, his good eye unfocused as he thought. “Aye, clever and powerful, that’s a bad combination. As I’ve always said… ‘Constant Vigilance’.” His last two words were chorused by a number of the others, well familiar with the phrase.

“I fear I bring further bad news. I went poking around in the DMLE records. I was unable to find the exact date, but it appears that the mass murderer and betrayer, Sirius Black, escaped from Azkaban Prison around the same time as the young lad went missing.”

This news came as an even larger shock to most of the audience. ‘Mad-eye’s’ gaze narrowed, though, when he saw that two besides Albus Dumbledore, were unsurprised by this news. Both Severus Snape and Remus Lupin met his intent look with brief nods.

After allowing a moment of chaos, Dumbledore shot up a bit sparks to draw everyone’s attention. “Yes, I have known of Black’s escape for some time. The Minister made the executive decision to keep the escape a secret, as it wasn’t discovered until several months after the incident. It is unclear which came first, the escape or the disappearance, but there is a distinct possibility that young Mr. Black was either involved or allied with the kidnappers.”

Severus spoke up, briefly, “If the kidnappers were followers of the Dark Lord, they haven’t spread news of their actions widely. None of my contacts has made any reference to the affairs, except for Lucius Malfoy mentioning that he was helping the Minister with the Black situation. That being said: there was a night around the same time when all those who bear the Dark Mark felt it flare with intense pain. None of my contacts have been successful in identifying the cause, merely that the experience appears to be universal to all the Marked.”

Moody cleared his throat, and spoke again. “There’s another issue with Black as well. It seems that he was able to convince the ICW that his imprisonment was unjust. I haven’t seen the transcripts, as they are apparently sealed; but the International Court declared him innocent and granted him sanctuary from British justice. He’s believed to be hiding out in one of the other ICW member nations.”

The cries of outrage were unsurprising, as Sirius Black had been built up in the minds of the British public to be a villain second only to He-who-must-not-be-Named. To hear of his crimes being dismissed by the International Magical community was a further shock.

Remus cleared his throat, here. “I feel I must speak up here. I have received a number of letters from Sirius over the years, claiming his innocence. He made a convincing case, claimed that Peter Pettigrew had been the Secret Keeper while he was a decoy. Given the characters of both men, I could have more readily believed Peter to reveal the secret out of fear than Sirius ever betraying
James especially.” He looked around at the group. “You remember how Sirius was with James, right? That’s why the betrayal was so horrifying. Sirius claimed that Peter may be alive and in hiding, which, if true, would be a powerful proof. However, he’s made no mention of having Harry, so that may be a dead end in that issue.”

He glared at Albus Dumbledore, reminding the man with his look that had the old coot allowed him contact with his godson – a position he unofficially held – the truth may have been discovered sooner. The older Wizard bowed his head, recognizing the validity of Remus’ anger. Had he been able to see through the werewolf’s Occlumency shields, what he would have seen would have been a huge surprise. Contrary to his statement, Remus was well aware of where Harry was at present. Instead, when Dumbledore had summoned him for the meeting, the Clan leadership decided that it would be a great opportunity to get inside information about the ‘Hunt for Harry’. Remus was there to ensure that Dumbledore and his allies were not in danger of discovering the truth.

“I can’t stay too long to help with a search.” Remus added mildly. “It was hard enough to find a job given my circumstances and I don’t want to lose it. Living in America is bad enough; at least they speak English there. But I’ll keep my ears open for any rumours over there about either Harry or Sirius.” He paused for a moment, and then went on. “Do you want me to reach out to Sirius and ask for news?”

“Better not,” was the man’s response. “We don’t want to risk a potential follower of Voldemort’s finding out the truth too soon.”

Remus shrugged, uncaring. It made no difference to either him or his ‘persona’ whether or not Sirius was told.

After further discussion, which went around in circles getting nowhere fast, the meeting broke up. Each attendee promised to keep watch for Harry in their various areas of oversight. There wasn’t much else that they could do. The trail was just too cold. All they could really do was hope that whoever took him had not killed him.

Mundungus Fletcher did warn that rumours of Harry’s absence were already swirling among the denizens of Wizarding Britain’s criminal element. Still, it wasn’t official… not yet. That would wait until Harry Potter failed to arrive at Hogwarts.
Great Hall,

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry,

Scotland:

Sunday, September 1st 1991

A train of wide-eyed eleven-year-olds followed Professor McGonagall as they entered Hogwarts Great Hall for the first time as students. As they lined up in front of the staff and older students to take their turns at the eponymous Sorting Hat, everyone else craned their necks trying to figure out which one of the tiny boys might be the year’s expected celebrity.

“That one has the wrong hair colour.”

“That one has glasses, but his skin’s too dark.”

“That boy’s hair hides his forehead, could it be him?” The whispers ran up and down the hall.

Those who were paying attention noticed that surprisingly Headmaster Dumbledore was doing the same thing as the other observers; and he looked disappointed after his perusal. His eyes lacked the sparkle they usually had on this day of the year.

One by one, the line of scared first years took their seats on the stool, the sorting hat was placed on their heads, and their House was assigned.

When the list read by Professor McGonagall reached Anthony Goldstein, the boy took his seat and was startled to hear a voice in his head.

‘Well, well, well. What do we have here? Someone knows the answer to the question on the minds of so many.’
'Please, you can’t tell anyone!'

'Don’t worry, young one, Godric’s spell work keeps me silent. Still, such loyalty brings to mind your sister. Shall you join her? …'

'No, that’s not your primary motivation. Rather, you like to know ‘why’? And such grand ‘why’s too.’

Ant blushed and squirmed in his seat.

'Yes, with such a goal I think that the best place for you is in…’ ‘RAVENCLAW!'

The last word was shouted out to the audience as the boy sighed in relief, removed the hat from his head, and passed it back to the Professor before heading over to his new table. He gave a quick wave to his sister at the Hufflepuff table as he did so.

“Sister?” came the question whispered by the boy seated beside him.

Ant nodded, and then turned back to watch the rest of the sorting. He smiled when he watched a swaggering blonde approach the stool and take a seat on it.

After the school announcement, Ant and Draco, along with Harry and the rest of the Clan children discussed how the Hogwarts contingent should handle their public connections. Rachel and Dora were easy. Two years older, Dora had been Rachel’s mentor since the girl had sorted Hufflepuff, which meant that her comradery with Rachel’s little brother was easy to explain.

Draco, on the other hand, was more complicated. Given that the Malfoys were still publically part of the Dark pureblood contingent, they knew that Draco couldn’t publically be friends with Ant or the girls. After all, the other three were – nominally in the Goldsteins’ case – half-bloods, and therefore lower class according to traditional pureblood politics. Instead, they decided that they could get away with being friendly allies by playing up Lucius Malfoy’s alliance with Theseus and Artemis Scamander. Ant also recognized that his placement in Ravenclaw was useful as it provided an excuse for Draco to seek him out as a resource for schoolwork ‘help’.

Meanwhile, under the Sorting Hat’s brim, a fierce discussion was taking place. To the surprise of many, Draco Malfoy was not IMMEDIATELY sorted Slytherin.

‘I must say, that is a bold strategy, young Malfoy. Reminds me of your cousin, you know. Maybe I should have you follow his footsteps.’

‘Don’t. You. Dare.’ Draco clenched his teeth as he thought the words at the Hat.

‘Fine, ruin my fun. You certainly have strong ambitions. I suppose that you had best be in…’

“SLYHERIN!”

Draco smirked, pleased, as he hopped off the stool and took his expected seat between Crabbe and Goyle. His old friends could be clueless at times, but he had no intention of wasting the resource that they represented.

Shortly after Draco claimed his seat, the list reached the ‘P’s: Pansy Parkinson went into Slytherin, followed by the Patil twins, who were split - Padma to Ravenclaw and Pavarti to Gryffindor – and then Sally-Anne Perks went to Hufflepuff. However, the expected next name was not called. Instead, Professor McGonagall moved onwards to another letter in the alphabet, ignoring the whispers that erupted when “Thomas, Dean” was called.
Headmaster Dumbledore finally had to put up his hands demanding silence as the Sorting Hat’s next announcement – Gryffindor – wasn’t even heard by many of the students. Still, hissed comments continued to run up and down the tables as the sorting continued. However, they were at a lower pitch than they had been before Dumbledore’s intercession.

When the last first year – Blaise Zabini, Slytherin – was sorted, the Headmaster climbed out of his ‘throne’ at the staff table and stood before the students.

“Welcome, one and all, to a new year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry…”

Later that evening, as the students made their way to the four House dormitories, Albus Dumbledore tried not to frown. He knew that within the hour a large number of owls would be winging their way to destinations across the country. No doubt, the Daily Prophet headlines tomorrow would proclaim the news:

“BOY-WHO-LIVED CONFIRMED MISSING! Harry Potter fails to arrive at Hogwarts. Dumbledore remains mum.”

In his depression, Dumbledore failed to note that hidden within the chattering students were a number of knowing eyes. Draco, Ant, Dora, and Rachel were already planning their messages to distant ‘family’ and the Clan, including the very Harry whose absence caused such turmoil!

Chapter End Notes

The next story in this series is still at the outline/rough draft barely started stage, so I expect that it will be quite a while before it comes out. I anticipate that it will be quite large as I have a number of ideas that I want to explore with it.

The focus of the story will be on Harry/Sirius's first return to England (planned for an alternate 4th year).

End Notes

This story started life as a brief interlude between Unexpected Consequences and the next part of Obscure Guardian, but somehow grew into a much larger tale. Warning, I have a lot of world-building included here, much of which I need in place for later stories.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!