Summary

In a world called Albion, there is only war.

Harry Wildfyre is the Light, the Wyrdfod, and the King, but more than anything, he is Fairest. He has loved and he has lost. His best friend is hiding something from him, his lover is a terrible man that he can't help but loving, and he is full of rage. The mirrors whisper truth and his heart is a bloody pulp in his chest. He doesn't know which way is up, which way is down, but it doesn't matter. There isn't any time for that.

There is only war.

By fairest blood, it is done, by fairest blood, it is undone.

This is the end.

Notes
See the end of the work for notes.
“That's how you get deathless, volchitsa.

Walk the same tale over and over,

until you wear a groove in the world,

until even if you vanished,

the tale would keep turning,

keep playing, like a phonograph, and

you'd have to get up again,

even with a bullet through your eye,

to play your part and say your lines.”

- Catherynne M. Valente, Deathless

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The Seven.

Father walked amongst the burning fields, spitting bay leaves of glory and a crown of amaryllis bulbs in his hair. He wept tears of blood. Mother trailed lines of silk, tying her to a loom, crucifying her. And she mourned for another. The Maiden spat rage. Crone brewed chamomile and poured it on the Father's feet, blistering his skin where the fire did not.

The Warrior and the Smith circled one another-one the sword, the other anvil. Rage. Rage.

But, it was the last that she watched.

The last stood alone.

The Stranger walked around a pyre of daffodils and lilies and irises. She kissed the ashes on the ground, dragging her red cloak through the dirt, lining blood wherever she stepped. The Stranger looked up and looked her in the eye and lifted her hand.

How do you become DEATHLESS?

The Seven turned to her and asked and the pyre erupted in flames. The Stranger's mouth wasn't moving, but she heard it anyways. She heard the words.

Inwi echad-Guri. Inwi cawd.

But, the Stranger didn't look at her. The Stranger was staring through her.

And she spun around, her eyes wide as she saw the one the Stranger spoke. The Mother was behind
her now except different. The Mother looked different. But, it was the girl. The girl that stood beside
the Mother, cloaked in white and savage in pelts.

Inwi echad-Guri.

The girl screamed.

And the Crone was there, like air, spinning her around. The Crone took her by her face and laid
kisses on her cheeks as her mother did when she was a girl.

This is what it means, Ainu. This is what it means.

The Crone-MOTHER-disappeared and she screamed as the pyre enveloped her, sending her far
away. It hurt. It hurt.

The salt burned her eyes. Ainu.

The fire burned her tongue. Ainu.

The earth overcame her-Mother-burying her alive. Ainu.

And then there were three, sitting at the spinning wheel, whispering a curse into the air. Water, Fire,
and Earth spread a curse across a land, drowning golden thread in blood while the world guessed
His name. What was His name?

Hermione's voice. The Wyrdfo. What is that?

NOT Fateborn. Not FAIREST.

And Death breathed a mist across the land, sealed by blood.

What does it mean to be DEATHLESS?

Mother's voice. Mother screamed in her ear. Not the Mother, but her Mother.

By fairest blood-

ENOUGH.

"Mother."

Luna gasped, sweat making her nightgown sheer. Rodolphus jerked awake, turning over to look at
her, his eye alert.

"Luna?" Rodolphus whispered. "What is it?"

Luna slowly closed her eyes, shaking her head.

"My mother...lives."

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MIRROR

The thirteen sat at the long table, all staring at one another with heavily guarded expressions. They all
looked across the table at one another all but for the woman that headed the table of power.

Madame President Seraphina Picquery leaned back in her chair, slicking back a stray piece of platinum blonde hair under her head wrap. She squeezed her long staff. The staff was sectioned into thirteen pieces, each a different material ranging from mahogany to oak to silver to onyx. Atop the staff was an orb, as golden as the beating sunbeams that streamed through the open windows.

She glanced down at the letter once more.

To Madame Seraphina Picquery, President of the United City-States of Freedom, and Her Distinguished Congress,

As you may have heard, I have declared war upon the Usurpers known as the Slytherins—those that have stolen a throne and built it on the blood and bones of my ancestral grandfather and his magical kin. I am prepared to wage and win this war but have found that with 30,000 men, I still cannot quite achieve my goals with my lack of fleet.

The problem is manageable. The strength of the fleet of the United City-States is famed throughout the world, and I would like to negotiate my use of it. You had once abandoned this empire in its time of war when you fled from the Tabooed and my grandfather who would save you. I shan't allow it again.

I am coming.

Harry Wildfyre of Houses Gryffindor and Potter, the First of His Name, Rightful Emperor of Albion, King of the Four Directions, the Wyrdfo, Protector of the Realm, Alpha of the Pride, Lord of Afallon, Lord of Karnaron, and the Fairest-of-Them-All

And set beside it was the gift. A single dragon scale, burning hot as if it were alive.

"He comes to claim this land as if it were his own," Theodard Fontaine snarled. The older man ran a hand through his salt-and-pepper hair, making the curls frizz out even more in the blistering heat.

"Of course, he will come. He believes that he can conquer us. We shall prove him false," Charity Wilkinson growled out, her teeth bared.

There were grumblings of approval from some of the other Congress members. But, Seraphina Picquery only had eyes for the letter and the dragon scale that had accompanied it. She hummed quietly to herself, and then lifted her chin to look at her right-hand man. Percival Graves stared back at her, waiting patiently.

"He calls himself 'Wyrdfo'. And the dragon scale is warm," Seraphina repeated. She looked at the witch and wizard standing just behind Graves' seat. "What does that mean, Scamander?"

Newt Scamander jumped, his red hair flopping into his eyes. He looked everywhere but in her eyes but, she didn't expect him to look her in the eye anyway. Newt was a skittish man who had problems maintaining eye contact. It didn't matter as long as he did his job.

"The dragon scale is warm. That means...its come from a living dragon," Newt said, his eyes alight with awe and worry.

The entire table erupted in shouts and irritated disagreements. Porpentina Goldstein grimaced at the noise, cringing.

"It's a warning then," Graves said, speaking into the din. The others governors fell silent around him,
all turning their grudging attention towards him. "He is letting us know what he has in his arsenal. A living, breathing dragon. We heard the rumors. Now, we know them to be true."

"And if that's true, the Dark Lord must also be on his side," Robert Grimsditch said with a quiet grimace.

There was a long moment of meditation over that.

"The Fairest of Them All," Picquery murmured, breathing the title. She leaned back in her chair, reaching up to pinch the bridge of her nose as she considered it all.

They had been citizens of the Albion Empire at one point. The 'Fairest' had not been wrong on that. They had fled. Cowardice or survival, it didn't matter. Picquery knew that if they had lived their natural lives, it wouldn't have been her that had to deal with all of it. But, it was her job. Pandora had taken away nearly a hundred years of the lives. Now, the consequences rolled and she would not flinch away from them.

"You will not bend the knee. We won't," Carlos Lopez barked.

"And if he threatens to raze us to the ground?" Bethilde Roche asked, always so very cautious.

Suddenly, they all turned to look at Seraphina. She didn't quiver under their gaze. Instead, she lifted the dragon scale to her eye and turned it over, examining it. It didn't burn, but it was warm. She cleared her throat, her lips curling into a terrible grimace.

"Let him come."

MIRROR

He barely reacted to the tight wet heat around his cock as he stared into the flames, tasting the tartness of wine on his tongue. He looked down at her, his eyes narrowed at her as if she were alien. She looked up at him with bright sea glass eyes, tears leaking down her cheeks.

Draco's lips curled into a sneer and he drained the goblet, slamming it down on the side table. Slowly, he knotted his hair into her wet blonde hair, twisting it above her head and thrusting into her mouth. She moaned around his cock as he battered the entrance of her throat and he winced, wondering what it would be like to feel bile around his cock. He yanked her off and she gasped, massaging her neck as she wretched.

"Back on my cock," he sneered, tugging her forward again. "Lick."

Like a dog, she lapped at the veiny shaft, eager to please and he finally lost himself in it. She had always been decent at sucking cock, though he would enjoy tearing her apart under him more. Her wide mouth wrapped around his cock, sucking the purple length with a moan as if she were getting off from just worshipping him. He thrust harder and she gagged.

Daphne Greengrass was lovely when she gagged.

He moaned softly, placing his other hand on the other side of his head, guiding her head up and down his cock. He groaned when he felt her teeth scrape against the sensitive flesh, hurting in just the right ways. She was weeping while she sucked; pleasure or pain, Draco had never cared. Daphne
had always been prone to her greens and greys, but he thought she'd look beautiful in red.

"You like that?" he hissed as he thrust once, hard, battering her throat open. She cried out around his cock, her cheeks red with the force of her tears.

He pushed her away and she fell back, spittle trailing down her chin, and she fell over, gasping for breath, her face pressed against the soft furs in front of the fireplace. Draco tilted his head back and reveled in the sound of her labored breathing.

When he looked at her again, Hermione Granger stared back, baleful and defiant.

She stood up, stumbling against the wall, dragging herself upwards. He stared at the back of her, her back, where her shoulder blades nearly cut through the bruised skin. The flat ass. Her thin, bird-like thighs. He could snap her in half. Her curls fell limp around her head as she gasped, attempting to walk towards the door.

"Draco…" she whimpered, looking over her shoulder. "W-won't you hurt me?"

Draco sneered, standing up and storming towards her. He knotted his fingers in the ragged curls, yanking her back. She gasped, falling back against him as he grabbed her by her chin, so tight that his fingerprints were painted purple on her skin. She looked at him, her eyes wide and sad. He hated it. He hated her. He wanted her to hurt.

His fist collided with her mouth and she gasped, falling back against the stone. He hoped that she bruised. He hoped that she bled.

Her bottom lip was split from the force of the hit. Blood trickled down the soft swell of her lip, down the skin of her chin. Draco leaned forward and licked it up to her lips. He reveled in the taste of iron, and he pressed their lips together, tasting himself on her tongue. She whimpered, wrapping her arm around his neck, pressing her naked body to his clothed one. Draco lost himself in the taste of blood on the back of his tongue, staggering back to the bed, his hands tight on her middle-tight enough to bruise.

When the back of her knees pressed against the edge of the bed, he pushed her back and gasped, softly to himself.

So beautiful.

The most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. Slowly, Draco wrapped his hand around his cock, jerking it gently as he stared down at Harry Wildfyre.

Harry Wildfyre stared up at him with a delicate sneer, his green eyes smoldering with rage. Slowly, he crawled backward, pulling his knees to his chest, staring at them at Draco. Draco swallowed, his mouth dry.

"I want to break you," he whispered like a promise.

Harry Wildfyre didn't say anything. Instead, he shook his head, watching with the judgment of all the gods. Draco slowly crawled onto the bed and he felt something crack in his chest. Something terrible and red that leaked evil into his belly. He wanted to break him. He wanted to possess the Fairest. Draco wanted to crack open his ribs and burrow himself between the Fairest's lungs, where his heart should be. He wanted to eat him from the inside out while he fucked the life out of him.

He wanted to choke the life out of him.
Draco bared his teeth, reaching forward and grabbing the Fairest by his ankles. Harry Wildfyre gasped, attempting to jerk away as he was dragged towards Draco's body. He tried to twist out of the way, scrambling past Draco, but Draco grabbed him by the back of his neck, shoving his face down into the bedspread. Draco grabbed the Fairest by the hip with one hand and thrust in with one messy move.

The Fairest screamed.

"Gods have mercy on you," Draco snarled into his ear as he thrust hard once, feeling wetness around his cock. He wasn't sure if the Fairest heard it over his own weeping. *Gods have mercy on me." I will burn. You will burn. We will all burn."

Draco threw his head back, grabbing at the Fairest's hips, fucking into the limp body beneath him. The Fairest twisted under him and Draco stared at the smooth lines of that pale back, unmarked. Draco would mark him. Draco would *hurt* him, the way he hurt. Draco felt like he couldn't breathe.

The King reached forward, wrapping his hands around the Fairest's neck, jerking him up until he was on all fours, choking and spitting as Draco's hands crushed bruises into his neck, into his windpipe. Draco closed his eyes. They stung. There was wetness on his cheeks. He was crying. Why was he crying?

Why was he crying?

He opened his eyes again and saw only dark wavy hair and a curvy body. *Pansy.*

He let go of her neck and felt her spitting and choking under him, weeping softly. Draco fell away from her, letting out a terrifying sob as she rolled over, gasping for air, her chest rising and falling in quick succession. Her eyes were glassy as she raised trembling fingers to her neck, massaging the bruises that he had put there. *Pansy.*

"D-Dr-" she rasped.

Draco screamed, falling into the pillows, trembling with terror. Pansy sat up, crawling towards him. Her body trembled with her aches and hurt, but she curled up behind him, wrapping her arms around him as he screamed. She looked over his body towards the shadow of the doorway, straight into pinprick blue eyes. Pansy nodded once.

Narcissa didn't nod back. She drifted backward, waving her wand so that it shut as quietly as possible. Narcissa stopped in the middle of the hallway, staring off into nothingness. She gathered herself, taking a deep shuddering breath, shutting her eyes.

Her poor, mad boy.

Narcissa allowed herself a single sob. And then, she gathered herself, as controlled as ever. Slowly, she walked through the deathly silent castle, ignoring each and every servant that quivered before her, lowering themselves to the ground in reverence. Her skirts dragged after her as she descended the steps. They parted just so with every step, revealing brown leathers and the chainmail she wore on her shoulders clinked.

She walked right past the Great Room and through the front doors. Crouch and Dolohov assumed their positions at her side as they looked at the ruins of Rowena's haven. The statue garden had been reduced to rubble, but for the statue of Helena-the irony was not lost on Narcissa. The stench was what really caught most of Narcissa's attention.

Broken bodies littered the battlefield, some crushed, others whole, and some reduced to nothing but
gore. The smell of blood and death would linger for years, crushed into the dirt. And smoke. Narcissa watched as the remaining soldiers levitated bodies atop one another and set them alight, burning them into ashes.

"How many have we lost?" Narcissa asked.

"We...haven't finished counting," Dolohov said, quietly.

Narcissa's teeth clenched. "How many did they lose?"

"Just as many," Crouch promised.

Narcissa didn't scoff. She closed her eyes, breathing in the scent of ash.

*F ÚIR!*

*Flames.*

She opened her eyes again. Dolohov and Crouch stared at her.

*Dear sister, I never claimed to love you.*

"What have you done with Zabini's body?" Narcissa asked, coldly.

"We have prepared it to be sent back to the Republic. But, who should the condolences come from? It would typically be...the Chancellor," Crouch said, his voice uncharacteristically soft. Narcissa's eyes narrowed and she turned away from the burning of the bodies and lifted her chin.

*I'm Lady Chancellor now."

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**ON THE WALL**

"A-a single ship is too little. It's not s-s-safe," Sirius stammered. He rolled his eyes at his own stutter, but Remus was happy to see that he didn't seem as frustrated with himself anymore.

"You think he can't defend himself? He knows war now, Sirius," Remus pointed out.

Sirius opened his mouth to argue, but Regulus shook his head.

"Remus is right. And he has the Dark Lord, Tonks, the Lestranges, Snape, Ginny, and Ron going with him. And, well, Freia," Regulus said. He sighed, crossing his arms. "Do you think he'll...fly Freia?"

The three stood in meditative silence, thinking to the day that they had returned from war. Sirius had been waiting at Regulus and Andromeda's sides. They had come back in bits and pieces. Fred and George had been one of the first, clutching onto bodies-McGonagall and Hagrid's. George's ear was gone, a gaping red wound, but they were whole. Immediately, they had been whisked away while Regulus went to take care of the bodies.

Sirius had gone ballistic, demanding to know who was dead.

All Fred had said was...*He can fly.*
Sirius hadn't had time to process any of that as the rest began to return, in groups. He had been horrified to see how many didn't return. And those that did return had bodies slung on their backs, most wounded, some dead. There was a great cry, and the entire city surrounding Westeron seemed to be too shocked to mourn just yet. Regulus had returned and every time Sirius had asked after Harry or Remus or even Tonks, they had shaken their heads.

The Lestranges returned next with Barty Crouch Jr. and a young blonde woman covered in dirt and blood. She clung to Rodolphus and he carried her into Westeron without another word. Barty had asked after a girl—the girl, Hermione—but, no one had seen her return. He decided to wait with the Death Eaters.

After that, it was all a waiting game. Hours passed and people trickled in, reporting those lost and those found—at least, those that they knew—to Regulus, Percy, and a small team of others. Percy had been on edge until all of his brothers returned.

Ron and Ginny had returned next, with a girl between them. She had been covered in blood from crown to toe, her entire dress soaked red and brown. Her eyes were wide and her hair was matted, but she looked unafraid. Barty had collided with her, wrapping his arms around her. Her arms had hung limply at her side and she was staring at the doorway. The young blonde woman held out her hands and the girl—Hermione Granger—rushed at her and sobbed, allowing Crouch Jr and the woman to guide her inside.

"Where's Harry?" Sirius had demanded. Ron had looked at him, shellshocked and whispered, "He's coming. Right behind us."

And then, there had been a great screech through the air. Sirius looked up as Freia crossed in front of the sun, creating a massive shadow as she circled Westeron, a blaze of white fire trailing after her wings. It had been one of the most beautiful things Sirius had seen in his life, and he watched as she landed in front of Westeron.

And Harry sat astride her back, Voldemort behind him, clutching at his waist. Everyone had fallen silent, watching as Harry dismounted his great dragon, white fire clinging to him as he staggered forward, a gap in his top teeth, blood spilling from a wound on his forehead.

Before Sirius could rush towards him, there had been a crack, and Remus and Tonks had appeared. Sirius had grabbed at Remus, holding him tight as Harry stumbled up to Tonks and raised a bloody hand to her cheek, leaving a red handprint.

Tonks had stared back at him and cupped his face.

"You are the sun," she had whispered.

And he had whispered back, "I am the Light."

Sirius shivered at the memory, shaking it away from his mind. Even now, the image of Harry wrapped in white flames terrified him. The look in his eyes had been a look that Sirius had never wanted there—he had seen death and it had not scared him. Sirius didn't want to think about the type of person that Harry was that he didn't fear death.

"He might fly Freia," Remus allowed. "I can't believe...that's a thing. Huh."

"It's a thing," Sirius repeated, his voice soft. Both Regulus and Remus looked at him strangely and Sirius forced a smile on his face. "The Alfheimans arrive while he'll be away."
"Cedric will be here to get them in order. He's still...mournning. He lost an Adored One," Regulus said apologetically.

Sirius nodded. "I offered my condolences, and he accepted them. But...the others...they only said it was war and that Michael Corner knew what he was getting into. But, they're all children. They couldn't possibly."

"No, Sirius. None of them are children," Remus corrected. Sirius looked at him in surprise and Remus smiled sadly. "I thought the same, once. I treated Harry...with a certain level of disrespect as if he were a child. It was a mistake. One I won't ever make again. They are not children."

"You're right," Sirius admitted.

Regulus hummed. "Though I loathe saying this...the Dark Lord won't let anything happen to Harry. He betrayed his own kin. He abandoned them. Fought against them. He chose his side," Regulus said, though grudgingly and Sirius frowned, nodding slowly.

Their cousin was a piece of shit, but he was a piece of shit that had chosen the right side. For once.

"You know why."

All three looked up at the limping man that approached. Sirius looked Mad-Eye Moody over. Old Mad-Eye didn't look much different from before Sirius' stint in Azkaban. More grizzled and grey, with a few more chunks missing out of him, but he was a tough old man. Age wouldn't do to him what all the Dark wizards couldn't.

"Alastor," Remus warned.

Mad-Eye scoffed, shaking his head. He looked up at the ship, his eyes narrowed.

"Not too big. I imagine there is only one set of private quarters. The rest will have to share the crew's quarters," Mad-Eye growled out. He turned his whizzing blue eye onto Sirius, zeroing in on him specifically. "Can't imagine the Dark Lord will happy about that, can you?"

"No. I...I didn't think about that," Sirius said, his brow furrowing. He turned to Remus and Regulus, but they were steadily not looking at him. "W-what is it?"

Mad-Eye pretended he hadn't heard him. "Well, it won't be a problem, aye? It's not as if the Dark Lord makes use of his own rooms here."

"W-where does he sleep?" Sirius asked. He swallowed around the sudden lump in his throat.

"The King likes to keep him close," Mad-Eye said, shortly, before he turned towards where a grey McKinnon and Vance waited. Vance was scarred now, a terribly angry red puckered mark that trailed across her neck from where a knife had almost slit her throat open. She was no longer hesitant or shaky, having learned her lesson. "I have work to do. Troops to train."

Sirius watched Mad-Eye limp off and he turned back to Remus and Regulus.

"What was he talking about? H-Harry lets him sleep in his room?" Sirius demanded.

Regulus swallowed. "Well...not lately, at least. After...the funeral, Harry has taken to not sleeping in the room. I don't actually know where he sleeps."

"In Tonks' bed," Remus supplied helpfully.
"And you're okay with that?" Sirius asked, surprised.

Remus hummed. "I...well, it's not going to be my problem."

"They're awfully close," Sirius teased and Remus shook his head.

"I'm not the one that would have a problem with it. Harry's mourning. He needs her. She needs him," he said, shortly, ending the conversation effectively.

Sirius sobered quickly, looking down away. Far down by the cliffs was a burgeoning garden, bulbs planted for all the lives lost. Harry liked to walk it sometimes, with some of the orphan children tottering after him. He very rarely spoke directly to them, instead choosing to listen to their childish babble instead. It was one of the few things that had made him smile since Minerva's death.

"He...he knows that she was old right? That s-s-she had fought long and h-h-hard and knew it was war. H-he knows it wasn't h-his fault. H-he knows, right?" Sirius asked, softly. Harry took so much on his shoulders. Sirius had known him for a short time, but he knew that.

Regulus frowned, shaking his head. "I don't think he does."

WHO IS

Hermione shivered in the dress that had been given to her by a passing servant. It was simple like her dresses in the Republic, and she felt more at home than she had in a long while, but it wasn't exactly practical. Westeron Castle was unreasonably cold despite the end of summer fast approaching. Hermione turned to Luna. The young woman was staring out of the window, a curious look on her face.

"Luna?" Hermione asked.

Luna turned to look at her sharply. "It's coming so fast. The end is close," Luna whispered.

She sounded terrified.

"How do you know?" Hermione asked, joining her friend by the window.

She swallowed when she saw who Luna was watching. Harry Wildfyre was sparring. He fought three Weasleys at once—the man that had saved her was called Ron, the girl Ginny, and their eldest brother, Bill. The Dark Lord stood afar shouting at Harry. Harry didn't seem to be paying attention, only swinging his sword and snarling as he beat them all back, fighting as if he were still in the middle of battle.

Hermione had so many questions. She had never had more questions. Except, now she was almost too afraid to ask about them. Everything felt ominous as if her world teetered on the edge of a knife. She regretted asking Luna 'how'.

"I had a dream," Luna said. She closed her eyes. "About the Seven. About priestesses and Death. About my mother."

"Luna...I'm tired of people speaking in circles. Speak plainly," Hermione rasped.

Luna's eyes narrowed. "I don't really know how," she admitted. "There are the Dtrwies, but there are
four more—as you know. You heard my prayers."

"I know about the Seven. My father prayed to them. Father, Mother, Maiden, Crone, Smith, Warrior, and the Stranger, Death," Hermione rattled off. Even so many years later, she could recall the lilt of her father's voice as he prayed to the Father for guidance.

"My mother is alive," Luna said, softly.

Hermione's eyes widened and then softened. "Luna...that's great."

"Is it?" Luna whispered, softly. "My mother is alive, but she abandoned me, as a child, and went to find the Red Woman. Tonks. And my mother came to me in a dream and called me Ainu."

"What does that mean?" Hermione asked.

"Holy One. Priestess," Luna said quietly. And it all made sense. So much sense that it made Luna's head spin. She took a deep breath, mulling over the new information in her head. "I've always been different. I'm not a Seer. Not even close. But, I've been able to see things and hear things and experience them. And my mother was a powerful witch. One of the most powerful witches. And a witch of fire. And the Wyrdod is here."

"The Wyrdod…" Hermione murmured, thinking again of the man that she had hardly seen since the battle. She hadn't known who that ask about that. She hadn't even seen Andromeda yet.

"I will have to go with him," Luna murmured.


"They are going to the City-States. My homeland. I know the way. And if I am Ainu…I must crown him with ashes," Luna said, quietly. "It is how it is done. I will ask the centaurs. They read the stars. They will know for sure."

"You still haven't told me what 'Ainu' means and why you must go? It's not fair! The Dark Lord knows the way!" Hermione protested.

Luna's eyes flash. "I want to go. I want to see my home again," she snapped. Hermione cringed back, looking down with shame. Luna's eyes softened just so. "If you could go home, wouldn't you?"

Hermione didn't have an answer. She would've liked to say yes, but she knew that would be somewhat of a lie. She didn't have a home anymore. Her father and mother were dead. She had slain her step-brother, and she knew that her stepmother would know. Her stepmother would murder her if she ever showed up at her own ancestral home. Hermione didn't have a home, just like all the other refugees that had sought safety at Westeron.

"I'm sorry. I'm being insensitive," Hermione said, awkwardly.

Luna nodded her forgiveness.

"Water, Fire, and Earth. And Death is like the air, whistling in your ear but you cannot see. There are three Ainu. Everything important comes in threes, Hermione. Three hearts. Three Ainu. Three Seers. And the four is always Death. Always," Luna said, firmly. And then she hesitated. "Unless...you are Deathless, but that is neither here nor there."

Hermione nodded in understanding.
"Who are the others?" she asked, softly.

Luna swallowed. "I do not know, but my mother...my mother is coming."

Hermione stared at Luna. Luna had rarely spoken of her mother. And she had always seemed like a healthy balance between grief-stricken and happy. But, now, Luna looked terrified.

"Why are you afraid?" Hermione asked.

Luna swallowed, looking down at her lap. "Because my mother is not like you and me. She cannot feel like us. She is power sewn to bones, and if she is sending me dreams...that means she's coming back. My mother never comes back. It's not in her nature. So...it is concerning that she's coming. I want to know why."

FAIREST

Gabrielle sat on their bed as Fleur walked around her spinning wheel, examining it for something that Gabrielle couldn't see. Fleur reached to the side, grabbing the short stool and settling it next to the wheel. She looked through the spokes at Gabrielle, utterly silent for a moment.

"What?" Gabrielle asked.

Fleur shook her head. "Nothing."

Gabrielle didn't believe her for a second.

"You're worried," Gabrielle said instead.

"Of course, I'm worried. There's a war. You heard what your Captain said," Fleur said, pointedly. Both Veela women thought about the owl that they had received from a wolf back in the Republic. They were going straight into war territory. The captain wanted to go towards the City-States, but Gabrielle had insisted that they continue towards Velothi.

"We have to go, though," Gabrielle said.

"You still haven't told me why. I remember a time where you told me everything. You can trust me," Fleur insisted and her face fell when Gabrielle flinched at the word.

"Trust. Gabrielle didn't feel like she could trust anyone anymore. Fleur shook her head. "I'm going to see what is waiting for us on shore. Don't interrupt me. I'll...try to tell you what I see."

"I won't," Gabrielle said solemnly. "And okay."

Fleur nodded once and she picked up the single grain she'd been able to find on the wretched ship that tore her insides asunder, and made her spit of water and bile. A grain of rice. She began to spin with the rice and Gabrielle gaped as golden thread flowed from that single grain of rice, spilling onto the floor. Fleur's eyes began to glow and the wheel began to turn of its own accord.

"Pokazhite mne proshloe," Fleur breathed.

And then she jerked, her back arching. Her eyes glowed as she spun the wheel, trembling again and again. Gabrielle leaned forward, intrigued.
"I...I see...Hermione," Fleur gasped, breathing hard, and trembling. Her eyes were searching something that Gabrielle could not see and Gabrielle was in awe as Fleur's hair seemed to take a life of its own, writhing wantonly through the air. Her spine went straight and she hissed. Fleur tore her eyes away from the wheel for just a moment to glance at her sister. "S-safe."


"Ukáž mi budoucnost," she murmured, calling to the future.

BURNING.

The Seven and the pyre and a mirrored crone who whispered, Ainu, to her. Fleur wept, tears streaming down her face, joining with the saltiness of mucus on her bottom lip. She trembled, shaking as the lilies and the daffodils and the irises were turned to ash. Red cloaks and mirrors and tears of blood.

How do you become DEATHLESS?

A woman with violet eyes and hair of raven walking the salty earth, clutching Elder in one hand and crushing an apple in the other. Gabrielle's favorite. Albion apples.

And the future abruptly ended, letting Fleur see no farther. She stopped her wracking sobs, gathering herself and prepared for the present.

"Ukáž mi Súčasnosť," Fleur snarled.

The present slammed into her, as large and threatening as an ox. Fleur shuddered from the force and she forced her eyes open so that she could see.

A man kneeling in water, his face painted. A woman in sea rags with a wide mouth and long wet blonde hair. Ainu.

Then, a woman—a little blonde woman that looked like a moon though she wasn't a moon, though she looked nothing like a moon-adorned the Wyrdfod with ashes and settled a crown on his head. Wyrdfod...Wyrdfod means…

"Deliverer."

Fleur jerked back, the magic ending and she looked up, wide-eyed at Gabrielle. Gabrielle's eyes were out of focus, and she stared at the mirror just over Fleur's shoulder, attached to the wall.

"What do you see?" Fleur demanded.

Gabrielle shuddered. "Baba Yaga says...Deliverer. Ainu, Deliverer."

Fleur swallowed. She had wanted to see because she wanted to find a reason not to go to Albion. Gabrielle jerked, suddenly thrown from her vision. She looked at Fleur, finally properly terrified.

"Baba Yaga spoke to you," Fleur said.

Gabrielle slowly nodded. "I...I saw her. When we were getting on the boat. She said to go to Albion."
"This...Grandmother, there's already an Heir," Neville said for what felt like the thousandth time. August grunted her default response after the third time he had said such a thing. She paid more attention to her letters than to her supposed 'King'. Neville didn't feel like a King. Neville looked down at his sister. "You said he's the Wyrdfod."

"I did not see him fly," Daphne said, instead, willfully ignorant.

"But, your sister says she did. She said that the seas were raging. That they saw him atop the dragon with the Dark Lord sitting astride behind him," Neville pointed out and wasn't that interesting. The Dark Lord had betrayed his kin, running after the Wildfyre man and riding off with him, a trail of fire coming after him.

"We will take advantage of all this distraction. We will expel the Slytherins from Essetir, and then we shall deal with this Wildfyre boy," Augusta said, firmly. She looked over at them, a grim expression on her face. "We don't know where he stands. Minerva McGonagall, Head of the Order is dead."

Neville and Daphne exchanged looks, not quite sure of what that meant, but they nodded. Neville looked up, swallowing. Daphne sighed, reaching up from between his legs, and brushed her thumb over his cheek. He smiled down at her as she kneeled up, finished mixing the colors. He stared down at the raw cuts on her wrist, still sluggishly bleeding, and shivered.

Daphne kneeled between her ward-brother's spread legs, brushing her fingers over his face, staining his cheeks with saltwater and blood. Neville sat in iron, his head tilted back, his eyes closed as Daphne marked him as the way a salt-warrior would look. She had already drawn the marks on her own face, for her sister would surely be without them.

"You are the King in the East," Daphne said, her voice hard. "You are the Ironborn."

"I am only King until we meet Harry Wildfyre for the first time," Neville reminded her. "Until you can confirm him as the Wyrdfod."

Daphne shook her head as she pulled him to his feet, walking him out of their tent, her back to them all. They ignored the host of Eastern nobility, all watching with solemn faces. Augusta followed them and despite her age, her stride was strong as she joined the nobility at their place on the rocky shores. Neville looked away from them all, too terrified.

Daphne pulled him towards the crashing waves until they stood ankle-deep in the water.

Neville pretended that they didn't watch, falling to his knees before her as she rolled her shoulders back. Daphne in the water was always a sight. When she stood in the water, her person suit melted away and she reveled in the strangeness of her eyes, the wideness of her mouth, the sharpening of her teeth. The wounds on her wrists bubbled and knitted together, making her whole once more.

"Will you consecrate your faith to the Dtrwies?" Daphne called.

She didn't pretend that they understood what she was doing. All that mattered was that Neville and his family believed in what she did.
"I would," Neville said.

Daphne nodded. "You will be born from the sea as I. Bless him with salt," she called as she knelt, grabbing the gourd of saltwater. She poured it on his face and he opened his mouth, drinking it down. "Bless him with stone. Bless him with iron. What are your words?"

"What is dead may never die," Neville snarled.

And then she took him by the back of his head and drowned him. His eyes shot open despite the way his eyes burned and turned red from the harsh churning salt-laden sea. He could feel her hands in her hair and on his chest, and he felt his heartbeat slow and his skin cool to the temperature of the ocean. Even as he felt water fill his lungs, he felt properly anchored by her touch, his dearest sister.

When she pulled him up, he gasped, her blood washed away from his face.

"How long was I under?" he asked, his voice raw and whispery.

Daphne's lips curled into a smile. "Five minutes." She turned to the Eastern lords and ladies, all staring at him in wonder. Neville wanted to quiver under their gazes, full of awe and expectation, things he had never seen for himself. "Look at your King! The King in the East! He is King Neville the Ironborn!"

They roared at him as she placed the salt-crown atop his soaked hair, and he wondered how similar they looked then-both doused in water and salt, matching towheads in the churning sea. He looked down at her and could see his own trepidation reflected in her eyes. And still, he was reminded of her words: *I will drown you.*

"If we die...we drown together," he whispered only for her to hear.

"Always, brother," she whispered back, linking their pinkies as they had as children. And immediately, Neville was reminded of a time when their parents had been slaughtered and Daphne had held him while he screamed. His kind-hearted sister.

He remembered a time before that, when he had found a little girl on a beach, her knobby knees knocking against one another as he helped her learn to walk, helped her learn to breathe in the air rather than salt. He remembered a little girl who could only screech on land, a guttural sounding thing that he learned, as she learned the common tongue. He remembered and he knew she remembered too.

Still, they shouted, "THE KING IN THE EAST! ALL HAIL THE IRONBORN!"

Neville heard them. Daphne heard them too. They were adults now, having lived through terrible things, having done terrible things. Yet, the children remained.

It was on that beach, where he was anointed with salt and blood, that he had found a mermaid one day long ago. It was on that beach, where a mermaid had found him, in return.

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**THEM ALL?**

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Harry swallowed as the crowd parted around him. The sea of creatures and Men alike watched solemnly as he walked forward, his eyes trained on the two women and man that stood on the
cliffside. On his shoulders was a cloak of darkest crimson, the color of Freia's scales. His head was bare of his crown, as it rested in Tom's hands. Tonks lifted her chin, her wand in hand.

"Incendio," she cast and the bonfire before the three burst into flames.

Some of the creatures flinched, but Harry did not. Instead, he looked up and saw where Freia hovered in the air, her eyes trained on him, as he approached Luna, Tonks, and Tom. Luna stooped down, grabbing a smoldering twig from the flames, holding it in front of her as if it were a torch rather than a burnt stick. Harry stopped in front of her.

She was perhaps the only person he knew that he towered over.

"Kneel, Wyrdfod," Luna Lovegood said.

Harry fell to his knees with a heavy thud, his head feeling strangely bare.

"Ainu," he greeted as he had been instructed. Luna nodded to him once and she reached down, brushing his wild hair from his forehead.

"Will you consecrate your faith to the Seven?" Luna demanded.

Harry swallowed as he thought about the Seven.

"I would," he responded.

Luna murmured words in the ancient tongue, her eyes glowing unnaturally. He thought he might have seen this once in a dream, or perhaps, in the reflection of a mirror. He couldn't be sure. Harry was never sure these days, but this...this he was sure of.

Luna leaned forward, cracking the burnt twigs, scattering it in his hair.

"Bless him with kindling," Luna murmured, tossing it in his hair, crushing it until her palms were black with it. She drew two lines down his cheeks, marking him with black as if he wept with it all. He did weep. He didn't weep anymore. "Bless him with ash. Tell me your name. What is your name?"

Harry bent his head forward. He didn't know anymore. He knew so very little things.

"Tell me!" Luna snarled "Are you Harry Wildfyre, the Wyrdfod?"

And Harry Wildfyre slowly looked up, his face streaked with ashes. He looked up at his people and did not smile.

"I am that I am," he said. "And more."

Luna took a step back, kneeling before him blowing ash from her pale hands into his face. Harry didn't flinch, only breathing it all in and Luna swallowed as the white fire slowly misted into the air around them. Luna turned and picked up the Gryffindor crown. She paused, turning to look at the two Slytherins that flanked her. Tonks nodded once to her. Luna slowly fell to her knees before Harry and settled the crown into Harry's hair.

As she did, the bonfire slowly melted away and circled Harry, kissing at his skin in greeting. Harry let out a deep breath and the sun burned brighter. Luna opened her mouth to declare him, but slowly Tonks tugged her back, moving to stand before Harry. Harry looked up at her, his brow furrowed.

"I am the One who comes after all. I am the One chosen by the Mirrored One," Tonks intoned,
drawing the crimson sword from her back. She pressed it to each shoulder. "Bless him with Light. Bless him with blood. Bless him with power sewn to bone. In the name of the Abominable One, I bless you. In the name of Baba Yaga...I mark you, Wyrdfod."

Luna flinched, wide-eyed. "What?" she whispered.

"I crown thee Harry Wildfyre, King-Emperor of the Albion Empire," Tonks said, and she took Harry by his hands, pulling him to his feet. She looked at him, the sun, the Light, the Wyrdfod. "May they look upon ye mighty works and despair."
Hermione swallowed, looking around the grand rooms. These rooms suited Andromeda far better than her rooms at Hogwarts. At Westeron, the stone walls managed to look warm, and the room was draped in mustard yellow velvets. The chairs were overstuffed and the tables were carved onyx. There were equal measures of books and swords, and Andromeda looked stunning and still as dangerous as ever, donning her dressing gown as a warrior would wear chainmail. Hermione shivered again, tugging the velvet throw around her thin body even tighter.

“You never asked for me. I gave you the two-way mirror and I had hoped to hear from you,” Andromeda said as her girl, Romilda, served them tea and hearty sandwiches. It was far more than Hermione was used to eating at Hogwarts.

She dug in with gusto, relishing in the fresh chicken. Andromeda smiled.

“I didn’t…” Hermione swallowed her food. “I didn’t think that you’d say anything I wanted to hear.”

Andromeda’s smile never dropped. “What do you mean?”

“I wanted the truth. You wouldn’t give it to me,” Hermione said, firmly. She didn’t sound angry. She wasn’t really angry at all.

“I couldn’t,” Andromeda corrected. “Nor did I want to. Do you really think you should’ve known about all of this?”

“Yes, I do,” Hermione snapped. “I had no idea. I thought...well, I thought.”

“Yes, you thought. You think Narcissa didn’t know every little thought in your head, little bird?” Andromeda challenged. Hermione opened her mouth to retort but Andromeda shook her head. “Narcissa would’ve never let you go. Everything would’ve fallen apart.”

“Luna knew,” Hermione hissed.

“Because your maid had something you didn’t: anonymity. Narcissa would’ve looked right through her. But, you were valuable. The Dark Lord was always watching. We were always watching,” Andromeda said. Hermione swallowed.

The Dark Lord had turned his back on his youngest sister. He had flown away on the back of a dragon, accompanied by the most beautiful person she had ever seen in her life. And then, he was gone again, just as quick, accompanying that beautiful person to the City-States.

“Why...why did he betray her? I understand why you did. But, why did he?” Hermione asked.

Andromeda leaned back in her seat.

“That’s a long story, Lady Granger.”

“I’m not a Lady,” Hermione retorted. Andromeda’s smile widened. “And we have the time. How did this happen?”
“Well...long ago, I fell in love,” Andromeda began. “And then that love was shattered.”

“Go on.”

“I know you know that once upon a time, I ran away. I ran because I had fallen in love with a Muggleborn and we had a child. My brother came to collect me, slaughtered my husband, and my child. Except, he didn’t,” Andromeda murmured, and she sounded torn. Both baleful and triumphant. Full of grief and a sort of peace that she had not carried the last time they had spoken to one another. “Nymphadora Tonks. The woman in the red cloak.”

“She’s your daughter,” Hermione murmured.

Andromeda nodded. “Yes. And the King...well, he said that if I bent the knee and pledged Afallon to him, that he would allow me access to my daughter. So, I did. I bent the knee.”

“But, how did the Dark Lord become his Chancellor? The King had your daughter. He didn’t have anything that belonged to the Dark Lord,” Hermione said, frantically trying to understand.

Andromeda laughed. “He does have something that belongs to the Dark Lord. His heart. My brother wanted to cut Harry’s heart out and eat it alive. That is old magic. Blood magic. Terribly Dark magic. But...love makes us mad, doesn’t it?”

Hermione paled.

“Love?”

“There are so many things to love about Harry Wildfyre, my girl, it would make your head spin to hear them all. And my brother is desperately in love. As in love with Harry as Harry is in love with him,” Andromeda said.

Hermione swallowed. “I didn’t think the Dark Lord could love,” she confessed.

Andromeda’s eyes narrowed as she regarded the young woman. Sometimes, she forgot how young Hermione Granger truly was.

“It is easy to love the Wyrdfod,” Andromeda repeated.

Hermione nodded, slowly. “Do you think...do you really think this is right? That he’s what this empire needs?”

Andromeda was silent for a long moment, considering Hermione’s question. Hermione’s stomach turned. If Harry Wildfyre turned out to be just another Draco, then they were doomed. Hermione would just have found herself in another enemy’s territory without anywhere to escape. She would still be a stranger in a strange land.

And finally, Andromeda answered.

“I think...that he is what the empire needs, but doesn’t deserve.”

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**MIRROR**

Harry felt Tom's eyes on his back, but he pretended not to notice. It got easier to pretend every time.
He couldn't pretend that he didn't love Tom, but he couldn't pretend that the man wasn't just complicit but also responsible for the state of the empire. Harry had tried to ignore it. He tried to ignore the nightmares too. It never worked.

“Harry,” Tom said.

Harry closed his eyes and instead focusing on the burning above them. He could feel Freia now, more than he could ever feel her before. She was like the sun, big and burning as bright as the fire in the pit of his stomach. He could feel her under his skin and it made him feel *alive*.

"You can't ignore me forever because of our personal differences, Harry. You have a power that I've...I've only seen once before," Tom confessed.

Harry spun to face the man that he adored, the man that he loved. His green eyes burned with rage and he swallowed it down, holding it inside of him. The fire burned, raging against his skin. He could feel it just underneath. He thought Tom could sense it too.

“What do you want me to say, Tom?” Harry whispered, his voice harsh.

Tom took a deep breath. “Do you feel it?”

So, he could sense it too.

“Of course I can feel it. It’s...it’s as if there’s something under my skin that’s *alive*. Something that isn't quite me but is me at the same time. It wants out. It wants to burn and Freia feels it too,” Harry murmured quietly. He held out his hand and exhaled. The white flames leaped at the call, as easy as breathing. He didn't even need to think about it anymore.

Tom nodded.

“You are power—”

“You know I love you,” Harry interrupted. Tom’s brow furrowed and he didn’t say anything. “I love you more than anything. But, I can’t give anymore. I have nothing left to give. I feel spent and broken and I am so tired, Tom. I am tired.”

“You must keep on,” Tom murmured.

Harry scoffed. “Oh, I know. I won’t stop until I’m dead.”

“Good.”

“Would it kill you to tell me that you love me too?” Harry asked, looking away at the sea again. Tom opened his mouth to answer, but before he could, Harry lifted his hand to stop him. “No. I don’t want you to say anything. I won’t beg for table scraps anymore...like a fucking dog. No. It doesn’t matter. All that matters is this.”

“This?” Tom murmured.

"You want my forgiveness so desperately, Tom," Harry mocked. Tom recoiled, his lips curling at the idea of him begging for something. "You reek of it. But, I want this. All that matters is *this*. I want to remember my rage. My grief. Let me keep it.”

And Tom stared at his angry lover. His broken, beautiful lover that had never been more beautiful than in his grief.
“Keep your grief. Keep your rage. I am here when you are finished with it.”

Tom watched Harry’s back as he trembled. Harry let out a sharp sound and there was an answering shriek. Freia swooped down from the sky, leveling out with the side of the ship. Harry stepped up onto the ledge and climbed onto Freia’s wing, crawling with confidence until he was on her back. And then, he was lost in the air.

Lost in the beating sun.

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**MIRROR**

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Luna’s fingers dug into the side of the ship. The Wyrdfod was flying on Freia’s back, leading them forward. Rabastan watched at the wheel, as he brought them forward. Rodolphus was probably below deck, planning with the Dark Lord. Luna swallowed hard when she felt a presence join her as she watched the Wyrdfod.

“Who are you?” Luna asked, softly.

She had watched the Red Woman from the moment she had seen her. Tonks had disappeared when they arrived back at Afallon but had met with her to organize crowning Harry before the creatures. But, she had never allowed Luna her full time to ask the questions she wanted to ask. And Luna had so many questions.

“I am Nymphadora Tonks, daughter of Andromeda Slytherin and Theodore Tonks,” Tonks said, turning her strange gaze onto Luna. “You look just like your mother.”

“You knew who she was. But...how?” Luna asked.

Tonks cleared her throat. “Your mother raised me. Trained me.”

“When?” Luna demanded.

“When I was sixteen,” Tonks said. “I’m nearly thirty.”

Luna faltered. “I was...I was five,” Luna murmured. “My mother died when I was eight. When did she leave you?”

“When I was twenty-three,” Tonks responded immediately.

“She...she wasn’t dead,” Luna said.

“She wasn’t dead.”

“Why, then?” Luna murmured, her voice cracking. She didn’t expect the compassion in Tonks’ eyes, though her expression never flickered, always cold—like a Slytherin.

“Because you were not necessary to the story. And you know how your mother enjoys stories,” Tonks said, firmly.

Luna swallowed. “She never told the whole story. When I was a child. She’d always stop before the ending.”
“They called your mother many names,” Tonks said, coldly. She looked out at the ocean, unbendable. Luna stared at the woman and trembled when she realized why Tonks seemed so familiar. “They called her Schau Fraude. The Abomination. Marzenna. Baba Yaga.”

Tonks reminded her of her mother.

“What did you call her?” Luna whispered.

“Pandora,” Tonks said, turning to look at Luna.

“She left me. Abandoned me to my fate,” Luna said as if she couldn’t quite believe it. Tonks only nodded, taking a deep breath. Luna looked over her shoulder and saw Rodolphus watching, a concerned look on his face. Luna turned back to Tonks.

“Because this is bigger than any one of us,” Tonks said. She cleared her throat. “How old is your mother?”

“Centuries old,” Luna said immediately.

“Millennia,” Tonks corrected. Luna’s eyes widened. “Your mother did things...things that would terrify you. Things that scarred me.”

Luna swallowed. She knew that her mother wasn't a good woman. Pandora had never been good to anyone but those that suited her purposes. The most humanity that Luna had ever seen out of the woman was when she was still nearly a babe. The way that Pandora looked at Xenophilius couldn't be mistaken for anything but love. It had been snuffed out when he was burned alive.

“Do you know what happened to me?” Luna asked. She asked as if she expected Tonks to know. She was surprised when Tonks shook her head.

“No. I only know what I’ve been told,” Tonks said, softly.

“And what was it you were told?” Luna challenged.

Tonks’ lips curled into a smile. Luna could see what Harry Wildfyre saw in her. She was frighteningly similar to Pandora—with her secrets and coldness—but Tonks had a fire in her. She was good. She was kind.

“I'm not allowed to tell you, yet,” Tonks said. “There are things I don’t even know. I just know my purpose. My destiny. And it wasn’t something I chose. So, how about we trade a story for a story? Tell me what happened to you and I’ll tell you what happened to me.”

Luna nodded. She could agree to that.

“When my mother abandoned me to my fate, she released a fearful man in the process. Ignatius Peverell, the Deathless, came for me in revenge. He scarred my body. Tortured me. I was only a child. I hadn’t even started my blood,” Luna said, softly. Tonks stared at her. There was no pity in her eyes. Good. “I wasn’t violated. Not...sexually. But, in every other way, I was. Rodolphus, my love, saved me. And the Dark Lord took me back to Albion. Out of affection for my mother.”

Tonks nodded in understanding.

“I see,” she murmured. She shook her head, rueful. “Fuck Pandora.”

Luna laughed. “Fuck Pandora,” she agreed. She leaned forward. “Your turn.”
“I was a whore in the City-States. And one day, a woman came to me offering me a cloak and a chance. A chance at knowledge and power. I took it because I was terrified and felt there was no choice. There never was. We are all born to fate. You are Ainu and I am...me,” Tonks said, her voice cracking with something that Luna couldn’t identify.

“And what are you?” Luna asked.

Tonks hummed. “Destined to Death,” Tonks said. She grinned. “But, aren’t all of us that have been touched by Pandora’s stories?”

“You think my mother did this. All of this.” It wasn’t a question.

And Tonks’ eyes flashed as she turned on Luna.

“Your mother knew we would meet one day. She knew that you were Ainu. And she didn’t love you,” Tonks said. Luna flinched, looking down at her feet. Tonks reached forward, grabbing her hand and squeezing once. “Your mother was not capable of love. You know this. She cared deeply for you, but she didn’t love you. She can’t. It’s not in her nature.”

“I know,” Luna whispered.

Tonks shook her head. “No, you don’t. But, you will.”

ON

Gabrielle wasn’t sure she would call it a relief when she finally caught sight of the approaching city, but she felt something heavy and foreboding. Perhaps, it was anticipation. Fleur would call what she felt, relief. Fleur was tired of living on the floating hellhole that smelled of sick and rotting fruit, and dog. It had only been three weeks at sea, but it was too close to the full moon for her comfort. She was eager to escape into Albion, whatever it held for her and her sister.

When they finally docked, the Captain turned to the Alpha of Laug.

“What is it you need of us, Alpha?” he asked, immediately.

Gabrielle pulled her hood over her head, cautious even in a land that promised something far better than her homeland. A chance.

“Nothing for now,” Gabrielle said.

The Captain looked thrown at her words. "What do you mean nothing, Alpha?"

“I’m not...I can’t be your Alpha. I’m not a wolf. You listen to Deyanira. Deyanira Argentum,” Gabrielle said, suddenly unsure of herself. She winced. She hadn’t been unsure since she had left her husband. Him. Her love.

Thinking of him made it hard to breathe, made the space between her ribs ache something terrible. When she thought of him, her thoughts spiraled, and she wanted to weep tears that she hadn’t thought she had anymore.

“But, she’s not the Alpha,” the Captain said forcefully.
“I...I have something to do here. I don’t know if I’ll ever be back. To Laug. So, listen to Deyanira,” Gabrielle said, firmly. She turned towards her sister. Fleur held out her hand silently, and Gabrielle wasn’t a fool. Not anymore.

She took her sister’s hand in her own and squeezed once. They disembarked.

When Gabrielle finally stood on land—Albion land—she felt a thrill. Like a child. This was the place that Gabrielle had imagined when life had been too provincial, too trivial. And now, here she was, something magical or divine—or both—that had commanded her to come. Gabrielle swallowed her squeal and she looked up through her pale eyelashes at her sister.

Fleur was grinning down at her. She knew. She knew her so well, and Gabrielle wondered how she had ever thought that Fleur didn’t understand her at all. Fleur was the only one that understood her now.

And so, the Delacour siblings walked through cobbled roads of the great port city of Velothi, Essetir, hope on their faces. They had nothing but the clothes on their back, a sword of silver, and a tiny burlap sack of gold, and they surely smelled like shit, but here they were. They were in Albion.

Albion.

THE WALL

Neville swallowed his nerves.

“Grandmother, I can’t make heads or tails of any of this,” Neville said, his voice full of panic. “I’m not...I’m a Herbologist! Not a soldier!”

“You’re both. You’ve been trained to be both,” Augusta snapped at him as they walked through Arcadia’s stronghold. Neville suppressed a wince every time they passed a Lord of Lady who bowed or curtsied to him.

He would never grow used to it. Neville hoped he never had to.

“I know, but I don’t know how to lead an army,” Neville hissed from the corner of his mouth. Augusta rolled her eyes as they turned into a doorway, entering Neville’s sister’s private quarters. Everything was draped in silks and velvets and it smelled like ocean air and sand.

Daphne was sat in the middle of her room, barely dressed but for the gossamer that she draped across her that left nothing to the imagination. If it were anyone else, Neville would’ve nearly keeled over in embarrassment for how much of her he could see. Except, this was Daphne and the first time he’d seen her, she’d been naked as the day the Dtrwies made her.

“What has your sister told you so far?” Augusta asked as she joined Daphne at her large table, sitting across from her.

As always, Neville sat between them. He could never sit across from Daphne. It implied that he wasn’t always, always on her side.

“He sails for the City-States. And he mourns. And he sails. And he screams. And white fire follows him,” Daphne said, softly, twitching gently. She looked at them with troubled eyes. “My sister truly
believes he is the Wyrdfod.”

Augusta hummed. “And? What have they been whispering aboard the ship? Plans?”

Neville balked. “Grandmother, our primary objective must be survival. We cannot go against—”

Daphne snarled something in her language as she dragged her fingers through the water. The water bubbled around her pale hands.

“My sister says...she says he has a dragon,” Daphne gasped. “He is the Wyrdfod. Grandmother—”

Neville’s eyes widened as he saw the water bubble around Daphne’s hands. Daphne fell into a thousand yard stare, swaying as she heard something only she could hear. Neville glanced at his grandmother, but her own eyes were hard. Daphne whimpered again, shaking her head, a gurgling sound coming from her throat.

“What else?” Augusta asked. Daphne continued to gurgle, speaking softly to the sister that the two Longbottoms she couldn’t see. Augusta slammed her fist down. “Daphne. What. Else?”

Daphne looked up, her eyes uncharacteristically soft. “Draco is mourning me.”

“How does she know that? Is he by the sea? Where is he?” Augusta snapped out.

Neville cleared his throat. “Grandmother—”

Augusta ignored him, staring intently at her pseudo-granddaughter.

Daphne looked up, a terrible sadness on her face.

“No. But, he cries an ocean of tears. My sister tastes the salt of his grief. What a pitiful boy,” Daphne said and Neville was stricken.

Sometimes, Daphne was like the sea—unforgiving and unyielding. And sometimes, she was still like the sea, yet calm and nurturing and yearning to heal. Despite Daphne’s grief, her rage, she still wanted to fix a poor, damned boy, just as she had wanted to be the friend of a poor, dumb boy. Daphne was always saving her boys. Neville just hadn’t ever imagined that both he and Draco Slytherin would be considered ‘her boys’.

“You cannot save him,” Augusta spat. “His mother has dug him a grave.”

“Aye,” Daphne said, and then she was unyielding again. “A watery grave. I have marked him. It cannot be undone. I pity the man.”

Augusta snorted, shaking her head.

“Save your pity for someone who deserves it, girl. Tell me something useful now. What are the Slytherins planning next?” Augusta snarled. Neville leaned forward until his face was just in front of hers, over her little bowl of water, her fingers twitching inside.

Daphne trembled, and then suddenly, the water exploded, drenching both Neville and Daphne in saltwater. Daphne breathed it in, refreshed, while Neville sputtered, wiping at his burning eyes. Augusta rolled her own eyes, huffing.

Daphne pulled back, shaking her head like a wet dog. She turned to Augusta.

“There is something...Dark moving through the lands, across seas. It is not the Slytherins.”
Neville swallowed hard. “What now?”

“It is what we call, Marzenna,” Daphne said. She opened her mouth to explain but fell silent when Augusta lifted her hand. The older woman stood and Neville and Daphne stood immediately, ever the trained soldiers. Augusta looked satisfied with their swiftness.

“We have no time for your Mermish tall tales. We know nothing about the Slytherins movements, but at least we know of this...Wildfyre. Come, we must make haste and make plans. There is no time to waste.”

WHO IS

Narcissa watched her son. He sat in his council chair, his gaze so very far away. He looked like he was anywhere but there. She wondered what he thought about. She rapped softly on the table in front of him, her wand clenched tight in her fist. Draco looked up, stroking a hand over his grizzled, spotty facial hair, his eyes the same color as his father's. Narcissa had no qualms delving deep into his mind.

She didn’t have to go deep to see that he mourned.

_Her blonde hair, her sea glass eyes, her wide mouth. Daphne Greengrass haunted his shadow like a ghost._

Narcissa pulled back, scoffing at his weakness. Draco let out a hard bark of a laugh before he cleared his throat.

“I call this council meeting to order,” he rumbled, his voice coming through in a low growl. The remaining men at the table fell silent. The magic of the room didn’t work, of course. There were seats that weren’t filled, but there was nothing to be done about that just yet. “Gentlemen, we have entered a war we cannot win.”

There was a long moment of stunned silence. Narcissa recoiled at her son’s words, a blaze of fury racing up her spine at the soft admission.

“Your Grace, we have suffered a devastating blow, but this is something we can recover from,” Dolohov said, his wild eyes belaying his panic despite the calm of his voice.

“Recover?” Draco rasped. He gestured at the empty seats. “We have lost our council.”

“Not all of us,” Theodore Nott said, firmly.

Draco’s eyes narrowed. “We have lost MacNair, Blaise, and...my uncle,” Draco said, hesitating. The entire council shifted uncomfortably.

“We have lost the weak,” Narcissa said, her voice cold. The council regarded her sharply. There was a wariness in their eyes that hadn’t been there before. None of them could avoid the diamond of her now—not when it was in her war-painted face, in the warrior’s braids that trailed down her back. “And now, we will build ourselves stronger than ever.”

Draco was silent, looking away.

The rest of the council startled at her new title.

“The King and I have discussed a new council. We will introduce Lord Bartemius Crouch, Sr. as the Lord of the Coin, Lord Mulciber as Commander of the Navy, and Pansy Parkinson as the Lady of Whispers,” Narcissa said.

Draco startled at the name of his paramour. “Pansy?” he asked, softly.

The three that she had named stepped out of the shadows, watching with determination in their eyes. Crouch and Mulciber didn’t hesitate to take their seats. Only the seat on the other side of Draco was available. Pansy only hesitated for a moment before she went to her seat, squeezing Pansy’s wrist.

Narcissa lowered her lips to Draco’s ear. “I trust no one with you, but if I were to, it would be she,” Narcissa said.

Pansy had long proven her loyalty to her boy.

Draco flinched but said nothing else.

“What have you heard, Lady Pansy?” Narcissa asked, giving no time for any adverse reactions.

Pansy leaned back in her chair, gathering her wits about her. Narcissa had told her that her position—her life—was conditional in what her petty gossiping skills could gather. It was conditional on whether her gossip could translate to something far greater than the court, on the chessboard of war.

“The dragon has been spotted. Flying towards the City-States. We cannot touch him there. MACUSA, if they choose to give him refuge, has a far stronger fleet than us—” Pansy said.

“Untrue,” Mulciber interrupted, his lips curled. “Girl, I’ve been an officer in the navy for—”

“It doesn’t matter. It is true,” Pansy said, stubbornly. “Your arrogance means nothing in the face of truth. Lady Chancellor, if they take him in, we cannot win. And, we must engage the East. Essetir has been taken by the Longbottoms. They call the Longbottom Lord, the King in the East.”

“Aye, I have heard.” Narcissa murmured.

If she were a girl, she would’ve worried her bottom lip with the tip of her wand. She would’ve fidgeted through the solution of this problem. But, she was not a girl. She was a woman grown. She was the Lady Chancellor of Albion.

"Our army outmatches Essetir, but is severely outmatched by the Pretender's—" Crouch said.

Dolohov scoffed. “We shall call him what he is. Wildfyre.”

“He is no Pretender,” Draco murmured. Everyone to look at him, wide-eyed. “He is no Pretender. They do not call my uncle, ‘Kingmaker’ for fun. Harry Wildfyre is no Pretender.”

“He is a Pretender to me,” Narcissa snarled with such a rage that the entire room flinched away from her. Narcissa lifted her chin, hissing. She turned to Dolohov. “If we do not have the numbers, what shall we do?”

“We buy the numbers,” Dolohov said, softly. “An alliance. With the Order of Nidavellir.”
Narcissa paused. A band of savage mercenaries that wandered the world, pillaging and raping and destroying.

Perfect.

“Can we afford it?” Nott asked, looking towards Crouch.

Crouch lifted his chin. “It depends on the value we place in them. If they infinitely turn the tide of the war, then it is an investment that we will sacrifice much to make. But, there are other things to consider. The Pretender occupies Afallon, Albion’s primary provider of goods. We’ll need to start rationing. If we ration and invest most of the coffers into Nidavellir, we’ll be able to sustain a war for about a year.”

Narcissa paused. She lifted her chin. The Order of Nidavellir was formidable.

“Mother. You decide,” Draco said, looking away.

Narcissa gritted her teeth, nodding. “Do it, Crouch,” Narcissa commanded. “In addition to Lady of Whispers, Pansy Parkinson will serve as my Lady Secretary. I will have you all set up meetings with her. I want a detailed report within the day. Dismissed.”

The lords lurched as her dismissal. Pansy stood up, swooping down to kiss Draco’s cheek before she walked out. “Gentlemen,” she called, and most of the lords trailed after her.

Crouch and Dolohov hesitated.

“You are included in ‘gentlemen’,” Narcissa said, coldly, never tearing her eyes away from her son.

They filed out of the council room until Narcissa was alone with her only son. Draco stared far away and when he looked at her, his lips curled into a snarl.

“Mother,” he spat.

Narcissa sighed. “Draco, you must push away your grief.”

“Stay out of my head,” Draco hissed. Narcissa rolled her eyes at her son. Draco only grew more incensed by that. He stood up, shoving his chair back with a thud. Narcissa remained in her seat, sitting in it as if it were a throne. “You are the reason they all leave. You make them all leave! You are the reason Father left. Why Uncle left. Why she...Daphne...”

Narcissa’s coolness slid away from her face.

“What?” she breathed.

Draco seethed, “You are the reason Father left. Why Uncle left. Why she...Daphne…”

“She didn’t want you,” Narcissa snapped. “None of them wanted you.”

“None of them wanted me because of you!” he roared down at her. “You made me into this...this monster. And I don’t know how to be anything else but a monster. I don’t know how! Why did you do this to me? Because you wanted someone like you?”

Narcissa stood, her hand to her chest as if she held her heart in her palm. She trembled with her fury and pain. She looked at him with sharp eyes.

“It doesn’t matter anymore. It is done, my monstrous little boy. She didn’t want you. She didn’t love you. She promised that she would drown you. Will you drown?” Narcissa bit out angrily.
Draco shook his head. “You know I won’t even if I wish I could,” Draco roared.

And then he crumpled, a terrible sob ripping free from his throat. Narcissa was by his side in a second, wrapping her arms around her boy as they sunk to their knees. He wept in her lap as he might have when he was barely a babe, gangly and young with a scraped knee. She kissed the top of his head as he buried his face in her stomach, his arms wrapped around his small waist.

“Do not worry, my boy,” Narcissa whispered. “We are strong. Together...we will begin a new dynasty. Forged in the blood of a god.”

FAIREST

“He won’t speak to me,” Voldemort said in greeting to his niece. She watched the dragon flying above, knowing that their King sat on the nape of Freia’s neck, his face pressed against his warm scales.

Tonks hummed. "He is grieving. Of course, he won't."

“There is a war going on. I don’t have time for his grief,” Voldemort said sharply.

This wasn’t a lie. There was no time for Harry’s grief or sorrow. There was no time for anything else but bloodshed and victory. There was no time. There was nothing left to lose.

“What does he remind you of?” Tonks asked, coldly.

Neither looked at one another, staring out at Harry, flying high. Tonks only heard the sloshing of the waves and her uncle's breathing. She wondered what it must feel like to be on the back of such a great creature, soaring through the air as if one owned it. Her uncle had experienced such a thing. She wondered if it felt as holy as it looked. She didn't ask.

"When I found him, I felt power. But, this is something...more,” Voldemort said, softly. Slowly, he turned his gaze to his niece, clearing his throat. "He doesn't even realize it."

“Of course, he doesn’t. This isn’t the end of the story,” Tonks said, her fingers digging into the railing. The ending of the story pounded on the inside of her head. She knew. Blood and war. Flowers abundant. “This is what Pandora was. Before she became what she is.”

“So, she’s alive,” Voldemort confirmed.

“Of course she is. She just left you. For Luna. And then, she left Luna for me. That’s what she does. She orchestrates, Uncle, and she watches. She’s always watching and she always leaves,” Tonks said. She grabbed at the red cloak around her shoulders, tugging it tighter around her. Finally, Voldemort looked at her, his eyes burning as he regarded her.

“Nymphadora. Who gave you that cloak?” Voldemort whispered.

He remembered once upon a time, a woman pale as moon, with a cloak on her shoulders.

Tonks shook her head. “Uncle, there’s a story. We follow it. Beginning, middle, and end.”

“You knew,” Voldemort said.
Tonks turned, sharply. “Knew what?”

“You knew that McGonagall was going to die. You knew that it was going to happen. You knew what it would do to him. And you didn’t stop it,” Voldemort said, softly. He took a step closer to her. “Pandora’s a teacher, first and foremost. She taught me and my sister the blackest of arts. The power of blood. What did she teach you?”


“Teach him,” Voldemort repeated.

Tonks hummed, nodding. “He needs to learn to control the magic before it controls him. Before he realizes what it means to be the Wyrdfod.”

“It means he’s ‘Fateborn’. There’s nothing else to it,” Voldemort snapped.

Tonks scoffed. “Wyrdfod is an old word, Uncle. But, it doesn’t just mean ‘Fateborn’,” she hissed, turning to look at him with narrowed eyes. “It means Deliverer.”

No one recognized their faces. Salazar hadn’t expected them to. The men and women of the city were young blood, lost in war and the emotions that followed it—grief, love, passion, and hatred. The city was brimming with the thick emotions, threatening to overwhelm him. Salazar hadn’t been around this many in a long time.

He didn’t remember this city being there. He wondered if it was all due to his daughter. Andromeda.

"She can sense us,” Rowena said as if she was reading his thoughts.

Salazar wasn’t surprised.

“Most probably,” Salazar said as they moved through the crowds.

The city surrounding Westeron bustled with movement and the sound of armor and chainmail. There were children of all types—creature and human, magical and Muggle. It was the most diversity Salazar had seen in a long time—since the war against his predecessors if he was being quite honest with himself.

Regret stirred low in his belly. Once upon a time, he would’ve pretended that he didn’t know what that was called—regret—but he had lived with it as his constant companion for far too long not to name it.

Rowena took him by the wrist, guiding him forward. Salazar hadn’t even realized that he’d stopped in the middle of the road. They continued forward, hearing bits and pieces of conversations.

“Bread for sale—”

“Children, back in here! It’s time to learn and—”
And then, they were in front of the steps of Westeron. Salazar remembered time and again being at Westeron. The day they had won it from Morgin, mounted on her dragon. The moment when Helga had sat on the onyx throne, claiming it for her own. The day Lily was born. His children had been there.

They only took one step up before they were surrounded and the doors swung open with a crash that deafened the valley below. For just a moment, the entire city was silent, and then the bustle began again.

They were surrounded by Order members, all recognizable by the phoenix emblazoned on their breasts. A redhead woman with blazing brown eyes and a bow across her back held her wand threateningly against Salazar’s chin. A man that resembled her, tall and broad had a battle-ax in one hand, his wand in the other, aimed at Rowena. Rowena smiled, dry and amused.

But, Salazar only had eyes for the woman that stood in the doorway, walking forward.

She looked like Bellatrix, but softer. She looked like her mother. Tall and severe with a mess of brown curls. Some of her curls were free. Most were in warrior’s braids, hanging down her back like ropes. Chainmail and velvet and a long broadsword. Andromeda Slytherin took another step forward, flanked by her cousins.

Sirius. Regulus.

“Lady Warden, what is your command?” the redhead woman barked out.

Andromeda stared, stricken. She took another step forward, peeling away from her cousins.

“Father,” she breathed.

Salazar forced a tired smile on his face. “Andromeda. You look...older.”

“It’s been many years, Father,” Andromeda confirmed, looking at him in wonder. She looked over at Rowena, her nostrils flaring. “Rowena.”

“Andromeda,” Rowena hissed with a smile. “Where is the King?”

“He is...on a ship. To the City-States. Why are you here?” Andromeda whispered. “You cannot be here. He cannot...he cannot see you. You cannot speak to him”

Rowena laughed. “Oh, Andromeda, but we’ve much to tell him.”

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She did not sleep nor did she eat.

She didn’t need to. Not really. Not anymore. At least, not as much.

Sometimes, when Bellatrix was bored, she ate. When she was bored, she gorged, eating everything in sight. What she ate didn’t matter. She ate bread and cheeses and the hearts of pretty girls in the villages she passed through. Everything tasted the same now. Like ash. Everything tasted like the
ends of life, like the beginnings of death, and everything in between. Everything, but for the hearts, of course.

The hearts tasted like rawness of magic. It was better than anything. And once upon a time, Bellatrix had been queen. She thought she had been queen of a nation, and when she was, she had eaten the delicacies of the world and drank the finest of wines. Nothing could ever trump the taste of a pretty girl’s heart.

But, that didn’t matter. None of it mattered.

As she stared out from the shores of Salem, she could taste the blood. There was one delicacy that she looked forward to, beyond anything else. She knew that the heart of the Fairest would be like ichor. It was would be akin to a meal of gods. Bellatrix wouldn’t gorge on the Fairest’s heart. No, she would savor each bite as she looked into her darling brother’s eyes, her lips smeared with red, the Fairest’s heart caught between her teeth.

Bellatrix let out a sharp laugh that was lost to the ocean’s winds.

He was near. Her dear, stupid brother was near. Her beloved, sweet brother. She could reach out and practically taste him. She stumbled away from the seas. If she could taste him, he could taste her, and then, her work would be all undone. And that would not do.

That could not do.

She owed him a fall.

She would make him ugly too.

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ALL?

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“Harry.”

Harry stared up at the ceiling, ignoring the man that stood in his doorway. Tom rolled his eyes, shutting the door behind him and entering the room. The older man crossed the room and sat on the edge of the bed. Harry was practically naked, but he didn’t even seem to notice the chill in the air.

“What?” Harry finally asked.

“May I lay with you?” Tom asked.

Harry nodded, slowly closing his eyes. He felt Tom slide onto the bed and turn on his side. He could feel the man’s war bright gaze on his face, analyzing every inch of him. Harry shuddered under that gaze. It read his grief and cut through his rage until Tom saw the rawness of his heart, the bloody pulp beating in his chest.

“Everyone is dead,” Harry said.

“Not everyone,” Tom said.

“Not everyone,” Tom repeated.

Harry’s eyes flashed open and he turned to look at the man. He looked at the man, truly, and saw the darkness lurking in the shadows of the man’s eyes.

“I don’t know what to do. I want to cry. I want the world to cry with me. But, instead, everything burns hotter. And inside...I am sick. Sick with rage. I would burn the world in their names. But, I cannot. Because I must be good and just when I don’t want to be. I want to rage,” Harry hissed and Tom sat up, pulling Harry closer to him, cupping his face between two large hands. Harry stared into Tom’s eyes.

“Harry, take that rage and make it your sword,” Tom said, firmly.

Harry’s fury seemed to drain away, leaving only sorrow and he grabbed at Tom, sliding into Tom’s lap—finally, suddenly. Tom stiffened as Harry wrapped his legs around his waist, his arms around his neck. Harry buried his face against his chest and trembled, terrible gasping sobs rising from his throat and choking in his mouth.

“Please…” Harry rasped. “Don’t leave me. Swear you won’t ever leave me.”

Tom swallowed. “I won’t ever leave you. I swear it on my life.”

“Everyone leaves me,” Harry hiccuped.


But, that hurt too much. Not Bellatrix. He couldn’t think of her. Except…

“Everyone’s dead,” Tom repeated, almost thoughtfully.

Harry pulled back, his eyes blazing. And Harry thought of those he held responsible. Narcissa. Draco. Dolohov. Crouch. And in the recesses of his mind, he thought of his grandfather and the Founders, too, for they had broken a boy into a man, and had sent him raining hell fire across an empire until that war had eaten him alive.

Harry grimaced. “Not yet.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, it’s been a while. I have this story plotted out for the most part. I thought this would be about 10 chapters more. But, it seems I have 18 chapters and counting. So, I'm going to give this a tentative 22 chapters and an epilogue. I think.

Well. Let's go, y'all.
Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

So, this was LONG overdue, and in apology, I give you four pages of straight-up smut in the middle of a drama-packed chapter. Here you go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They disembarked in the cover of night, on the far side of the island, hidden in a cove that Tonks had helpfully named. Harry tugged his hood closer over his head as he walked carefully across the rocky sand. He wiped the sweat from his brow. The colonies were more tropical than he thought they would be. It was a heavy mugginess that made him breathe just a little harder, feel just a little more tired. He glanced over at Luna, tucked under Rodolphus’ arm. She looked like she was having a revelation.

“We make camp further on the island, my Lord?” Rabastan asked.

Harry looked up at the man, standing next to him. Tom's brow was furrowed as they walked further into Salem. There weren't many trees and not the type of trees that would provide much cover unless they wanted to go further into Salem and climb the small mountain at its center.

“We can’t. We’ll be noticed. If not by our kind, by creatures. They’ll notice Harry. I know somewhere we can stay,” Tonks insisted. She looped one arm through Harry’s and changed direction, marching towards the city.

“We don’t have a plan, yet. We can’t go straight to the city now,” Tom snapped.

Tonks scoffed. “We’re not, Uncle. There’s somewhere we can go that’s safe and at the very edges of the city.”

“And what about the dragon?” Tom said, looking up at the dark figure that was a nearly black spot in the night sky.

“She can take care of herself. She won’t be any trouble,” Harry insisted. Tonks nodded in agreement, looking sharply at her Uncle.

Tom looked put out that he was not the one forming a plan but he followed his niece anyway. Harry leaned into Tonks’ side, looking up at her wide-eyed.

“The City-States,” Harry breathed, his lips twitching into a small smile.

“Well. Only Salem,” Tonks corrected with a tiny smile. She glanced over her shoulder. “We don’t need to go far. I’ve made accommodations for us at the very edge of the city.”

They continued their trek in near silence, moving further inward. Harry looked up again. Freia passed over the moon, casting a burgeoning shadow for just a moment before she swooped up again, disappearing into the darkness. He got feel her, straining for the mountains, ready to hide until she was called. Watching her, he wondered if she missed Hedwig. His sweet Hedwig, who was not yet
Harry snapped back to attention as Tonks’ gait slowed. They were approaching a freestanding building—at least four stories high—that seemed to be brimming with action. It was painted an ostentatious fuschia, and there was the sound of women’s laughter—screeching and grating. Then, the sound of something heavy falling and crashing to the ground.

“A whorehouse? What are we doing here?” Rabastan whispered to Rodolphus.

Harry stared at Tonks with wide eyes as she stepped forward, fiercely, and knocked on the door. The door swung open, revealing an older woman, pale and strange. Her blonde hair was curled in an elaborate style, her face heavily powdered. She had a heavy-jawed face, with arching penciled-in eyebrows, and a pair of bejeweled spectacles on her nose. When she grinned, Harry could make out exactly three solid gold teeth in her mouth. Her ample bosom was pressed up by the poison green corset she was wearing and her skirts parted, revealing her pale, hairless legs.

“Well, if it isn’t sweet, sweet Nympho,” the woman shrieked, throwing her head back and laughing. She glanced over her shoulder. “Do you hear that? Nympho is back!”

There was a roar of cheers from inside the whorehouse, echoed by the sounds of smashing glass.

Tonks rolled her eyes.

“Wotcher, Rita. I’ve brought guests.”

She shouldered past the older woman and pushed into the whorehouse, beckoning in the rest of Harry’s party. Harry stepped forward, his eyes wide as he peered around.

There were men and women, all crowded around the messy brothel. It was well-kept, for what it was, but overflowing with patrons. One woman had lifted a whore onto the bar, her face buried between her ample breasts. The woman behind the bar was squeezed into a tight corset and a pair of knickers, and not much else. After all, those skirts were so sheer, it didn’t count for much did it. Harry’s mouth dropped open as a pair of blonde twins giggled as they were chased up the stares by a burly man, his hands still blackened from the work of the day.

“Are they paying customers, girl?” Rita asked. She stopped in front of Harry, grabbing him by the chin and tilting his head up. Harry gasped, jerking back. “Oh...he’s beautiful. Beautiful like you could be when you liked to use your little tricks, Nympho. He would fetch me high, high prices with the governors.”

Tom sneered, grabbing Harry’s wrist and jerking him back. “He’s not a whore,” Tom growled out.

Rita laughed, sweetly, her eyes flashing as she looked Tom up and down.

“Oh, you’ve made beautiful friends, Nympho. Are you looking for...entertainment, sir?” Rita asked, fluttering her feathery eyelashes, dipping forward to show off her large, liver-spotted breasts.

“That is my Uncle, the Dark Lord Voldemort, you hag,” Tonks snarled.

Rita blinked, madly, jerking back, her cheeks turning pink while the rest of her turned ashen. Finally, she seemed to notice those burning crimson eyes, and she cringed away from them. She looked at Tonks, terror in her eyes suddenly, and then back at Tonks’ party. Her eyes fell on Harry. Rita’s talon hand wrapped around Tonks’ bicep and she jerked her forward.
“You’ve brought...him. The Fairest. What have you brought into my house, girl?” she hissed into Tonks’ ear through her grinning mouth.

“Backroom and I’ll explain everything. And there’s gold in it for you. Promise,” Tonks said, keeping an easy smile on her face. She looked over Rita’s head and nodded at a rather older, tired looking redhead woman. Harry flushed. The woman was naked. “Wotchya there, Paloma.”

“You finally back, then, girl? Where you belong?” Paloma drawled, nastily. She crossed her arms over her sagging breasts, uncaring that her crotch was on display.

Harry averted his eyes.

“I’m back for now,” Tonks retorted, her lips curled.

Paloma scoffed. “I took all your regulars, you know. Always asking ‘Where’s Nympho? Where’s the nympho?’” she called mockingly. “They’ll be happy to know you’re back after a damned decade, isn’t it? Are you going to join me for old times’ sake?”

Tonks took a deep breath, shaking her head. “I’m here on government business. I’ve got a new place of employment.”

“Oh, I heard. You know how men like to talk. Lady Tonks, is it, now? Too good for us?” Paloma spat. “Once a whore, always a whore.”

“Oh, I know,” Tonks said, quite seriously.

And Paloma considered her, looking rather pleased then. “Good. As long as you remember who took you in,” she said, and then she turned on the spat, sashaying back up the stairs, the inside of her thighs glistening.

Harry cringed. He glanced over at Rita who was looking around nervously.

“Enough. We have things to discuss,” Harry said, softly.

Tonks nodded. “Right. This way,” she said. She led them forward and Rita barely recovered before she was scurrying along. Rita pushed her way into her office, unlocking it with a key. Harry wasn’t even sure where the enormous, crooked key had come from, and he wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

Rita collapsed behind her large gleaming wooden table. Harry’s eyes widened at the amount of money piled on her desk. Stacks of Galleons, Sickles, and Knuts, evenly lined the front of her desk, in a methodical manner.

“Sit, your Majesty,” Rita said, flourishing at the rickety chair across from her.

“Um...I’d prefer to stand, Madam,” Harry said.

Tonks snorted. “You’ve still no class, Rita. It’s ‘your Grace’,” Tonks corrected. She strode forward, brushing her fingers across the stacks of gold, silver, and bronze, and neatly avoided the Stinging Hex Rita immediately sent at her fingers. “I haven’t forgotten all your tricks, Rita.”

“I haven’t forgotten how you were a little thief either, Nympho,” Rita retorted, snidely.

Tonks scoffed and looked over her shoulder, holding out her hand. Rodolphus walked forward, dropping a small sack into her hand. “We’ll only need a week. In clean rooms, Rita. I’m not joking. That’s the King of Albion. Right there. And the Dark Lord. And Death Eaters. And Pandora's
daughter,” Tonks snarled.

Rita’s lip curled as she looked straight at Luna. “You bring that thing’s kin in here? Really, Nymphadora?” she asked, her voice like death.

“You’ll speak to her with respect,” Harry barked. “We’re paying you an obscene amount for room and your discretion. The least you can do is afford us some courtesy.”

Rita took a deep breath, and turned her sneer away, leaning back in her chair. She kept her stare on her coins and bared her teeth. Again, Harry couldn’t help but notice the gold of her teeth.

"Really, Nympho. What have you gotten yourself into?" she muttered under her breath. She looked up then, from under her eyelashes. "I can't get you six rooms."

“We don’t need six. Two will do. I’ll sleep...is my old bed there for me?” Tonks asked, coolly.

“Tonks?” Harry asked, alarmed.

Rita raised an eyebrow. “You going to make some money, then, Nympho? If so, allow me to advertise."

“I haven’t decided. But, I want my bed. There are things underneath it. Things I know you haven’t gotten access to,” Tonks spat.

“Kick the twins out of it and it’s yours,” Rita decided. “Only two rooms?”

"Beauty attracts beauty," Tonks said with pursed lips. Rita’s lips curled into a terrible smile as she looked at Harry and the Dark Lord, laughing darkly to herself.

“What are you telling her?” Voldemort snapped.

Tonks rolled her eyes. “You think she’ll settle just for gold? Oh, no. We deal in secrets here. They're fucking, Rita. Long and hard. So make sure that my King's bed is clean. Make sure it's clean every night. Two beds in the other room. For the Lestranges and Luna."

“Very well. I’ll get it settled,” Rita said, standing. She took a step closer to Tonks, and her eyes softened. She leaned forward, pressing her brightly painted lips to Tonks’ cheek. Tonks gagged, shifting away from it, wiping the waxy cosmetic from her cheek. “Welcome home, Nympho.”

“Can’t say it’s good to be back,” Tonks said, firmly.

Rita laughed as she stalked out of the room, her poison green skirts swaying around her. The door snapped shut and Voldemort immediately pulled his wand.

“What the fuck was that?” he barked.

"That was me making a deal. Don't bother with wards. Rita is a cunning bitch. She's had this place warded longer than I've been born and nobody expects a King and a Slytherin to hide out in a whorehouse," Tonks said, coolly. She leaned back against the wall, staring out of the window.

“This is where you grew up,” Harry said, softly.

Tonks hummed. “It is. Rita raised me. Until Pandora did. Rita taught me men and politics. Pandora taught me power and magic. And here I am. Now, enough of my ‘tragic’ childhood, caused by my ‘loving’ Uncle,” Tonks said, shooting Voldemort a glare. Voldemort rolled his eyes. “We need a plan.”
“I want to make an impression,” Harry said, immediately. “They are the colonies and they’ve been allowed to act out for far too long.”

Voldemort nodded once. “Of course. They must fear you.”

Luna looked, nervous as she swayed against Rodolphus’ side. “I will not come,” she said, softly. Everyone turned to look at her. “You saw how the madam, Rita, reacted to me. The Governors will not be as kind.”

“You can’t be here alone,” Rodolphus whispered.

Voldemort scoffed. “Do not treat her like porcelain, Rodolphus.”

“He’s right, Rodolphus. She won’t be touched. Especially because she is the spitting image of her mother, and these people’s memories run long,” Tonks said firmly. She turned to Harry and gave a tired smile. “You’ll make an impression, Harry. I’ll be sure of it.”

MIRROR, MIRROR

"We know they're on Salem," Governor Helmut Weiss said. He glanced at Newt. "Mister Scamander, you said that there is a trace of that...dragon? In the mountains?"

"I...well, I said that the magical creatures are behaving wildly," Newt said, nervously. Theseus rubbed his thumb against his brother's inner wrist, attempting to relax him. It didn't help. Tiny brushed her hand against his elbow and he looked up at her from beneath his lashes, grateful.

“How so?” Graves asked.

“They...they are acting like prey. All of them. There is an apex predator on this island and only something big could make them all behave in the exact same pattern of behavior,” Newt explained.

Everyone turned their gazes to Madame Picquery. Queenie was standing just at the President’s left, in her space as the woman’s private secretary.

“Then, they are coming. We will—”

“Madame,” Queenie gasped, suddenly, lurching forward, one hand pressed to her chest and the other buried in her own blonde curls. Madame Picquery looked up at her, sharp-eyed.

Slowly, Tina looked up, her eyes widening as the doors creaked open. The wards had been dismantled without a sound, as if the doors had been blown open by a weak wind. She stared.

The first through the door was a woman draped in a crimson cloak, her hood hanging over her head, throwing her face into shadow. Two great broadswords were strapped to her back—one steel-colored and the other the color of old blood. Tina shivered and glanced at Queenie. Queenie was staring, absolutely stricken with terror.

“What is it, Queenie?” Tina whispered.

“Death…” Queenie breathed.

The Red Woman stepped aside, revealing the Fairest.
Tina's mouth parted as Harry Wildfyre strode into the room, the Dark Lord Voldemort at his side, both of their faces so beautiful in their cruel coldness. Harry Wildfyre had the face of an angel, long black curls surrounding his pale face like a halo. His lips were plump and red as blood. But, that wasn't what distracted Tina the most. The Fairest was powerful, with a magic that raged like fire. But, he was equally matched by his companion.

The Dark Lord was someone Tina had only heard about in stories, but she could feel the heaviness of his magic, settling on her chest and pressing her lungs flat. His jaw was strong, and his eyes were bright crimson, the color of freshly spilled blood. Draped in black, he was exactly as Tina would imagine him to be.

"Harry Wildfyre of House Gryffindor and Potter, contender for the throne of Albion," Picquery greeted, dipping her head. She didn't rise in the Fairest's presence.

Slowly, the Fairest turned his head towards the Red Woman. He nodded.

"You are in the presence of Harry Wildfyre of House Gryffindor and Potter, King-Emperor of the Albion Empire, the Wyrdfod, and the Fairest-of-Them-All," the Red Woman drawled.

Slowly, the Fairest took another step forward. The Dark Lord was his shadow, coldness in his eyes and dried blood beneath his nails. The Fairest lifted his chin to watch them all, taking them all in. There was a long beat of silence and then a terrifying screech. Tina couldn't help her gasp.

"What was that?" Governor Fischer snarled.

"His...dragon," Madame Picquery said, raising a pale eyebrow. "Would I be correct in assuming that, your Grace?"

The governors all shifted, uncomfortably. Picquery had addressed him with his title, establishing a precedent.

"Yes, Madame Picquery," the Fairest said and he drew his wand, flourishing it and Conjuring a seat for himself. He sat down in it and reached to the side, lacing his fingers with the Dark Lord’s. “Am I correct in assuming that we are all acquainted with one another?”

"Madame,” the Dark Lord drawled.

Madame Picquery’s lips curled. “Lord Voldemort. And...the Red Woman?” Madame Picquery asked.

"Nymphadora Tonks," Tonks said, inclining her head. She stood to the left of the Fairest.

"Why have you come?" Governor Mary Jauncey shouted.

The Fairest leaned back in his seat, unconcerned that he was so vastly outnumbered.

“I have come because I have need of your ships and you are my subjects,” the Fairest sighed.

“We are free—” Graves began.

“You are traitors,” the Fairest corrected. “I do not acknowledge your freedom as freemen. You are colonists, occupying sacred creature land, and as the Wyrdfod, I will only allow you to live here if you acknowledge my sovereignty over you.”

"Or what?" Madame Picquery asked. It wasn't a challenge, in any way. It was a true question.
“Or you burn.”

There was a long moment of silence before the Governors erupted in shrieks of denial at the quiet threat. The Fairest didn't flinch from a single one, taking the verbal abuse being hurled at him. His lips were curled into a small smile, as if this were beneath him as if he had heard every insult before.

“We are a proud people and we will fight—”

“You can’t be serious—”

“You would let this foreign whore—”

“Enough!” Madame Picquery shouted. She glanced at Queenie. Queenie was trembling, her eyes never straying from their...guests. The President straightened and looked back at the Fairest. The Fairest was frozen.

“You would call me ‘whore’?” the Fairest whispered. Slowly, he stood. “Is that meant to be an insult?”

“Your Grace, Governor O’Brien spoke out of turn. I apologize,” Madame Picquery said, immediately.

Tina glanced at the governor in question. He did not seem particularly apologetic about choice of phrase. The Fairest tilted his head, looking at the Governor.

“What say you, O’Brien?” the Fairest challenged.

O’Brien sneered. “Well, you’re quite pretty, your Grace. Even prettier than the pretty whore you have in your company.”

"I have killed greater men than you, sir, for lesser insults, and it would be no challenge to kill you where you stand," the Fairest said, coldly. Slowly, his hand dropped to his side, drawing his wand and Tina knew that it would be bloodshed.

She cringed, pulling her own wand, but just as she prepared to use it, the Dark Lord stepped forward, right in front of the Fairest, blocking him from view.

“It seems that these talks go nowhere. Your people insult my King,” the Dark Lord said, his voice chilly.

“And your King insults my people by calling us his colonists,” Madame Picquery sneered. She took a step back, however, backing down. Even she knew that she could not match the Dark Lord in strength. Perhaps the Fairest was an unknown entity that she was willing to challenge, but not the Dark Lord. “This goes nowhere, it seems. You’ve come to intimidate.”

“It seems to be working if your people can only spout childish insults,” the Dark Lord sneered.

"Your King's arrogance doesn't intimidate me, nor does his beauty. We will meet again, my Lord. Your Grace. But, the time for agreements is not now. I know none of your real terms,” Madame Picquery said, eyeing both of them. The Fairest had fought his way from around the Dark Lord, glowering furiously between the Dark Lord and Madame Picquery.

“I told you my terms,” the Fairest spat.

“We will revisit an agreement when you come to me with terms that are more palatable, your Grace,
or you will get nothing from me,” Madame Picquery said, coldly, before she turned her gaze back to the Dark Lord. “We shall arrange a meeting. You have something on this island that is of great interest to me. For security reasons of course. Tomorrow. At noon, then?”

“We have an accord,” the Dark Lord spat and then he pressed a hand to the Fairest’s lower back, guiding him from the room almost immediately.

The Red Woman—the whore, O’Brien had called her—nodded once and took a step back, allowing the Dark Lord and the Fairest to pass through. She followed and then the two Death Eaters. The doors swung closed behind them.

There was only silence.

ON

The door slammed shut behind them before Harry began to yell.

“How dare you?” Harry roared, turning on Tom, his finger jutting out accusatory.


“How dare you speak over me? As if I am child? As if I am not King?” Harry shrieked, shoving Tom's chest. Tom took a step backward, his eyes wide. He hadn't expected Harry to hit him, then.

Good.

“I understood you, but these people...they have had a taste of independence for too long. And I am a known factor. They would not cross me,” Tom said as reasonably as he could.

Harry scoffed, shaking his head. “No, I am not known because you spread stories of my beauty. You do not tell them how I am powerful. How I am strong. Stronger than you even, sometimes,” Harry snarled and he trembled with his fury. He began to pace through the room, unable to contain it all. He stopped, looking up at Tom with burning green eyes. Low and dangerous, he whispered, “I am not your sister.”

“I do not think you are,” Tom protested.

“Oh, but you do. I am not your puppet!” Harry roared.

Tom sighed, rolling his eyes. “You are being a child, Harry.”

"You let them call me a ‘foreign' whore,” Harry hissed, his voice low. "You would parade me like a common slut for every vile, lecherous creature to fondle himself to."

“We had no choice. We need the fleets. You know you’re no whore,” Tom said, keeping his voice as cold as he possibly could.

“You weak, shameless, pitiful excuse!” Harry snarled, storming up to Tom and staring up at him. “You should have run him through. You should have cut out his tongue!”

“We had no choice. For Albion—” Tom began.
Harry threw his hand out and caught Tom on the cheek. Tom's head snapped to the side and Harry pushed him. Tom stumbled back, refusing to hit him back.

“You had every choice not to undermine me, not to treat me like a doll! You had every choice to defer to me as you should have in that situation! I am the King of Albion!” Harry roared. “Where is your honor? Where is your strength? Where is your love for me?”

Harry broke down, pushing and punching at Tom's chest. Tom caught him by the wrists and tugged him in. Harry let out a terrible broken sound, slamming his fists into Tom's chests. Tom released his wrists and grabbed Harry's face, bringing it to his, and pressed his lips to Harry's in a violent kiss. Harry looped an arm around Tom's neck and pulled himself close, biting furiously at Tom's bottom lip, tasting the sharpness of blood on his tongue.

“Please…” Harry gasped as Tom tore away from him and promptly attacked his neck. He whined loudly as he felt Tom’s teeth dig into the sensitive flesh of his neck, his bite nearly hard enough to draw blood.

Tom’s hands were roaming, every part of Harry on fire under his palms, and he went along with it when the taller man’s hands slid down to his thighs and pulled upwards. Harry jumped, wrapping his legs around Tom’s waist as they stumbled, never parting for long enough to do anything but breathe. Instead, Harry ravaged and was ravaged, biting and clawing and shrieking with rage and arousal.

“What do you want from me?” Tom growled against his neck, licking over the mark blooming purple at the junction of Harry’s neck and shoulder.

“Fuck me. Fuck me,” Harry whispered. He drew his wand, waving it mindlessly, and grabbed blindly for the tiny vial of oil that had shot out from the side drawer.

Well, wasn’t being a brothel awfully convenient.

Harry leaned forward, intent on licking his way into Tom’s mouth when Tom’s hands suddenly disappeared from underneath him. Harry’s stomach dropped as he fell back onto the bed, the vial of oil nearly rolling out of his hands before Tom slid onto the bed, between his legs, wrestling him out of his robes.

“I’m going to make you come, Harry-sweetling. Going to make you come so hard, you’re going to cry. I’m going to make sure every fucking whore in this building hears you,” Tom hissed in his ear and Harry couldn't help the way his cock twitched, the way his cheeks flushed red even after everything that he had done with Tom.

“Mhmm, yes, yes,” he breathed, hissing when Tom finally peeled the robes off his body and pulled down his trousers, leaving him naked. Harry’s breath hitched and he pouted up at the man. “You’re still fully dressed.”

Tom hummed, ignoring him as he pressed his lips against Harry’s collarbone, moving down to lap at his nipple. His hand fell against Harry’s pelvis, long fingers wrapping around his hip. Harry gasped and arched under Tom’s tongue as the man teased the sensitive nub.

“You’re so pretty, Harry. Did you know that?” Tom asked, looking up from underneath long eyelashes, his red eyes piercing and seeing straight through Harry’s rage and confused arousal. “You’re so pretty when you’re hard for me.”

Harry swallowed, his eyes stinging as he looked away. “Be...be nice,” Harry warned softly.

It was oddly reminiscent of the first time.
Tom grinned wickedly. “I’m not a nice man, sweetling,” he hissed as he closed his teeth over Harry’s nipple.

Harry squirmed, breathing heavily through the teasing as Tom sucked and lapped at his nipple before he moved to the next, paying just as much attention to it until both of his nipples were bright red and hard.

“Kiss me. Kiss me now,” Harry demanded and Tom did as he was told, something he never did unless Harry decided to be bratty in their bed, as he was now.

And Tom kissed like he fucked. Always. With long sweeping moves of his tongue, licking and tasting everything inside of Harry’s mouth. His large hands would cup Harry’s face and he would lay almost entirely on top of him, anchoring the younger man to the bed. It was always dirty and demanding and made Harry’s lips feel hot and swollen and red. Tom kissed like he was king of the world, slow and all-consuming, like he owned every single part of him.

*After tonight, I’ll always own a piece of you.*

Tom pulled back to breathe. Harry lost himself in those red eyes, lost the aggravation and irritation and for a moment, lost all of that grief that he carried in his bones.

“Are you here?” Tom whispered.

Harry nodded. “I’m here.”


Harry nodded vigorously.

“Yes, yes, yes,” he chanted.


Harry rolled over, and his cheeks burned hot as they always did when he was exposed to Tom like this. Tom pulled Harry’s ass cheeks apart, looking down at the puckered little hole, pink and tightly furled. He simply stared, for so long that Harry groaned in embarrassment, pressing his face into the dingy, flat pillows.

“Tom, stop *looking*. Merlin, what the fuck is wrong—” Harry snarled and then he gasped when Tom’s tongue touched his hole gently, dragging down to his balls and then back up, slowly. It circled and teased the tight flesh, lightly and Harry let out a low grown.

Tom turned his face into Harry’s flesh and Harry could feel the man’s smirk of satisfaction.

“You always shut up when I get my tongue in you. Until you start screaming,” Tom murmured.

Harry whimpered softly as he felt the man’s breath against his sensitive hole and then Tom’s tongue began to move more firmly, pressing strong, drilling into him, penetrating him.

Harry let out a mewl that he would’ve been embarrassed by at any other time.

“There it is,” Tom hissed, satisfaction brimming in his voice.

“Don’t. Stop,” Harry snarled brattily and Tom dove in again, licking and fucking his tongue in and
out of Harry’s hole, sucking and kissing sloppily. Harry let out keening noises, reaching down to rub his too-hard cock as he rocked into the threadbare mattress.

He was so hard that he felt that even pressing down against the sheets would be enough to get him off. Tom’s hands wrapped around his waist and pulled him up, removing the stimulation from Harry’s cock.

“Just my tongue, Harry,” Tom hissed.

Harry rolled his hips through the air, lewdly, pushing back on Tom’s tongue. Tom pulled back to admire his handiwork, Harry’s asshole slick with spit, puffy and red.

“I can’t... I can’t...” Harry rasped, and his face felt wet with sweat and tears and he moaned loudly, uncaring that they hadn’t bothered to put up a Silencing Charm or that the Lestrange brothers or Luna or even Rita Skeeter might be next door.

“Just me, Harry. My tongue. On my tongue, sweetling,” Tom commanded and he thrust his tongue in again and again and again until he built a rhythm, fucking Harry’s hole with his tongue messily, spit sliding down Harry’s crack and down the back of his balls.

Harry whined, rocking back again and again.

“Please, Tom. Your cock. Give me your cock please,” Harry begged and his heart lurched because he sounded like a whore, what he had told himself he’d never sound like—he’d never be what they called him—and here, he was begging, like a whore.

“How about a finger? You can come on my tongue and a finger, yes?” Tom hissed, his voice low and dark and Harry nodded, the pillow under his head wet.

“Yes, I-I can. Please,” Harry rasped, squirming under Tom’s hands and his tongue and his warbright eyes.

Harry gasped when he felt Tom’s tongue against his hole, gentler now before he felt a familiar finger pressing up against Tom’s tongue. He moaned as the man worked his finger inside, wet from only his spit and it burned, in a way that Harry hadn’t known he’d liked to burn. Tom had always been, if not nice, it had never hurt. Harry had never wanted it to.

Now, he thought he’d like to hurt. Really hurt.

And then, Tom pushed his finger into Harry’s hole, to his knuckle and curled it just so. Harry gasped, his vision blurring as he came, his come spurting out and soaking the sheets, staining them white and Harry collapsed when Tom finally released his hips. Harry trembled through his orgasm, jerking until it was over and his chest wasn’t tight anymore.

He turned his head, watching as Tom opened his trousers just enough for him to take his cock in hand and jerk it a few times before he came, white come covering his long fingers, dripping down his shaft and getting caught in the dark curls at the base of his cock. Harry reached weakly for Tom’s hand and brought his fingers to his lips, licking up the bitter liquid, never breaking eye contact with the older man. Tom collapsed on the bed next to him as Harry cleaned his hand off, until Tom’s hand was only sticky with drying saliva.

They were silent for a few moments and Harry turned, curling towards Tom.

“Are you still brimming with, sweetling?” Tom asked softly.
Harry smiled weakly, reaching up his hand to brush away the hair from Tom’s forehead. Tom’s hair curled when it was damp with sweat.

“Tom... I’m almost never really angry. Almost never. Right now, I’m just very... very tired.”

Tom hummed. “Then, sleep. We’ll plan tonight. Just... sleep.”

“Hold me,” Harry whispered and he curled against Tom, throwing one naked thigh over the man’s still mostly clothed body.

Tom’s arm fell heavily over his shoulders and collarbone, and finally, finally, Harry slept.

THE

Rowena stared out from their quarters at the small city that had sprung up around Westeron. According to Andromeda, that had all been due to the Fairest, and it grew more and more every week, with new arrivals coming from all corners of Albion to pledge their allegiance to him. Those words had sparked the question of how Andromeda had found herself pledging allegiance to Godric’s grandson, but Andromeda had neatly side-stepped her father’s question with a bland smile. Rowena was always suspicious of that smile. Andromeda liked to appear harmless, when it suited her, but harmlessness didn't often reconcile with her warrior braids, the chainmail that hung off her dress. It didn't reconcile with her unnatural abilities of empathy that could tear a man's soul apart. It didn't reconcile with the memory Rowena had of her standing by as her bloodthirsty siblings tore into Rowena's family. Rowena didn't trust her. She didn't trust any of this.

“Even here, in the seat of our soror’s once-castle, you sit and stare out of windows, Rowena,” Salazar said with a smile. He smiled more now. He dined with his daughter in the evenings and spoke with her during the day when she was drawn out of her many meetings. Sometimes, she even came to him, asking for advice on food stores and the like.

Andromeda made Salazar feel important and relevant again. It’s what Rowena more suspicious than anything else, in truth.

“What else am I to do in a prison, brother?” Rowena drawled.

Salazar scoffed. “This is no prison. Not like our last housing situation.”

“If you think such a thing, you have gone senile in your old age,” Rowena retorted. She pointed out of the window, her eagle eyes narrowed. “Look. There.”

Salazar sighed and walked forward, looking towards where she was putting.

“What am I supposed to be seeing, Rowena?”

“That is Lucius Malfoy. Father of the boy-king, Draco Malfoy,” Rowena snarled. “And that is Severus Snape, at his side. Your son’s righthand man. There are Death Eaters in this camp, Salazar. You must be blind.”

“Rowena…” Salazar said, suddenly uncertain. “Andromeda wouldn’t ally with him.”

“Wouldn’t she? To ensure her survival? Your children swore a pact, did they not? Blood above all?
Something your savage wife taught them I’m sure,” Rowena spat as she thought about the Slytherins’ mother. A warrior with no loyalty to anything but her own skin and her own kin.

“Rowena,” Salazar said, voice sharper. He no longer looked calm or even vaguely happy. Good, he shouldn’t be. He should be suspicious. “We are being kept in the dark. I never made the mistake to think otherwise. But, we must exercise caution. We are outnumbered.”

"So, we do nothing but wait until the Fairest returns? If he was ever here, to begin with," Rowena said, bitterly. She stared at Godric's sword, propped up against the wall in the corner. A sword had betrayed them, then. Her brother’s sword.

“He was here, Rowena. I am sure of it. And we are not doing nothing. We are in wait.”

Hermione wandered the halls of Westeron. She would never feel comfortable in castles—not after all that she had gone through at Hogwarts—but, here it was different. Here, she wasn’t the future Queen which was something that would take some time to get used to. Here, she wasn't Draco's fiance, stolen and bought from treacherous Zabinis.

Here, she was only Hermione Granger, the girl that had been saved by the Order.

No one bowed or curtseyed or even said much of anything to her. She was like a ghost, and Hermione loved it. She had even wandered into the kitchen earlier, for breakfast, and no one had batted an eyelash at her. She had only been escorted towards the fire by a few house elves, who had plied her with bread and cheese and tea. Hermione had felt uncomfortable, surrounded by house elves. It reminded her of her life in Laug, in Lady Zabini’s household.

She sighed to herself, shaking her head as she darted down another corridor, memorizing where she was going for future use. She was attempting to avoid Barty. At the moment, she was positive that Barty was in another meeting with Percy Weasley, Salazar Slytherin, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Andromeda. Hermione shivered.

If Gabrielle was there, she’d piss herself in excitement.

The Founders, in the same castle as her, little Hermione Granger.

Hermione was both intrigued and terrified. When the Fairest—Harry—returned, there was no telling what would come of everything. What would the City-States do? What would Harry do about the new interlopers? What would Voldemort do?

All questions that Hermione didn’t have the answers to, and she felt even more in the dark now. Before, at least, she had attended some of Draco’s meetings, though she had been nothing but a trophy for him to show off. Towards the end, Hermione was sure that Draco was bringing Daphne along, and that was why she was no longer necessary.

The thought put a sour taste in her mouth.

“Hermione Granger? Is that you?”

Hermione jumped and she looked up from her feet, wide-eyed.
A pair of siblings peered at her, and they were so strikingly similar, they reminded her of Fleur and Gabrielle. These siblings were redheads; one tall and gangly with broad shoulders and a spattering of freckles on his cheeks and the other shorter with a constellation of freckles on the right side of her face and a stern look in her brown eyes.

“Hello. Ron, wasn’t it? And...I’m sorry, I don’t remember your name,” Hermione said apologetically. She blanched when she realized what their presence meant. “Wait...is the meeting over?”

“Ginny Weasley,” the young woman introduced herself with, pushing her heavy braid behind her shoulder. She took a step forward, her head tilted. “The agriculture meeting? We weren’t in that meeting. We’re part of the war council, I suppose.”

“Oh...I don’t really know what goes on here,” Hermione admitted. She couldn’t help how put out she sounded about that. Ron’s lips tilted up into a small smile.

“I used to feel put out about it too,” he said.

“What happened?” Hermione demanded. “Why are you part of everything now?”

“My teacher died. Her space needed filling.”

Hermione blanched. “I’m sorry,” she whispered.

“It’s what happens in war. People die,” Ron said so matter of factly that it made Hermione’s heart ache.

“That doesn’t mean I’m not sorry,” she pointed out.

Ginny rolled her eyes. “We’re all sorry for a lot of things. Why are you so worried about the agriculture meeting?”

“I’m not,” Hermione snapped, almost petulantly.

Ginny looked at her, unimpressed.

“Try to lie better,” Ginny retorted.

Hermione deflated. “I’m...I’m avoiding Barty Crouch Jr.”

“The man who went out of his way to save you during the War Wedding?” Ron asked. “He’s been asking after you.”

“Is that what they call it? The War Wedding?” Hermione asked quietly.

“And you, the Bride of War. Everyone remembers the girl in the wedding dress with blood painted on her face. The girl who slew Blaise Zabini,” Ginny asked and she sounded mildly impressed as she regarded Hermione.

Hermione didn’t feel particularly impressive.

"If you don't want to see him, you don't have to," Ron piped up, helpfully. Hermione looked up at him, intrigued. "We're going into town. To see if anyone needs anything. You're welcome to help."

“Ron…” Ginny hissed uneasily.
“She killed Blaise Zabini, Ginny. She’s not a spy,” Ron snorted.

“We’ll wait for the Lady of Whispers to decide that,” Ginny retorted. She looked back at Hermione’s expression of outrage and didn’t look particularly upset about it.

“I’m not a spy. I hated Draco. Just as much as you two,” Hermione said. She didn’t say if not more, which was what she wanted to say.

“We’re not doing anything important, Gin. We’re just making sure everything’s moving smoothly. And I know quite a few people that’d like to meet her,” Ron said matter of factly.

"Hm. Well, she's your responsibility. Don’t look at me if the Lady Warden or, Merlin forbid, Moody gets angry about it,” Ginny said sounding a little put out.

“Who cares about fucking Moody?” Ron snapped. He rolled his eyes and turned to Hermione, his gaze softening somewhat into something that looked uncomfortably like pity. Hermione didn’t feel very pitiful at the moment, though she must’ve looked it. Or perhaps he was remembering the terror in her eyes right after she had struck her stepbrother down, horrified at what she had been capable of, of what she had done. “You’re welcome to join us. Come on. It’ll be fine.”

And Hermione didn’t hesitate. She hadn’t hesitated with the strange, broad-shouldered red-headed man had swooped in during the War Wedding—a stupid name, if anyone asked her—and she wasn’t going to hesitate now. There was something about these two, even Ginny who stared at her with distrust. There was something that reminded her of her, before the veneer of glamour and gold had fallen over her at Hogwarts. They were like her and that was something rare. She didn’t know about Harry Wildfyre or Andromeda or the Dark Lord even the pink-haired woman, Tonks. But, these two were like her: Survivors.

So, she gave a weak smile and said, “Sure. I’ll come.”

WHO

Seraphina wasn’t unprotected when she chose to attend the meeting with only Percival, the Goldsteins, and the Scamanders. The other governors had protested wildly, insulted that they hadn’t been handpicked, but Seraphina didn’t trust them. O’Brien had made a grave mistake in calling the Fairest a whore, and only the Dark Lord’s quick dismantling of the situation had saved the governor from a certain death.

“The Red Woman is coming,” Queenie warned as they finally walked past the whorehouse, leaving Salem proper.

Seraphina stood at attention, Graves straightening next to her. They strode in step towards the beach.

“Be ready,” Graves said from the corner of his mouth.

Seraphina frowned. “I don’t think she’s come to kill us. We’d know,” Seraphina murmured and they turned their attention forward as the Red Woman approached, her hood pulled over her head. The Red Woman pulled her hood down and she looked different from yesterday.

Her hair was in spiky pink tufts, and her face was sharper. The curve of her lips was familiar.
"Hello. I don't believe I fully introduced myself. I am Nymphadora Tonks, daughter of Andromeda Slytherin and Theodore Tonks," the Red Woman said. "Please, call me Tonks."

Seraphina’s nostrils flared. So, this woman was a *Slytherin*.


Tonks’ eyes widened as she looked at Newt. “My King will be pleased to meet you all,” Tonks said, softly. “I believe that yesterday was tense because we felt cornered. But, now, we are in neutral territory."

“How so? This is still our country,” Graves said gruffly.

Tonks’ lips curled into a small smile. “And mine, in part. I grew up on Salem,” Tonks said and then she turned on her heel, beckoning them forward. She settled next to Seraphina staring at her from the corner of her eye. “The King is informal upon your second meeting with him. Though he will continue to call you ‘Madame Picquery’, he would appreciate it if you’d call him Harry.”

“That’s...incredibly informal,” Tina piped up and then promptly flushed.

Tonks hummed, nodding slowly.

“He is...odd, when he isn’t in a formal setting,” Tonks allowed.

Newt took in a sharp breath of air as they finally came to the beach and Seraphina tore her gaze away from the odd Red Woman to follow Newt’s eyes.

Seraphina’s mouth dropped open as Harry took a deep breath and smoke emerged from his nostrils. Sweat began to bead on her forehead, and suddenly it felt so much warmer. Seraphina glanced at Percival, but he looked enraptured. Harry opened his eyes again, and they burned a bright green—the color of the Killing Curse.

“What is he doing?” Tina gasped.


The dragon stared at him, never shifting her gaze. Harry lifted his hand out in front of him, and Seraphina gasped when she saw the white-hot fire that spiraled out of his hand. The dragon let out a roar, and a plume of white fire emerged from her mouth, spiraling with Harry’s fire.

“Harry,” the Dark Lord called, patiently, from where he was watching the King, flanked by his Death Eaters.

Harry jerked to a stop, pulling the white flames around him and he spun, eyes wide. His eyes fell on Seraphina and narrowed. The dragon finally noticed them and bared its long teeth, screeching violently at them. Newt gasped.

“Brilliant,” he whispered.

“Freia, calm,” Harry said softly. The dragon calmed under his hands, breathing only heavily through its nose, puffs of smoke emerging. It was still curled around Harry protectively, making a noise that sounded like a whine when Harry pulled away. Harry’s lips curled into a smile. “Freia, it’s okay.”
The longer Seraphina looked at him, smiling, the more reasonable it sounded that they called him the Fairest.

“You try to appeal to my softer side with that pretty smile, your Grace?” Seraphina challenged as Harry approached them.

His green eyes flashed.

“No,” Harry said, his voice cool. “And I would have you call me Harry. I thought Tonks told you that.”

“Harry,” Seraphina repeated.

Harry nodded. “Yes. And I invited you here so that you may see my entire hand. My ship and my dragon. This is Freia,” Harry said, gesturing behind him. The dragon, Freia, screeched in greeting and Newt watched her again in awe.

“You are romantically involved with the Dark Lord,” Queenie blurted out. She squeaked, slapping a hand over her mouth. Tina slapped a hand over her sister’s mouth, looking at the Fairest in shock.

Seraphina looked at the Fairest, her nostrils flared. Slowly, a pink flush spread across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose, down his jaw and his neck. Harry swallowed hard.

“Is that a rumor that is...circling?” Harry asked.

“My secretary is a natural Legilimens. No mind can escape her if she wills herself to know,” Seraphina said, pride permeating her voice.

“Except for...well, his,” Queenie said, looking over Harry’s shoulder. The Dark Lord was watching, curiously. “It’s like a giant blank space. You have a very loud mind, your Grace.”

“Merlin,” Harry groaned, embarrassed and he let out a soft snort. “Well, this...this doesn’t pertain to our meeting, now, does it?”

Seraphina would argue that it did. The Dark Lord and the Fairest. It shouldn’t be so much of a shock. Seraphina remembered Harry reaching to his side and lacing his fingers with the Dark Lord’s.

“Perhaps. Perhaps not,” Percival said in her stead. He always knew what she was thinking.

"Come. Meet my party," Harry insisted and he stood at Seraphina’s side, walking with her. He turned to look at her, a curious glint in his green eyes. His eyes slid past her to Queenie again.
"When I came, you lurched. That was you, wasn't it?"

“Yes, your Grace,” Queenie said.

“‘Harry,’” Harry corrected. “‘Why? Because of my Tonks?’”

Queenie looked at Seraphina and Seraphina nodded.

“Yes...Harry. When I heard your mind, I heard chaos and fire and all of your thoughts and fury. It was so much, so chaotic, I could barely make sense of it all. But, her mind...it is a graveyard. It is silent. Death.”

Harry’s eyes cut ahead and he stared at his Tonks for a long moment. She was watching him too.

“I fear we’ve no manners, Harry. This is Governor Percival Graves,” Seraphina introduced. Harry’s
eyes darted back to her. “He is my right hand and Admiral of our fleet. Queenie Goldstein is the younger sister of Porpentina Goldstein. They make up my team. Then, we have Captain Theseus Scamander, and his younger brother, Newt Scamander.”


He sounded so cheerful that it threw Seraphina. It was as if the man that had come the day before, demanding her people’s subjugation had vanished. She looked at the Dark Lord again. Had that been his aspirations the day before? Was Harry Wildfyre just another puppet?


“I ride her. Freia,” Harry said.


“No. And she’s not a beast!” Harry protested. His gaze softened. “She’s...she’s mine.”

They finally reached Harry’s party.

“The Dark Lord, as you know. Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestrange, his followers. Tonks, his niece and my Lady of Whispers. And...where’s Luna?” Harry asked curiously.

“Here, Wyrdfod.”

Seraphina froze.

The voice was both familiar and it wasn’t. It sounded younger and more tender, but Seraphina had heard a voice like that during the Great Sleep. It was a voice that had mocked her and tormented her, and sometimes, she still had nightmares of that voice. Slowly, they turned and Seraphina’s heart was caught in her throat.

She looked so young with wide greys and long silver hair. She was smaller than Seraphina remembered. Seraphina didn’t remember pulling her wand.

“Avada—”

“EXPPELLIARMUS!”

Seraphina jumped when her wand jerked out of her hand, flying into one of the Lestrange brother’s hands. The Lestrange brother with the scar, Rodolphus, she thought, stepped in front of her, a hard look on his face.

“Do you know who that is?” Percival demanded, his wand out.

“Do you?” the Dark Lord asked, his voice cold.

“It’s not Pandora,” Tonks drawled, sounding and looking rather bored with the proceedings.

“Well, of course, it is! Look at her!” Theseus protested, sounding almost hysterical.

“No. It isn’t,” Tonks bit out.

“How would you know?” Tina snarled.
Tonks’ eyes narrowed. “Because I was raised by Pandora.”

“Don’t you recognize the little girl you nearly burned at the stake?” Rodolphus Lestrange hissed angrily.

Seraphina’s heart dropped from her throat to her stomach. She took a shaky step forward, ignoring Rodolphus’ wand, pointed straight at her chest as she peered around him. The girl—not Pandora—hadn’t flinched from any of the commotion, only staring into Seraphina’s eyes. And Seraphina did recognize her. Pandora’s eyes had never been that shade of grey. There had never been anything resembling kindness in her eyes either.

“You’re Xenophilius Lovegood’s daughter. Luna,” Seraphina said quietly.

Luna Lovegood stared at her, proud and compassionate and kind.

“Yes. I am,” Luna said. Her voice didn’t tremble.

“Stand down,” Seraphina whispered. When she didn’t hear movement, she whipped around, glowering angrily. “Stand. Down.”

Rodolphus swallowed. “What are you going to do?” he demanded.

“Move out of the way, Rodolphus. I want to speak with her,” Luna said, her voice sweet despite the demand.

“Luna…” Rabastan, the other brother, began.

“Don’t you start too,” Luna warned. Rodolphus did as she commanded and Luna took a step forward, staring up at the Madame President. “Madame President.”

“Luna. Luna Lovegood. You haven’t grown very much,” Seraphina said quietly. “Your mother and father were quite tall.”

“I know,” Luna said.

Seraphina swallowed and slowly she bent low at the waist before this young woman, humbling herself. Luna looked down at her, her eyes slightly wide. The last Lovegood took a step back when she saw the rest of Seraphina’s party doing the same, bowing low at the waist.

“What are you...doing?” Harry asked curiously.

Seraphina barely paid him any mind, staring only at Luna. “Nothing that I say or do can ever earn your forgiveness or correct the mistakes that were made in the aftermath of the Great Sleep. But, I, on behalf of the Union and myself, humbly, apologize for what was done. We attempted to burn you for your mother’s sins, and that was a grievous, grievous mistake that has haunted me for over a decade. Even now, after I know you live, it will still haunt me, and I apologize.”

Luna looked lost, as if she weren’t sure what to do with herself. She glanced towards Rodolphus, but he was looking at Seraphina and the other City-Staters with sour distaste. The Dark Lord looked bored with the proceedings, but Harry was smiling, a light in his eyes that Luna didn’t quite like.

“I...thank you,” Luna said softly. “Please, stand.”

Slowly, Seraphina stood and she turned to look at Harry, her eyes bright.

“Do you know who her mother is?” Seraphina asked.
“Yes,” he said, almost defiantly.

"And you took her in, anyway," Seraphina said.

“Why should her mother’s sins be paid in her blood?” Harry demanded.

Seraphina swallowed. That was the answer she’d been looking for. Seraphina had fallen short when the question had been posed to her. Harry Wildfyre hadn’t hesitated, and though he was an arrogant child, he had gotten it right at his young age when she hadn't. That meant there was something more there, besides the beauty, the airs, the arrogance. There was something beneath the godliness. There was a man, with a heart.

“Do you have any real terms yet, Harry?” Seraphina asked coolly.

“They remain,” Harry said.

And there was the Fairest. The Fairest used his beauty as both weapon and shield. Seraphina glanced at the Dark Lord, but he seemed to be making it a point not to interrupt or engage.

“If I remember correctly, you offered me two options: surrender or burn,” Seraphina said.

Harry looked at her with a raised eyebrow. "Perhaps burning you all would be too hasty. I do like this City-State. Perhaps I shall establish a residence of my own," Harry said and Seraphina couldn't tell if it were a joke or a threat.

“You give us non-options,” Percival said through clenched teeth.

Harry didn’t look all too concerned. “I need a fleet. My people are going to die. I would do anything for my people,” he said.

“And that is something we can agree on,” Seraphina admitted. She sighed, shaking her head. “Nothing will come of this meeting.”

“Giving up so soon?” Harry retorted.

“On the contrary, your Grace,” Seraphina said sharply.

“I thought I told you to call me ‘Harry’, Madame,” Harry snapped.

Seraphina smirked. “I’m not your subject to be told what to do, your Grace. I will allow you one more day. Come to me tomorrow and ask again. If we do not strike a deal, then you will leave.”

“Or what?” Harry retorted.

Seraphina's smirk disappeared and her eyes narrowed. "Or your empire will find itself embroiled in two wars.”
Tonks leaned back in her chair. Harry cast Tom an irritated look at the use of *that* word, but Tom didn’t even glance at him. Instead, he waited for Tonks’ full report.

“I left. I got out and I got lucky. I’m of noble blood. They don’t trust me anymore. I’ve had to work,” Tonks said, her voice flat. She ignored the Lestranges’ wide-eyed stares.

“You...worked?” Harry whispered. “You didn’t have to do that, Tonks.”

Tonks’ lips pressed into a thin line. “I do what I must, Harry. We’ve had this conversation before. Men are talkative in the throes of passion anywhere. Now, I have learned that they have not come to consensus. Grimsditch said that they would leave it to Picquery.”

“Then, we know nothing,” Rodolphus decided, collapsing into a chair. “Are we to declare war on the City States as well?”

“They are colonies, nothing more,” Tom retorted. “They have a fleet and no central military. All it would take is gathering the Governors in one room and *massacring* them.”

Harry’s eyes widened at the implication.

“We can’t.”

Harry thought that he had said those words until he realized it had been Luna. They all turned to the pale young woman. She sat on the bed, cross-legged, her eyes closed. Slowly, she opened them, her silvery eyes glowing.

“What do you mean ‘we can’t’?” Tom sneered.

Luna blinked, long and slow. “I mean that we cannot massacre them. Harry, you cannot dominate everyone. You cannot conquer this place,” Luna said, softly. She stood from the bed, as graceful as a gazelle and she crossed to him, taking one of his hands in both of hers.

“What can I do, then, Luna?” Harry asked, harshly. “I am their King and they do not acknowledge it.”

“They are without a King. They are no longer *yours*,” Luna said, softly. “They weren’t even your grandfather’s. They left before your grandfather and his cohorts took their thrones. They are a free people. And you cannot afford two wars.”

“They are a people of traitors,” Tonks spat.

Luna's face contorted. "And you were one of them."

“Never by any choice of mine,” Tonks snapped, standing to her feet. Luna nearly flinched away until she found her resolve and shook her head.

“Harry, if you *must* lord over them the fact that you are head of state, establish a Commonwealth. Become head of a Commonwealth, but let them govern themselves. But, you cannot think to gain their ships by demanding it,” Luna said. She cleared her throat. “These are not the Alfheimians. You cannot blackmail them. This is not the Lady Warden of the West, whom you can give a lost child. This is not Karnaron, which you lay claim to. These are a free and noble people who escaped men and women that looked very much like you.”

“Looked like me?” Harry asked, his lips curling.
Luna nodded once. “Men and women with power with no bounds and beauty that terrified the masses. Your beauty is not always a gift. It is a weapon, and these are people that know to fear it.”

“He is the Wyrdfod! He cannot submit!” Tonks snapped.

“And that means nothing to them!” Luna retorted. “It means something to us, but that means nothing to them. Titles mean nothing to them. Wealth means nothing to them. Only control and power and they want to keep their autonomy.”

“If he submits, he looks weak,” Tom murmured.

“Then, let him look weak, my Lord,” Rodolphus said, quietly. Tom and Tonks looked at the Death Eater, surprised by his words. “Weakness is not always so, my Lord.”

Tom shook his head. “I never took you for a fool, Rodolphus. What say you, Rabastan?” Tom demanded.

“I don’t know. I...I don’t have a mind for politics, sir,” Rabastan said, weakly. When he saw Tom’s irritation, he hastily added, “I see merit...in both points.”

Luna’s eyes narrowed.

“You are blind,” Luna spat at the Dark Lord. “You are blind to your own faults.”

“Watch your tongue, girl,” Tom said, slowly drawing his wand.

Luna shook her head. “I am not your servant any longer. I serve the Wyrdfod,” Luna snarled. And then she turned on Harry, her eyes wild. “If you listen to these power-hungry Slytherins, you are a proud fool that is unworthy of your title.”

“Do not call me a Slytherin,” Tonks roared.

Luna laughed, softly. “You cannot help your blood,” she said, dismissively. Tonks swallowed her gasp, shaking her head. Luna dropped Harry’s hand and stormed to the doorway of the room. “Use your own mind, your Grace. You are the Wyrdfod, and if you mean to truly be worthy, then you will do what you must to make the alliance peacefully.”

Harry flinched from her scarring words, his eyes wide. “Luna, I am the King—”

Luna scoffed, shaking her head. “Your pride will be your undoing,” she whispered, her voice trembling. She stormed out, leaving them in silence.

OF

Harry walked the grounds of Madame Picquery’s manor, and he had to admit that it was stunning. He wondered if she knew that he was there. He had made no secret of tearing into her wards. He wanted her to know what he was capable of. But, if she knew, she hadn't sent any guards out at all. She didn't seem to be worried about her safety one bit. Harry wondered if that was hubris or a genuine belief that she could beat him in a duel.

Harry scoffed. There were scarier and far more powerful people in the world than Seraphina Picquery, no matter what she believed. He was one of them.
He reached up to brush his fingers against the velvet petals of the violently red and yellow Umbrella flowers that bounced through the air, pushed to and fro by the slightest of breezes. A Whomping Willow twisted and twitched at the edge of the property, as if waiting for someone to approach. Harry was tempted to do so and he walked closer, wondering if and when it would lash out. He had no idea how to stop it, but nor could he stop his morbid curiosity.

Until he saw the boy.

The boy standing by the trunk. The Willow's branches were violently snatching out at squirrels and birds and fairies, and curiously, the gnomes that were flitting around it, reveling in the relatively peaceful night. But, it didn't seem to lash out at the boy. In truth, the Willow seemed to shy away from the boy standing at its trunk, as if afraid—no, terrified.

"Who are you?" the boy called.

"I'm Harry Wildfyre. Who are you?" Harry whispered.

The boy was thin, almost wane, with dark eyes that spoke of pain. His hair curled around his face. He was beautiful. Harry took a step closer, and then winced when he felt something wild and powerful swirling around him, lashing out. Harry's lips parted.

"You're like me," the boy murmured, staring at him in wonder.

"Y...yes," Harry agreed, hesitantly.

He took another step forward, and this time, he didn't hesitate. The boy was unafraid, staring at him with wide dark eyes. His lips curled into almost cherubic smile.

"I'm Credence. Credence Graves," the boy said. "You shouldn't be here. Did you sneak onto the grounds?"

Harry’s eyes widened. “ ‘Graves’?” he murmured.

"Mister Graves...Percival..." and he said this, as if to remind himself, “is my husband.”

"What are you?" Harry asked.

A new question. One just as important as the first.

Credence hummed. “That...is an interesting question. Mr. Scamander—Newt—says that I am an Obscurial.”

“An Obscurial? Is that a creature?” Harry asked. “Tom...Tom didn’t say anything about an Obscurial.”

“Tom?” Credence asked, pleasantly.

“It’s...well, he’s the Dark Lord. The Dark Lord Voldemort,” Harry said.

Credence’s smile twitched. “Percival says that the Dark Lord isn’t a very good man.”

Harry bit his lower lip.

“He isn’t.”

“He’s good to you, though.” Credence said it with such conviction that Harry looked at him again
with his bright green eyes. Credence held out his hand. “Walk with me, Harry Wildfyre.”

Harry took his hand without question. Together, they walked through the orchards, away from the Whomping Willow, staring at the low-hanging fruit.

“So, what’s an Obscurial?” Harry asked.

“It’s...it’s the bad...Percival says I shouldn’t call it ‘the bad thing’. He says magic isn’t bad. My magic isn’t bad. It’s just...wild,” Credence said, choosing his words very carefully. He looked at Harry from the corner of his eye. “Many are afraid of me. It’s why...I don’t go outside very often.”

“My magic is wild too. People are afraid of me too. I’m afraid of me,” Harry blurted out. He flushed, his eyes wide as he looked up at Credence. “I...don’t know why I said that.”

Credence only beamed down at him.

“It is good that you are honest,” Credence said. “I’m afraid of me too.”

The silence descended and it was a comfortable silence. It wasn’t the type of comfortable silence that Harry only felt with Tonks or Tom. It was the type of comfortable silence that one reveled in when alone. Harry felt...alone.

“I feel like I know you,” Harry said.

Credence smiled, his plush lips curling into a bow. “Perhaps you do.”

It was cryptic and Harry’s nose wrinkled in annoyance.

“You are...kind to me. For someone who is on the opposite side,” Harry said.

“You see me as your opponent already, Harry Potter?” Credence asked.

“No one calls me that,” Harry scoffed, shaking his head.

Credence tilted his head. “Why not?”

“My parents gave me a warrior’s name. Harry Wildfyre, for on the day that I was born, summer died and was reborn once more,” Harry said. He said it as if reciting something out of a text. Credence smiled softly.

“A warrior’s name? They would call me Credence Nightmare,” Credence sighed. “Mr. Gra—Percival would call me Credence Gentle-Heart, but that isn’t very scary, is it?”

“Nightmare?” Harry asked.

Credence hummed, looking up at the stars. “My darkness was born of the Great Sleep. Pandora’s dreams affected all of us differently.”

“I hear so many things about Pandora. So many conflicting things, and yet, no one will tell me much of anything,” Harry complained.

“You don’t want to know,” Credence said. He turned towards Harry fully. “Why don’t you claim your father’s name?”

“Well...it’s not exactly carrying the weight of ‘Gryffindor’, now, is it?” Harry challenged.
Credence frowned. “It is your father’s name. It isn’t a king’s name. It is the name of a man. Harry Wildfyre is the name of a god, the name of the Wyrdfoð, but Harry Potter… that is a man. You should appeal to them as a man,” Credence said.

“How do you know about ‘Wyrdfoð’?” Harry snapped. “Everyone seems to know about that, now.”

“I listen to things I’m not supposed to,” Credence said, sounding nearly embarrassed. He looked away, his cheeks burning hot.

“You call your husband ‘Mr. Graves’. Why?” Harry asked.

“It’s what I knew him as, at first. And how I fell in love with him. It’s a habit. What do you call the man you love?” Credence asked.

Harry flushed. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Credence rolled his eyes. “It was all Tina and Queenie could talk about after you met today. Queenie saw the Dark Lord in your mind. Touching you… as my husband touches me,” Credence said, his lips turning bright red and Harry rubbed the back of his neck, embarrassed.

“Sex doesn’t mean anything,” Harry said firmly.

Credence stared at him. “What does that mean?”

“Sex doesn’t suggest love, is all,” Harry snapped, already finished with the direction the conversation was heading in. “I should know. I traded my virginity to the Dark Lord for his loyalty. In perpetuity.”

“Truly?” Credence asked.

“Why would I lie?” Harry hissed. He regretted it immediately when Credence flinched, nearly tugging their hands apart. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s just… Queenie said that you adored him. That she could feel how truly in love you were with him. I thought… she thought it was returned,” Credence said quietly.

Harry’s breath caught in his throat.

“Well, it’s not. I am in love with him. Truly. Desperately. It doesn’t matter to him. I am his way to freedom. His way out. His whore. I am so desperate for his affection that I spread my legs for him whenever he asks, as if I am a whore,” Harry spat out, trembling with fury and self-loathing.

Credence flinched at every nasty word.

“You are not... that. He wouldn’t call you that, would he? He defended you when Governor O’Brien called you that… that word,” Credence retorted. Suddenly, he seemed smaller. “Didn’t he?”

“No. He didn’t,” Harry hissed.

And he’d never needed Tom to defend him about that. Harry was used to those words, and he’d grown enough that he could snap about it. He had grown enough to know that he wasn’t a whore or a slut or a bitch. So, he hadn’t needed Tom to defend him.

But, he would’ve liked it.

And then, though Harry had begged for it, Tom had treated him like a whore in their bed, had made
him cry and beg for it. Harry had allowed himself to be treated like a whore, and so it was what he came.

You are not a whore.

Harry flinched away from the memory of Tom’s voice.

“You are just a man,” Credence said, and he sounded almost in awe. “We have heard so many fantastical things about you. Unbelievably, extraordinary things. But, you are just a man.”

He sounded pleased.

“I am just a man,” Harry whispered back, defeated.

“She will not bow to you. None of them will. Especially not my husband,” Credence murmured.

Harry frowned. “I will make them bow.”

“You can’t,” Credence whispered, frantic and hurried as he pulled away from Harry, backing away towards the Madame Picquery’s Manor. “Harry, I believe that you are good and kind. And I believe that you will do what you must to secure this alliance.”

THEM ALL?

Harry stood in front of the Governors, once again feeling like he was on trial. He didn’t look back at Tom or Tonks. Instead, he took another step closer, scanning each of their faces. All of them stared back impassively, though they fidgeted. So, no one would give him a clue.

Except...Harry looked up at the black swirling mass that writhed and spat against the ceiling. Harry glanced at Madame Picquery who walked up to him, her staff in hand as she approached. Harry took his eyes away again and looked up at Credence.

Perhaps, Madame Picquery had sent out a guard that night. And Harry had stupidly trusted him, spilling his secrets out because he felt an immediate sort of trust, the kind of trust that he had immediately felt for Tonks when they had first met. He was so fucking stupid.

“Have you made your decision?” Harry asked, never looking away from Credence.

Madame Picquery nodded once. “I have. You are powerful and have the capability to raze us to the ground. But, I have been told that you will not.”

“Is that what you’ve been told?” Harry asked, finally looking at her, his lips curling into a wry smile.

“Yes. I have it on good authority. So, I will not bow to you,” Madame Picquery said.

“Unaccept—” Tonks began.

Harry held up a hand, shaking his head once. Tonks fell silent as Harry looked at Madame Picquery.

“What do you propose instead? I need your fleet and you need me.”
“How so?” Madame Picquery asked.

“The City-States are reliant on trades with the Republic and Afallon. I control Afallon. I control you. So, how will we reconcile, woman? Gold? Military?” Harry asked.

Madame Picquery lifted her chin. “You acknowledge our independence. You acknowledge our republic and stop with your childish claims that we are your colonies. We are finished with sovereigns. We are finished with kings and queens,” Madame Picquery snarled. “We are a democratic republic.”

“How hypocritical,” Harry snarled, taking a step forward, his eyes flashing. “You spit these ‘unalienable rights’ at me and you deny it to the people that lived here before you. You didn’t discover these lands. You colonized them. I come here to stop that. This land doesn’t belong to you. I am the Wyrdod——”

“We made mistakes!” Madame Picquery roared, cutting him off. Harry’s eyes widened. “We made terrible mistakes, and we paid dearly for them. But, I will not bow to another sovereign. I do not look it, but I am a hundred years old, boy. I lived through the savagery that your predecessors and the Tabooed rained down on Albion. I was placed into what was to be an eternal sleep but was truly a nightmare. I will not do it again.”

“Then, we are at an impasse,” Harry whispered.

Madame Picquery shook her head. “There is no impasse. I am the President of the United City States of Freedom. Your dragon doesn’t scare me. Your attack dogs don’t scare me. You don’t scare me. I am not afraid of you. And that must needle you. That I am not afraid. Harry Wildfyre, I have not been afraid for a long time.”

Harry stared at the woman, coldly.

“You are a fool,” he hissed. “If Narcissa Slytherin wins——”

“It will be your own fault.”

“How so?” Harry roared.

“Because you refuse to do what you must,” Madame Picquery said, taking another step back. “You are but a man. You are no god and right now, you are no king. You refuse to do what you must. What is necessary.”

“What I must?” Harry demanded, trembling with rage. “What is necessary?”

And Madame Picquery smiled, slow and cold. “Humble yourself.”

Harry trembled as the Governors watched him. Madame Picquery watched him. He could feel Tom and Tonks’ eyes on his back. He looked up at Credence again and wondered if this was what it would take. Harry felt his eyes sting with tears. He had not felt so helpless since he was at the Dursleys, and he hated it. In that moment, he hated Madame Picquery more than Narcissa, more than
Draco, more than anyone.

Harry closed his eyes and slowly got to his knees before the President and the Governors of the United City States of Freedom. He could hear the sharp intake of Tonks’ breath and he trembled with the humiliation of it all as he bowed his head forward.

"Who are you to come to the United City-States of Freedom?" Madame Picquery demanded.

Harry ground his teeth. "I am Harry Potter, Madame President."

"Who am I?" the President said.

"Madame Seraphina Picquery, President of the...United City-States of Freedom."

"And why do you come?" she snapped.

"I need...your assistance," Harry whispered. "I am the rightful King of Albion and I have been usurped. I am in need of your ships. Please. Help me."

Slowly, he looked up at Madame Picquery and she was holding out a hand to him. Harry shuddered as he reached up and took it, allowing her to pull him to his feet. She didn’t let go, staring at him with deeply probing eyes.

"We are equals from this moment until we are dust," Madame Picquery said. "I do not help sovereigns. I help equals. And I will help you, Harry Potter."

"Yes," Harry whispered.

Madame Picquery dropped his hand and she turned her back on him. She lifted her hand towards the Governors, but the screaming writhing black cloud of magic dropped from the ceiling, spinning inwards and leaving Credence Graves in its wake.

"Credence—" Percival Graves began.

Credence ignored his husband, peering delicately at Harry.

"Harry," Credence murmured in greeting.

Harry stared blankly at him. "Credence."

Credence looked saddened and he drifted backward, going to his husband's side. Harry stared at Madame Picquery's back.

"A third of our fleet to support the King of Albion’s claim, I nominate. As ambassadors, I nominate the Scamander brothers and the Goldstein sisters. What say you, Governors?" Madame Picquery called.

Graves hesitated until Credence squeezed his shoulder. "Seconded," Graves called. "All in agreement call ‘aye’?"

A rousing sound of agreement boomed through the chamber. Harry refused to flinch.

"Motion passed," Madame Picquery said and she turned back to Harry. "The preparations begin immediately. You will leave in a day’s time."

"Understood," Harry said, stiffly. He didn’t move as she approached him again. "I suspect we will..."
meet again, Madame President.”

He wasn’t sure if it was a promise or a threat.

“I am counting on it...your Grace.”

Harry backed away from her and then turned on his heels. The two Slytherins watched him—Tonks with sadness and Tom with rage. Tonks reached out to him, but Harry swept past her before she could. Tom spat under his breath, hissing so much that he must have been speaking in Parseltongue. Harry ignored it all, so very far away.

He didn’t cry.

Chapter End Notes

Hoped you liked that. Sorry that it took so long. I was so utterly stuck for a long time because it was getting so dark, and I didn't know what to do, especially when I've already outlined the thing. And then, I wrote "Diagnosis" and that took ALL of my attention, with the reaction to it, so this fell on the backburner since it's got a smaller audience and is MUCH harder to write. Then, when I was finally ready to get back to this, I had to refresh my memory and read all my old outlines, the last few chapters of Cinders and the first chapters of Grymmr, and I was finally feeling like I could get back in the writing style of THIS story, as opposed to Diagnosis.

That being said, I apologize. Pretty shitty of me. Hopefully, I'll be a little more regular with this one so I can fucking finish a fic, which I've only managed to do once. You'll be glad to know this is outlined to the very end so the chances of me not finishing are exponentially slim, outside of me being killed in a freak accident.
Chapter Four

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She sat before the mirror alone. She was alone and yet, she was not. Sometimes, if she watched, unfocused, she could see the shape of a girl. Narcissa knew this shape better than the back of her hand. It was seared into her memory, so deep that to remove the memories of Helena Ravenclaw, she was be tearing out herself. Helena. Helena. Helena. Narcissa never looked too closely. If she did, Helena would leave her.

“Lady Chancellor…” Dolohov began.

Narcissa hushed him. She glanced over her shoulder, looking him up and down. He was naked again, fresh scars on his body that hadn't been there before the War Wedding. She sneered. What an unsightly name. Only peasants could come up with something so stupid. Narcissa’s gaze trailed down that broad chest, to his tapered waist, the heavy set of cock and balls between his leg. She licked her lips. She was still sore.

Narcissa would ride him again. But, only after she was done.

“Bring it to me,” Narcissa commanded.

Dolohov took a step forward, hesitating, offering the blood splattered crystal platter. Narcissa reached forward, the long silver iron nails spearing the soft pulpy red mess. She brought it to her face, sniffing it delicately and she moaned. She smeared it across her lips, bringing fresh blood to her chin. Narcissa looked in the mirror again.

The lower half of her face was a mess of dried blood, strings of muscle hanging from her teeth. She opened her blood-soaked mouth around the raw snake heart and swallowed it whole, feeling it slide down her throat.

“What is this intended to do?” Dolohov asked, carefully. “I ask only out of concern.”

“Be less concerned,” Narcissa instructed, coolly. “I only do what I must. Where’s the rest of the body?”

“You intend to eat that too?” Dolohov asked. “What is the purpose of this?”

“The heir of the family consumes a raw snake’s heart,” Narcissa barked. Her eyes narrowed and she lurched as once more her stomach rebelled, burbling deep inside of her. “But, I am the last, true Slytherin.”

“This is Dark magic. Black magic,” Dolohov murmured as he brought the rest of the snake’s carcass to her side. It looked so much like Nagini and Narcissa’s eyes narrowed, wondering what would happen if she found her brother’s snake, still spying on her in the castle. She would rip Nagini apart and eat her while she still lived.

She would want him to feel it.

No. That couldn’t be true. Narcissa very much remembered seeing Severus with the great beast running from the castle. Severus. And at her side had been Narcissa’s husband. Lucius. The man she had once loved in her silly youth. The man that had left her.
They all leave, Helena’s shadow seemed to mock her from the edges of the mirror. We all leave.

Narcissa bared her teeth. “I will swallow a snake whole if it makes me the Heir of Slytherin.”

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**MIRROR**

Harry found himself lost in the clouds. Freia’s wings spread wide, cruising them through the air as the sun began to set. There was nothing but open ocean, and for once, Harry wasn’t eager to find himself back at Westeron. He thought that if he could fly on Freia’s back forever, he would be content. He nestled deeper to her burning hot scales, his eyes closed from the air rushing past them.

‘Harry Potter’.

It was a name that he had never used for himself. It was a common man’s name, and Harry had never wanted to be common again. Common people were abused. Common people were called whores and thrown away. Common people were abandoned.

Harry had never wanted to feel that.

And they had seen it. Tom and Tonks and the Lestranges. They had witnessed him sink to his knees before that woman and rage burned through his belly. They had witnessed his humiliation, and that would stain him forever. He was beautiful in their eyes, perfect. Perhaps, he had once been a means to an end, but now, they loved him, as long as he was perfect. As long as he didn’t fuck up.

He had fucked up.

Freia let out a screeching sound. She was falling down through a break in the clouds, flying back towards the ship, circling it. Harry sighed. He knew what that meant. She thought it was time for him to eat. When they had left the City-States, he had done so on her back, and he had only been off her back twice—each time to eat a quick meal and then to sleep. Now, she wanted him off. She was worried.

“I’m fine, Freia,” he warned her over the wind.

She screeched and came to float perpendicularly to the side of the boat. She turned her great, long neck to stare at him with a bright yellow eye. Harry huffed, rolling his eyes as he turned and watched as he threw one leather wing over the edge of the boat. He made a quick job of it, crawling down her wing and then standing steadily on the deck. As soon as Freia knew that it was safe, she took off, screeching, her teeth bared.

“Make sure you eat something, Freia! Birds! Or fish! Something!” he shouted after her.

Harry really wasn’t sure if she heard him. He sighed and made to go to his room again.

Harry only took one step on the deck before a man stepped into his path. Harry looked up and winced, looking away from the warbright eyes. He took a step back, preparing to leap back onto Freia’s back when an arm looped around his waist and a hand pressed his chin up, turning him so that he couldn’t turn away.

“No more running,” Tom said quietly.
“I don’t want to talk about it,” Harry hissed, closing his eyes. “Now, let me go.”

“No.”

Harry’s eyes flashed open. “You say no to your king?” he demanded.

Tom’s eyes flashed with amusement, and Harry’s ire only grew as Tom looked at him with that dismissive smile. He struggled, pushing harder against Tom’s chest. Tom stumbled forward instead, making Harry’s back press against the edge of the ship.

“You push me and you fall into the ocean,” Tom teased.

“What the fuck do you want?” Harry snarled.

Tom shook his head. “I raised you from urchin to prince to king. I’m most likely the only person to ever tell you no,” Tom said and he lowered his face, pressing it against Harry’s neck. Harry’s breath hitched and he shivered. “No more running.”

“That wasn’t supposed to happen,” Harry whispered, and he slowly lifted his hands, burying his fingers in the back of Tom’s robes as he clung to the man. “It wasn’t...that wasn’t...that wasn’t supposed to happen. The...the last time I was on my knees...I was nobody.”

Tom hummed. “You are someone. You’re the Wyrdfod. You are the King. You are Harry Wildfyre. You are Harry Potter.”

“E-excuse me, your Grace?”

Tom jerked away as if he had been stung, and Harry felt anchorless for just a moment before he brought himself to reality. He looked around Tom, and blood rushed to his cheeks in embarrassment. The redhead Scamander brother—Newt—had averted his eyes, but his brother and two female companions watched, openly curious. Porpentina’s lips were parted, a sharp breath of air exhaled.

“Yes,” Harry whispered. He slid his hands up Tom’s back, holding himself against the man. Tom wouldn’t go far.

“I mean to talk to the Dark Lord. The Lestrange brothers and I have been discussing logistics concerning the fleet that will come after us. I hear that Afallon doesn’t have a true port,” Theseus said, still ogling them.

Harry nodded and pressed his hands harder into Tom’s back, feeling the warmth of the man’s body under his hands before he let his hands drop to his side. Tom spun around, his gaze carefully blank once more. He clasped his hands behind his back and strode forward, leading Theseus and Porpentina. Porpentina glanced over her shoulder, her worried gaze darting from her sister to Newt and then to Harry. Her eyes narrowed in suspicion.

Harry smirked, wiggling his fingers at her. When she was gone, he turned back to Queenie and Newt. Queenie looked amused.

“Was there something else you needed?” Harry asked, curiously.

“What you did today took a lot of courage. I admire that,” Queenie said softly.

Harry winced, cutting his gaze away. He looked up at the sky and watched the shadow Freia swathed through the sky, his eyes softening.
“You think of her as your child. She reacts to you as she might to a mother.”

Harry looked back at Newt, his eyes wide. Newt cringed away from his attention.

“Does she?” Harry asked, taking a step forward. “How can you tell?”

“Her loyalty and the way she protects you. I...it’s an interesting phenomenon. May I ask...were you there when she was born?” Newt asked, his curiosity overcoming his nerves.

Harry nodded. “She was...she was in my parent’s tomb. And I was so...grief-stricken and I released my fire, and she was born in my hands. Born in my fire.”

“So, you were probably the first thing she ever saw. How remarkable,” Newt said with awe in his voice. He looked at Harry again, tilting his head. “You respect her. You treat her as if she is her own entity. Not like she’s a weapon.”

“She’s not!” Harry retorted immediately. “She’s...she’s just baby.”

“She really isn’t,” Queenie piped up. She grinned when Harry glared at her. “I’m not scared of you, you know.”

“Oh, really? You were terrified just a few days ago,” Harry sneered.

“And then you showed who you were. And I’m much more afraid of the Red Woman than I am of you,” Queenie said, waving away Harry’s irritation.

“Why are you afraid of Tonks?” Harry asked.

Queenie rocked back and forth. “I told you. Her mind is full of silence. Silence brought by Death. Silence is the most terrifying thing in the world,” Queenie said firmly. She looked at Harry with a tiny grin. “But, your mind is full of noise. Chaotic and full of love. Love for your people, for your dragon, for your Dark Lord. I like it. It’s soothing.”

Harry took that as an odd compliment.

“She’s really still a baby,” Newt said as if he hadn’t heard a single word of their conversation. “A sweet one. Protective of her mum.”

Harry flushed. "I'm not her mum. Merlin. Don't say that in front of my council. They'll start calling me something silly. They like to give me stupid titles. 'Fairest of Them All'. Next, they'll be calling me something ridiculous like the 'Mother of Dragons'.'

Queenie’s nose wrinkled.

“Yes, that’s not very good, is it?”

“No, it is not. Especially as I am, if you hadn’t noticed, a man,” Harry said firmly. He turned to Newt, a curious look in his eyes now. “You know a lot about dragons. They’ve been extinct for a long time.”

“Not for me,” Newt corrected. “Before the Great Sleep, I worked on a dragon preserve. I ran when...when Morigin of Afallon began to murder anyone that had access to her dragons.”

Harry nearly shivered. He wasn’t going to touch that one. He straightened, crossing his arms and striding forward. Newt took a stumbling step back, his cheeks turning pink.
“Well, then. Come join me for bread and mead. I want to know more about dragons. I think you’re the expert on these things and you can teach me a thing or two. You’re welcome too, Queenie.”

MIRROR

Fleur watched from the shadows as Gabrielle’s fist crunched against another man’s cheekbone. The man stumbled from the heavy blow, crashing back into the inn’s wall. Fleur moved forward almost silently, reaching one hand down and pulling the young woman up to her feet. The brown-faced, brunette woman was barely out of girlhood. She’d probably gotten her blood only a year ago and already she was being exposed to the cruelty of men.

“She’s going to kill him,” the girl whimpered.

Fleur’s nostrils flared as she inhaled sharply. Gabrielle’s wand was in her other hand now and she flicked it sharply. The man flew farther down the alley, rolling and tumbling. He lurched onto all fours and vomited, the sickening smell of bile mixing with the already revolting scent of shit and piss.

“Most probably,” Fleur said. She looked at Gabrielle again. For the first time in days, she looked alive, blood spattering her cheeks.

Gabrielle was staring at something beyond the man. Was it another vision? Gabrielle was getting visions. Whenever she got into fights—in the pubs, outside of the inns, anywhere—she said that she would see Baba Yaga.

“That’s illegal. She can’t,” the girl whispered.

Fleur stared down at the girl. “He tried to rape you. Rapists don’t deserve life. And she knows how to get rid of a body,” she said coolly. “Hurry along, girl. You don’t want to see the end. And hurry up, Gabrielle.”

The girl did as Fleur commanded, running from the alleyway, her eyes darting back and forth at the nearly empty street. Gabrielle jerked, looking behind Fleur, a blankness in her eyes. Gabrielle drew her sword and slammed it down, straight into the man’s gut. The man jerked under her blade and Gabrielle drove it down farther and farther until the man stilled. Gabrielle waited for the twitch and the smell of shit before she pulled her blade free, wiping either side on the man’s pants.

“He deserved it,” Gabrielle snapped, roughly.

Fleur’s eyes narrowed. “I didn’t say anything.”

“You were thinking it. And...And Baba Yaga said he did. That’s he done it to others,” Gabrielle said, her voice softer. She took a deep breath, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“We’ll need to go to another inn. He was the bartender, Gabrielle,” Fleur snarled.

Gabrielle didn’t flinch. “I didn’t know that. I wouldn’t’ve...”

“Don’t lie,” Fleur warned.

Gabrielle looked away, her gaze cold and she stepped away from the body and walked out of the alleyway, uncaring that anyone could find the corpse. Fleur followed after her, silent. Once upon a
time, Fleur might’ve protested, but now, she sensed that Gabrielle...needed this, for some reason. If she didn’t go out and hunt, she would go stir-crazy in their rented rooms, speaking softly to the mirror, to her reflection. Whenever Fleur asked about it, Gabrielle would say that she was talking to Baba Yaga or the Red Woman. Fleur didn’t know who the Red Woman was.

They walked past the old inn and ventured deeper into the city of Velothi. They had stayed in nearly every inn by the docks, but further in, the inns got nicer and, thus, more expensive. Fleur sighed. The could make it a week there before they’d either need to find work or resort to stealing, and Fleur wasn’t sure if she was willing to steal.

They came to a stop and Fleur grabbed Gabrielle’s hand, pulling her through the door.

The Toad and Shrew Inn was a large two-story timber-framed building with high vaulted ceilings. It was quite nice, much nicer than the inns that the sisters had been occupying before, adjacent to the brothels. Fleur made her way past the drunken guests and those that were less so until she was just in front of the barmaid. The barmaid was quite tall with generous curves, long blonde curls, and bright green eyes.

“Hello. We’re looking for a room?” Fleur asked, softly.

The woman turned from her customers at the end of the bar, raising an eyebrow.

“Who’s asking?” she barked.

“Fleur and Gabrielle Delacour,” Fleur said.

“Nice to meet you. You sound like you’re from the Republic, yeah?” the barmaid asked, sounding only vaguely interested as she ran a rag over the large tin cups that were stacked on a shelf behind her. “You look like Veela.”

“Yes, we’re from the Republic,” Fleur said and she looked around the bar in wonder. There were so many people here. Witches and wizards sitting with a vampire and two goblins in the corner playing chess. “We’re not used to seeing so many...creatures.”

Fleur couldn’t help whispering the word.

“Nah, it’s alright. You’ve come a long way from a very different place, I imagine,” the barmaid said, her Essetirean accent heavy as she stressed the end of every word. “I’m Rosmerta, the bartender and night manager of this humble establishment. Welcome to the Toad and Shrew Inn. I think I know what you two need: a nice room, a hot meal, and a bath.”

Rosmerta’s nose wrinkled and Fleur was shocked when a bubble of laughter exploded from Gabrielle’s lips. Fleur looked at her, alarmed, but Gabrielle looked at ease. It almost seemed like...a mask.

“I think I’d have to agree,” Gabrielle said. “I’ve read all about Albion, you know. All about it and its relationship with creatures, and well, I’ve never met a creature openly, besides my sister. Are they well-received here?”

“As long as you pay your taxes, you live here,” Rosmerta said. She leaned forward, looking over at them curiously. “I’ve got some Fae blood, down the line, I think. What are you exactly? I don’t like being misled, so you go on and tell the truth.”

“We’re Veela,” Fleur said quietly.
“One of the Fae too, then. You’ve picked a dangerous time to come from the Republic,” Rosmerta said.

“Dangerous?” Fleur asked.

“There’s a war going on, lass,” Rosmerta said, nodding. She moved towards a pair of dwarves that had settled themselves at the bar. “I was looking to go to Hogsmeade, you know, before this mess. Was going to buy me a pub and everything. But, that'll have to wait, now. Until the war is over.”

“King Draco and Wildfyre,” Gabrielle murmured to herself.

Rosmerta peered at them, uneasily. She rubbed her arms, looking away for a long moment before she turned back to look at the Delacour sisters.

“You shouldn’t go around speaking the name too loud. Words have power, got that?” Rosmerta asked. Gabrielle fought the urge to smirk. She knew all too well of the power of names. “Look, if you’re talking about who I think you’re talking about, you’d best not go looking for trouble. You two seem like nice girls and you don’t want to get involved. The Empire may be better than the Republic, for creatures, but there’s a civil war happening here. Outside of Velothi—Essetir, really—you’re on your own. Don’t be saying that name too loud in my inn.”

Fleur looked over at Gabrielle, but Gabrielle hadn’t looked away from Rosmerta.

“What do you have to eat?” Gabrielle asked abruptly.

Rosmerta relaxed. “We had a good haul this week, so we’ve got a lot of seafood. Some crayfish and feck-crabs. Feck-crabs are good meat, but awfully expensive. If you’re not looking to spend too much, I can get you a duck roast and date pie with a glass of ale for ten sickles each.”

“And the room?” Fleur asked.

“That’ll be two Galleons a night,” Rosmerta said.

Gabrielle’s mouth was still watering from the idea of food. She hadn’t eaten well since...Fenrir. She winced as she thought about her dead lover. She had tried not to think about him since she had disembarked. She turned away, hiding her face from Fleur. Rosmerta wasn’t watching him, still troubled by Gabrielle’s mention of Wildfyre.

If only Rosmerta knew. If only she knew about Gabrielle’s constant visions of Baba Yaga. If only she knew how Fleur’s wheel commanded them to travel West.

“That sounds good. We haven’t eaten real food in a long time,” Fleur was saying. “Seafood, please?”

“Coming right up. We don’t have much in the way of bread. Afallon is controlled by...him, and King Neville hasn’t figured out a way to grow suitable crops this far East,” Rosmerta said apologetically. “The climate isn’t well suited.”

“King Neville?” Fleur asked as Rosmerta pulled out a quill and began jotting their orders down on a slip of parchment.

“The King in the East. The King of Essetir,” Rosmerta said distractedly.

The Delacour sisters exchanged glances.
“A lot has changed since we started sailing,” Fleur muttered under her birth, dipping her head down and nodding.

“I suppose it has. The War of Three Kings, they’re calling it,” Rosmerta said. She snapped her fingers, setting down the quill, and Fleur reared back as the plates of food appeared before them. Rosmerta grinned. “House-elves in the kitchen.”

“I’ve never seen a house elf,” Gabrielle murmured.

The two sisters dug into their meals. Anything was appreciated that wasn’t rock hard sea biscuits and salted meats. Gabrielle nearly groaned as the buttery crust of the date pie melted on her tongue and the duck roast fell apart under the direction of her knife and fork. Fleur ate far more primly, but she looked like she was having an orgasmic experience herself. Gabrielle’s nose wrinkled. She had had sex, and here her older sister was, still a virgin.

It was terribly odd to think about. Better not think of it at all.

Someone cleared their throat. Gabrielle looked down the bar at the two dwarves that sat by side. The one closest to her had his hood pulled over a wild mass of brown hair, crusted black in some places. He had big, calloused hands, each finger bearing an ugly silver ring.

“You’re looking for Harry Wyrdfod?” he asked roughly.

Fleur frowned. “Harry Wildfyre?”

“His name’s Wyrdfod for people like us, innit it?” the dwarf asked. “What a couple of nice girls doing, looking for a war?”

Gabrielle bared her teeth, looking up at her pale, pale face. "Do I look like a nice girl to you?" she hissed.

The dwarf looked at her and then down at the sword of pure silver at her side.

“No. I suppose not. Alpha,” the dwarf said mockingly.

Gabrielle stiffened. “What’s it to you?”

“We’re going to her. I go by the name of Grom. My brotherhood and I have no need for the boy-king and his kinslaying mother. We do not follow Ironborn either. We follow the Wyrdfod. Would you ride with us to the Westeron?” Grom asked.

Gabrielle reared back. She felt out of her depth, no longer surrounded by only werewolves that respected her just for breathing. In the Republic, after Fenrir had died and before they had escaped onto the ship, there had been whispers of her being the Alpha. The Widow.


Grom snorted, derisive and dismissive. "You know nothing of this Empire. You come here, speaking of a man that you should not know the name of. You come here, speaking of this man as if his very name was not dangerous. You are children."

Gabrielle’s eyes narrowed.

“I’m not a child,” she barked. “I have been married and widowed already.”

“By your own hand,” Grom said with a shrug. “The Order of the Phoenix is the rebel group, led by
the Wyrdfod. It is said that the mother of the Boy-King will murder how kin to secure her son on the throne. Now, that is all. The walls have ears and they’re always listening,” Grom said. He glanced over his shoulder at his companion and the man shifted, holding his war hammer in his lap.

“My friend is in Westeron. I must go to her,” Fleur said uncertainly.

Grom’s face wrinkled unpleasantly as he downed the rest of whatever foul-smelling liquid had been in his tin cup. “Will you come? To get to Afallon is very dangerous. We must travel across Essetir, cut through the Forbidden Forest, dangerously close to Hogsmeade and Hogwarts Castle. We leave in the morn.”

And Gabrielle’s eyes narrowed. She didn’t trust Grom, and his brotherhood, but she knew that she had to fight to stay alive, she could. And it would be more prudent for Fleur and her to travel in a group to avoid bandits and rapers and murderers. So, Gabrielle glanced at Fleur and then back at Grom, her lips curled into something like a smile, but not quite.

“We like danger.”

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Hermione wasn’t sure how this was her life.

Once more, she was sitting with Andromeda, enjoying her tea. But, now, she was in Westeron, on the side of the Order—the Resistance—with two leaders of the Resistance sitting on either side of her. Ron was lounging on the wide sofa, his long sprawling legs stretched out across, feet brushing against Andromeda’s velvet skirts. Ginny sat straight, her tea and biscuits sitting in front of her, untouched. Hermione took another long sip of her tea.

“He still isn’t back. The lioness is getting restless,” Hermione noticed quietly.

Andromeda hummed, raising an eyebrow. “Hedwig, you mean,” Andromeda said. She drained her teacup and then set it down. She waved her long pale wand, and the teapot floated, topping off all of their tea. “Are you afraid that he won’t return?”

“Does he really need to?” Hermione asked stiffly.

Ginny looked at her sharply.

"What are you talking about, Hermione? Of course, he needs to come back," Ron said firmly. He glanced at the window and then looked back at Hermione. "All of these people out there...all the people that are still coming here. They're here for him. They'll only follow him."

“Only because they don’t know it’s okay not to have a King.”

They all froze, looking at one another.

“I would hesitate in voicing these opinions,” Ginny warned.

Hermione’s eyes narrowed. “Why?”

“I’m on the King’s Council,” Ginny retorted. “I’m obligated to tell him anything that may be treasonous.”
“I’m not his subject,” Hermione snapped.

“You live on his money,” Ginny hissed. Hermione reared back, surprised. “You’ve no idea what Harry has sacrificed for this empire, for our people. You were the Usurper’s wife. You’re lucky you’re here to begin with. If it were my decision, you wouldn’t be here. Who knows what you could be hiding?”

Hermione’s mouth clicked shut, offended.

“Ginny, relax. She was as much of a prisoner as anyone—” Ron warned.

"Quite right," Andromeda said. Her words silenced Ron and any more of Ginny's protest. All three young people looked to the Lady Warden. She looked faintly amused by them. "I understand your hesitance, Lady Granger. You have only suffered great cruelty at the hands of the monarchy. You have been beaten, tormented, humiliated, and abused."

Hermione refused to be ashamed.

“Yes.”

“So has he,” Andromeda returned. Her smile widened when Hermione reared back. “Do you know how he got my brother’s perpetual loyalty?”

Hermione swallowed. “No. I thought you said he loved him.”

Ginny and Ron lurched on either side of her. She could feel them exchanging glances behind her head, but she only had eyes for Andromeda.

“He traded his virginity. He whored himself out for this kingdom. For his rightful crown. He allowed my brother—his enemy, at the time—intimacy. An intimate part of himself. He bared his soul. I think the empire would do well with a king like that,” Andromeda said and there was respect in her voice that Hermione had rarely heard from the woman.

Hermione mulled over the words and she glanced at the Weasley siblings. They looked uncomfortable. Ginny looked over at Andromeda, hesitating.

“You know he doesn’t like that word. ‘Whore’,” Ginny said. She said it like it was a vile curse.

Andromeda sniffed. “Well, he isn’t here right now, is he?”

“I think tea should be over now,” Ginny said quite rudely. Hermione glanced at Andromeda, but Andromeda still looked quite amused. Ginny stood up stiffly and walked out without another word.

“Is she always like that?” Hermione asked once Ginny left.

“She’s...she’s complicated,” Ron said, searching for a word. It didn’t sound like the half of it, in Hermione’s opinion.

“With good reason to be,” Andromeda admitted. “Her emotions are so raw. If it weren’t so painful, I would call them ‘delicious’ even. She feels strongly.”

Hermione wondered about that, but there was a strain on Ron’s face that made her think not to ask. Not until she was alone with Andromeda, and she wasn’t sure if Andromeda would even know the answer. Andromeda pretended to know everything, but Hermione didn’t think she did. Not even by half. She just thought that all Slytherins thought they knew everything. Even Salazar Slytherin
thought he knew everything.

“Thank you for having us for tea,” Hermione said calmly.

Andromeda nodded once. “You are quite welcome. I enjoy having our tea. Now, hurry along. I must go entertain Rowena and Salazar before they begin snooping some more. I imagine they’ve already caught glimpses of the number of Death Eaters in Afallon. They are old, suspicious people.”

“With good reason to be,” Hermione debated. “Your brother did murder their comrades.”

“I never said they didn’t have a reason,” Andromeda retorted and for some reason, it made Hermione’s cheeks hot.

Hermione rose and immediately went to curtsey. She stopped herself. Andromeda looked at her in delighted surprised and nodded. Ron stood immediately, nearly tripping over his long legs as they walked out of Andromeda’s rooms.

“Where we have off to now?” Ron asked.

“We?” Hermione asked patiently.

Ron shrugged. "I've nothing to do. Percy and the twins are going to the village today to see if the harvest is going smoothly. We're preparing for a war, aren't we?"

“Yes, we are,” Hermione sighed.

“Well, I’ve nothing to do until Harry is back. So, where are we off to?” he asked.

“The library,” Hermione decided, turning a sharp left. It was probably by choice that Andromeda’s rooms were positioned far from the library.


“I didn’t ask you to come,” Hermione retorted.

Ron nodded, conceding her point. “Why not go out and spar?” he asked.

“I’m not a soldier,” Hermione said as she pushed open the doors to the library.

She’d been in the library so many times since she had arrived at Westeron, but it took her breath away each time, just as the library had at Hogwarts. This library was certainly not as big, but it was always grand to see more than a few books. Hermione had been limited to the three books that her stepmother had allowed her when she was still nothing but a servant.

From servant to Lady to a maybe-Queen to a free person. What a remarkable tale her history made. She smiled softly.

“You could be,” Ron said. Hermione looked at him in surprise.

“You think so?” she asked.

Ron nodded. “Oh, yeah. Bloody hell, you’re quite good, you know? The way you dueled with Zabini? It was...it was really good. Who taught you?”

"Books, I suppose. I learned everything I know from books. My father was a Muggle. So was my mother. When we found out I was magical, I got a wand and they brought me so many books,"
Hermione said softly. "I suppose they all belong to Lady Zabini."

"Imagine being smart enough to learn all that from books," Ron said and he sounded awed by her. Hermione’s lips twitched. No one had ever been in awe of her.

It was flattering.

"Books and cleverness aren't a real replacement for talent and bravery. I'm...I'm a survivor. Not a warrior. It's different," Hermione said.

Ron frowned, letting that settle in the silence between them as they walked through the library. He rocked back and forth on his heels as they came to a stop by a bookcase and Hermione peered at the spines, searching for something to catch her interest. Nothing did, so they continued their walking.

“Fancy a game?” Ron asked curiously.

Hermione crossed her arms as they walked side by side through the library. She wanted to peel away, to rifle through all of the beautiful tomes. Hermione resisted. It would be rude, especially when Ron was one of her only friends. Luna was still gone, and Barty...well, she wasn’t quite ready to see Barty just yet.

“What kind of game?” she asked.

“Wizarding chess. I found a set here, but no one will play with me anymore,” Ron said.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “Why?”

Ron grinned. “I always win.”

Hermione stopped at the challenge, and she turned towards him fully. She looked him up and down, curious.

“Where’s the board?”

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**THE WALL**

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Neville peered down at his sister’s miserable face, unable to help his grimace. He’d been grimacing for what felt like forever. Ever since she had baptized him in the ocean, he had only felt grim and tired. He hated being King, and couldn’t imagine fighting what could be a years-long war for something he didn’t even want. But, what he wanted didn’t matter at the moment. Instead, he looked over at his grandmother.

"Let's finish this meeting, yes?" Daphne said firmly, looking at Neville and Augusta. She paused to cough, wrapping her blankets around her shoulders tighter and taking a sip of the lukewarm tea. "My sister says that they are returning, but ships do not follow. She isn't sure what that means just yet."

“Do you think the Fairest means to claim the East first?” Neville wondered aloud.

Augusta sneered. “The Gryffindor will see Narcissa as the bigger target. While they go at one another’s throats, we will build our strength,” she decided.

Daphne nodded agreement. She absently mopped at her sticky forehead with the edge of her quilt
and sighed, brushing back her hair.

“It feels warm in her. And dry. Too dry,” she rasped even as she downed the rest of her tea.

Augusta frowned, worried, but didn’t say anything. Neville huffed, shaking his head. He was at the end of his rope. Daphne had been like this for weeks, and he was finished with pretending that there wasn’t a problem.

“What can we do for her?” Neville demanded. “She’s ill. She’s never been ill before.”

“I know,” Augusta snapped. Neville knew that she was nervous and worried. He could see it in her face. She looked so much older with her right-hand bedridden.

“I’m...I’m still alive. Don’t speak of me like…” Daphne began and was interrupted by a terrible cough. She trembled, her arms wrapped around him as she gagged. She turned to the bucket next to her and vomited out fresh water and what looked like raw fish mixed with bile.

Augusta’s upper lip curled. “You haven’t been cooking your fish?”

“No,” Daphne snapped. “It’s disgusting.”

“You never minded before. You haven’t minded since you were given your legs,” Augusta retorted.

Daphne paused as if she hadn’t realized that. She frowned, looking down at the exposed skin.

“I don’t...I haven’t any scales,” she whispered. “I’m not reverting back.”

“No. But...are you sure that that...Warlock didn't make any stipulations?” Neville whispered, eyes darting around the room, worriedly. Daphne raised an eyebrow, an unimpressed look on her face.

“Neville, I was a child. A child that got lucky because my father protected me. I’ve no idea what other stipulations that Warlock might’ve put in,” Daphne retorted.

Augusta shook her head. “A child, perhaps, but never a stupid one. Raw fish and bile. What have you been up to, girl? Will you ask your sister?”

Daphne shook her head. “I’ve already been calling upon her too often. My father is dying, you know. Soon...soon she will be Queen. And she is worried. Marzenna is...Marzenna...” and then Daphne screamed, staring past Augusta.

Augusta and Neville spun to stare at whatever it was. But, the space by the window was empty. The only change was that the window was now open. Neville looked back to his sister. Foam bubble from her cracked lips. Her screaming had stopped and she was muttering in that gurgling Mermish language that he had never master. She was rocking back and forth like she was speaking to someone that wasn’t there.

“Has she gone mad?” Augusta whispered. Neville looked to his grandmother and he glanced back at the pool she had in the center of her room. The pool of saltwater.

“She’s dry,” Neville realized softly.

Augusta’s eyes widened. Neville didn’t wait for her command. He stood up, tearing the quilts from Daphne’s shoulders and scooped her up. She was tall, but always so thin and her bones were still thin like a fish. He walked quickly towards the pool and dropped her in, not even bothering to carefully settle her. Augusta made a sound of protest, but Neville ignored her. The water splashed
along his trousers, but Neville only watched Daphne sink.

Daphne’s closed eyes opened and there were no longer sea-glass. Neville’s mouth dropped open as he stared into the yellow, yellow eyes that he remembered from childhood. She slowly opened her mouth and gulped the water down, her back arching. Her hand shot up, crashing through the water and she sat up in the water, rocking back and forth.

“What the fuck just happened?” Neville demanded.

Daphne looked healthier than she had in months. She slowly turned to look at her brother.

“Marzenna called me Ainu,” she said softly. She looked troubled.

“Who is this ‘Marzenna’?” Augusta barked.

Daphne looked dismayed. “I tried to tell you. You wouldn’t listen,” she whispered.

“I am listening now,” Augusta snapped.

Daphne swallowed. “What do you know...of the one called ‘Pandora’?”

“Nothing. Who is she?” Augusta asked.

“There are three Dtrwies and Death is like air. Pandora...starts wars and ends them. Pandora is coming. Because this war...this war is ordained,” Daphne whispered, sounding terrified. “There is a reason that this Harry Wildfyre is so important. He was born to be special. He is special like her.”

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WHO

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Tonks leaned back, searching Harry's face for something that she surely wouldn't find. He was fine with pretending that he didn't see the look of apprehension on her face.

"I'm sorry if that makes things any better," Tonks finally said. Harry hummed as if he hadn't heard her. "I shouldn't have...encouraged the fire and blood conquest. It was a bit much. Even for me."

“I should’ve been more humble. We live through our humiliations. We learn from them too,” Harry said grudgingly, and Tonks took it for an acceptance of her apology. She beamed at him, sidling up to his side as she neatly looked away from his rumpled sheets and sat down on the one other chair in the room.

“What are you working on?” Tonks asked.

“I don’t know,” Harry muttered, staring at the blank page. “I just...feel restless on this fucking ship. I have nothing to do.”

“You’ve been doing...a lot,” Tonks said, lewdly. “It smells like a brothel.”

Harry snorted, his cheeks slightly pink. “You know, the brothel you grew up in smelled quite nice,” Harry teased.

“Rita’s all about the atmosphere,” Tonks said with a smirk. She leaned back in her chair and frowned. “I...I never thought I’d go back there.”
“You didn’t have to work,” Harry repeated.

Tonks sighed. "I did. And it was fine. I...Remus knows what I do. I was doing it for a long time, Harry. I did it even when I was with the Order if there was a need for it. I'm not ashamed. There's no reason to be ashamed."

Harry hesitated for a long time as he processed that. Shame. What an utterly strange word. What a word that he hated. His humiliation had transformed into shame as they crossed back to Albion. The shame of being treated like a nobody, of bringing himself to his knees. The shame of having no one defend his honor. The shame of them seeing him like that. The shame of allowing Tom to treat him like…to treat him like…

“No, there is no shame in what you did,” Harry said. It wasn’t a lie. Tonks had no reason to be ashamed.

“The ambassadors wonder after you. They gossip. The blonde girl, Queenie, is getting along spectacularly with Luna. They whisper to one another, I don't know what about. Porpentina, Tina, she likes to be called, is serious but—” Tonks said and then she cut herself off after Harry gave her a look. Her lips twitched. “What?”

“They’re a necessary evil. I don’t intend to make friends with them, I think. Except for the zoologist. He appreciates me lovely Freia,” Harry said with a little smile. Newt was a sweet man.

“I was just getting to him,” Tonks huffed playfully. "Tina's a bit jealous of you. Apparently, Mr. Scamander speaks quite a lot about you. Theseus and she think he's a bit sweet on you."

Harry threw his head back and laughed. “He fancies my dragon. That man is in love with Porpentina and you know it,” he said. His eyes grew brighter and he leaned forward. “Shall I go up there and flirt with him? Make him flustered?”

“Harry, don’t start any trouble where there need be none,” Tonks warned, but she was grinning.

“What? Mischief is in my blood, isn’t it? That’s what Remus and Sirius say. They were always pulling pranks!” Harry began, grinning as he turned fully away from his desk for the first time. Tonks laughed, shaking her head. “No. Come on. Show me how to flirt. Must I flutter my lashes?”

He did just that.

“Harry!”

“Oh, shall I lean in close and whisper into his ear? Oh, but that would make Tom quite angry, wouldn’t it? Oh, I must do it now,” Harry said, a bit of bite in his voice. He grinned, licking his lips lasciviously and Tonks burst into a fresh round of laughter that howled throughout the room.

“Tom should come in here and smack the nonsense out of you,” Tonks said, her lips quirking into a little grin. “He’s the only one that has the patience for you when you get like this.”

Harry’s lips curled, a quick retort on the end of his tongue before he hesitated. He swallowed hard, his mouth suddenly dry, and he felt almost dizzy with the thought.

“Maybe he should,” Harry whispered like a terrible secret.

Tonks’ eyes widened and she snorted. “Really, Harry?”

Harry stared at her with narrowed eyes. She didn’t know what was going on in his head. Tonks liked
to think that she always knew, but she didn’t. Not really.

“Really. Maybe I’d like it,” Harry hissed, his eyes bright with anger. “Maybe I want him to treat me like a—”

Tonks faltered. “Harry,” she began. “Rough sex doesn’t make you a whore.”

Harry ignored her.

“What did I do in life to be given you?” he asked suddenly. Tonks looked surprised by his sudden words of affection. Harry’s lips curled into a smile. “You were kind to me from the very beginning. You have always been on my side. You’ve never lied to me.”

Tonks winced, her lips curling into a smile.


“I am no Master,” Harry said immediately. He shuddered. “I know what it is to be a slave. I would never be anyone’s slave. You understand that, right?”

Tonks’ gaze never wavered. “I am your Sword.”

“Okay…” Harry said quietly. “You are my sword.”

Tonks stood from her perch on the edge of the chair and moved towards Harry’s desk. She sat on the edge of it and looked down at the blank piece of parchment. She nodded and crossed her arms.

"There's work to be done. Let's draft meeting agendas for when we return. I suspect a war council meeting is in order. At least, enough of one to apprise them of the current situation," Tonks said and Harry nodded in agreement.

“Yes. We’ll need to establish who will be my Admiral, don’t we? And I suppose, there’s a conversation I must have. I’ve been avoiding it,” Harry admitted.

Tonks looked down at him in surprise.

“A conversation? With whom?” she asked.

Harry sighed. “With the Lady Granger, of course.”

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Sirius had learned how to be remarkably quiet during his time in Azkaban. Dementors were drawn to sound and emotion, and so, Sirius had learned how to make himself quite small. In both the emotional, mental, and physical sense. Now, he trotted down the halls, disguised as a great, shaggy dog. Sirius’ tongue lolled out of his head as he went around the corner, barking happily as he ran past two servant girls.

They both shrieked, terribly surprised by his sudden appearance, and Sirius’ barking laugh was the answer as he darted away.
“That mangy mutt!” one called, roughly pulling out her wand and sending a Stinging Hex. Sirius dodged it, laughing.

“He’s only a dog,” the other pleaded.

“No, it's not. It's Sirius Black!”

Sirius strained his neck as he turned down a corridor that he rarely found himself in. Sirius slept in Regulus’ rooms, near the Lady Warden. Regulus was quick to put some of his many responsibilities on Sirius. Sirius was both happy and annoyed with his sudden role. Harry hadn’t given him anything important to do, so Sirius was happy to be involved, but it was all about being the steward of a castle. Sirius had a war to fight in.

He had found some sense of interest in the twins. Fred and George provided a great distraction. They were talented pranksters and inventors, and Remus and the twins had shown them some of the inventions that Fred and George were working on at the behest of Harry. He liked to watch their weapons explode—things they called bombs or fireworks, but it sometimes put Sirius in a mood. Even the pranksters were given something to do.

“—must decide for the good of the empire—”

“He’s blinded by his—”

“He’s blinded by cock. Whoring himself out—”

“—the walls have ears—”

“Constant vigilance, McKinnon!” Alastor Moody shouted and Sirius nearly whined when he heard a bang. Slowly, he padded forward, keeping his head hanging low to the ground as he pressed himself against the door.

“Yes, yes, Moody,” Marlene McKinnon drawled. Sirius had just met her when he had first been brought back from Azkaban. She was a wane, serious looking woman with a bad attitude, but she seemed quite capable on the battlefield. “But, he is not here. Of course, he is not here.”

“He will return,” Fendwick said in his gruff voice. “Hopefully, with ships.”

“And if not?” McKinnon asked.

Moody let out a low grumble. “If he is not given ships, that means he has failed. And failure may turn this in our favor. He will look away from the Dark Lord and the Slytherin whore as his advisors. He will seek counsel elsewhere.”

There was the sound of someone shifting. Sirius strained forward, even more, to hear their voices as they lowered to whispers.

“By ‘elsewhere’...do you mean us?” McKinnon whispered.

“Two mistakes he’ll have made by listening to Slytherins. Each greater than the last. McGonagall is dead because of Slytherins. If he is denied the ships, it will be due to the Slytherin monster that he keeps in his bed,” Fendwick spat and then he calmed, letting out a noisy breath. Sirius’ heart had stopped in his chest.

Sirius closed his wide grey eyes and couldn't help his whimper. He remembered Harry's sweet smile, always directed at the cold, impenetrable Dark Lord. The way moved around one another as if they
couldn't ever bear to be torn apart. The way they locked themselves away for hours on end, and everyone looked the other way.

“He will stray from him and come to—”

Sirius trotted away, running as fast as he could. Mid-run, he Transfigured back, shifting into his robes. He panted just as madly as he had as a dog, panic and fury swelling within him as he ran up the winding stairs to Regulus’ rooms. He threw the doors open with a bang and Remus and Regulus looked up from their conversation. They had been smiling.

“Teddy is down for his nap now, but I should get him up soon,” Remus was saying, and Regulus was nodding, his eyes soft as they were whenever anyone mentioned Remus and Tonks’ adopted child.

Regulus was sipping his tea and Sirius threw the door shut behind him. Both men looked up, wide-eyed.

“Sirius, where have you been?” Regulus asked. “There’s work I need you to look—”

“D-Did y-you know?” Sirius snarled. He hated how when he got angry, his stutter returned full force. Both men looked at him, confused for a long time. Sirius grimaced. “I-I heard M-Moody and his lackeys t-talking.”

“They’re having secret meetings? Who else was there? Fendwick?” Remus asked, more alert and serious. He looked so much older than he had nearly twenty years ago. He had once been Sirius’ best friend.

Sirius’ best friend wouldn’t hide something like this from him.

“D-did you know? A-a-about H-Harry a-and V-Voldemort. T-they’re fucking!” Sirius roared. Regulus looked away and Sirius slammed his hand against the hard wooden door. He heard something crack, and, in both rage and pain, he shouted, “Fuck!”

“Sirius…” Remus began, uncertain where he would go with his explanation.

Sirius whipped around to sneer at his closest living friend.

“What?” he spat.

“He didn’t want you to know. He asked me not to tell you. I wanted to,” Regulus said and his gaze softened as he looked up at his older brother. “He loves him.”

Regulus watched how Sirius turned so pale that he was the color of bone. Sirius shook his head in disbelief, his lips parted and he sucked in a deep breath of air through his teeth. And then he deflated, wrapping his arms around himself.

“He can’t,” Sirius whispered. “He killed James and Lily. Harry’s parents.”

“Harry knows that better than anyone,” Remus said grimly. “And he loves him anyway.”

FAIREST
They heard Freia first.

The great screech echoed across Westeron and the city surrounding it. Freia circled Westeron, a blaze of white fire escaping her mouth to announce their homecoming. Even on Freia’s back, he could hear the cheers. Harry could imagine their cries as they caught sight of their Wyrfod for the first time in weeks. Freia circled again, flying over the main road of the city, just behind the walking procession. Freia dipped low, flying towards the entrance of Westeron, on the strip of land between the castle entrance and the entrance.

She landed with a thud.

Harry stared at the party that waited for him. Andromeda stood at the forefront, his war council surrounding them. Cedric, Cho, and two of his Adored Ones were also there, draped in their finest. He spotted Lady Granger towards the back of the welcoming party, her gaze trained on a pair of old people standing just behind Andromeda. Harry slipped down from Freia’s back just as Tom and Tonks joined him along with Luna, the Lestrange brothers, and the City-State ambassadors.

Harry straightened his blood battle robes, his sword bouncing against his side. He threw back his shoulders as he looked at Andromeda.

“Welcome home, your Grace,” she greeted.

“It’s good to be home, Lady Warden,” he said with a small smile.

“Was you trip met with much success?” Moody growled, sounding impatient.

Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Instead, his smile grew into a grin. “Ah, yes. We have secured a third of the City-State’s fleet. More than enough for our needs. I think this conversation would be more prudent in council, don’t you—”

“Andromeda. What have you done?”

Harry glanced over his shoulder. Tom’s nostrils were flared and he was staring at the two older people on either side of Andromeda. Tom’s wand was out, pointed at them, his left hand resting on the pommel of his sword.

“Tom, what is it?” Harry whispered.

Andromeda swallowed. “Your Grace, we have welcomed two...unexpected guests. You will know them as my father, Salazar Slytherin, and...Rowena Ravenclaw.”

*Helena’s mother.*

*The first one’s mother.*

*The first heart.*

Harry’s smile melted away.

Harry stared silently at the two elders that stood before him. The man must have been handsome in his youth, like Tom, with silvery eyes. Harry wondered if Tom’s eyes had ever been that color, once upon a time. Rowena was still a handsome woman, though with more silver in her hair than black. She had aged very well, according to the portraits in Harry’s books. Unconsciously, he reached out, grabbing Tom’s wrist and positioning himself in front of the man. It didn’t matter that Tom towered over him; Harry’s intent was clear. Harry didn’t miss how Rowena’s dark eyes flashed at the
movement.

“Hello, King Wildfyre.”

Harry nodded. He would not bow to them. He would not bow to anyone anymore.

“Lady Ravenclaw. Lord Slytherin,” Harry greeted, his voice soft. He pretended not to notice the way the witnesses hissed and whispered at the titles he had granted them with. “I had been led to believe that you were deep in hiding.”

“We have been. Hiding from the man that stands by your side,” Rowena spat. She waited for Harry’s shame.

She would not have it.

“The man by my side has been there from the very start of this war,” Harry bit out.

“The man by your side started the war!” Rowena roared, her voice echoing through the Entrance Hall. Harry didn’t flinch, his green eyes hardening.

Salazar looked from Harry to his son, his colorless eyes revealing no emotion. Harry studied him. He could see some of the resemblance between the once King and his firstborn. Their strong jaw was one and the same, but their eyes were different. Of course, they were. Salazar's eyes were neither silver nor blue. Tom's eyes were the color of war.

“The man by my side,” Harry whispered, “Has kept me safe.”

“I’m not sure if I believe that,” Salazar finally said. Harry looked up at Tom, as his father finally spoke.

Tom’s lips were curled into a terrible smile. “Of course you don’t, Father. Always believe the worst of me, won’t you?”

Salazar’s eyes grew cold. “You’ve always shown the worst of you.”

“Father. Brother. Do try not to air the family’s dirty laundry out in front of polite company,” Andromeda said, coolly. She bypassed the quiet showdown, marching up to Tonks. Tonks allowed her mother to press kisses to each cheek. “How are you, my dear?”

"I'm fine. Just fine," Tonks murmured.

Salazar turned sharply, looking at his daughter. “Your daughter?” Salazar asked, his voice quiet, looking at her and he winced when the pink melted from the girl's hair, and her hair grew to her shoulders, a mess of wild curls.

She looked like Andromeda and Bellatrix when young. Her eyes were sharp like Narcissa’s. His blood ran strong.

“It doesn’t matter,” Rowena barked. She still hadn’t looked away from Tom. Harry swallowed hard, his fingers clenching, white fire already gathering in his palms. “I promised you a death, boy.”

“Try it,” Tom barked. “I dare you.”

"No. No one's fighting," Harry snarled. He took a step forward, staring at the two of them and he let out a deep breath. "You are both here. And you will remain as my guests. But, if you dare touch him...if you even think...I will burn the hearts of you.”
“Why are we in the dungeons? Doesn’t this seem excessive, Mother?”

“Hush, Draco. The Lady Chancellor was a sense of privacy. This is the closest we get in a court full of spies and liars.”

Narcissa resisted the urge to rub her temples. She felt an aching building in her forehead and at the base of her skull. Draco had moved past his sorrowful weeping and grief and had gone back to whining as if he were a toddler. In some ways, it reminded Narcissa of the boy he had been when Bellatrix had still been alive. It nearly made her smile. But, then, she remembered that when Bellatrix had been alive, her son would’ve never been given what he was owed.

She would’ve never been given what was owed.

At least, the Lady Pansy Parkinson kept him check, through her own annoying sort of whining. If Narcissa knew that elevating the Parkinson girl’s status would mean a constant state of ass-kissing, she wouldn’t have done so. But, it was too late, and the girl was proving rather useful. She could keep her life.

For now.

“We are meeting here,” Narcissa finally said as she led them into the room she had carved out in the dungeons. It was a simple room, repurposed from a cell. A big stone table sat in the middle of it and already, two of the seats were filled.

As Narcissa, Draco, and Pansy entered, Crouch and Dolohov stood, immediately, bowing.

“Lady Chancellor,” they said, stumbling over themselves. “Your Majesty.”

“Sit down,” Draco said, rolling his eyes as he walked forward. As Narcissa looked at him again in proper torchlight, her smooth expression crumpled into a slight frown.

His eyes were bloodshot and the circles under her eyes were so dark they looked like bruises. No, he still was not well. He was haunted in his dreams. Narcissa looked at Pansy. Underneath the heavy cosmetics, Pansy couldn’t hide the black bruise around her neck. So, Draco had tried to strangle her once more. Pansy caught her looking and lifted her chin, a stern set to her mouth. Narcissa nodded in appreciation.

The girl continued to serve even at her near-death, every night.

Only something foolish called love could inspire such loyalty.

“Mother, it’s past the time of retirement. What could be so important?” Draco demanded.

“A war, boy,” Narcissa snarled.

Draco looked away, two pink circles blossoming in his cheeks. Narcissa sat down next to Dolohov, and Draco sat between her and Pansy. Crouch was sifting through his notes, muttering to himself before he looked up.

“Shall I begin?” Crouch asked.
Draco sighed, waving his hand. “Very well. What is this about?”

“Well...it’s about Wildfyre,” Crouch began. “It is time to acknowledge that we are at a severe disadvantage. He has the numbers, he has the Dark Lord, and he has a dragon.”

"The numbers...we can match that with skill. They lost just as many as we did," Dolohov retorted for the fifteenth time. Narcissa pinched the bridge of her nose. She would’ve killed him by now if it weren’t for how he dogged her footsteps, forever loyal to his new mistress, and his sizeable cock.

“The Dark Lord has no equal though,” Pansy said timidly. She sounded nearly afraid.

Narcissa’s eyes flashed open and she looked at Pansy, a cool smile spreading across her face.

“Oh, dear girl...my brother didn’t kill the Founders alone,” Narcissa hissed nastily. “I wear a warrior’s braids. As long as I meet him, and I alone, you shall not fear.”

“And your sister, Andromeda?” Pansy whispered.

Narcissa smirked. “She is no match either,” Narcissa said. Truly, she wanted to hiss her horrible deeds—*I have gone farther with black magic than anyone. I have slain the great Bellatrix. I have bathed myself blood and torn apart my body. I have cleaved darkness to my soul.*

She did not say anything of these things.

“Perhaps, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have something to fear: Wildfyre and his dragon,” Crouch reminded them, rubbing at his thin mustache. He looked rather excited, and Narcissa leaned forward, intrigued.

"You have an idea. An idea for a weapon?” Narcissa asked.

Crouch paused. “Not a weapon, exactly. Something to assist us...of sorts. Something to put us on equal grounds with a dragon,” Crouch said, his eyes glowing black.

Draco was suspiciously silent before he leaned forward, his silver gaze like molten iron.

“I know,” Draco whispered. “I understand.”

“Do you?” Dolohov asked, confused.

Draco’s lips curled into a grin—that terrible, incorrigible grin that Narcissa had missed.

“He’s going to make us fly.”

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**THEM**

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They were putting on a show.

Slowly, they circled one another. Harry smirked, his eyes never leaving the man. He drew his sword in one hand, his wand in the other. Tom mirrored him, his red eyes never leaving Harry’s. Their audience waited with baited breath, wondering. Harry struck first, as he always did. He sent out a terrible Cutting Curse, and Tom batted it away with a flick of his wand. Harry roared, swinging his sword down, and Tom blocked it and parried.
“You’re so predictable,” Tom sneered.

Harry rolled his eyes and went to knee the man in the stomach. Tom caught it with his wrist and knocked Harry off balance. Harry stumbled back and he grit his teeth as he dodged a vicious purple curse. Knowing Tom, he'd send lethal curses Harry's way to inspire an urgency to survive. The man was a fucking prick.

“Oh, so we’re getting serious, then?” Harry asked.

“We always were. You’re so angry, Harry,” Tom taunted.

Harry sneered. “So, are you.”

And then they met again in a fury of steel and magic. Magic burbled in the air, curses catching and being blocked. Shield Charms and curses flew through the air. Harry slid through the dirt, dodging what looked like the Cruciatus Curse and came from Tom's legs. Tom spun out of the way and engaged in a battle of steel once more for close quarters. They came at each other, neither holding back in their endeavor to win their spar.

Harry’s blood was pumping harder than it had in a long time. His lips curled back into a fearsome grin, full of rage and adrenaline, and Tom had that same look in his eyes. This was what it meant when one met their equal in battle. Harry fluttered his lashes as they met again, only steel blocking his sword from meeting Tom’s throat.

“Gonna give me a kiss?” Harry purred.

Tom rolled his eyes and kneed Harry in the stomach. Harry stumbled back and gasped, trying to catch his breath. Tom didn’t give him a chance to recover, swinging his hand and backhanding him. Harry stumbled again and he brought his hand to his lips.

“I’m fucking bleeding. If I lose my teeth again, I’m going to kill you,” Harry snarled.

Tom sneered. “No one will give you that fucking courtesy in a battle between life and death.”

Harry huffed and went forward again and he cursed when Tom caught him by his wrist and turned him so that his blade was against Harry’s throat. Harry didn’t yield, only slamming his head back into Tom’s nose. He heard a satisfying crack and threw his pommel back into the man’s stomach over and over again so that Tom’s blade finally dropped from his throat.

“You yield?” Harry asked.

“Not even close. Avada Kedavra.”

"ARE YOU SHITTING ME?” Harry roared, diving out of the way as it shot past him. He turned to look over his shoulder and he saw that all of their spectators had dove out of the way. "You can't do that! People are watching! You can't just shoot Unforgivable Curses at me."

“I didn’t ask them to and I knew you could dodge it,” Tom snarled, taking his nose and snapping it back into place. “It’s how I was taught.”

“By who?” Harry hissed.

“My father. Do we continue or do you yield?” Tom asked, not even bothering to stem the bleeding that sloshed down and covered his mouth and chin.
“No I yield,” Harry snarled. He looked over his shoulder at everyone. Even Cedric looked thrown by the use of the curse. “Everyone, just...go back to training or something. Please!”

Everyone grumbled, looking over the shoulders as they did what their King commanded. Harry turned back, frowning up at Tom’s ire.

“What?” Tom snapped.

Harry’s gaze softened. “I’m sorry that he’s here,” he whispered.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Tom said stiffly.

Harry sighed. “Okay,” he muttered, leaning up and pressing a kiss to Tom’s lips, ignoring the blood that soaked them. “Fix your nose. And don’t do it yourself. You’re rubbish at Healing charms.”

“Who told you that lie?” Tom asked through clenched teeth.

Harry grinned. “No one. I just know you’re rubbish at it,” Harry murmured, pressing his forehead against the man’s shoulder. “Please don’t do it yourself.”

“I’ll have Andromeda fix it later,” Tom sighed.

“Thank you, Tom. We’ll train later. No more Unforgiveables,” Harry said.

“I’m not a child,” Tom snarled, annoyed.

Harry rolled his eyes. “I know. Stop being an arse. I have to wash. I have tea with the Lady Granger,” Harry said, wiggling his eyebrows.

“She hates the idea of a king,” Tom pointed out.

Harry hummed. “Gotta keep her close. I’ll tell you about it when we go to bed tonight.”

He danced away without another word, leaving Tom in the middle of his own carnage. He sighed, looking at the scorched earth, created by his own Killing Curse. Yes, if that had hit someone—or even, Harry—that would’ve been a problem. But, really, Tom had been trained that way. So had Bellatrix, and Andromeda, and Narcissa.

“You’ve no idea what you’re doing, boy.” Tom didn’t look up from the scarred earth. He didn’t move at all, as cold as marble as Rowena knew his heart to be. “You’re doing this wrong. You treat him as if he were a soldier,” Rowena spat, her eyes unforgiving as she looked at the man who had ruined her life. She watched in satisfaction as his gloved hands clenched into tight fists.

“He’s not a child,” Tom snarled. “Don’t let his pretty little eyes deceive you. Don’t let his innocent smile turn you into a fool. He wants you to think him a pretty whore. But, beauty is terror, Rowena Ravenclaw. You’d be sure to remember that.”

Rowena looked stricken for a moment and Tom felt a cheap thrill rush down his spine. It was the thrill of a child besting his elder, and Tom couldn’t hate Rowena more than in that moment. Here, she had come—both her and his father—to haunt him.

She blinked at him, watching Tom’s eyes—always bright with cruel madness. There was an air of darkness around him, and he looked exhausted. But, there was passion there when he spoke of Harry Wildfyre. Rowena remembered a child with passion and dispassion. She remembered a child, soft with her blind little girl. That might be why it had hurt so much when she found Helena’s broken
body, the blind little bird dead at his hands.

“Then you see that you’ve created a monster,” Rowena hissed. “You did the same with Narcissa, and you see what that has done to the empire. You see what you’re doing to him. You’ve ruined him. You’ve broken him and—”

“He was already broken what I got him. You are in no place to tell me how to do what must be done. What I have been ordained to do by the gods,” Tom said, his words like acid, meant to scar. Rowena was very still. “You are no longer part of this story.”

Rowena did not react. Not yet.

“No. I am not. But, I was. My story didn’t end well. I want his to. It’s not too late,” Rowena said calmly.

Tom’s eyes narrowed with malice.

“There is no such thing as a ‘happily ever after’. Pity the fool who thinks there is,” Tom said.

“I don’t have one because your selfishness took it away,” Rowena whispered, and he could hear the agony in her voice, the grief that still weighed so heavily on her shoulders. Tom sneered at her. This weak woman still clutched to the idea of her revenge. It was the reason she breathed.

“Life is a story, Rowena. And we were all given our parts to play. You, the grieving mother,” Tom said, his voice heavy. He hesitated, her name stricken his tongue. It always hurt to say her name.

“Helena, the martyr. And Tom Marvolo...Voldemort of House Slytherin...the Dark Lord, the villain. We play our roles as the gods have given them.”

For so many years, Rowena had wondered. She had wondered what had made him kill her. She had wondered what had caused him to crave immortality. She had always wondered, but she had always hated him too much and cared too little for his excuses. She wondered.

“Why did you kill her? Why did it have to be my girl? Why did you take her from me?” Rowena demanded and she felt her eyes sting with her tears.

Tom faltered as he stared at her.

“I don’t have to answer you,” he said calmly.

“What have you to lose? Don’t be...for once, Tom, don’t be cruel,” she said, finally breaking to pieces in front of him, and a sob ribbed its way from her lungs. Rowena suddenly looked very much like the old woman she was.

Somehow, Tom felt like he was winning and losing all at once.

“I wouldn’t have done it,” he said softly. “She asked….What is it that you need of me, Tom? And I told her. And I wouldn’t have done it, but she said ‘then it is yours’. And I don’t remember every death by my hand. But, I remember hers. Every detail.”

Rowena’s sobs crackled. Tom watched her cry with a morbid sort of curiosity. He could turn away, but he didn’t. Her sobs felt like a baptism. He closed his eyes, letting the sound wash over him. When she quieted, he opened his eyes again to look at her.

“Do you regret it? Was it worth it?” she spat like vitriol.
“Hello, Lady Granger.”

Hermione’s breath caught in her throat again. She had prepared herself for this meeting. Luna had warned her it was happening as soon as they spoke. They had curled up together in Hermione’s bed, whispering to each other about everything that had happened since their separation. Luna had said that after a day or so of Harry Wildfyre settling after his trip, he would ask to have tea with her. Luna had tried to prepare her.

Luna had said that he would be both regal and informal. He would seem soft, but there would be an edge to him. His beauty would draw her in and repulse her. Hermione would be soothed and terrified. Luna had called him a mess of conundrums, but Hermione hadn’t understood.

She understood now.

“Please, come sit. The tea is getting cold and I’m not very good at making it. I always heat it up too much and it’ll nearly evaporate,” Harry Wildfyre said with a grin.

Hermione swallowed as she joined him on his wide balcony. It was a beautiful day outside. The sun seemed to beat harder with Harry back in Afallon.

“I’m...I’m good at making tea. I used to make tea. A lot. For my stepmother,” Hermione said, stumbling over her words. She flushed, ducking her head down, patting her hair awkwardly. She was surely frizzing it.

Luna had taken care to dress her as if Hermione was still a one-day Queen.

“I should be good at making tea. I made it a lot for my fake aunt. But, I’m still not very good at it. She used to yell at me a lot, because of it,” Harry said. He sounded far away as he said these words and then he looked at her, his lips curled into a wry smile. “It’s been brought to my attention that we have a lot in common.”

Hermione couldn’t help her snort. She raised an eyebrow. “Oh, really? How so?”

“We were both servants. We were both outsiders. You were once destined for the throne as I am,” Harry said. He waved his wand and the tea began to serve itself. He took a sip of it, his lips curling. “Ugh, more sugar for me.”

Hermione’s lips curled into a tiny sneer.

“I never wanted any throne. I wanted to be left alone,” Hermione spat.

“I never wanted the throne either,” Harry said immediately. He ignored the look of surprise on Hermione’s face. “Greatness was demanded of me from birth, and so, I deliver. But, you...greatness was thrust upon you. How did you come to be Draco’s fiance?”

Hermione shivered, wrapping her arms around herself. She frowned. She had never told the story to
anyone. She looked at him, her eyes narrowed.

“The Prince...the King...*Draco,*” Hermione corrected. "Draco was on a diplomacy tour. He’d traveled through all of Albion, and his last stop was across the ocean, in the Republic. They held a great ball for him. My stepmother, Lady Zabini, and her son were going. Everyone important was going. And the invitation had been addressed to *me.*”

“Why you?” Harry asked, politely.

“Because it was my father’s estate, and yes, he was a Muggle, but that doesn’t mean as much in the Republic. It shouldn’t mean anything at all, but he was wealthy, too. So, I, as his Heiress, was meant to go. I was forbidden. My best friend...her name was Fleur...didn’t think it fair. So, she made me a dress and gave me her invitation,” Hermione said, and suddenly, she was back in the Republic.

She had tried so hard not to remember the cause of her misfortune, but now, as she started to finally tell the tale, she couldn’t help but remember. The silk gowns and the velvet cloaks. The gold and crystal fountains. The fairies trapped in mason jars, providing light through the entire ballroom. Candle wax dripping from the chandeliers, burning hands. They had wanted *real* candle wax, because it seemed more luxurious than never-ending candles.

“She conjured me a masque. And Fleur gave me the most beautiful shoes. She had conjured them herself. A pair of shoes made of glass. She applied a Cushioning Charm to them, but they were to wear out at midnight, so I had to be home by then. But, he noticed me. He noticed me and he was charming. Before...before all of this, he was so very charming,” Hermione said, her voice cracking.

Harry didn’t look at her with pity.

“Yes. Slytherins are...quite charming,” Harry whispered. “They fool you into thinking they’re safe.”

“Yes,” Hermione blurted out. “And we spoke for hours. And we danced. I told him about my life, and he promised me...he promised me that he’d free me. And I believed him. Like a fool.”

Harry hummed, closing his eyes as he took another sip of his very sweet tea.

“They are tricksters. They make fools of us. They make us love them until they show how terrible they are,” Harry said quietly to himself. “Only fools love them more for it. Hermione, *you* are no fool. That is the difference between us.”

Hermione stared at him, unsure.

“Your Grace—”

“Just, Harry,” Harry prompted. “You think me unnecessary. I could see why when your only experience with kings and queens are the Slytherins.”

“I think monarchy is the death of the realm,” Hermione said sharply. She winced when she realized what she had said. “Your Grace...Harry...”

“You are bold. I like that,” Harry decided. “A bossy, know-it-all, maybe, but bold. And brave. You’re very, very brave. And you are strong and talented and intelligent. I would ask you to be one of my advisors, as your Luna is.”

Hermione’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Me? I...I don’t support your claim to the Albion throne. I don’t care about your war,” Hermione
blurted out. Harry looked amused. “All I want...all I want...is to go home.”

“But, isn’t this your home now?” Harry challenged.

Hermione’s eyes widened. “What?”

“The people you love are here. Your friends. The person you’ve made your family. You said it yourself. All that is left for you in the Republic is servitude,” Harry said firmly. “But, here, there is a place for you. You know the way of court. You know what Draco and his mother are like, better than anyone but for the Dark Lord and the Lady Warden. You are invaluable.”

“I don’t want to...I can’t...I don’t know,” Hermione stammered.

Harry sighed, nodding. "I suppose it's a hard pill to swallow, isn't it? I'm asking you to support an institution that has caused you nothing but pain. While you think about it, I would ask you to join one of my general council meetings with all of my advisors. I think you will learn the type of leader I am.”

“The type of leader you are?” Hermione asked. She hated how she was practically repeating everything like a parrot.

“Yes. I think you’ll find I’m quite different from Draco or Narcissa,” Harry said decisively. Then, he looked up sharply, staring at the position of the sky. He pulled his wand. “Tempus.”

“What is it?” Hermione asked.

Harry grimaced. “Freia needs to eat or she’ll try to eat a person,” he said. Hermione balked as he stood and walked towards the balcony and promptly began to stand on top of the railing. She let out a shout, but he barely gave her a glance. “FREIA!”

There was an answering screech, and Hermione gasped when a big head swiveled down from the roof.

“Was she...was she always up there?” Hermione choked.

“Haven’t you noticed?” Harry said, grinning over his shoulder. Freia swung down to fly adjacent to the balcony and Harry crawled onto her wing. “Goodbye, Hermione Granger. I shall see you soon. And hello to you, Tonks.”

Hermione shook her head, shocked, and then frowned when the last words registered. She glanced over her shoulder and jumped when she saw the older woman standing in the middle of the King’s sitting room.

“S-should you be here? A-are you allowed?” Hermione stammered.

She cursed at herself. What a stupid question.

“I am allowed everywhere,” Tonks said, amused. “I don’t think we’ve formally met. Nymphadora Tonks, at your service.”

“You’re the Lady of Whispers,” Hermione said immediately. “You...you look like Bellatrix. Why?”

“I’ve been told,” Tonks said, sounding dour. She wiggled her nose, and her bouncing brown curls shrunk into her head into little spikes and then turned a blinding pink. “Ah, much better.”

“You’re a Metamorphmagus! I’ve read all about them!” Hermione said excitedly.
Tonks laughed and then sobered again, quite quickly, “You’ve so much doubt, don’t you, Hermione Granger?”

“I’ve seen what crown can do to a person. What power does to a person. What a throne can do to a person,” Hermione said, and if there was one thing that she could remember most clearly of her time at Hogwarts, it was of that ghastly throne.

A mess of gold, silver, onyx, and bronze, ugly and terrible.

“The Gilded Throne. Taken from the fallen four Founders. Forged by the magic and blood of four Slytherin children and the heart of a blind girl in order to save the empire. The Dark Lord says good things come in ‘threes’. I believe that it comes in fours,” Hermione said, her voice cold.

Tonks watched the former princess. She was a cold woman, a broken woman that had made herself sharp as the glass that the King had forced on her feet. Tonks didn’t trust her as far as she could throw her. Tonks knew that Harry intended to keep tabs on Hermione by offering her a place an advisor, but Tonks had heard about the incendiary comments made in Harry’s absence, and the people in the city around Westeron loved her.

She was dangerous.

“It wasn’t to save an empire,” Tonks retorted.

“It’s an ugly old thing. You want your King to sit upon it. All Kings are marked for evil,” Hermione said as she stared down towards the fire pit.

Harry Wildfyre stood near the cliffside, his head pressed against the long neck of his Horntail. Freia looked evil, her scales black, her gaze a poisonous yellow. Harry whispered calm words to her as she fed on the copious amounts of fish and meat that they kept just for Freia. Freia screeched a terrible sound. But, Tonks knew that she was a gentle thing. Hermione did not.

“It has a certain appeal,” Tonks said. She took a step towards Hermione, looking her up and down, wondering if she could murder the Lady Granger without Harry ever finding out. “You will not hurt my King because you do not believe in the crown, my Lady.”

“Thwarting you is not my primary ambition. I would see King Draco dead,” Hermione said.

Tonks hummed. “We call him the Usurper here.”

“Aren’t they all Usurpers?” Hermione challenged.

“No.” Tonks took another step closer, as if daring Hermione to make a move against her. Hermione just watched. At least she was clever enough to know when she was outmatched. “You could’ve stopped this before it began.”

“I did what I did to save my life and for the good of the realm. Without me, this would’ve been much worse,” Hermione said. Tonks laughed. The Lady Granger was arrogant in her survival. Believed herself brave now that she had survived the Mad King. If she continued being arrogant, she wouldn’t survive the war. Harry thought her brave.

Tonks knew better. Tonks knew a lot of things, and Harry liked to give second chances. That’s why he needed her. She was his Sword.

"The Realm. Do you know what the Realm is, Lady Granger?" Tonks asked, her voice soft. "It's the four thrones that were forged on the heart of a blind girl that my aunt and uncle consumed. It's their
triumph over the Founders of a dying era. It's a story we agree to tell each other over and over, until we forget that it's a lie."

Hermione reacted to the revelation of who Tonks was. Tonks pulled her crimson hood over her head, her eyes just as dark as her mother's. She flashed them red for her uncle and Hermione flinched. Tonks' lips pulled into a smile.

“But, when we abandon the lie, we have chaos. A gaping pit waiting to swallow us all.”

Tonks laughed, long and hard.

“Chaos isn’t a pit. Chaos is a ladder,” Tonks began her education of the Lady Granger, just as she had educated Harry what felt like years ago. “Many who try to climb it fail and never get to try again. The fall breaks them. And some, are given a chance to climb. They refuse. They cling to the realm. Or the gods. Or love. Illusions.”

Hermione flinched at the barbs directed at her and suddenly, her icy veneer cracked. Tonks watched as the mask that she had learned from Narcissa fell away, leaving only a sharp vulnerability. There she was.

“Only the ladder is real,” Tonks hissed, looking over to King Harry. “The climb is all there is. But...what does one need of a ladder when one can fly?”

Chapter End Notes

Okay. Another chapter done. Cool. There's still so much story left to tell, my goodness. Trying wrap up these loose plot strings as we go along so it won't be quite as difficult at the end. Anyway, I couldn't help the 'Chaos is a ladder' speech delivered by Tonks. I love that speech. So much. And it had to go in somewhere. I've had that last scene--the meeting between Hermione and Harry and then the speech--written for literal MONTHS. I've been so excited. The only other thing that I have written past this, along with the outline is the BIG CLIMAX, which I can tell you literally nothing about, and the meeting between Neville and Harry, which I'm equally excited for.

Anyway, I think I'm gonna write one more chapter for this, and then take another break to focus on Diagnosis, which I love like my own child. I love this fic too. It's also my child, but it's a really dark, angsty child, isn't it? Until next time!
"We must move. Soon," Bill said, his voice cutting through the cacophony of voices in the overfull council room. All of Harry's Council sat in the proper seats, but Harry had assembled a rather large amount of advisors on the side.

Andromeda, Luna, and Remus had dragged in an assortment of chairs. The City-Staters stood and sat clumped together at one of the room. Cedric, Cho, and Susan Bones were in another corner. Andromeda and her cohort—the Black brothers—had their own little faction of sorts, and Luna was surrounded by the Dark Lord’s Death Eaters, the only one seated.

“Lord Prewett is right,” Cedric added. “We lie in wait while Narcissa plots. Our resources are dwindling.”

"Afallon is self-sufficient. It is better to close ranks," Regulus retorted, shaking his head. He turned towards Harry, his sharp grey eyes widening into something softer and beseeching. "Your Grace, I urge you. We do not have the forces to strike just yet. We are waiting for the last of the Western Lords to come. They are accompanied by the Lady Warden's closet warriors. They will come."

“I’ve no doubt of that,” Harry said. Andromeda had reassured him of Regulus’ words, and he trusted Andromeda in that. “But, Bill’s words still stand. We have been sitting idle. We are surrounded on both sides. By Narcissa, and unknown forces to the East.”

Tom leaned in, his lips brushing against the shell of Harry’s ear. “We need another loan or we will need to collect a tax.”

Harry frowned, looking over at him. Softly, he whispered, “What do you mean?”

“Ask the Weasley boy,” Tom returned.

Harry turned back to Bill, eyes narrowed.

“Why do you think we must move soon, Bill?” Harry asked.

Bill sighed. “We’ve used three-quarters of our loan.”

The entirety of the room startled. Rowena and Salazar exchanged glances from where they watched, sitting by the windows, nearly tucked behind Cedric’s party.

“What do you mean? How will we sustain ourselves?” Cho demanded.

“We need another loan or we will need to collect a tax,” Harry said, repeating Tom’s words.

Another fresh wave of debate erupted through the room.

“You cannot ask that of the creatures,” Luna said, immediately. “After what they have given, you cannot.”

“I know,” Harry said, sighing. His head was hurting behind his eyes.

Tom leaned in again. “Ask Andromeda about what’s in her coffers.”
“Andromeda, do you have anything?” Harry sighed. Andromeda opened her mouth to speak, but Harry raised a hand, gesturing towards Bill. “Bill knows the numbers far better than I do. We could propose a tax over the wealthier Western families, and the Southern families once we establish a presence there, but for now—”

Harry allowed Bill and Andromeda to present numbers to the council at large while Harry turned back to look at Tom, their heads bent together.

“We must consider what the East plans and how that may affect Narcissa’s plans for us. Augusta is not someone to be trifled with,” Tom was whispering into his ear. Tonks was still as she listened in on the words that her uncle whispered. Tom peered past Harry and nodded at his niece.

“Nymphadora knows this as well as I. The East has attempted to annex themselves. They will go the same as the City-States. Perhaps you let them get away with becoming an independent people, but not Essetir. Essetir is too important, culturally and economically. You cannot let them announce independence—”

“Is what we’re speaking on irrelevant to you, your Grace?”

Harry’s words tapered out, and the entire room went silent. Slowly, Harry turned to look at Sirius. Sirius looked just as surprised by his own words as Harry was. And then, he gathered his resolve and glared at Tom, fiercely.

“I’m sorry?” Harry asked softly.

“It just seems that this conversation about the resources remaining in Afallon is relevant to you, and you are being...distracted by the Dark Lord,” Sirius spat. He took a step forward. “You are perpetually distracted by him, I would say.”

“Sirius—” Remus began.

“You’re quite brave, aren’t you, Black?” Tom hissed, malevolently. Everyone flinched. It wasn’t often that Tom spoke out loud to anyone during council meetings, preferring to hiss into Harry’s ear to prove that he always had it.

“I say this out of concern for his Grace,” Sirius snapped. “After all, some conversation should be kept to private rooms, yes? I’m sure others would agree with me. I’m sure others do. Perhaps Alastor was right.”

Harry could hear his implication. He turned bone white in fury.

Sirius perhaps didn’t know but it was the implication that matter first.

“Get out,” Harry said, his voice quiet.

Sirius startled as if surprised. "What?"

Slowly, Harry stood to his feet, his green eyes burning. “I am your sovereign. How dare you act out such pettiness because you want my attention or you don’t like who I listen to in my council room? Get out. I will not tell you a third time.”

A pin could be heard if it were dropped. Sirius took a step forward and quickly exited the room. Remus winced and went to follow after him.

“Remus—” Tonks began.
Remus winced again and looked at Harry. “May I follow after him, Ha—your Grace?”

“Yes.” Harry waited for the door to close behind the two men, looking back to Andromeda and Bill who were pointedly not looking at him. “I do apologize for my inattention. We were discussing war matters and possible diplomacy with the East. You know as well as I that I don’t have a head for maths. The Dursleys didn’t see much in providing a solid education for me.”

“I understand that,” Bill said. Of course, he did. Harry said it many times before.

“As do I,” Andromeda said. “We were just wrapping up.”

Harry nodded and leaned back in his chair, waving his hand, and they continued.

The rest of the meeting was stilted and awkward. It was as if everyone were afraid to even breathe too hard. Harry watched them all carefully and didn’t turn to look at Tom even once until he had dismissed everyone, and slowly, his councilmembers and advisors filtered out of the room. Tonks was once of the last to leave, pressing her head against Harry’s shoulder.

“It’s fine. We’re fine,” Harry said. He wasn’t sure if he was trying to convince her or himself.

“You’re always fine,” Tonks muttered back. She stood up and glanced down at Tom. “Uncle.”

“Nymphadora,” Tom said as dismissal. Tonks’ nose wrinkled.

Tonks looked towards the corner of the room at the two elderly people that Harry had missed in the fray of people leaving.

“Grandfather. Lady Ravenclaw,” Tonks said and she made a short curtsey before she moved towards the door. She paused and turned towards Salazar. “Grandfather, I’d like to know about Grandmother, and I’d like to introduce you to my son. Please, join me for tea.”

“Your son?” Salazar asked, sounding partly scandalized and partly intrigued. “I’d no idea that you were married, Nymphadora.”

“Oh, I’m not, Grandfather—”

The door slammed closed behind the two Slytherins, leaving only Harry, Tom, and Rowena Ravenclaw.

“Your Grace, I’d like to speak with you,” Rowena began.

Tom’s eyes narrowed. “Why?”

Rowena pretended she hadn’t heard him, watching Harry with narrowed, crow’s eyes.

“Your Grace,” Rowena repeated.

Harry hummed. “Tom, I’ll see you in a moment,” he said.

“You want me to leave you here with her alone?” Tom snarled in his ear, his eyes blazing. Slowly, Harry turned his head, and their faces were less than a few centimeters apart. “She’ll kill you.”

“I’m not the one that practices regicide.”

Tom’s head snapped around, his eyes dilating, and his nostrils flaring. At that moment, he looked more snakelike than Harry had ever seen him.
“Tom, please?” Harry asked, soft and sweet, looking at Tom with bright green eyes. Tom’s eyes dilated further, and his lips curled into a sneer. He didn’t move as Harry leaned forward, nuzzling his cheek against the stubble on Tom’s jaw, leaving a soft kiss.

“Your attempts to manipulate me are clumsy.”

“But, they’re working, aren’t they?” Harry murmured. “Now, I’m not in the mood for your shit. Please, Tom.”

Tom scoffed and stood up, stalking from the room without another look backward. Harry collapsed back in his chair. Rowena was staring at him with those fucking eyes, and Harry’s stomach turned. This woman was just another in the sea of people that wanted Tom dead—but this woman could do it. At least, it was a distinct possibility.

“You wanted to speak with me, Lady Ravenclaw?” Harry began.

“He makes you arrogant and somehow small all at once. He dwarfs you,” Rowena said. She stared at him curiously. “Tom does.”

“Excuse me?” Harry asked, raising an eyebrow.

“You would do well not to listen to him as often as you do. He’s clever. Always been clever, even as a boy, but you will outlast us all, I think,” Rowena said, her eyes sparking.

Harry flinched. He remembered another older woman that had spoken similar words to him.

*Your love is a clever man, your Grace. I’ve known a great many clever men. I’ve outlived them all.*

And yet, McGonagall was ash, bone, and flowers, now. Harry’s heart ached.

“You have been invited into my council rooms as a courtesy, Lady Ravenclaw,” Harry reminded her, regarding her with narrowed eyes. He thought that, maybe, he would’ve once begged her for stories of his parents when they were children. He would’ve asked about the war and after his grandparents, too. But, this was a cold broken woman that was the enemy of Tom, and Tom was his.

*Are you a sheep?*

“Very well,” Rowena said, roughly. “Just from a former sovereign to another: you cling onto every one of his words, lend your ear to him when it should be lent to others, and you keep him in your bed so that he may have your attention even in sleep. He is always at your side, and this must be reassuring for you. He is an evil man, but even I am not blind enough to not see that he is good to you in a way that he wasn’t to my dear Helena. So, you have him. But, consider this, Harry, what will you do when you do not have him?”

Even as she walked away, he heard McGonagall’s words echo in his ear.

*No. You’re a lion. The alpha lion. Be a lion.*

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**MIRROR, MIRROR**

She was invisible and visible, all at once. She heard Admiral-Governor Graves shouting his orders as they loaded the ships that they were sending off to Albion. His wane bed whore that he called a
husband clung to his side, his head drooping as he listened to Graves and Picquery talk around him. Even so, Bellatrix knew what it looked like when one wanted to listen in without being caught. She could taste the power rolling off of Credence Graves.

Bellatrix looked at all of these people—bewitched by the Fairest as her brother had been. They would go to their deaths. They would drown in the seas, be destroyed by powers far greater than theirs. A fleet of prowess they possessed, but none of the military intellect that needed to accompany that. No, strategy had always been a solely Slytherin trait in Bellatrix’s experience. Strategy, ambition, and cunning.

How Narcissa lived up to their name.

The heinous cunt.

Bellatrix crept forward, walking past Credence Graves—invisible to the naked eye—and suddenly, she was staring the boy straight in the eye. He watched her with wide eyes, opening his mouth to speak out, and then Bellatrix was in his face, standing eye to eye with him.

She had always been a tall woman.

*Speak not of us, creature. We are God-touched.*

Credence Graves blinked, once, twice, and he was a pretty, *pretty* thing. A pretty shell wrapped around a pulsing dark power that Bellatrix would like to eat raw. If she had the time, she would tear his chest open and devour him.

*We will devour you whole,* she promised.

It was a threat for another day. Credence Graves turned his face into Graves’ shoulder, shuddering and Bellatrix drifted away as the fool of a man asked his spouse what bothered him so. Bellatrix walked up the stairs of the closest ship.

Like her teacher before her, she was air.

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Daphne’s eyes looked pink as she stared out from underneath the saltwater. Neville looked down into the sunken pool, tilting his head. She did the same, mirroring him. Her lips curled into a feral smile, sharp and pointy. It was the same grin that she had possessed as a child. Neville lowered one hand, brushing it against the still water. Daphne lifted her own hand, pressing the wet palm of her hand to his and their fingers entwined for just a moment.

The door swung open and slowly Neville pulled away from his sister.

“What is she still in there? Is she still ill?” Augusta grumbled to herself. Neville knew that it was a rhetorical question. Augusta seemed lost without her right hand. Neville wasn’t the grandchild that Augusta relied on.

He was the pawn.

“She’ll be out for our meeting,” Neville said. He sat down at the small table next to the pool and
gestured for his grandmother to sit.

Augusta pursed her lips, probably annoyed that he had sat before her, but he was king now. She had no reason to complain about him acting like the king that she had told him he was.

“We know nothing of anyone’s next move. We are lying in wait—like prey,” Augusta hissed. She glanced back at the pool.

"What did you think we were? We’ve barely any resources, an army, and barely a king,” Neville snapped. Augusta sneered at him but said nothing in particular. Both Longbottoms turned back to the pool and watched as the water began to stir.

A long green-hued arm emerged force. As it touched the air, it paled, becoming the color that Neville was used to seeing. Daphne rose, her hair sopping wet and the thin fabric of her dress clinging to every edge and curve of her body. She turned to face them, her eyes narrowed and yellowing now instead of pink. They shimmered and then, once more, her eyes were the color of the sea.

“Have you learned anything useful?” Augusta demanded.

Daphne barely paid their grandmother any mind as she emerged from the pool, walking towards them as if she weren’t practically naked. Neville averted his eyes from his sister’s hard nipples poking through the translucent fabric. She sat down in her chair, soaking the velvet with her body and she leaned back in her chair, plucking the raw squirming fish from the goblet that always sat by her seat now.

She swallowed the tiny fish whole.

Then, she looked at Augusta, her teeth bared.

“I’ve learned what’s wrong with me.”

Neville’s eyes widened. “So...there is something wrong you?” he demanded. “What is it? Who told you?”

“My sister and I communed. And I remembered...my body must change to accommodate the parasite. It is not wholly human, you see, for I am not wholly human,” Daphne said, sounding lighthearted.

Augusta’s eyes narrowed.

Neville frowned, confused. “What are you saying?”

“She’s with child,” Augusta barked out. “You fucked Draco Malfoy.”

“Why?” Neville squeaked, staring at Daphne in bewilderment.

“I did what I must,” Daphne said coolly. “I know his every waking thought, his heart beating. I know him like my marrow. I have put myself in his lungs and he has put a babe in me.”

“This...changes things,” Augusta said sharply. “You will be rid of it?”

“Ah, no. The time to act is now,” Daphne said plainly. She looked amused by the surprise on Neville and Augusta’s faces. She leaned back in her chair, putting her goblet of swirling saltwater and fish to her mouth and she drank deeply, feeling the slimy little fish slither down her gullet. “I am not human. I am not meant to have a child like this. But, if I must, I will need to strengthen myself.”
“How will do this?” Augusta asked.

Daphne grinned a terrible grin. “I shall suck him dry.”

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THE WALL

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“You’re going to need an heir.”

Harry froze, looking away from the map on the small table. He was lying across the love seat, his head in Tom’s lap as the two lazily waved their wands, moving the map piece in interesting, dynamic ways to figure out everyone’s next move. Tom was staring down at him, unapologetically calm after the reality-cracking words that he’d delivered like he’d only announced what he intended to eat the next day for breakfast.

“How—”

They were interrupted by a knock on the door. Harry looked up, frowning at the door that led into the corridor.

“Tempus,” Harry said, waving his wand. It was past midnight. No one disturbed him past midnight unless it was Tonks, and she never knocked. She waltzed in as if she owned the place, which Harry supposed she did, and had no sense of personal space, which she didn’t have any sense of.

“Enter,” Tom called.

Harry glanced at him, amusement tugging at the corners of his lips.
“I didn’t know these were your rooms,” he said, raising an eyebrow.

“I eat, sleep, and shit here. These are as much my rooms as they are yours no matter which rooms were ‘assigned’ to me,” Tom said, his lips curling in distaste. Harry’s nose wrinkled. The man could be so fucking vulgar sometimes.

Before Harry could respond, the door was pushed open. Sirius walked in, his head bent forward, and he flinched back when he saw Harry, practically in the Dark Lord’s lap. His face was ashen, and his mouth was pinched, but he didn’t say anything. Harry jerked away from Tom as if he had been burned, and then he frowned.

“Sirius,” Harry murmured.

"Your Grace. I'm sorry. It's late, I know," Sirius rasped. He looked up, steeling himself, glaring daggers at Tom, but still, he said nothing.

“You’re not stuttering anymore,” Harry said stupidly. Tom made a sound in the back of his throat and Harry dug his knuckles into the man’s side, never looking away from Sirius.

“Regulus has been helping me,” Sirius said, stiff as ever.

There was a long moment of uncomfortable, unbearable silence

“Is there a reason you’re here so late?” Tom finally asked, sounding annoyed.

“I should be asking you the same question,” Sirius snapped back. “Oh wait, I already know the answer. You’re in here because you defile my godson every night.”

Harry groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“You know,” he sighed, collapsing back into the sofa.

“I wouldn’t call it ‘defilement’. After all, he begs for it every night,” Tom snarled back.

Harry squawked. “Hey, you. Kindly shut the fuck up.”

Sirius looked surprised and Tom only rolled his eyes, glowering at Harry’s godfather. Harry sighed and gestured vaguely at the chair across from them.

“Would you like to sit down?” Harry asked.

“I’d prefer to stand,” Sirius said firmly.

Harry gritted his teeth. So, Sirius was going to make this difficult for him? Fucking splendid. Harry could be fucking difficult too.

“What can I do for you after you so kindly undermined me in my own council meeting?” Harry asked. There wasn’t a hint of sarcasm in his voice as he stared at Sirius. And then, he was surprised as Sirius looked down, almost as if he were ashamed of what he had done.

“That was...that was unprofessional. I apologize for that,” Sirius said.


“It shouldn’t because you shouldn’t allow him back in council meetings. He adds nothing but doubt and takes up space. You keep him out of sentiment. Sentiment is the death of ambition,” Tom said
coldly and Harry nearly shivered at that.

How cold.

“This is the man you choose to have at your side, Harry. A man that thinks sentiment and love are for the weak,” Sirius said, his lips curling back into a sneer. "I spoke out of turn, yes, but Harry, he is cruel. He is evil. He killed your parents. He killed your grandparents. He’s killed—"


“Do you, really?” Sirius asked, his voice cracking. “Do you really understand all of what he’s done? Do you comprehend the tragedy that he has brought upon an entire empire?”

Harry glanced over at Tom. His handsome face was so still. He looked like he was made of marble, and he was as beautiful as any marble statue.

"Yes. And maybe that makes me a terrible person," Harry whispered. And then he looked back at Sirius again and tilted his head. "I would give my life for any of those men and women and creatures out there. I have dedicated my existence to this cause. I'd ask for one thing. Him. I'd like you to respect that, and that be the end of it. My sins are mine alone, and I already know what my parents would think, thank you. I dream about it all the time, so let's not talk about it anymore."

Sirius looked floored by his words and he swallowed hard. He didn’t nod, but he looked like he had heard Harry’s words, Harry’s regret, and Harry’s defiance.

“If there’s anything else,” Tom said, sounding bored and dismissive already.

Sirius sneered at the man, but he didn’t leave just yet.

“There is something else,” Sirius snapped.

Harry hummed. “What is it? I’d like to retire. We’ve been working since dinner.”

"I overheard a plot."


“Your slimy snake is here?” Sirius asked. “Where?”

“She is my eyes on the ground. My ears in the walls. She is everywhere.”

Harry snorted at the man’s dramatics.

“What plot?” Harry asked, pushing away his amusement at Tom’s antics.

“Moody and his supporters. They’ve been meeting quite a lot in your absence, and more so, within your return. I think...I think they’re plotting to take control of you. To make you their puppet. The same way he did to his sister.”

Harry froze. Moody again. It always led back to Moody, eschewing distrust and worry amongst the ranks. He glanced at Tom, and Tom was staring back at him, probably thinking the same thing.

Moody had to die.

WHO
“I, King Draco, call this council to order.”

The great map of Albion flared with magic and slowly the mountains and forests and rivers rose from non-existence. Draco watched his kingdom form in miniature and up sprung pieces—a dragon piece that represented Wildfyre, a snake piece to represent his uncle and his Death Eaters, and several phoenixes surrounding them to represent the Order and their forces around Westeron. He made note that a city seemed to have sprung up around Andromeda’s fortress. His eyes narrowed. He turned to look in the other direction—Longbottom and his forces were represented by iron pieces shaped as swords, crowded on the coasts of Essetir. It was a much smaller presence than Wildfyre's.

“We’ll need to strike Afallon. Soon,” Dolohov said without any prompting.

Draco’s gaze snapped towards him. Narcissa looked unamused by the man speaking out of turn, but she waved her hand, willing him to continue.

Dolohov cleared his throat and nodded. “We’ve been training the replacement soldiers harder than ever before. Our training regiment is an altered regiment that your brother used for the Death Eaters. They may not have our natural-born skills, but their stamina is building.”

“Their numbers continue to grow. It’s nearly double what they were before,” Nott pointed out, unhelpfully. Dolohov gnashed his teeth at him.

“Their numbers will always grow. But, it means nothing if we strike them where it hurts. They’re all gathered in one place. We can take them out now,” Dolohov snarled back.

“And what of the East?” Crouch pointed out. “Ironborn will grow stronger. Those that survive will go to him.”

Draco twitched.

“Let them. Augusta is an old bitch. The Ironborn is a soft lump who prefers the dirt. And Daphne—” Pansy was snarling. Her breath caught in her throat, and she turned ashen as the blade cut against the soft flesh of her neck, blood beading, a soft red line coming into being. She turned her terror-filled eyes to her love, her King.

Draco was barely breathing. “Don’t. Talk about her,” he said, his voice stilted.

He hadn’t even realized that he’d pulled his dagger.

“Draco, my love,” Narcissa called, drawing his attention to her. She grabbed his wrist, slowly pushing the knife away from Pansy, against the table before them. “What say you? How do we approach the situation?”

He knew it for what it was—a placating move. Bait.

He took it.

“Look here,” Draco said, pointing with his knife to the coasts. “Ships approach. He must have found himself a fleet. He will try to secure countries through ports. It’s smart. He’s a good fighter, but he’s no war tactician. He has a full council, and he has one of us on his side.”

“It’s what you would do,” Draco said pointedly. "So, we will strike with our navy, not our men. Marching across towards Afallon can wait. We'll be out in the open and can't combat the dragon yet. But, Wildfyre's fleet hasn't reached our waters just yet. We go to secure the port cities, and we send some of our forces to the East to wrest control from this...Ironborn.”

And Narcissa looked at him, her eyes wide with pride and her lips twitched into a small smile. She leaned forward, pressing a sweet kiss to Draco’s cheekbone.

“My boy...you will surpass us yet,” she cooed. Draco scoffed but said nothing. Narcissa pulled away, and hid behind sheets of ice, looking around at the council table. She glanced around. “MacNair is dead. Who will lead the navy?”

"I, my Lady Chancellor," Nott said. Dolohov sneered but Nott didn't look at him. "I have experience on ships. This is something I may accomplish."

Narcissa stared for a long moment. She really had no other choice.

"Very well," she said through gritted teeth. She hated doing things when there were no other choices. "We will send a raven with the message of your command so that they may begin to prepare at once. Ride towards The Alari in the North. Command the harbors."

“Very well, Lady Chancellor,” Nott said, and he preened under his new command.

Narcissa turned her attention from him and looked to Dolohov. "I would not have you lead the clash between the Eastern traitors and our men. You are more valuable here and alive as our General."

“Very well, Lady Chancellor.” Dolohov didn’t sound pleased, but he wouldn’t go against her word.

“And you, Lord Crouch, how goes the...experiment?” Draco barked.

Crouch straightened immediately. “It goes, your Majesty. We are perfecting spells. The prototype is nearly done.”

“It must be perfect,” Draco warned. “Or it is your head.”

Crouch nodded. He perfectly understood that. Pansy was still dabbing at the blood on her neck. She had accidentally smeared it so there was a pink tinge to her skin.

“And...we are at war,” she said softly as if she had only just realized. She looked at Narcissa and Draco with wide eyes. “Is this a war we will win? They have a dragon. Creatures of all kinds. The Death Eaters. Your sister. Your brother, Lady Chancellor.

Narcissa clenched her teeth, stopping herself from spitting the first curse that was on her tongue. She closed her eyes and remembered a little girl named Cissy who had sobbed under her eyes had felt swollen and her lungs had nearly collapsed from exhaustion. She remembered a little girl named Cissy who had a brother named Tom. And Tom had cradled Cissy in his lap and stroked her hair with the hand covered in Cissy’s best friend’s blood, and whispered the words that had haunted Cissy until she was a woman grown.

From porcelain to ivory to steel to diamond, my love.

Oh, how her brother had loved her. Her brother. The man that had raised her.

And Narcissa took a moment to mourn. She mourned Cissy and Helena. She mourned the man that had raised her just to abandon her. She mourned the woman that had taught her to braid a warrior’s
braid just to run away to live in mud. She mourned the woman that had taught her to wield a blade—the same blade that Narcissa had practically slammed between her shoulder blades. Narcissa mourned her blood.

And then, she put her mourning away and smiled coolly.

“We will kill them all. But, leave my blood to me.”

Hermione waited nervously at the edge of the fight. Barty was dueling with the Dark Lord, their swords clashing against one another. The more she watched, the more she could see how Barty’s fighting style resembled his master’s. Somehow, Hermione had forgotten how Barty had been practically raised by Voldemort. She felt the spar come to a climax as the Dark Lord mercilessly slammed the pommel of his sword into Barty’s jaw with a loud crack, and Barty collapsed. Hermione’s heart stopped.

“Barty!” she called, rushing forward, ignoring Voldemort’s calm surprise. Barty groaned, clutching his jaw, and yet, he was grinning. “Barty, are you alright?”

Barty looked at her, surprised, eyes widening. He opened his mouth and winced.

“He can’t talk until his jaw is Healed,” Voldemort said coolly. He reached down, pressing his wand tip underneath Barty’s chin. “I shouldn’t Heal you. You always fall for that one. It'll get you killed.”

Even as he spoke, Hermione watched as a soft white glow—too soft for a man like the Dark Lord—beamed from the long yew wand, and then Barty flexed his jaw, grinning.

”Then, who would you Crucio?” Barty asked. Hermione raised an eyebrow. He sounded teasing.

“Lucius,” Voldemort deadpanned. He glanced over at Hermione again. “Lady Granger appears to want a word with you, Barty.”

“I’m not a Lady,” Hermione said immediately.

Voldemort pretended as if he hadn’t heard her, walking away in clear dismissal. Hermione rolled her eyes and turned back to Barty. He was watching her like one would watch a skittish horse. He expected her to run, even as she had come to him. Hermione’s heart clenched. She had treated her friend terribly in her own cowardice.

“Are you talking to me now?” Barty asked. He sounded cavalier, but Hermione cringed away from the pain in his eyes. She lifted her chin.

She reminded herself that she had the spine of iron.

And then, she broke down, and threw herself at him, tossing her arms around his neck. His arms wrapped around her in surprise and they clung to one another, both stopping the other from collapsing to the ground in grief.

“I missed you,” Hermione confessed into Barty’s neck. Barty said something, but it was muffled by her bushy hair. She pulled back, looking him in the eye. “What was that?”
“I missed you too, Hermione,” Barty said and he looked like he wanted to kiss, and yet, he did not. Hermione was relieved and her shoulders dropped slightly. “You’ve been avoiding me.”

Hermione sighed, looking away. “Yes. Can we...walk?” Hermione asked.

Barty nodded. He didn’t offer his arm, only walking alongside her through the camp. Hermione no longer got strange looks. Some had looked at her in awe before. After all, she was the War Bride. Many had seen her duel next to Harry’s. But, now, she was plain, old Hermione Granger, and Hermione found she much rather that.

“Is this about...what we were?” Barty asked as they walked in the general direction of Westeron.

Hermione swallowed. “Yes. It’s...you know that I love you,” Hermione said and that was true.

“I...I know that now. I love you too,” Barty said nearly immediately.

"But...I don’t want to...you comforted me. You were a great companion to me through a terrifying time. I was lonely. I was terrified. I didn't control what I ate or what I wore. I barely controlled the thoughts in my head. Being with you...made me feel like I could control something,” Hermione said, rambling despite herself and Barty quirked an eyebrow at her, his lips curling into a dry smile.

"You see me as nothing more than a friend, is that it?” Barty asked

“Yes,” Hermione confessed.

Barty mulled over this for a long time, and Hermione relaxed. He would tell her the same thing and then they could go back to being friends. The type of friends that exchanged book recommendations and gossiped, and he could join her for tea and she could ply him for information on the Dark Lord and Harry Wildfyre.

And then—

“I adore you,” Barty said, looking at her. “I might have even fallen in love with you. There’s a lot to love about you, Hermione Granger. But, even if you don’t feel the same, we’re still best friends. And we can remain that way, if you like.”

Hermione’s heart cracked for him, but it was overwhelmed by the sudden flash of joy. It was the first feeling of joy that she had felt in a long time.

She grinned. “I’d like that. I’d really like that.”

FAIREST

“I’m glad that you’ve finally considered listening to our counsel, your Grace,” Fendwick was saying. Harry kept his face impassive as he walked through the camps with Fendwick and Moody on either side of them. McKinnon was moodily following after them after Harry had barely acknowledged her presence.

“Though, we do wish that you had before. If you had not been so arrogant, you could have returned to Albion with an entire navy from the City-States. Instead, they see you as a beggar king, giving you a measly third,” Moody said, as if he didn’t realize quite how obnoxious and rude he was being.
Harry gritted his teeth.

“Thought I don’t understand why we had to meet in the cover of darkness—” Fendwick grumbled.

“We obviously didn’t communicate clearly. This way, gentlemen. McKinnon,” Harry said as he led them past the edges of the camp, preying on their idiotic arrogance.

McKinnon noticed first.

“Your Grace—” McKinnon began.

Harry helped up a hand as he led them towards the cliffs where they waited. Moody grumbled under his breath. Freia sat on the very edge, her wings spread and her head poised forward. Hedwig sat in her shadow, prowling back and forth in front the three Slytherins the waited—Andromeda, Tom, and Tonks. Tonks pulled her red hood further over her face, obscuring her expression. The Weasleys fanned out to the left, and the rest of Harry’s Council and the Order to the right. The Alfheimans and the City-Staters watched as spectators.

"What is this, Harry?” Moody growled, reaching a hand out to grab Harry's wrist.

Simultaneously, a screech and a low growl began to grow until Moody retracted his hand. Harry strode forward, ignoring the three that watched in confusion and dawning terror.

“It has been brought to my attention that you have, once more, plotted against me,” Harry said, his voice cold as he turned to look at the traitors.

“Never to betray you. We meant to guide you and only for the good of Albion, your—” Fendwick began.

“I am Albion.” Fendwick fell silent as Harry gazed at them impassively. He lifted his chin, looking down his nose at the group of them. “I have left you on long leashes, I will admit. I let you run free to do as you please though I knew that you continued to undermine me in private. I let you debase and demean me in public forum. But, we are at war. We are one. And I cannot have traitors in the midst of my army.”

“We are the original founders of the Order!” Moody roared, spittle flying from his mouth. His scars twisted as he shouted at Harry. Harry didn’t even flinch. “How dare you imply that we are traitors!”

“Yes. The original founders of the Order of the Phoenix. Created when my mother was still living. But, she is long gone. She is nothing but bones, and I am here. I am the last of her blood. I am the last of her legacy. And you think to manipulate that? To manipulate me? No more,” Harry said firmly. He tilted his head, regarding them. “This...I will call it what it is—an act of war.”

There was thrum of whispers that ran through the spectators, all whispering to one another before it was quelled under Andromeda’s sharp eyes. Harry looked at each of the three perpetrators. Moody was practically spitting in his rage. Fendwick still looked down his nose at Harry, as if he were better than him, and McKinnon...McKinnon looked proper terrified.

“And who would ever dare to speak to this? What proof do you have?” Moody demanded.

Sirius stepped forward. “I have proof. I heard you plotting against him. Plotting to use him as a puppet. I would be happy to provide memories.”

“Memories can be tampered with,” Moody retorted immediately.
“Even the seeds of discord can corrupt and destroy my reign. And my reign has only just begun. And so, you have been brought before me, Alastor Moody, Benjy Fendwick, and Marlene McKinnon, for the rebellion and conspiracy against the Throne. This is against the law of your King, and thus, is his treason, punishable without trial and with immediate death,” Harry said, his voice booming for all to hear.

McKinnon let out a hoarse cry. The only other sound that could be heard was the crackling of the massive bonfire that cast everyone’s face in a ghostly orange light.

“Let it not be said that I am an unmerciful King. I insist that...only one of you must die as punishment for your crimes,” Harry said.

He could hear them shifting behind him, suddenly uncertain of his actions. Harry heard the grass crunching under a pair of feet, and he caught sight of blood-red from the corner of his eyes. Tonks’ hand rested on the pommel of her sword. Harry tilted his head and watched as Fendwick whirled around, pulling his wand.

Suddenly, all three wands were flying from the three former Order members. Harry glanced back. Ron, Ginny, and Kingsley held the wands as prizes, watching with coldness in their eyes. Harry turned back and raised an eyebrow when he saw Moody’s large hand curled around McKinnon’s shoulder. The man pushed her forward and she stumbled, her eyes wide with betrayal.

“Her. She should die.”

“Yes, her!” Fendwick added.

McKinnon whirled on them, tears rolling down her cheeks as her body trembled with suppressed sobs.

“M-me? I-I-I was only doing what y-y-you said!” she sobbed.

Moody acted as if he hadn’t heard her. “I can still be useful to you, your Grace,” he said gruffly. “I fought in your grandfather’s army. I was in the Order from the very beginning. I worked with your father.”

“She’s an outsider. A foolish young woman who went around spouting her ideas. She doesn’t speak for us,” Fendwick said.

Harry tilted his head. Slowly, he went to pull his sword but Tonks clapped him on the shoulder. Harry looked at her in surprise, but she was staring straight forward. McKinnon looked up at Tonks, a glowing look of surprise and pleading in her eyes. She reached a hand forward.

“Yes, Lady Tonks?” Harry asked formally.

“Your Grace, I am your Sword. Wield me.”

Harry cleared his throat and nodded. McKinnon let out a terrible sob as she fell to her knees, bending her head forward as she prepared for her death.

“Grab her arms,” Tonks commanded to Fendwick and Moody.

They did as she commanded, scrambling to obey the woman that they had once spat ‘whore’ at so derisively. They struggled to hold her steady as McKinnon’s body trembled with her grief, the hacking sobbing sounds echoing for everyone to hear over the crackling fire. Tonks pulled the great dark sword that gleamed the color of blood and then she swung with all of her might over her head.
Two thuds followed.

There were gasps as Moody and Fendwick’s headless bodies collapsed on either side of McKinnon. McKinnon’s sobs caught in her throat in shocked awe.

“Remember this,” Tonks began. “You live by the grace of His Grace, and you will let *them* know. The ones that you have manipulated and tricked into thinking like you. When they come forward with notions of retribution or ideas, remind them what Harry Wildfyre does to traitors. Go.”

McKinnon leapt forward, sobbing, throwing herself into Emmeline Vance’s arms, as the young woman held her. The two collapsed, sobbing into one another’s shoulders. Harry turned back to look at the bodies.

“What are we to do with bodies? Who will prepare them?” Remus asked quietly.

“They died a traitor’s death. Feed them to Freia,” Harry spat, snarling. He spun to look at them all, lifting his chin. He looked at each and every one of them, devouring their terror and their respect and awe. Finally, his gaze fell on Kingsley. “Kingsley Shacklebolt, you are now the Head of the Order of the Phoenix.”

They came in droves. It was like a never-ending sea of people. His armies were ever-expanding and Harry felt both trepidation and enthusiasm. He huffed behind the black veil that kept him separate from the proceedings. No one would look up at the balcony that showed Harry both the inner Throne Room and the armies that settled outside.

“Patience, sweetling. You will have them bend the knee soon enough,” Tom said sharply. Harry huffed in annoyance as he looked up at the man. He crowded against the Dark Lord, arching his head up, demanding a kiss without words.

Tom looked amused by him and leaned down, pressing a soft kiss to the seam of Harry’s lips. He pulled back after a quick kiss.

“More,” Harry snapped, pulling him down.

Tom laughed into his mouth. When he pulled back from their less chaste kiss, he looked endlessly amused. “You are needy.”

“Shut up,” Harry muttered. He let out a nickering sound and he watched as Hedwig lazily rose from the ground and walked forward, twining between their legs and purring deeply. Harry scratched the top of her head. “My love, I want to meet them.”

If Tom was startled by what Harry had called him, he didn’t show it.

“Wait. Their chosen champions must pledge to the Order,” Tom said firmly. “Watch.”

Harry sighed, impatient.

He peered through the curtains at the noble Western Houses. Each House—Smith, Cadwallader, Rickett—had come, Lord and Heir, and with them, their strongest to bind to the Order of the
Phoenix. Only after their champions were bound by magic and oath, would they be able to bend the knee before Harry? It was a measure meant to keep Harry safe, but really, to Harry, it seemed like a lot.

The champions moved forward, falling to their knees before Harry's council, led by Kingsley Shacklebolt. He was saying something to them, and they were nodding. They had been made to memorize the Order's oath for this very moment.

“And now, the fire is lit,” the three champions began. “It shall not end, as a phoenix does not die, until my death before. I shall wear no crowns and win no glory. I shall live and die at my post. I am the sword of fire in darkness.”

Tom snorted. “How dramatic.”

“Hush,” Harry snapped, intrigued by the three champions that were pledging themselves to the Order of the Phoenix.

Amongst the champions, there was one woman. The two others were men—one exceptionally handsome man with golden hair and bright white teeth, and the other was tall and brooding and not particularly handsome at all. Harry grew more and more curious.

"I am the summer's defender and a lion of the pride. I am defender of the fire that burns against the cold, the light that brings the dawn, the shield that guards the Protector of the Realm. I pledge my life and honor to the Order of the Phoenix, until the summer dies again."

As soon as their oaths were spoken, fire erupted from the ends of the wands, binding them to the mission of the Order of the Phoenix. Kingsley nodded in appreciation.

"On behalf of the Fairest, I accept your service. Rise, Gwenog Jones. We thank you, House Cadwallader, for your offering. Rise, Karl Broadmoor. We thank you, House Rickett, for your offering. Rise, Gilderoy Lockhart. We thank you, House Smith, for your offering." Kingsley said, sounding quite formal. The champions stood to their feet and there was a smattering of applause throughout the throne room.

The champions drifted back to their respective House Lords. The golden-haired man—Gilderoy Lockhart—stood between another two golden-haired men, though they were much less handsome than him. The younger one, the Heir, lifted his pointy nose and looked around, curiously.

“Where is he, the Fairest?” Heir Smith asked obnoxiously. “Shouldn’t this pledge of fealty go to him?”

“Patience, young Smith. He is watching,” Andromeda said.

Tom turned to Harry and offered his arm. “Our cue, sweetling,” he said, nearly mockingly.

Harry pressed a hand to Tom’s arm and let out another soft click of his tongue. Hedwig was at his other side immediately, and the three began to descend the steps that would open up behind the throne. As they had finally moved to reveal themselves, whispering and gossip had sprouted into the silence, all anxious to meet the one that they would be bending the knee to.

Tonks sensed them first. She stood straighter by the side of the onyx throne.

“You stand in the presence of Harry Wildflyre of Houses Gryffindor and Potter, the First of His Name, the Rightful Emperor of Albion, the King of the Four Directions, the Wyrdfod, Protector of the Realm, the Breaker of Chains, the Alpha of the Pride, and the Fairest-of-Them-All!” she
announced.

In unison, his council turned towards him. Harry didn't turn his eyes away from the six people that could possibly permanently turn the tides of the war in his favor. They didn't seem able to look away either. Or rather, they didn't seem sure of where to look—whether at the albino lioness at his side or the Dark Lord on the other or at Harry himself.

“I am Harry Wildfyre, King-Emperor of Albion,” he said quietly as the Dark Lord led him to the onyx throne and Harry sat down, a Slytherin on either side of him. Hedwig punctuated his sentence with a quiet growl, settling at his feet.

Heir Smith sputtered, unable to say anything.

“Your Grace,” Lord Rickett began and then seemed to lose his train of thought.

Harry smiled. “Thank you for coming. I assume you’re here to bend the knee to your one and only King?”

And with that question, they fell to their knees.

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**THEM**

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“The Order’s grown at least threefold in the last week. It’s grown more in the last week than it has in over a decade,” Ron said calmly, looking around at the camps that had quadrupled in size since all of the Western Houses had gravitated towards Westeron like it was the center of the world.

Hermione nodded, taking that in. The entire castle was stuffed full. Everyone was on top of one another, and people had been moved around. All pretense has been dropped and the rooms that Andromeda had given to Voldemort had been given away to the Smiths. House Wenlock, House Sprout, and House Jones were stuffed all along the west wing with some of their households. The majority of the noble households were in tents surrounding the edges of the city.

Hermione now roomed with a few of the other girls from the first Order camp—Lavender Brown was one of them. She always had little Teddy Lupin on her hip if he wasn’t with his mother or father. Ginny and all of her brothers shared a single apartment of rooms, bunking with one another, two to a bed. Ron complained that Ginny kicked. They were running out of space, the camps surrounding Westeron for a few miles, at least.

“We’re going to run out of space, don’t you think?” Hermione asked, softly.

Ron shrugged. “Maybe. Food stores have been replenished, though. The Muggle women have been planting in the greenhouses. Meat was scarce, but House Smith brought two dozen cows and forty pigs alone. If they're bred well, we should make it through winter.”

Hermione froze, her eyes widened. “You think...you think the war will last through winter?” she asked. Even as she asked, she knew it would happen.

“I’m afraid so.”

“That doesn’t worry you?” Hermione asked.
Ron shrugged. “This war has been going on for as long as I’ve been alive. Another hard winter? Well…” Ron trailed off and look at Hermione, curiously. “What would you do about the lack of space?”

“Make room,” Hermione said immediately. “We have a third of a navy coming to us with none of our men on it. It’d be easy to turn tail if it got hard. There must be some that are sailors and officers.”

Ron beamed at her and Hermione’s eyes widened. She hadn’t realized it was a test.

“See. That’s why you should be in the room with us. No one’s thought of that as a solution yet,” Ron said, beaming at her. Hermione pursed her lips as they walked towards the training grounds. “You should be one of his advisors.”

“You know how I feel about the monarchy system,” Hermione reminded her.

She walked towards the archery area, littered with centaurs, and Ginny Weasley. Ginny was blindfolded as she shot arrow after arrow. There were three centaurs treading around her, and she moved with them, shooting into their shields.

“She’s learning to fight blind,” Ron said. “When we crashed your wedding, she was blinded by blood for a moment. Nearly cost her her life.”

“I...she’s so good,” Hermione whispered. “She must have started young.”

“We’ve been in battle since we were thirteen. In our family, it’s much like a rite of passage,” Ron said quietly. He looked at Hermione with wide eyes. “Our parents were in the Order.”

“And now...they’re dead,” Hermione said.

“Now, they’re dead.”

“How can you still fight for their cause?” Hermione asked. “When it cost them their life.”

“Well...it’s multi-dimensional. I fight to carry on their legacy. I think...Ginny fights out of revenge. Harry’s promised her a life, you see. It’s her life to take,” Ron said. He answered Hermione’s unspoken question. “Antonin Dolohov. But, that’s not my story to tell.”

“Okay,” Hermione accepted. They all bore the mark of other people’s sins. She knew that better than most.

“Hermione, I think you should consider advising Harry. He could use your insight,” Ron said.

“I could, you know.”

Both Ron and Hermione jumped. Hermione spun to face the King and she cringed when saw the massive white albino lioness at his side—Hedwig, she was named. Hedwig was barely paying Hermione and Ron any mind, constantly brushing her massive head against Harry’s hand. Harry absently stroked the top of her head, a low growl emerging from the lioness. Hermione assumed that the animal was purring in content.

“What can I offer you?” Hermione demanded.

Harry tilted his head as he looked at the young woman. “I’m not going to beg you, Hermione Granger. I’m not. I don’t need you,” he said firmly. “But, you are a stranger in a strange land, and you yearn for a home that has been taken away from you. I am offering you a place. A home here.
You have been at Hogwarts Castle. You know Narcissa and Draco. You know court. So, I offer: one more time...a place at my table. Where you will be free to offer your opinion and advice to guide me to be a better monarch than any other that sat on that wretched throne.”

Harry was watching her with those beautiful green eyes. He really was beautiful. Hermione had never seen anyone that had deserve the title *Fairest* more. He was more beautiful than the Slytherin siblings put together and they were a striking quartet, when they had been whole. Hermione glanced over at Ron and he was nodding.

"You'd...you'd really listen to what I have to say?" Hermione asked, and she felt so terribly small at that moment. "Even...even if you don't like what I've got to say?"

“I think I’d listen even the more for it. I’ve learned, quite recently, that the advice I hate to hear is the advice I need most,” Harry said with a rueful smile. “Your Luna has taught me that.”

And Hermione remembered Luna’s story about the humbling of Harry Potter before the City-State and she knew that he wasn’t lying.

Perhaps, he would be different.

So, Hermione stepped forward, offering her hand out to Harry. Harry beamed and took it, squeezing hard.

“Hello. I’m Hermione Granger,” she said softly.


He glanced over at Ron, and for a moment, Harry felt something. He felt at peace in a way he had never felt before. Looking at his friend, Ron Weasley, and this girl, Hermione Granger, felt right in a way he had never expected. It felt destined and pre-ordained, as if the three of them would meet in every single universe that may exist beyond their own.

And as he looked at the pair of them, he knew they felt it too.

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**ALL?**

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“I did not think that I would ever be back here,” Rowena murmured as they roamed the catacombs of Westeron, where the forgotten were buried. She looked over at her brother in arms. “Does your child remember this place?”

“If she does, she says nothing of it. No one has been down here since...our time,” Salazar said quietly. This he knew to be true without even asking. He could feel how age and old magic had settled around the tombs like dust. He would be able to feel a disturbance if anyone had been down there.

But, he did not. Instead, he felt Helga’s magic, still in the air, though she was long gone. Salazar walked along the corridor, passing the bodies of fallen soldiers. They were going towards the center, just under the throne room—where Helga’s magic was strongest. Godric’s sword bounced against Salazar’s side as they walked.

“The boy is different than expected,” Rowena said into the silence.
“He is,” Salazar agreed. “Far more beautiful. Far more...stubborn.”

“Ah, that, I expected. He is like his father and his mother and his blood before them. He is a Gryffindor and a Potter. But, I was speaking of...he has compassion and he is unashamed of his love,” Rowena said. She sounded both admiring and spiteful. Only Rowena could sound like that. Salazar looked at her from the corner of his eyes. She patted a silvery strand back into the tight knot she had made at the nape of her neck.

“Unashamed of my son,” Salazar said. “Tom is a manipulative sort.”

"Harry is unashamed of him. And he stands up to him,” Rowena said. She smiled dryly and without humor when Salazar gave her a look. "It's impressive."

“Not even Bella could stand up to her older brother,” Salazar said softly.

“He kicked your boy out of the room when I wanted to speak to him,” Rowena murmured.

They stopped talking until they reached the very center of the catacombs, just underneath the throne room. It was a circular room, large and yawning and dark. Rowena raised her wand, waving it once, and the torches along the wall lit up immediately, revealing the massive tomb in the center. Rowena shivered.

Helga Hufflepuff’s bones rested in the depths of Hogwarts Castle.

But, Morgin of Afallon’s final resting place was Westeron itself, amongst the rest of her army and court.

The skulls lined the walls, staring sightlessly at the two Founders that had put them there. There was something accusatory and terrifying about it all and Rowena had forgotten how many had fallen before the Founders. She had forgotten how many had been on the other side. Rowena had forgotten how terribly ugly war was. She tore her gaze away from the skulls pressed into the walls like heinous wallpaper and redirected her gaze towards the tomb in the center.

In the center was an enormous dragon skull—large and ugly. Ironbellsies never ceased growing so Rowena and Helga had always speculated that the dragon Morgin had ridden had been centuries old. Rowena could remember riding side by side—Helga, Rowena, Salazar, and Godric—across the field, weaving in and out to avoid the flames from the enormous white-scaled beast.

There was a large hole in the side of its skull, blown out from the force of an enchanted spear—a spear that had been destroyed the moment the moment Helga had assumed the throne. And if one were to look through the yawning open mouth of the dragon skull, one could see the tomb of Morgin of Afallon, her bones nestled in a concrete box.

“An honor she didn’t deserve,” Rowena hissed pointedly.

Salazar looked at her. He looked sad. “Helga always said that everyone deserved dignity in death.”

Rowena’s heart ached, momentarily chastened. She hardened herself.

“Helga is dead. Did your children give her dignity in her death?” Rowena challenged.

Salazar looked away.

He didn’t know.
They turned away and faced each other. Salazar pulled Godric's sword from his side. Rowena reached into her own small bag. It had an Undetectable Extension Charm on it, and she winced when all of her books and potions tumbled inside, echoing in the tomb. Salazar glared.

“We could have done this anywhere else,” Salazar muttered.

“There are eyes everywhere else,” Rowena said. She tilted her head. She could hear something, moving. She shook her head and pulled forth a hat.

Salazar made a soft, broken sound in the back of his throat.

It was an old hat, battered and torn. Filthy and patched with a wide brim and a tall pointed crown.

It was Godric’s hat.

“Put the sword in the hat,” Rowena commanded.

Salazar gave her a look of disbelief but did as she said, pulling forth the sword and slowly slid it into the hat. His eyes widened in shock as the Sword of Gryffindor disappeared into the depths of his Hat.

“What sorcery?” Salazar demanded.

Rowena’s eyes glistened. “It is a spell I have tampered with. Like the Extension Charm on my satchel. But, this...the sword will only present itself to the worthy,” Rowena said softly. “He must prove himself worthy and there...there could be no one else in the world that could potentially be worthy.”

Salazar blinked slowly and nodded. “I...this is good, Rowena,” he said and Rowena smirked.

“I know. Not even your wretched boy could touch it. Could you, Voldemort?” she called.

And she knew she was right—that someone had been there—when an enormous poisonous green snake emerged from the shadows. It was as thick as a grown man's thigh and twice as long as some of the tallest men. Rowena was not surprised to see that Nagini had grown to such monstrous proportions. Nagini hissed at Salazar, and Salazar gave a strangled hiss back.

“Father.”

Rowena could not understand Parseltongue, but Salazar jerked as his son appeared before him, as if he had been air and then wasn’t.

Rowena stepped back. Salazar looked at her.

“Rowena,” he began.

“Address your own mistakes,” Rowena snarled. It was clear that she thought of the Slytherin boy as a mistake. The Slytherin sneered at the former Queen of Essetir, glowering after her with war bright eyes until she disappeared back into the darkness.

Finally, Voldemort looked back at his father.

“A mistake. She calls us a mistake,” Voldemort said with a grim smile. “How charming.”

“Tom...”
Voldemort turned away from his father. “I would kill you both where you stand. I do not only out of respect for my King.”

“And love, perhaps?” Salazar asked.

He regretted it immediately. Voldemort’s blazing red eyes were on his face again. His hands were clenched into tight fists, one on the pommel of his sword, the other around his wand. His face was bone white. Still, he didn’t strike.

“What do you know about love, Father? You did not love your wife. You did not love your children—” Voldemort said coldly.

“How dare—”

“‘Kill them all’,” Voldemort hissed through clenched teeth. Salazar paled at the words that had haunted his memories. ‘Kill them all’, Godric had commanded of a boy barely grown, and he had done as his sovereigns had bid. Tom Marvolo had killed them all. “I was your judge, jury, and executioner, so I dare. You didn’t love us. You made a killer of me, and then, you were finished with us. I raised your children. Bella and I taught them how to read and write and fight. So, what do you know?”

Salazar looked away. Children had never been something he had wanted. He had...needed an Heir.

“Your mother loved you,” Salazar said softly.

If Voldemort—no, Tom—was startled by the sudden use of English, he didn’t show it. Instead, he glared at him, waiting for more words. Salazar grabbed at the necklace around his neck. It wasn’t his locket—not the locket his mother had given him—but, the ring on the second chain. Salazar snapped the chain from around his neck, the ring clenched in his tight fist.

“This was your mother’s. She loved you,” Salazar said.

“She died,” Tom whispered and he sounded lost.

He sounded lost as he had when Salazar had told him the first time. And Tom, not even a man yet, had seen his mother in a bed of roses and blood, Narcissa’s pale body still resting against her cold breast. And Salazar couldn’t touch her—couldn’t look at her. So, Tom had picked Narcissa up and had cradled her and introduced her to their siblings, ignoring their mother’s dead body as if he hadn’t heard Salazar’s terrible sobs.

“She loved you,” Salazar said firmly and he pressed the ring into Tom’s hand. “She loved you.”

He disappeared without another word, and Tom swallowed hard as his fist closed around the small object his father had pressed into his hand.

Tom didn’t think much about his mother. When he did, he felt that familiar ache of resentment course through his blood. His mother had been a talented witch and she had died. She had let herself die.

Everybody died.

Tom scoffed, shaking his head. He was too old for this. He no longer missed his mother—that happened over time, when the resentment had burned like wildfire before slowly becoming nothing but ashes, as she was. Instead, he opened his fist and looked down at his mother's ring. It had never been particularly beautiful though she had clung to it, never parting from it even when bathing. He did away his father's chain and settled the ring on his middle left finger and held it up in the firelight
to admire it.

The ring was clumsy, big, and gold, and set in the middle was a black stone with a jagged crack running down the center.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked this chapter. It was a hard one to churn out. All of this feels like build-up for the main event, to be honest.

Also, please review. Even if it's just to say "Oh, I liked this chapter". It's really encouraging and helps me get chapters out faster. These chapters aren't coming out of the ether. They're coming from a person who really, really would like some encouragement, please and thank you.
“I, Harry Wildfyre, call this meeting to order.”

How many times had Hermione heard those words before? Too many, she thought. Too many times she had sat beside Draco Slytherin and heard him use those very same words. Too many times she had seen the map be magicked to life, and spring cities and mountains and forest and rivers. Too many times she had heard about death and destruction and war.

And yet, this time, something felt different.

Hermione glanced over at Luna, who sat on one side of her. Luna was watching the King intently. Hermione swallowed. This was a large council room. A large council room for a large council. In truth, Hermione hadn’t realized how many advisors Harry Wildfyre truly had. It was true that he had his core councilors, but there was upwards twenty people in the room, all representing vastly different goals.

Ginny and Kingsley sat with the King on his main council with Bill, Tonks, Charlie Weasley, and the Dark Lord. The Dark Lord sat by Harry’s side, as always. Hermione wondered how often he spoke in meetings. Luna had said not very.

Hermione flinched from his impenetrable red stare and looked elsewhere.

Towards the left of the room was Andromeda with her two most trusted—the Black brothers. To Hermione’s knowledge, they represented the interests of Afallon. Then, next to them were the representatives of the Order. Ron winked at her and Hermione’s lips twitched into a smile. Remus was watching Tonks with a soft look in his eyes.

Barty sat by Ron’s side with Severus Snape and Lucius Malfoy. To Hermione’s understanding, the Dark Lord’s most-trusted often switched off with the Lestrange brothers, depending on whose expertise was needed.

Then, on the other side of the room were the foreign representatives—the United City-State ambassadors and the Prince of Alfheim, Cedric, and his wife, Cho. Next to them were two Adored Ones, though Hermione didn’t know their names. She would make it her business to memorize everyone’s names.

And then, finally, Hermione and Luna were next to one side of the door—impartial judges.

“A party, isn’t it?” Luna said with a soft smile.

Hermione’s lips twitched.

“First order of business,” Harry began. He looked around at the table, blinking slowly. “Alastor Moody and Benjy Fendwick are dead, by my order. Kingsley Shacklebolt is the new Head of the Order of the Phoenix. This means we are without a Commander of the Cavalry.”

There were murmurings all around. Hermione’s eyes widened as she glanced at Luna. Luna looked unsurprised by the deaths.
“How…” Hermione began. Everyone turned to her, and Hermione winced under the weight of a thousand stares. “What were they accused of?”

“Treason and conspiracy,” Harry said softly. He looked away from her and glanced around the room. “Does anyone put forth a nomination?”

“I nominate Marlene McKinnon,” Sirius Black said quietly.

There was another rumble of disruption.

“Out of the question,” Tonks barked. “She was a traitor as well, spared only by the mercy of the King.”

"And we know that she was not the only one out there questioning the King,” Lupin added, leaning forward, intrigued by Sirius Black's idea. He looked thoughtful, tapping at his chin as he looked around. "Placing her on your Council keeps her close and it means that those that question your rule will be appeased. They will believe that their complaints are being heard."

“To reward a traitor for being a traitor. How...quaint,” the Dark Lord jeered, softly.

Lupin sneered at the man.

"Enough," Harry drawled before it broke out into a fight. He looked from his left to his right, at the two Slytherins that flanked him, before he turned his gaze back to Hermione, amusement in his green eyes. "What say you, Hermione Granger? Luna Lovegood?"

"Us, your Grace?" Hermione asked softly.

"Luna has vouched for your wisdom," Harry said quietly. "And Luna...is quite wise, as proven in the United City-States. What say either of you about this proposal?"

“It shows that you listen,” Luna said, her voice soft and sweet. Her eyes cut over to Tonks, eyes narrowed. “Do not let your pride blind you.”

"Very well," Harry said as if he hadn't a care in the world. "Sirius nominates Marlene McKinnon as Commander of the Cavalry on the behalf of Afallon. Lupin seconds it on the behalf of the Order. Who will sponsor her on my Council?"

There was a long moment of silence before Bill Weasley let out a mighty sigh.

“I shall, your Grace,” Bill called. He ignored the betrayed look in Ginny’s eyes.

“She is a traitor,” Ginny hissed.

Bill’s eyes narrowed. “She is of Essetir. Showing an Essetirenean on our side will entice the East once we demand that they bend the knee,” Bill snapped. “Do you know how much money the Eastern lords possess? How much the Longbottoms are worth? How much Arcadia is worth?”

Harry looked pleased with Bill's forethought.

“With the support of my council member and an independent party, I say aye. Marlene McKinnon will be sent a missive later today. I shall write it to her personally,” Harry decided.

"And to ensure her loyalty?" the Dark Lord asked.

"The Unbreakable Vow," Cedric of Alfheim said. Everyone looked at him, but he stared back,
grimly. "We are in war times. Another insurgency within the ranks cannot be tolerated. I'd be happy
to dispatch my own to ensure that she and her potential followers be bound."

"Hopefully, that won't be necessary, but duly noted," Harry said with a sly grin. He looked around
and stared, curiously, at the City-Staters. "This brings me to my next order of business. Look at the
ocean."

Everyone directed their gaze to the map. One of the City-Staters—a Scamander, though Hermione
didn’t know which was which—frowned.

“Ships are approaching. But, not our ships,” the Scamander said.

Kingsley leaned forward in his seat, staring at the map for a long moment. In his deep, rolling voice,
he said, softly, “It appears as if Draco is attempting to secure the port cities.”

“It cannot be allowed,” Andromeda barked.

“Of course it can’t. Which is why, I am making Theseus the acting Commander of the Navy,” Harry
said as if he hadn’t just put a foreigner in charge of an essential part of his army.

Hermione winced at the sudden uproar. Tonks was only nodding at his words—it meant that they
had privately discussed the matter. But, Ron was on his feet, shouting, as was Barty and Severus
Snape. Andromeda looked livid, and even Cedric looked put out. Harry winced under the onslaught
of shouts from all sides, but he hadn’t looked away from Theseus. Theseus looked shocked, a flush
in his cheeks.

“You’re being foolish,” the Dark Lord bit out.

Harry hissed at him. “Who else present is a captain of a ship? Who else can command a navy?”

“Me,” the Dark Lord snarled. Hermione nearly couldn’t hear him from the rest of the shouts as
everyone argued with each other about the merits of Harry’s proposal.

And Harry paled, his hand flashing out, grabbing at the Dark Lord’s arm.

“You cannot leave me,” Harry whispered, almost desperately, and he slowly pulled himself away to
turn to the rest of the room at large. He composed himself, hiding his desperation deep within himself
before he smiled beautifully again. It was a wonderful performance, but Hermione had seen the ache
in his eyes. “You didn’t allow me to finish. Please, sit down. Ron, put away your wand. No cursing
the Death Eaters.”

Ron sheepishly stowed away his wand and Barty sneered, sheathing his own sword. Harry scoffed
and glanced at Hermione as if they were sharing some sort of joke between the two of them.

“And Harry pale..."

Continue, your Grace?” Andromeda said stiffly.

Harry nodded. “I said acting Commander of the Navy. Two of my most trusted will accompany him
and learn from him—Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. The better of the two will rise to the rank of
Admiral,” Harry decided.

Tonks stiffened. “Harry…” she hissed. “Remus can’t go.”

Harry glanced over at Tonks, blinking slowly. “Because of your son?” he asked softly. Tonks
nodded emphatically. Harry looked back at Remus. “Then...you will discuss and decide in private.
But, the offer stands. Will you go, Sirius?”
“Aye, your Grace. I will travel across land and meet the ships by the harbors with Theseus,” Sirius said.

Harry beamed. “Good. That order of business is settled,” Harry said. He turned to Tonks, who still looked wary of Harry’s previous command. Harry reached for her hand and squeezed, and she looked at him for a long moment before she nodded. Suddenly, Tonks turned her gaze to Hermione, her eyes squinted.

Hermione jerked back, eyes wide.

“The Alpha of the Laug Republic is dead,” Tonks breathed.

The older magic-users in the room stiffened. Remus’ nostrils flared and he looked at Tonks, just as betrayed.

“What?” he spat. “Fenrir Greyback is dead?”

“Who is Fenrir Greyback?” Harry asked quietly, his brow furrowed at not knowing something.

“He’s the alpha werewolf of the Laug Republic. The werewolf that turned Remus when he was a boy,” Sirius said quietly. He looked at Tonks with wide eyes.

“How sure are you of this, Nymphadora?” Andromeda asked.

Tonks made a face at her given name, but continued on, “Very. The Alpha was slain by his own little wife. She comes now to Afallon. She is important...she is...very important,” Tonks said, a little frown on her face.

“And her name, niece? What is her name?” Voldemort asked.

“Is she friend or foe?” Kingsley barked out, just as concerned.

Tonks gave a rueful smile. “Funny you should say that. It seems that we have a mutual friend of hers in the room,” Tonks said, and she looked at Hermione again.

Everyone’s heavy gazes fell on Hermione once more.

“Me?” she asked, softly.

“Why, yes. The new Alpha is Gabrielle Delacour, and she’s eager to meet the Wyrdfod.”

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"They call him the Beggar King, for he went to his knees to ask for the fleet that was given to him. He is nothing to us, my darling. Nothing," Narcissa cooed as she raked a comb through Draco's hair.

He said nothing, only staring down at his crimson-stained skin. The smell of iron and copper dominated the small dungeon room, but it bothered neither of them.

They had become accustomed to the smell of blood.

“He haunts my dreams, Mother. They all do. The Granger, the Fairest...Daphne. Always Daphne,” Draco said, his voice cracking. Narcissa lifted the small bucket and dumped the blood of virgins over
his head, chanting the dark words under her breath.

*Clean. Be cleaned,* she prayed even as she sullied him with the blood—half-blood and Mudblood virgins. It was unnecessary to spill the blood of purebloods. Not when Draco did so every night as he fucked into Pansy Parkinson, using her as a rag.

And still, Pansy took it, like the good little soldier she was.

Narcissa would reward her handsomely when this was all over.

"You have Mother, my love. You only need Mother," Narcissa rasped because she knew what it was to be left behind. They had all left her behind too, and she had become the greatest of them all—she had taken the best parts of her siblings and fashioned herself into a weapon of unbreakable diamond.

She washed the blood over him again, working it into his pale shoulders, murmuring the words. She would mend him blood magic if she could. She would tear the world apart to silence the grief that haunted his waking steps, to temper the rage that would serve a part in their destruction. Draco let out a terrible sigh, shaking his pale hair, dyed pink deom the blood.

"Mother, I'm tired," Draco whispered.

Narcissa nodded slowly. "Yes, my love. Wash clean in the blessed water basin there, and sleep. I have work to attend to," she said.

"Of course, Mother."

He never looked at her, and Narcissa stood from her perch on the stool, uncertain as she left the small dungeon room. Absently, she licked her fingers clean of blood and walked down the hallway, the only pale spot in a long corridor of absolute darkness. She walked towards the closest secret passageway to her office until she heard it.

The hissing.

"*Come...come to me...*" the voice said before dispersing into a mess of hisses.

Narcissa stopped, pressing her hand against the cold stone wall. It had been a voice of pure venom, chilled and murderous. She couldn't discern the words anymore, and she pressed her ear to the wall, eyes narrowed. She could hear the hissing.

"I...can...hear...you," she whispered to the wall.

The hissing.

"*Come...*"

The hissing.

"Lady Chancellor?"

Narcissa jerked away from the wall. She looked at Dolohov, a darkness in her eyes. He immediately bowed at the waist, his eyes trained on the ground and Narcissa straightened, tilting her head as she looked at the man. He looked up at her through his pretty, pretty eyelashes, and Narcissa smiled coldly.

"Come, Antonin," she commanded, walking past him.
Dolohov followed her like a good bitch.

“My Lady?” he asked, softly.

“I’m quite cold. Won’t you warm my bed?” she drawled.

Dolohov didn’t need to answer. She didn’t expect him to. She expected him in her bed.

And if Narcissa saw a flash of a pretty little blind girl with pale, pale eyes and dark hair from the corner of her eye, she pretended that she hadn’t.

But, she couldn’t pretend that she hadn’t heard the hissing.

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**MIRROR**

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Severus Snape and Lucius Malfoy almost never spoke to Harry Potter. There was never any true need to do so. After all, they belonged to their Lord, first and forever. Their Lord operated in their best interests, and they hadn’t ever questioned that. If the Dark Lord didn’t want them to operate with the man that was, effectively, their new sovereign, then they wouldn’t.

And so, they had never expected to find their aforementioned sovereign in the parlor of their shared rooms.

He was serving tea, it seemed, brow furrowed as he attempted to reheat the teapot that surely gone tepid while he waited for them. Severus knew from their Lord’s complaints that Harry Potter was quite horrid at reheating tea despite his talent with fire, and so he waved his wand, carefully raising the temperature to nearly boiling once more. Harry Potter jumped, and he looked up, a sheepish look on his face.

“Oh, hello. Thank you. I would’ve hated to serve you cold tea. I’m quite bad. At reheating tea, that is,” Harry said, stumbling over his words.

Severus glanced over at Lucius who looked quite put off. *This* was the man that had their Lord enthralled. Pretty, he was, but he didn’t seem particularly bright.

Severus supposed that could be due to the fact that he hadn’t been raised using magic as most witches and wizards were, but then, he remembered that Harry Potter was supposedly destined. He was supposedly going to save the entire world, which Severus wasn’t quite sure he believed. He had never put much stock in Divination, and he certainly wouldn’t start now.

“Your Grace, it is an honor to receive you in our rooms, of course, but we do wonder…” Lucius said, as diplomatically as possible. “What could we have possibly done to receive this honor?”

Harry blinked.

“Well, I...well, nothing. But, I wanted to have a conversation with you. Sans the Dark Lord,” Harry tacked on in a rush.

Severus and Lucius exchanged another look as they sat down across from the King.

“I see,” Severus finally said.
Harry leaned forward. “You both far surpass me in military experience, I know. You are, after all, the Dark Lord’s most-trusted. This is why I come to you. I feel like you are being underutilized in your positions. I suppose you are not used to that. Being outside of the inner circle.”

Perceptive of him.

“No, we are not,” Lucius admitted. “But, we serve our Lord in any capacity that he needs us in.”

“And I admire that,” Harry said firmly. He muttered a spell under his breath, shakily levitating the teapot to pour them their tea. Severus watched him, amused as some of the amber liquid splashed over the sides of the teacup. Harry cursed under his breath as he set the teapot down. “Damn.”

“It’s fine,” Lucius said with barely concealed amusement.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Whatever. Anyway, I have come because I have decided to make Severus my official Potions Maker, and you, Lucius, I would like for you to work with Ron Weasley to command the troops."

Both Death Eaters startled.

“Does the Dark Lord know you’re asking this of us?” Severus demanded. "Does he know his sweetling is trying to command us as if we belong to him?"


Harry’s eyes narrowed, defensive immediately. “No, he doesn’t know, and it’s not his business. And enough with the blood traitor nonsense. Does it matter?”

“Yes, it matters!” Lucius snarled, forgetting himself.

"It doesn't! We have a war to be concerned about. Blood purity is stupid, and we've got an entire population of Muggles that help Westeron operate at the level that it should. Enough," Harry retorted, eyes narrowed in irritation. His eyes cut towards Severus. "And I don't need the Dark Lord's permission for anything. He is my Chancellor. He is in my bed. Not the other way around. How dare you try to mock me because of who I choose to keep in my bed?"

Severus blinked, cowed. Lucius recovered first.

"Your Grace—"

“I’m sorry if I phrased it as a question. It wasn’t. It was a command. I am not your Master, but you live on my coin—a coin that I will have to pay back in full. You live in my country because Afallon is mine. And this is a war that you helped to perpetuate. And you will do well to help end it because there has been enough death for generations," Harry said, standing to his feet, green eyes blazing. "Death that you helped spread. You were complicit participants in this. All of this."

Severus swallowed hard.

“We served our Lord,” Severus said sharply.

“You had a choice,” Harry spat.

“It was obey or die,” Lucius snarled. “What would you have done?”

“I would've died," Harry snarled, and Severus saw that the young man was not lying. "You. Were.
Complicit. Compliant. Participants. And if you want this to end, you will *help.*

And at that moment, Harry Potter looked so much like Lily Gryffindor, Severus felt his heart stop.

And so, he couldn’t help it when he said, “Yes, your Grace.”

“Gods, Harry, you suck cock like a dream.”

Tom reached down, pressing his thumbs to the spit-slicked lips, red and swollen around his cock. He traced Harry’s top lip as the younger man bobbed, swallowing his cock, making a soft, wet noise. Tom groaned as he fucked forward, pressing against the opening of Harry’s throat again, and Harry moaned around his cock, swallowing hard. Tom reached down, hooking his thumb in the corner of Harry’s mouth and fucking in deeper.

Harry looked up watery green eyes and pulled off, gasping for breath. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and dove in hungrily, lapping and chasing the vein on the underside of Tom’s cock.

"Just like that," Tom growled. He wasn’t sure if he was speaking to himself or to Harry, but Harry’s eyes brightened, pleased. Harry lowered his mouth, lapping at Tom’s balls, kissing up his shaft, and wrapping his swollen lips around the man's cock once more.

It was hot and slick, and surely, Harry had gotten far too good at this. He had taken to sucking Tom’s cock like a fish to water, and he was such an *eager* student. Tom knotted his fingers in Harry’s hair and thrust once, groaning as Harry’s slick throat fluttered around the head of his cock, and a wet gagging noise filled the air. He pulled Harry’s head back, admiring how *pretty* the young king looked, sticky strands of saliva sliding down his chin, hanging between Tom’s cock and those swollen red lips.

Harry’s lips curled into a terrible smile and he dove forward, pulling his lips back over his teeth and fucking his mouth down on Tom’s throat, gagging again on the older man’s cock. Tom groaned and they fell into a steady rhythm. It was nearly violent—the way Harry would swallow around Tom’s cock as Tom thrust forward, threatening to choke Harry on the fat shaft. The sloppy noises drove Tom further and further along the bath of pleasure and he felt his balls begin to tighten. Tom wrapped his hand around the part of his shaft that Harry couldn’t fit in his mouth and jerked it off roughly, his fist gently bumping into Harry’s lips on every down stroke. Harry tore Tom’s hand away and went as deep as he could, his nose brushing the thick thatch of hair at the base of Tom’s cock, gagging roughly. Tom made a choked sound that tapered off as Harry pulled back, breathing heavily.

“Cum on my face,” Harry rasped, his voice rough from his abused throat.

Tom paused, staring down at Harry as he stroked the length of his shaft, fast and hard. Harry leaned forward, running his tongue over the head of Tom’s cock against, tasting every inch of skin that Tom wasn’t touching.

“What?” Tom hissed.

Hoarsely, Harry demanded, “Cum on my face. Make me your whore.”
Tom stopped immediately, his hands dropping to his side as he stared narrow-eyed down at Harry. His cock still hard, bobbed in the air, and Harry dove forward, taking the cock into his mouth and swallowing hard, down to the root. Tom groaned and with his fingers knotted in Harry's hair, he spilled down the younger man's throat. Tom collapsed back in the chair, breathing softly, brushing his sweat-dampened hair from his forehead.

“What was that about?” Tom hissed.

Harry pulled off, slowly, swallowing again as he tried not to think about the bitter aftertaste. Harry closed his eyes, still on his haunches and he turned his head away, looking down at the ground. Tom reached down, grabbing Harry by his arms, pulling him up onto the couch. Harry didn’t resist.

“Harry, why did you want me to call you a whore?” Tom demanded. Harry hummed, shaking his head, burying his face in Tom’s neck. Slowly, he wrapped his arms around Tom, straddling his thighs. Tom sighed, running a hand down Harry’s tunic covered back. His eyes softened.

“Sweetling, please talk about me.”


And Tom stared down at him for a long moment that felt like years and then he nodded, standing up. The taller man let Harry hang from him as he stumbled towards their bed, and ever so gently, he laid Harry on the soft sheets. He laid down next to Harry, his back towards the smaller man, and they did not speak or move for long moments that felt like hours.

Only when Harry shifted, pressing his chest against Tom's back and throwing a leg over his thighs, did they rest.

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**THE WALL**

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“You have to go. I know.”

The words flew out of her mouth even before Remus had shut the door to their rooms. He waited for a long moment, looking at Tonks with narrowed eyes. She was standing so tall and strong, her chest puffed out, her pink hair in wild spikes. And then, she deflated just as quickly, her hair rapidly turning brown. Teddy tensed in her arms and patted her cheek with a chubby little hand.

“Mama?” he asked, softly.

Tonks’ arms tightened around him even more.

“Remus...he needs his Papa,” Tonks whispered, her voice cracking.

“And he has his Mama. His incredibly strong Mama,” Remus said softly. He walked up to her and grabbed her free hand, carefully leading his small little family to the couch. He sat down and immediately, Tonks curled into his side, tucking Teddy tight between the two of them. Teddy squirmed, disliking being held so tightly for someone nearly four. “Please, Teddy. Your Mama needs to hold you. I need to hold you.”

Teddy whined but settled just so. He’d be patient.

“I know you have to go,” Tonks said again. “You can’t just say no. You could be...you could be
Admiral. And there’s a war. We always knew that we would have to sacrifice some things to the war.”

They both knew what she was talking about. Sacrificing their monogamy, their personal wants, exploiting their personal fears. They were willing to bleed and die for the war to end, for peace to truly spread across Albion. That willingness to put everything on the line—her mind, body, and soul—had always been what Remus had loved most about Tonks, and vice versa.

“But, now we have a son,” Remus said quietly.

“Now, we have a son,” Tonks agreed.

“And our son will be proud of his parents. He will know what we have done for his future. I daresay that I’ll be safer going to lead the fleet. You’ll be in the thick of battle,” Remus pointed out.

That had always been true, and it had never worried them before. Tonks was exceptional on the battlefield. After all, she was a Slytherin, trained by one of the most fearsome witches that had ever lived. And yet, everything felt so much more real. It wasn’t that the war had been pretend before, but now, they had a king—a king of flesh and blood, not just an idea—and he was rallying an army. Harry was a king in want of a throne, and Remus knew how loyal Tonks was. She would die for her Wyrdfod.

“And I know...I could...die. And he would be well-taken care of. Mother would look after him,” Tonks said softly and she pulled Teddy in closer to her. She pulled her wand out as he grew more restless, summoning one of his little dolls to him. Teddy cooed at the sight.

He smiled up with his few teeth. “Thank you, Mama,” he giggled.

Tonks’ eyes softened even as her brows drew down further in frustration. “You’re welcome, my love,” she said quietly. She turned back to Remus and she sighed, sounding as if the weight of the world rested on her shoulders. “This is all for him.”

“It’s all for us. Our family,” Remus said quietly and he leaned forward, pressing a kiss to her lips, and immediately hated himself for it.

Tonks melted into it, wrapping an arm around his shoulders, clinging to him. It wasn’t often that he let himself kiss her. She was too good—too good for him. She was a Slytherin. A Princess. And he was an old, scarred werewolf, barely worthy of the title of Auror. Teddy reached up, swatting both of them.

“No! No!” he shouted, disgusted by his parents’ show of affection.

Tonks let out a bright laugh, her hair turning a bright pink once again. And she pulled Teddy onto her chest, tickling his belly and Teddy writhed with laughter. Remus committed the moment to memory, and he closed his eyes.

Teddy and Tonks.

His family.

He’d need that memory in the war to come.
“The ships are circumventing the South. They’re coming towards Afallon,” Hermione said, tracing her wand over the tiny ships moving at a snail’s pace along the coast of Albion. “They’re coming towards Westeron.”

“They have no orders. None of our men are on that ships. Remus and Sirius are nowhere near. How fast is an owl?” Bill asked, looking at Kingsley. Kingsley’s brow was furrowed as he examined the board and he fell back in his seat, sighing long and hard.

“Not fast enough,” the man said.

Harry squirmed in his seat, irritated. A meeting in the middle of the night. Narcissa was clever. Clever, clever, clever. To take off in the cover of night, sending some of her ships to the South, as they had expected, and then sending a whole fleet towards Afallon.

“The City-States’ fleets are approaching, but they’ve already gone to meet Remus and Sirius in the South,” Tonks sighed, shaking her head. She looked towards Harry, eyes wide, suddenly lost, and Harry winced, looking away. He glanced over at Tom, but he was leaning over the map, eyes narrowed.

“What do we do?” Harry demanded.

Tom looked up, eyes narrowed. “We have no ships.”

Harry groaned, leaning back in his chair, shaking his head.

“You can go.”

Everyone paused and looked at the two women by the door. Luna and Hermione stood in the doorway, watching with narrowed eyes. Harry looked at his civilian advisors, eyes narrowed at Hermione Granger. She stared back, unafraid.

“What are you saying, girl?” Tom barked.

“You can go, Harry. You can destroy them alone,” Hermione said quietly. “You have a dragon.”

“Absolutely not.”

Harry looked over at Tom, wide-eyed. Tom’s eyes were narrowed with fury, all of his rage directed right at Hermione Granger. Hermione tried her very best to glare back, but even she was cowed by the Dark Lord’s absolute fury. Harry glanced over at the rest of his council, but they all glowered at Hermione, just as irritated by her words as the Dark Lord.

“You can’t go alone. It’s not safe,” Ginny said, coolly. She tore her eyes away from Hermione to look at Harry. “It’s not safe. You can’t go.”

“I agree, your Grace,” Bill said.

Charlie leaned forward from his perch by the window, his eyes beseeching. “We don’t know if they’ve discovered any spells that Freia isn’t impervious to. It might not be safe for Freia either,” Charlie said firmly, and Harry nodded.

That explanation had made the most sense to him.

“She’s a dragon. The only part of her that isn’t impervious to magic are her eyes,” Hermione rushed
out. She strode forward, standing just in front of Harry and she reached forward, grabbing his hand and squeezing. Harry looked down at their clasped hands, alarmed. “Harry, you have to go. How will we stop them otherwise? There’s no other way.”

“My council disagrees with this action,” Harry said quietly.

“But, you’re the king,” Hermione said sharply.

Ginny’s eyes narrowed. "You can't have it both ways! You can't say that a monarchy is barbaric and when his council disagrees, you tell him to pull rank. You can't disrespect our king. You go around screeching and complaining about how you're not from here and yet, you leech off our king's hospitality. You have his ear even if you don't want to obey the law and him. You know what—fuck you, Hermione Granger,” Ginny snarled.

Hermione winced, taken aback by the vitriol in Ginny’s tone. “I just—I’m not—”

“You are,” Ginny said, her voice hard.

There was a long moment of tense silence. Hermione swallowed hard and looked back over at Harry, much more subdued now.

“I just...there’s no one else that can do it, is there? Only you,” Hermione said, her voice small, and she felt a flash of rage rock through her as Harry Wildfyre stared at her with something that couldn’t be anything but utter amusement.

He was amused by her humiliation.

“What do you say...my dear?” he said, slowly rolling his head to look at Tonks. Hermione’s eyes narrowed at the odd moniker. Everyone else’s confusion was palpable, but Tonks hadn’t twitched. “You’ve said nothing.”

“I cannot do this for you,” Tonks said softly. “If I could, I would.”

"I know," Harry said, his amusement dampened. He reached towards her, lacing their fingers together and he squeezed. "You agree with the Lady Granger."

“No—” Kingsley began.

Tonks nodded once. “Yes. I do.”

FAIREST

Harry stood completely still as Tonks and Andromeda outfitted him, spinning around him and barking orders at the other maids. He ignored the way his council observed, still in awe of him though they had seen every mistake he’d ever made. Harry glanced down at the chest that was being Levitated into the room by two young maids.

“What’s that?” Harry asked.

“It was your grandfather’s. We had it repaired. It was found in storage,” Andromeda said briskly.

Harry raised an eyebrow, exchanging a glance with Tom. Tom stared back at him, unimpressed.
Harry rolled his eyes and huffed.

"You are foolish," Tom spat, ever spiteful. Harry looked away to hide his smile. "If Granger's idea gets you killed, I will tear out her throat. With my teeth."

Harry heard Hermione Granger’s squeak and Ron’s whispered reassurances that it wouldn’t come to such things. Harry didn’t have the heart to say that if he did die, Tom would make good on his word. The man was many things, but not quite a liar.

Not quite.

Harry pulled his final layer of robes over him, the dark red of the dyed Basilisk scales appearing nearly black in the low light. He took a step forward as the chest was dropped just a few feet in front of him. Tonks waved her wand and the chest slowly creaked open. Harry made a soft sound in the back of his throat as he looked down into it. Tonks pulled forth a gorgeous cloak of crimson velvet, with a collar of soft white fur. Harry brushed his fingers through it and frowned when he realized how coarse it felt.

“What is this?” Harry murmured.

Tom looked notably surprised. “It’s a lion’s mane. It really is Godric’s cloak.”

He sounded displeased.

Harry beamed as Tonks whipped it around, sliding it over his shoulders and fastening with a golden broach that she tapped with her wand. She reached up, arranging her hair to fall better over the crown she was woven into the raven locks.

“This seems like a lot of ceremony,” Harry teased gently.

Tonks was not smiling. “You are off to do foolish things, yes, but you will look beautiful doing so. I am your Sword,” she repeated.

Harry’s brow creased. She had said it thrice before. Still, he did not ask. That was a conversation for another time. Instead, he looked back at Tom. Tom stalked forward, grabbing Harry's chin. Harry opened his mouth and was silenced with a fearsome kiss. His council fell silent as Tom devoured him, licking into his mouth as if he wanted to own every inch of him. Tom pulled back, looking at him with burning crimson eyes.

“How…forward,” Harry said, his voice lilting.

Tom didn't blink; instead, he pressed something into Harry's hand. Harry looked down and made a quiet noise in the back of his throat.

It was a beautiful knife. Curved and dangerous, the handle wrapped in leather.

Tom’s ceremonial knife.

The knife that had taken Helena’s heart. Lily’s heart.

The knife meant to take Harry’s heart.

“You take this with you. You take this and I will always know where you are.”

Harry took the knife, attaching it to his belt and then leaned up on his toes to press a kiss to Tom’s jaw, ignoring the looks cast their way.
“\textit{Inwi nwaly ten’ke},” Harry breathed for just a moment and then he spun with a swish of his cloak. It dragged behind him as he walked towards his balcony, never stopping his stride. He whistled sharply and was answered with Freia's roar of discontent.

Freia swung down from the roof, chips of brick falling from her claws as she flew next to the balcony, offering her wing. Harry stepped up onto the railing and stepped on her wing, walking towards her back. He settled himself at the base of her neck and Freia let out another roar.

"Remember!" a voice shouted. Harry looked back to his balcony. His council had rushed to follow and Hermione was pressed to the railing. "It's along the Karnaron border. They want to try to claim the Western Sea. They'll be by the Southern mouth of it for sure."

Harry nodded. He leaned over Freia, pressing a kiss to her scales.

"Okay, Freia. Let’s go."

And with a roar, Freia shot off, the dawn turning the sky orange. Harry squinted against the terrible glare, hiding his face against Freia’s scales as she flew through the air. The cloak must have a Warming Charm on it, he thought, for the air was frigid, even for flying as hard and fast as they did. Harry’s fingers dug into the soft spots between Freia’s scales as he went farther and farther. In the parting of the clouds, he could see the water, and he wondered then just how fast Freia could really fly.

Harry hummed, leaning forward, whispering quiet, reassuring words into Freia's scales. He tilted sideways, and Freia let out a screech and barrel-rolled through the sky. Harry shrieked in laughter and exhilaration as they spiraled through the air. Freia let out a cooing sound of approval and then she dove, piercing the clouds.

Harry’s eyes widened as he saw the approaching ships. The Slytherin colors were hoisted high above the ocean. There had to be a fleet of at least three dozen ships—an ample amount to launch an attack on Westeron, which sat on a cliffside. Harry’s eyes narrowed and he rubbed his face against Freia’s side. Slowly, he sat up, raising one hand above his head, his lips curling back into a sneer.

"\textit{Fuir.}"

And the ocean was set on fire.

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**OF THEM ALL?**

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“It’s...different from how I imagined,” Fleur said softly as they walked through the bustling city that sat at the base of Westeron. She was watching the people go about their day. They didn’t seem bothered or in any way affected by the newcomers. Gabrielle expected that new people joined this strange little colony of people every day.

She amended her thoughts of ‘little’. What must have begun as a small village had become a sprawling city. As they approached the castle, she looked to her right and saw tents going as far as the eye could see.

"Look. Up there," Grom said, pulling away from his brothers as he went to stand between the two Delacour women. Gabrielle followed his gaze and couldn't help her tiny gasp when she saw what sat on top of one of the tallest towers.
The dragon was terrifying even from so far away. It seemed to be watching them, but it made no sound, only staring at them with evil yellow eyes.

“The Wyrdfod’s dragon,” Gabrielle murmured to herself.

She redirected her gaze to the steps of Westeron Castle and was stricken twice. Gabrielle saw the Red Woman, in all her glory. Her crimson cloak swept the floor, her hood over sharp pink spikes. Beneath her cloak, she wore full battle regalia, brown leather that made her look dangerous. She was so strange to look—terrifying and lovely. It wasn’t the type of lovely that a Veela was. It was human. A loveliness that one could miss so easily.

Just behind her was a woman that looked like Baba Yaga, but so clearly wasn’t. Her long pale hair fell in straggly strands to her waist. Unlike the Red Woman, this woman was barefoot, her skirts falling just to her ankles. Next to her was a terrifyingly tall man that dwarfed her. One of his eyes was pale and blind, a wicked scar bisecting that side of his face. His hand was on her shoulder, but there was nothing paternal about it. The slight, pale girl came forward first, eyes wide.

“Welcome to Westeron,” the girl said with a sweet smile. “I am Luna Lovegood.”

“I am Grom. These are my brothers and company. We come to join the war,” Grom said gruffly.

Still, the Red Woman did not speak. Gabrielle couldn’t look away.

“I am Rodolphus Lestrange. I will lead you to the campgrounds,” the man said, striding forward. Gabrielle mourned the fact that she would not get to speak with the Red Woman. She glanced at Fleur, but Fleur was watching the girl, Luna Lovegood.

Luna was grinning at Fleur. Fleur’s smile grew.

Grom made a move, beckoning his brothers and the Delacours along with him.

“No.”

The Red Woman had finally spoken.

Grom and his brothers stopped, staring at her.

“No?” Lestrange asked.

“The Delacour sisters have been requested,” the Red Woman said.

Luna Lovegood finally pranced down the steps, surprising nearly everyone. She nearly collided with Fleur, grabbing her hands and pulling her forward, excited.

“Ainu. Fleur, I’ve been waiting for you,” Luna Lovegood whispered, excitedly. She stood on her toes, and even still, was only able to press a kiss to Fleur’s jaw.

The Red Woman crooked her finger at Gabrielle.

“Come, Gabrielle,” the Red Woman called.

Grom’s hand shot out to grab her wrist. “How does she know you? Did you like to me?” Grom growled out.

“I know her like my marrow. Come here, Gabrielle. Fleur,” the Red Woman said.
She did not sound like the type of woman to repeat herself a third time. Slowly, Grom released her, allowing himself to be ushered away by Lestrange. Luna Lovegood grabbed Fleur’s arm, clinging to her, and pulling her forward. Gabrielle slowly walked closer, never looking away from the Red Woman.

“We were requested. By him,” Gabrielle said as she stood next to the Red Woman.

The Red Woman hummed and began to lead them forward.

“And he’s in there?” Fleur asked softly.

The Red Woman nodded, slowly. Her eyes were staring straight ahead and when they weren’t, she glanced at Gabrielle from the corner of her eye, curious about her.

“He is. He wants to meet you,” the Red Woman said.

Luna Lovegood clung tighter to Fleur’s side. “After he knows that you are like me, he will want to know you more. We are important. Ainu.”

Even still, Gabrielle wasn’t entirely sure of what that meant, but the way Fleur had instantly taken to Lovegood showed that she was safe, in some way. At least, she didn’t seem like that a threat that Gabrielle couldn’t dispatch if the need arose.

"And there’s someone else that will want to speak to you,” the Red Woman said. She turned to the redhead pair of twins that stood in the Entrance Hall. They were short and stocky but had a hardened look in their eyes. They had seen war. "Go fetch the War Bride. She'll want to speak with them.”

The two twins nodded, rushing off almost immediately. Gabrielle turned her attention back to the situation at hand. She glanced at the Red Woman.

“You’re...you’re a Slytherin,” she said slowly.

The Red Woman’s eyes widened. “How did you...yes.”

Gabrielle did something she hadn’t done in a long while. She blushed.

“I...I was obsessed with Albion. When I was a child. You look just like Bellatrix Chaos-Bringer and Andromeda Empath. You have their eyes and their mouth and their nose,” Gabrielle said quietly. “Fenrir...he had books full of portraits of them.”

The Red Woman’s eyes softened. “I am Nymphadora Tonks, daughter of Andromeda Slytherin,” she introduced as they reached the final pair of double doors. She glanced over at them. “Don’t feel like you must bow. He won’t care.”

And with those words, she waved her wand, sending the doors inward.

There was a long plain black runner from the door to the onyx throne that sat at the far end of the hall. It was lined with people—Order of the Phoenix members—the firebird emblazoned on their chests.

Gabrielle stared at the man who sat on the onyx throne with narrowed eyes. Her hand fell to rest on the pommel of her silver sword. She reached down, running her fingers over the edge of the silver blade, reassuring her that it was there. That she could fight if she needed to. Fleur's hand tightened on her shoulder, a warning but also support. Gabrielle would speak on behalf of the pair of them.
The man that sat on the onyx throne was easily the most beautiful person that Gabrielle had ever seen. He was more beautiful than a Veela—red lips parted over straight white teeth. He was nearly as pale as Gabrielle, but it contrasted with his lovely raven hair. Dressed in red-dyed Basilisk scales and fur and velvet, and silver tree branches dripping with rubies jutting from his head in a crown from his messy hair, he was both otherworldly and frightening human. He was staring at them with a curiosity that hurt.

He was both so far away and so close. Gabrielle could feel the power beating off of the man. She looked at the man that stood at the King’s side, blood-red eyes piercing them, looking between Gabrielle and the Red Woman.

“You are Gabrielle Greyback. The Alpha of Laug.”

The man’s voice was soft and lilting, affecting as well as a Veela’s voice would.

“Yes,” Gabrielle said, cutting through any enchantments. She could see...something hazy around the King, like his beauty gave him a strange power. "You are King Harry Wildfyre of House Gryffindor. The Fairest. The Wyrdfod."

The Wyrdfod raised an eyebrow and gave a slow smile.

“I’ve been called that from time to time, yes.”

The Wyrdfod was more impressive and more terrifying and lovelier than Gabrielle had imagined. And yet, she could practically hear the blood pumping in his veins, his mortality as visible as a little bird’s. It suddenly struck her that this man was either absurdly stupid-lucky or absurdly stupid-blessed; he should’ve been long dead by now.

"My sister sees you in dreams. She is Ainu," Gabrielle said, striding forward, powerfully. She ignored the way everyone shifted in the room. She only stopped at the base of the throne when the Dark Lord shifted, pulling the hauntingly pale wand from his side, pointing it at her. "You are blessed. You are Deliverer. You have burned a fleet of ships, and conquered lands. Men tremble at the sight of you. Women pray to you as if you were a god. You have done the impossible."

The Wyrdfod smiled. “So, have you.”

“No, I haven’t,” Gabrielle said arrogantly.

“You’ve killed Fenrir Greyback, the Wolf of Laug,” the Wyrdfod said.

Gabrielle refused to wince. Instead, she blinked. She had shed that weakness of her, like an old snakeskin. And yet, even still, she felt an old ache inside of her—like a phantom limb. Fenrir's smile was burned into the back of her eyelids. Her love. Gabrielle opened her eyes again.

The observers were watching with disbelief. They couldn’t believe that she was the Alpha.


“Oh, my dear, I know a thing or two about loving monsters,” the Wyrdfod said and he reached up without looking away from her, brushing his fingers against the Dark Lord’s sleeves, pulling his wrist down.

The tension in Gabrielle’s shoulders drained away when the Dark Lord’s wand was no longer pointed at her.
“They said, that he could change a man into a wolf even without the moon’s power. They say that he was a slobbering beast. They say that he couldn’t be killed,” the Wyrfod said, his lips twisted into a dry smile and Gabrielle couldn’t help her bark of laughter.

She hadn’t laughed in ages.

Gabrielle shook her head. “Anyone can be killed.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello, world! I've returned!

I'm so sorry that this took me such a long time to get out. This chapter was really hard for me. I think it was the weird blowjob scene that's just right in the middle. It serves a narrative purpose in the sense that it has to do with Harry's personal growth/regression, but it feels so extraneous when examining the big picture: i.e. the war.

Anyway, please comment. Comments fuel me to update faster! Also, I really like questions and I try to respond to like every question/comment, so feel free to shoot a few at me. I know I missed some last chapter, but March was...weird for me.
“Anyone can be killed.”

The words hovered in the air. Gabrielle swallowed as she realized how those words could be taken. The Order surrounding the Wyrdfod seemed on edge. But, the Wyrdfod only grinned, showing off his blinding white teeth like they were fangs. The Dark Lord hadn’t even moved. He simply stared at Gabrielle as if she were shit that he had accidentally stepped in. Gabrielle nearly shrunk into herself from the weight of such a gaze. Two gazes, tearing her apart and staring at her soft insides, ready to tear into her with the venom of a viper, and the righteous fury of a lion.

“Your Grace—” Gabrielle began.

But, she was interrupted. There was a bit of a commotion outside. A familiar voice barked at someone and the Wyrdfod straightened, interest entering his sharp green eyes. The Delacour sisters turned around as one, staring wide-eyed at the doors. They caught sight of her—her tanned skin, those wild curls.

“Who is…” Hermione Granger trailed off, turning away from the redheaded twins. She stared, slack-mouthed at the Delacours. “Fleur.”

No one moved.

“Hermione,” Fleur whispered, her voice cracking.

And then, Hermione was flying down the runner, crashing into their bodies, her arms wrapping around them. Gabrielle's knees buckled and the three women fell to the ground, kneeling and clinging to one another. A heart-wrenching sound ripped its way free from Hermione's throat. They were a mess of cornflower silk hair and brown curls. Gabrielle's cheek was pressed into the warm brown skin of Hermione's shoulder, and she could taste salt on her tongue. She was crying. She hadn’t cried since Fenrir.

Gabrielle didn’t remember if she had cried when she’d left Fenrir.

Fleur pulled back, holding Hermione by her shoulders, looking at her. She flinched back violently.

“Oh. Oh, Hermione. I am sorry. I am so sorry. I am a fool. The biggest fool,” Fleur hiccuped, trembling with her grief and Hermione cupped Fleur's face, shaking her head.

“No. No. No. I...Gods, I thought I’d never see you again. I thought I’d never see you both again,” Hermione said, wiping her tears from her cheeks. She turned to Gabrielle, eyes wide, cupping her cheek. Gabrielle pressed her cheek into Hermione’s hand. “You look so different. Older. Gabrielle Delacour.”

“Gabrielle Greyback,” Gabrielle corrected with a whisper.

Fleur winced.
“I...I heard...what kind of monster he was,” Hermione whispered and she leaned forward, pressing two kisses to Gabrielle’s cheeks. “I know what it is to be stuck with a monster.”

“I wasn’t stuck with him. I loved him. My name is Gabrielle Greyback,” Gabrielle said blankly. Hermione stared at her for a long time before looking over at Fleur. Fleur stared back, unyielding in not only her grief but her support for her sister as well.


Gabrielle’s expression cracked and she leaned forward, clinging to Hermione. “We missed you too...sister.”

"Down this way, Lady Chancellor," Lord Crouch said as he led Narcissa down the winding stone staircase. She descended deeper into Hogwarts Castle, apprehension tucked away tight in her chest. Crouch sounded giddier than he ever had before, but Narcissa kept her hope close. "We consulted many ideas to allow you the advantage over the Pretender, but this...this is our shining achievement."

Narcissa hummed but said nothing else. Lord Crouch lifted his wand higher to light the way, but Narcissa knew each stone as well as she knew her bones. She could travel through Hogwarts in the darkest of nights without a slip or a stumble.

Lord Crouch pushed open the final door and it opened into a cavernous dungeon. Each step they took echoed, booming uncomfortably. Lord Crouch still sometimes flinched. But, Narcissa didn’t. She had played hide and seek in this dungeon, chasing a little bird’s shadow. Narcissa waved her wand and the flames all burned just a little brighter. She imagined that just nearby, if she tilted her head, she could hear the echoes of a Chamber that her father had kept hidden from her. They were just as far deep beneath.

“Tell me, Lord Crouch, what have you made for me?” Narcissa asked.

Lord Crouch turned to her, his watery eyes strangely pale in the fierce firelight. He leaned forward and led her to his workbench. The entire table was covered with threadbare stained fabric and Lord Crouch looked at her from the other side of the table.

“We cannot pretend that the Beggar King does not have forces we may not be able to reckon with. He has the power of creatures, the former Lord Chancellor, and your sister on his side,” Lord Crouch said firmly. Narcissa’s lips curled back.

“And you are telling me the obvious, why, Lord Crouch?” she asked, her voice cold and cutting like ice. Lord Crouch steeled himself, willing himself not to flinch away. Narcissa’s lips curled into a biting smile, exposing just a hint of her gleaming teeth.

“Because. I have created something that will put you on equal grounds with him,” Lord Crouch whispered. And then he waved his wand, Banishing the sheet. Narcissa’s eyes narrowed as she stared at what had been dramatically presented.

It was a broom—if it could be called that.
Narcissa’s brow furrowed at the long crooked piece of wood, a collection of twigs at the end, some still bearing dried brown leaves. She turned a furious glare back onto Lord Crouch and he flinched away from her, already feeling the effect of her icy rage.

“What is this?” she hissed through bared teeth.

Lord Crouch said nothing. Instead, he smiled and reached out with his hand and rasped, "Up."

The broomstick smacked his hand, leaping up as if called and then very slowly he let go. The broomstick floated in the air, held aloft by magic that Narcissa had never seen before. For a long time, she stared at the floating boomstick, imagining the possibilities of such a creation.

And then, she turned to Lord Crouch and did something she had not done in a very long time—she smiled.

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MIRROR

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“Godric’s Hollow,” Theseus Scamander murmured as he looked around their shared rooms. They had decided to occupy a single set of chambers in the vast Gryffindor stronghold. They would be gone in the morning anyway.

“The seat of Harry’s family,” Sirius confirmed. He ran his hand over his face, groaning softly. “I haven’t been here since…”

"Since before Lily was locked away in the tower," Remus said softly. Sirius grimaced at the man’s words but nodded. The two Marauders glanced over at Theseus, but he looked intrigued by the room, going around to inspect every nook and cranny he could find. "When we were good and whole and stupid."

“And stupid,” Sirius reiterated quietly. “We were so stupid. To trust Slytherins.”

Theseus looked up as he rolled out his bedroll. He didn’t say anything, but his lips were pursed, as if he wanted to agree, but wouldn’t let himself do so. After all, Albion wasn’t his land. He could do as he wanted. Sirius relaxed just a bit more as he waved his wand, letting his bedroll lay flat on the ground, Conjuring a few more pillows for his back. Theseus raised an eyebrow.

“Pillows?” he asked, poking gently at the overstuffed velvet monstrosities.

"I was in Azkaban for nearly 20 years. I think I deserve a little comfort," Sirius retorted. Theseus raised his hands in surrender, and Sirius relaxed, laying on his back, arms folded behind his head as he stared at the ceiling.

Godric's Hollow. This was the place that, in an ideal world, Lily would've used as a summer home. In an ideal world, Queen Lily the Just would rule over Albion with James as her Prince Consort. Harry would've run about the grounds, laughter in the air, beautiful because of his joy. Not whatever magic made him look like that. Not that that was bad.

Because Harry was beautiful, in a terrifyingly inhuman sort of way.

It was haunting to look at him, and so, so easy to just forget that he was Lily and James’ son, because he looked like them, and then looked not a thing like them at all. It was disconcerting.
“What are you thinking about?” Remus asked.

Sirius blinked, coming back to himself. He looked over at Remus’ worry and then at Theseus’ polite show of being disinterested when he was terribly intrigued. Then, he looked back at Remus and smiled, tired and slow.

“How. Lily. James. This would be Lily’s summer home. If everything had happened as it should have happened,” Sirius murmured gently. Remus’ expression crumpled and he looked away, nodding slowly.

“Yes,” he said, half-heartedly.

“Do you disagree?” Sirius asked.

Remus looked away. "I think that...though this is not what I expected out of life, a lot of it...I do not regret."

Sirius’ temper flared and then, he remembered. His cousin.

“Tonks. And Teddy,” Sirius said.

Remus nodded, his confirmation unnecessary. “I love Tonks and our son. I do not regret them.”

"He is son to you both, but she isn't your wife," Sirius retorted. "Why is that?"

"Her destiny hinders us from taking any further steps," Remus said, and then he clammed up as if he were afraid that he'd said too much. He sighed and looked away, falling onto his own bedroll and he stared up at the ceiling. With a wave of his wand, he dimmed the candles until they just barely lit the room. Still, Sirius could make out the amber of his friend's eyes. "So much has changed. This would’ve been easier with Lily and James."

“It would’ve been unnecessary if they were still alive,” Sirius countered.

“Would it have been? Sometimes, I think...this was all fate, wasn’t it?” Remus asked.

“Divination, Remus? You never put much stock into prophecy before,” Sirius challenged, rolling onto his side, his face practically sinking into the velvet of his pillows.

Remus shook his head. “This is different. They call him Wyrdfod, you know. Harry, I mean. Wyrdfod means ‘Fateborn’. A king, white as snow, that grows and breathes fire. A king that will lead the creatures to peace through war,” Remus explained and he sighed, shaking his head. “Tonks always that we all must play our parts. She has a part to play.”

“But, you would marry her, if you could?” Sirius asked.

“She’s a Lady, Sirius,” Remus said like this was something he’d repeated over and over again.

Sirius’ face twisted at the very idea of nobility.

“She’s a prostitute and a Slytherin. Her occupation as a lady of the night is more honorable than her Slytherin blood,” Sirius retorted and Remus scoffed looking away.

“I don’t care that she’s a prostitute.”

“And you well shouldn’t,” Sirius said. “Just as you shouldn’t care that she’s a lady. Even if she’s a Slytherin.”
Remus was silent for a long moment.

“That are other things stopping us,” Remus said, conclusively, definitely, and Sirius knew not to push anymore.

Sirius sighed, turning his head to look at Theseus, but he was still playing good, pretending not to be listening and remembering every word shared between old friends.

“Remus, I’d...like to go to the tower,” Sirius finally said.

Remus’ breath stopped in the darkness of the night. After a long time, minutes even, he asked, “Are you sure?”

“No,” Sirius snorted. “But...there’s something I must retrieve and...I never got to pay my respects.”

ON

Draco lounged in the great ugly Gilded Throne. He shifted atop it, refusing his mother’s side stare. She always stared at him as such, now, like she knew something that he did not. Draco resisted the urge to spit at her feet. His mother was a level-headed politician, but there was a reason that he sat on the Gilded Throne, and not she. Inheritance, when it wasn’t being manipulated by his traitor uncle, led through the male-line. There was something to his blood and masculinity that made him correct in certain matters, and his mother would never quite grasp that, no matter how intelligent she was.

“Draco—” she began.

“Mother,” he hissed, straightening in his throne as the echo of Pansy’s voice filled the room, just outside of the Throne Hall.

Draco knew what Narcissa meant to say. He did not need a cushion for comfort. His mad witch of an aunt had sat on the Gilded Throne for many years without one, he would do the same.

His subjects—the few that remained, though they were the best of the realm—all tensed at the sound of Pansy’s voice, shrill and confident.

“Announcing the Order of Nidavellir!” she called as the doors swung open with the force of magic and Pansy stepped through the doors and to the side, dressed in the loveliest emerald green gown, though Draco preferred her in red.

Almost immediately, they entered with fanfare.

Dressed for the coming winter, they wore long leather coats, trimmed with fur. Their shaved heads were capped with fur hats as well, and all were armed with heavy wooden staffs, all intricately curved. With each step, they slammed them on stone, singeing the ground. They moved with unity, more than Draco’s troops ever had, even with Dolohov training them.

And rounding out the back was the legendary Igor Karkaroff and Viktor Krum.

They looked as formidable as they promised to be, and expensive, as much as they were promised to be, as well.

When they kneeled in front of the Gilded Throne, Draco was careful not to let his expression shift.
As he glanced at his mother from the corner of his eye, he could see that he hadn’t quite succeeded. She looked scornful, and the crease between her eyebrow was from definite worry. Draco stiffened in his seat, throwing his shoulders back. His mother had no need to worry. Draco was King, and a good one. He could handle this.

“I am Draco of House Slytherin, the first of my name!” Draco announced, standing to his feet. “Emperor of the Four Directions of the Albion Empire and Lord of Hogwarts.”

He let his words echo, sure of how impressive they were.

Igor Karkaroff swept into a low bow and already Draco was unimpressed, could see the way he would simper to get into Draco's favor. But, Viktor Krum had not bowed. Instead, the foreign man, pale and head-shoven and rather ugly, with his crooked nose, stepped forward, his long furs dragging along the blood splattered runner.

“You are Lord of Hogwarts,” he agreed in a thick accent. “But, you can’t say that you are the Emperor of the Four Directions, can you?”

There was a rumble of dissent amongst the crowd and Draco felt his cheeks grow hot.

“You will—” Pansy began, voice shrill.

Draco stood sharply and everything fell silent again.

“What do you mean?” he demanded.

Viktor Krum did not seem to have any preservation skills whatsoever.

“In the East, they have crowned Lord Longbottom King. The Ironborn. In the South and the West, they have crowned Harry Wildfyre their King. You know his many names,” Viktor Krum said.


Draco twitched.

“And what of it? I am still the rightful heir,” Draco snarled. He hadn’t noticed that he’d pulled his wand until he had, and even still, Viktor Krum didn’t flinch.

“Right. Wrong. Who cares if you are dead?” Viktor asked, with a shrug. And then he smiled, a mouth full of crooked regrown teeth. “Would you like to truly be Emperor, your Imperial Majesty?”


Viktor Krum laughed and strode up the runner and up the steps, without a care in the world. He clapped Draco on the back. “Oh, we go hunting.”

The camp was even larger than what Gabrielle had first perceived. It stretched farther than Gabrielle had thought possible, a bright cluster of buildings, tall and new, and just beyond it, a tent city.
bustling with more people than could be counted. At least, it was far larger than Gabrielle's home city, large enough to truly get lost in. She paused when she came to the edge of the city proper. She could see that past the buildings, it was the verifiable grounds of a war.

Soldiers leered at her as they passed, despite the fact that nearly all of her skin was covered. Men and women alike stared at the impassive expression on her face. Gabrielle didn’t hesitate anymore. She strode forward, eyes narrowed as she entered the military grounds. Immediately, she felt at home amongst the smell of sweat the sound of steel clashing against steel.

“Alpha.”

Gabrielle looked, wide-eyed at the person that had addressed her. The centaur was tall and fierce, and so utterly calm that it set Gabrielle on edge. There was a twinkle in his blue eyes and he crossed one arm over his chest and dipped his head towards her in respect.

“Don’t...just Gabrielle. I’m not an Alpha. Just Gabrielle Greyback,” Gabrielle said, the words spilling from her mouth in a rush. The centaur hummed.

“I am Firenze. Is there something in particular that you look for?” Firenze the centaur asked.

Gabrielle pushed back her cloak, revealing the long silver sword that had been fashioned with her in mind. If Firenze found it odd that the Alpha of Laug carried a silver sword, he didn’t say anything. She couldn’t read anything from his face. She hated it.

“I want to know where I can go to train,” Gabrielle said quite calmly, hiding her fear. “Where are Grom and his brotherhood?”

“Watching Lady Tonks train the Adored Ones,” Firenze said. “Follow and I shall lead.”

He began forward without watching to see if she would come. He just knew. Gabrielle’s brow furrowed. The Adored Ones sounded familiar. She had never been as into culture and history of other countries as she had been with the Albion Empire. But, she knew that Alfheim was present in some way as were the United City-States. And ‘Lady Tonks’. The Red Woman, she believed. Firenze did not seek to clarify his words.

Instead, they walked in companionable silence. As they walked deeper into the camps, Gabrielle saw that they weren't only reserved for soldiers. Children—creature and human alike—ran about, laughing and playing games and singing songs that Gabrielle had never read of in languages that she had never heard of. A centaur foal galloped past, whooping, a play bow with felt-tipped arrows in hand.

“Sorry, Firenze!” he shouted as he cut past them, but he didn’t stop.

Firenze smiled genially down at Gabrielle.

"It is a lively camp," he said as an explanation.

Gabrielle would have responded if Firenze hadn’t come to a stop at the edge of the training grounds. Gabrielle looked over and her eyes widened.

The Adored Ones were powerful-looking beings. None of them resembled one another, but there was a toughness to their expressions, and their bodies were roped with muscle. Three were dueling against a single woman—the Red Woman. They swung heavy broadswords. One of the women, slight with a shoulder-length sheet of brown hair, looked barely taller than her own sword but she swung it easily. They all went hard at the Red Woman, snarling and spitting and growling.
But, the Red Woman looked at ease.

She moved gracefully, deflecting each blow with a flick of her wand or a glance of her sword. Her red cloak swirled around her as she danced out of their way, her dark eyes flashing with mischief.

“Come now. Won’t you strike me?” she taunted with a fierce grin. She looked past the trio of Adored Ones. “How is Mama doing, my boy?”

Gabrielle looked to where her gaze fell. Sitting just beyond the controlled fight was a young blonde woman with ringlets of blonde curls spiraling from her head. Sitting in her lap was a little boy—barely older than a toddler, Gabrielle would say. His hair was a shocking turquoise, and he was wrapped in a little dark blue cloak that looked, quite frankly, adorable on him. He was grinning, clapping chubby hands together.

“Good! Mama is so good!” he cheered.

“Do you hear that? He thinks his Mama is good,” the Red Woman laughed.

The tall dark-skinned man came to a stop, breathing heavily, his hands pressed against his knees. “How haven’t you broken a sweat yet?” he demanded.

“Come on, Dean. She’s Tonks,” the brown-haired woman said.

“Do you yield too, Susan?” Tonks asked.

“Aye,” Susan said. She glanced past Dean at the last young man who had collapsed in exhaustion on the ground. “I think Ernie yields as well.”

Tonks laughed and fell into a bow. The spectators all clapped raucously and Tonks turned to look at them, bite and mischief in her eyes. “Are you entertained?” she roared.

The soldiers roared back at her.

“She’s so good,” Gabrielle whispered to Firenze.

Firenze hummed. “She is the King’s Sword. She was trained by the fiercest of warriors and the Darkest of witches. She is a Slytherin. Of course, she is good,” Firenze said serenely. And then he turned knowing blue eyes onto the young Alpha of Laug. “Won’t you fight her?”

Gabrielle scoffed. “And embarrass myself before the Lady of Whispers and the Wyrdvod’s army? I think not,” Gabrielle said with a shake of her head.

As if she had heard Gabrielle, the Red Woman turned towards her. She straightened, a strangely satisfied look in her eyes. She took a self-assured step.

“Won’t you fight me...No One?” the Red Woman asked.

Gabrielle felt cold.

“How do you...” Gabrielle trailed off.

Tonks’ lips spread into a wide smile. “I want to spar with you,” Tonks said firmly.

“Don’t do it,” Ernie shouted from the ground, still sounding out of breath. He wheezed, rolling over onto his stomach and coughing as if he couldn’t get enough air to his lungs. “She’ll beat you black and blue.”
“I want to spar with you, No One.”

“I am not No One,” Gabrielle spat with a fury. Tonks looked pleased with herself, to get such a reaction out of her. “I am Gabrielle Greyback.”

“Then, fight me, Gabrielle Greyback,” Tonks said, bowing low.

Gabrielle discarded her cloak to the ground, and she took a step forward, her silver chainmail rattling against her body. Tonks didn’t make a move to remove her own red blood cloak. Slowly, Gabrielle unsheathed her silver sword, glittering in the high noon sun. She held it before her, eyes narrowed on Tonks. They took a deep breath, almost in sync.

And then, Tonks lashed out, spiraling and throwing her sword down. Gabrielle jerked out of the way, dodging the fatal blow. She heard Susan gasp.

“That could have killed her!” Susan shouted.

“I know,” Tonks said with a bared grin. She looked at Gabrielle with a bright smile. “Fight, girl with no name.”

Gabrielle’s eyes widened at the moniker and then narrowed at the challenge. A tiny smile widened across her face and then she was darting forward, throwing her silver sword down just as Tonks brought up her sword to block it. It became a dance of thrusts and parries and sweeping silver and steel. Each time Gabrielle thought there was an opening, she went for it, but Tonks beat her back with a ferocity Gabrielle hadn’t expected from a spar.

An exchange of violence was enough to set Gabrielle alight and her small smile quickly turned into a grin as she darted back and forth, spinning with the dance. Tonks was laughing, wicked humor in her eyes, full of such utter delight. Neither of them noticed the growing crowd around them as they met blow for blow.

It was only when Tonks spun, her cloak flapping behind her, that Gabrielle faltered. She caught sight of the Wyrdfod just behind Tonks, a torn expression of surprise on his face, as he stood next to his forever-shadow, the Dark Lord. Tonks had no problem taking advantage of the split-second of Gabrielle’s non-focus, kicking out. Gabrielle flew back, slamming into the dirt with a thud. She rolled twice, cracking her jaw against the hard ground. Her sword skittered from her grip.

The was a burst of applause and Gabrielle pushed herself up, spitting out saliva and blood. Tonks was bowing, obscenely, her lips curled back in laughter. Tonks swooped down on the young blonde woman with the babe, snatching the babe into her arms. The child laughed, delighted with his mother’s triumph.

“Mama is so good!” the child cooed and Tonks pressed kisses to his plump cheeks.

“I am,” Tonks confirmed, and then, she added with a sly smile, “but, so is Gabrielle Greyback.”

Gabrielle stood, and inclined her head. “But, not as good as you.”

“You’ll get there,” Tonks said as if it were a given fact. She looked over her shoulder at the Wyrdfod, grinning. “Harry.”

The Wyrdfod did not smile back.
As they walked the long winding road, Pansy stood taller with all of those eyes on her. She kept her smile, gentle and smug, and even still, she knew that they did not love her. They did not love her like they had loved Hermione Granger, and then, Daphne Greengrass. If anything, Pansy thought that they looked tired. They looked curious: why had their King not secured a wife? How could he have squandered two good matches?

Because he is mad, Pansy did not shout to them. Because he is a raving mad pawn.

No, she did not shout that. Instead, she clung to him and smiled because perhaps Draco mad and perhaps, he was a pawn, but she had loved him since they were children, and she didn't know how not to love him. Even when he made her bleed, she didn't know how not to love him and didn't that she mean she loved him most of all.

What did Pansy know of love anyway?

Draco was speaking. “—and when then is over, we will parade his head through these streets. I will have his dragon’s skull placed in the Great Hall. What do you think? Do you agree, Pansy?” Draco asked. He hissed at her almost immediately, his hand tightening over hers, digging his nails in when Pansy didn’t respond immediately.

“That sounds lovely, darling,” Pansy said gently. “But...what about the others? What about your uncle? What about your aunt? What about...Daphne Greengrass and her family?”

Draco twitched at the very mention of her. Daphne.

He had never hurt Daphne, Pansy thought. It almost made her proud. Draco hurt things that he wanted because he had never been taught how not to. Maybe he’d never wanted Daphne as much as he wanted Pansy.

“I—” Draco began.

“Please, your Imperial Majesty! Your Imperial Majesty!” someone shouted.

Pansy paused, her brow furrowing as she looked around for the peasant that had shouted. She glanced behind and searched Antonin Dolohov’s face for an answer, but the man looked just as confused. He nodded at her and Pansy turned back to Draco, cooing at him almost immediately.

“Someone calls for their King?” Draco asked. Then, louder, “WHO CALLS FOR—”

“No, my darling. It’s fine. Someone’s addled mind—” Pansy murmured.

“YOUR MAJESTY, WE’RE HUNGRY!”

“We’re starving!” Another voice.

They swelled, all echoing with the concaveness of hunger and Pansy shuddered at the wails from children and adults alike. They all shouted, calling for Draco’s reaction but he could give them none as long as he couldn’t parse out their words. As Pansy crafted an explanation in her mind, ready to tip off her tongue, the shouts reached its apex and then—

Shit marked Draco’s pinkened cheek, splattered up his head, staining the collar of his robes. Pansy gasped in horror and Draco turned white with fury.
He spun, wand pulled out in the general direction and then he snarled, “Avada Kedavra.”

A riot broke out immediately as the jet of green reached its mark and a someone toppled from the second story of a building and into the street. They were rabid, all fighting and almost immediately the Aurors were tossing Protego Charms and Pansy flung her arm around Draco, Disapparating on the spot with little abandon. She Apparated onto the edge of the ground of Hogwarts Castle, Dolohov appeared with a crack just behind and she gasped, clutching her side.

She was bleeding. She had Splinched herself.

“Draco, my love—” Pansy grasped, reaching for him with red-slicked hands.

"WHY DID YOU LEAVE? I WANT THEM KILLED! KILL THEM ALL!" Draco roared, shoving her away. Pansy crashed into the grass and she whined, watching blood stain the turquoise of her robes. But, Draco only had eyes for his Head of Aurors.

“My first concern is you, your Imperial Majesty,” Dolohov insisted. Not even he submitted to Draco’s whims, like Pansy. Dolohov had been empowered by Narcissa’s cunt.

“I’m fine!” Draco snarled. “Go back and kill them!”

“He can’t do that,” Pansy gasped, searching for her wand. She gasped, pointing it at her side. “Diffindo.”

A tear appeared, revealing the slight chunk of meat that was missing. Not enough to be fatal, but it would surely scar.

"I didn't ask you! Very well, I'll consult my mother! Or Krum. He will gladly deal out punishment to Hogsmeade with me," Draco hissed and he stormed off, leaving her bleeding in the grass.

Pansy whimpered and stared down, watching an earthworm work its way up between curling blades of grass. She refused to stare up at Dolohov.

“Don’t—” Pansy mewled but before she could finish her words, Dolohov was Levitating her out in front of him and walked with her. “What are you doing?”

“You are the Lady of Whispers and second to Narcissa, the only one that can control him. I can’t very well let you bleed out,” Dolohov said cruelly. And then, the way he stared at her. She knew that looked well.

“Don’t pity me,” she hissed through tears of rage. They walked through the halls, past the bent heads of the gentry and the maids, walking until they reached her rooms. Dolohov set her down and snapped his fingers, Summoning a house elf. “Don’t bother. I can’t take care of this myself.”

“What do you—” Dolohov began, but Pansy had already crossed to the apothecary of sorts that she kept locked in the corner of her room. As she moved, she tore off the top of her robes, letting them hang.

She reached for the Dittany and splashed it generously on her side, ignoring the burn and twinge of new skin growing in. From the corner of her eye, she glared at Dolohov, but he stared at her back, striped in scars from whips and the bites marks on her shoulders. She wore them like badges of pride.

“He has made you his whipping boy,” Dolohov drawled.

“I do my duty. You do yours,” Pansy hissed nastily. She turned on him, her breasts exposed to him.
Those were perfect. Draco liked her breasts very much.

Dolohov didn’t seem to know what to do. Pansy laughed, harsh and loud. Dolohov shouldn’t be so surprised. Draco and he had much in common, though Draco preferred grown men to little girls. Pansy wanted to eviscerate him, to tear Dolohov limb from limb. But, no, the Lady Chancellor had him in her bed, and that protected him. Pansy tasted sour bile on the back of her tongue.

“Why do you laugh?” Dolohov asked.

“Because they are starving, and soon, so shall we,” Pansy hissed. “They were right to throw shit at him.”

Pansy didn’t need to clarify. Draco was off to fetch Viktor Krum, his new playmate, and they would wreak havoc on Hogsmeade, just as they had been on the rest of the surrounding lands, where the other contenders’ holds were weakest.

“What do you mean so shall we?” Dolohov asked.

“Don’t be a fool, Dolohov,” Pansy sneered. “Vegetation comes from Essetir. Grain comes from Afallon. All we have is meat. And how long can we survive on carcasses that die? Soon, it won’t matter who wins this war. Winter is coming and we will starve to death.”

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**WHO**

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To Lord Neville of House Longbottom, the Ironborn:

King-Emperor Harry Wildfyre of Houses Gryffindor and Potter, the First of His Name, Rightful Emperor of Albion, King of the Four Directions, the Wyrdfod, Protector of the Realm, Alpha of the Pride, Lord of Afallon, Lord of Karnaron, and the Fairest-of-Them-All:

Invites you to Westeron. My King commands the combined forces of Alfheim, Karnaron, and Afallon, a fleet from the City-States, legions of creatures, and a dragon. The Albion Empire will bleed as long as Draco Malfoy, the Usurper, sits on the Gilded Throne. The rightful King is in need of the forces of Essetir to truly take back his throne. You will come to Afallon and bend the knee.

Lord Voldemort of House Slytherin, Chancellor of the Albion Empire, Warden of the North

“He didn’t even write his own letter to demand we bend the knee,” Neville said quietly. He passed it along to Daphne, but before the young woman could even read it, Augusta snatched it from her hands, shrewd eyes scanning over the words.

"He's the ‘Rightful Emperor’ and you're only a Lord, in his eyes. Of course, he wouldn't write to you directly," Daphne said dryly, looking out of the window quietly. She walked away from both Neville and Augusta, one hand pressed to her gently rounded stomach.
She looked pregnant now, and that frightened Neville.

“What do we do?” Neville asked, looking between Augusta and Daphne.

"We do nothing. We have more pressing concerns," Augusta declared as if she were unworried about the rightful Emperor of Albion Empire swooping down on his dragon, righteously burning them to cinders with the Dark Lord at his back.

“What could be more pressing than a man going around on a dragon?” Neville groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. Daphne leaned forward.

“He’s the Wyrdfod, Grandmother. Maybe—” Daphne began.

Augusta snorted, pushing away her ward-granddaughter’s words about things that she believed to only be fairy stories. Daphne’s mouth twisted into a grimace and she crossed her arms over her swollen chest, staring at the older woman, waiting for the reprimand she knew was to come.

“You know what’s more important,” Augusta said, waving her hand lazily at Daphne. “We must discuss...that.”

" ‘That' is my unborn child,” Daphne said, her voice flat.

Augusta snorted. “The spawn must be dealt with.”

Neville flinched at his grandmother’s calloused words, rubbing at the worry between his eyebrows. Daphne was still as an untouched lake, never flinching.

“Don’t call it that. It’s a baby,” Neville insisted.

Augusta scoffed.

“It’s the Slytherin King’s bastard,” Augusta returned, scathing and harsh. She looked over at Daphne with a hard look in her eyes. “There are matrons ready to terminate. The moment you say it.”

“I won’t be saying it, grandmother,” Daphne murmured, rubbing her hand over the slowly growing roundness of her. Neville saw the adoration in her eyes, how much she wanted this. “It’s my baby.”

“It’s an abomination. A half—”

“Don’t call it that,” Daphne hissed, and for a moment, just a moment, she looked like she did in the water—savage and wild. And then, she pulled back, her gaze softening. “I want this. I want my baby.”

Augusta made another sound in the back of her throat. Daphne glared back, just as fierce.

And as always, Neville stood in between.

“I thank you again, Lord Prewett, for escorting me,” Fleur said demurely, looking up at the handsome man from under long, pale eyelashes. She would be a fool not to see how handsome Bill Weasley-Prewett was, with his long red hair and the curved fang earring hanging from one ear. “I am
“It is no trouble. I promise,” Bill said with an earnestness that became him. He looked at her from the corner of his eyes, and Fleur flushed with pleasure. He did not look at her as one might look at a Veela, but as a man that looked at a woman.

He was not slathering or begging for her approval. He just...looked. She had never liked being looked at more, and at that moment, she considered pulling her scarf from around her lustrous silver hair and letting it glow. But, no, she did not want to see how he reacted to her Veela. Just how he reacted to her. Fleur. She bit her bottom lip to stop herself from smiling too wide.

“It is so large. So much larger than home,” Fleur said.

“Are you comfortable? Here?” Bill asked.

Fleur hummed. “I...I sleep in Hermione’s rooms. And it is nice. I’ve missed her. She is like my sister. She is my sister, in all ways but blood. But, it is more than I am used to,” Fleur admitted.

“Aye,” Bill agreed almost immediately.

Fleur frowned at him. “But, you are a Lord on the Wyrdfod’s council?”

"I wasn't always. I was illegitimate. My mother was a Prewett. My father was a poor blood traitor. Harry legitimized me only recently. We lived in Godric's Hollow when I was a boy, but after my parents were...murdered, we lived in tents at the original Order camp for a long while until we built the Burrow II," Bill explained. His cheeks turned a light pink as if he were shocked by all the information he had offered her. He turned to her. "You are quite easy to talk to."

“Perhaps, it is the Veela lure,” Fleur said, looking down. “It is known to...persuade a man.”

“No,” Bill said so firmly that Fleur looked up, eyes flashing. “It is just you, I think. You are very brave, by the way.”

“I’m not,” Fleur scoffed.

“You left your country with no idea of your future. You saved your sister from the Alpha of Laug.”

“She saved herself,” Fleur retorted.

Bill shook his head. “Not without the silver sword you gave her. You don’t see yourself very clearly, do you, Fleur Delacour?”

“And you do?” Fleur laughed, long and throaty and kind. “You barely know me.”

"I know enough," Bill said shortly and he grinned down at her. Fleur's lips curled into a small, pleased smile. "Your sister dueled Tonks yesterday. Did you know?"

“The Red Woman?” Fleur blurted out.

“Is that what you call her?” Bill asked.

“It’s what I know her as.”

“Well, yes. She held her own,” Bill insisted. Fleur's brow continued to further farther, and Bill scrambled to correct himself. "More than held her own. It was rather extraordinary if I'm to believe it. Tonks is the most formidable warrior we have besides the Dark Lord and Harry.”
Fleur swallowed her own surprise, keeping her eyes trained forward as Bill led her through the camp. She crossed her arms, searching out Gabrielle, but she could find her pale ghost of a sister anywhere. Instead, she caught sight of two other familiar figures, and Fleur couldn’t help the broad smile that crossed her face.

“Hermione!” she called, flagging the young woman down.

Hermione’s head was bent low over a scroll but at Fleur’s call, her gaze shot up, first vicious and suspicious and then soothed into something like content. The corner of her lip quirked into a smile, and Fleur’s heart ached. Hermione had not had much reason to smile back in Laug, but she had certainly smiled more than she did now. Now, Hermione’s smiles seemed hollow.

“Ainu!” Luna called cheerfully from Hermione’s side, and though Fleur did not know her well, her heart fluttered with something like recognition and the word, sister, hissed in her ear.

“Luna,” Fleur said, broad and warm as the two pairs joined in the middle. “What are you two doing out here?”

“Looking for you, Bill,” Hermione added for clarification. She sounded almost surprised and then drew herself up, haughty and strange. “The King has called for a food train to be delivered from here across to Karnaron, to be delivered to Godric’s Hollow. Enough grain for now that we can safely close off the Bridge until after the war.”

Bill’s contentment shifted from something more serious as he deeply considered the financial logistics and as they began to talk shop, Fleur tuned them out. Instead, she turned to look over at Luna. Luna still seemed politely intrigued, though she was humming to herself, a familiar little ditty that made Fleur twitch with excitement.

“You call me ‘Ainu’. Holy One. But, I am no priestess,” Fleur said. For a moment, she wondered if Luna had even heard her. The other woman hadn’t stopped singing.

And then her strange silvery eyes snapped over to her face, pinning Fleur in place.

“And then her strange silvery eyes snapped over to her face, pinning Fleur in place.

“Even your sister agrees that you are Ainu. You can’t deny your nature,” Luna warned, tutting softly. She was still smiling, lazy and happy and she took a step forth, taking Fleur’s hands in hers. “You see things too. There are three of us, you know.”

Fleur’s eyes widened at the very idea of three Ainu. She wondered if they would ever join their other sister.

“I have seen her. Baba Yaga. So has my sister,” Fleur confessed under her breath.

Luna stiffened at the mention. Fleur swallowed hard, wondering.

“She is called many things,” Luna allowed.

“What do you call her?” Fleur asked because this woman...looked just like her.

Luna’s lips tilted into a smile. “Mother.”

FAIREST
Sirius glanced over his shoulder. Theseus and Remus waited patiently. Remus smiled encouragingly, but it only made Sirius turn away. He didn’t want to cry just yet. Instead, he turned back to the entrance of the mausoleum. He looked up at the tower. The tower where Harry had been born. The tower that Sirius and Remus and Pettigrew had gone to visit James and Lily countless times in that year—that one year of peace between depression and war.

He remembered laughter and the smell of spices as Remus had cooked in the cauldron that hung next to Lily’s potions. He remembered pranks and fun, running through the wind. He remembered James’ hazel eyes and Lily’s bright red hair. He remembered it all.

It had all been so simple, once upon a time.

He wouldn’t go up there. He didn’t think he could. He’d break if he did.

So, instead, he would travel down to where their bones were kept.

“Sirius?” Remus asked. “Do you want—”

“I’ll go alone,” Sirius said softly, tearing his eyes away from the crumbling top of the North Tower.

He began his trek forward, his gaze caught on the marble doors. Before he could even touch the doors, they swung open for him, the sound of stone creaking booming across the clearing. Sirius took another deep breath and flicked his wand. The end of it lit up with a soft white light, leading him down the marble stairs, as he began his descent into the cavern. With each step, he felt both colder and warmer, his skin goose-pimpling while the pit of him grew hot and roiled with bile.

Sirius stumbled when he finally met flat ground again after a walk that he felt had lasted for miles. He reached out and flicked his wand, whispering, “Incendio.”

The flames that leaped from his wand landed where they were meant to and the two troughs of oil erupted into flames, and the entire mausoleum was thrown into light. Sirius let out a soft whimper, the kind that had been common when he’d been in Azkaban. He’d always imagined what their graves would look like.

Sirius gasped.

The statue was shaped out of marble. He recognized every inch of her—long hair that curled at her toes, the kind roundness of her jaw, the firm set of her mouth. And her eyes, they were as bright green as they had been in life, as bright a green as Harry’s. Truly, Harry resembled Lily Gryffindor in all ways, most in her loveliness and in her fire.

Even in death, Lily was on fire.

Sirius tripped forward and he felt his feet weigh more and more with each step until he collapsed at his knees at her feet. He could see ash and scorch marks dusting the hem of her marble robes and Sirius sobbed as he looked past her at the words marked on either side of her.

THE PHOENIX HER KNIGHT

“I-I’m s-sorry,” Sirius stammered through his choked sobs, tears splattering against the base of Lily’s statue. He kneeled before it like it was an altar, and she looked like a goddess in Death, and he was
afraid. “I failed you. I failed you!”

He looked up at her for forgiveness, begged James’ bones for forgiveness, but there was silence. Only the sound of his grief echoed back at him. He grabbed at the statue’s ankles and he cried until he could not cry anymore, and his heart ached and his throat felt raw. When he took another shaky breath, he squeezed harder and looked up at Lily.

“I’m sorry, Lily. James,” Sirius whispered. “I will not fail you again.”

And Lily’s eyes twinkled.

Sirius leaned back on his haunches and he gasped as he heard the creak of stone as Lily’s statue shifted back, stone scraping upon stone, and then something there, wrapped in parchment. Sirius reached in and felt around, his hand squeezing tight. His lips parted and a soft breath escaped from him as he peeled the old weathered paper back to peer inside of the package.

A cloak was woven silver.

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"I, Harry Wildfyre, call this meeting to order," Harry barked as he swept into the room, ignoring the squeal of chairs against stone as everyone stood to honor him. Tom was on his heels along with Tonks and Luna and they all crowded around him as he bent over the map that sprang to life, stones sinking and swirling to mimic the topography of the Albion Empire.

His eyes searched from the pieces that were meant to mark the food train and he snarled when he saw that the food train had been replaced by new markers, just as Luna had said.

“What seems to be the problem?” Hermione asked, imperious as ever.

“Fleur Delacour was spinning. She saw something in the present that Luna has brought to my attention,” Harry hissed. Hermione looked disturbed that Fleur and Luna had reported back to Harry first, but Harry had no time to deal with Hermione’s growing worry over loyalties.

“What did she see?” Kingsley asked, already alert.

Harry’s eyes narrowed as he regarded Hermione and Bill.

“They’ve stolen our food,” Harry snarled, stalking around the map. He was restless, and everyone seemed on edge. He looked down at the new markers on the table—the little pieces marking the Order of Nidavellir. Harry laughed, bitterly.

Hermione’s eyes widened. “No...we...Bill and I assigned the best guards we had. They were supposed to meet Remus and Sirius—”

“They didn’t make it halfway,” Harry hissed, pointing an accusing finger at the two. Bill looked hollow at the loss, both monetary and otherwise.

“I was so sure—” Hermione began again.

“Nothing is sure in war, Hermione,” Harry warned. He turned away from her, pinching the bridge of his nose, shaking his head. “Do you know how much grain that was? Enough to feed Karnaron through the fucking winter, and now, they have it. They have all of it and they’ve slaughtered eighty
good men. Numbers that we needed."

“Why?” Regulus whispered. Everyone turned to regard the keeper of Westeron Castle. “What purpose would it suit them?”

“Because they’re starving,” Andromeda answered almost immediately, her face grim. “Essetir has been taken by the Longbottoms. Produce comes from there. We control the grain. All that the North has ice, and of the lands that Narcissa still controls, they produce meat. One cannot live through winter on meat alone.”

Harry cursed.

“And they know that you won’t stand for it.” Tom looked almost bored with it, having moved from the map to stare out of the window, ignoring the Founders that stood almost right next to him.

Harry looked up at Tom, eyes wide.

“What?” he spat.

“You’re being predictable, sweetling. Narcissa knows that you won’t take this sitting down. She wants to draw you out,” Tom drawled. It just made Harry’s fury burn even brighter.

“If I don’t challenge her, Karnaron starves. No matter what we try to send, they will starve,” Harry returned.

“And we need enough here. To feed us and the troops. And there are more coming, your Majesty. More flock here,” McKinnon added. Harry looked to the others to see that it was true, and he could read that same truth in both Ron and Ginny’s eyes—they would know best, besides McKinnon, being part of those numbers.

“Then, there is no way to win this?” Harry asked. He turned to Tonks and Tom, but neither of them looked at him. Even the Founders had nothing to say.

And then: “Perhaps there is.”

Harry glared at Hermione. “Your last plan—”

“Foolish, but I’m no fool,” Hermione drawled. “Fools don’t learn from their mistakes. I do.”

“Wouldn’t I be a fool to repeat my mistake? Listening to you?” Harry asked.

Hermione snorted. “I’ve given you only results before this moment. Let me rectify my mistake.”

Harry didn’t have to consider long. Hermione was right. She didn’t believe in the concept of monarchy, per se, but she had always believed in him, even when Tom and Tonks didn’t quite think the same. Harry crossed his arms over his shoulder.

“What?”


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ALL?
In the garden, she sang.

There was never a moment that Pandora did not sing as she roamed amongst the overgrown swells of green, fat with blooming flowers no matter that they were on the precipice of winter. Wherever she stepped, Pandora was like air, carrying summer with on her wing, and the ground broke way for fresh blades of grass and the sun beat harder upon her face.

The three Seers sat patiently in the dirt as Pandora sang, gathering flowers in the wicker basket that she held tight to the crease of her elbow. The basket was overflowing with lilies, soft as velvet, irises, purple as sunset, and daffodils, harsh as the summer light. Pandora brought up a daffodil to her nose, breathing in the scent of green and smiled.

Cassandra Vlabatsky sat, crushed between Sybil Trelawney and Celestina Warbeck. They led the pure tones of the great being wash over them, and though Cassandra could not see, just the very sound of Marzanna’s voice dragged visions before her.

“Baba Yaga?” Celestina sang, the trillness of her own lovely voice nothing compared to the celestial sounds that emerged from Pandora’s lungs.

Pandora hadn’t stopped, clipping another stem free, laying the flower in its bed, smiling to herself.

“Baba Yaga?” Celestina sang again.

This time, Pandora turned to her three children. Ainu. Celestina like water. Sybil like earth. Cassandra like fire. Pandora like air.

“Yes?” Pandora asked.

“You said there is work to be done. But, we are in a garden in Karnaron without doing a thing,” Celestina sighed. She closed her eyes. “There is nothing to See.”

Pandora laughed, shaking her head. It was cold and refined, and still, there was beauty and horror in it, in equal fold.

“There is work being done.”

“What are you doing, Marzanna?” Cassandra asked. She sounded like a petulant child though she was a woman grown, wizened and aged.

“What are you doing, Pandora?” Sybil echoed.

And Pandora glanced down at her basket of flowers and hummed, “Preparing a death shroud.”

In the garden, Pandora began to sing again. There were no more questions after then.

Chapter End Notes

Hi.

Well, I'm back. It's been a LONG time, but I was hit with the MOST intense case of writer's block I've literally ever suffered, and then I wrote a little fic called DIAGNOSIS, which got such amazing reception that I was dragged into updating that
more with the promise of fame and fortune.

Now, I can't promise that I'm back, for real. But, I do intend to be updating a little more now that I've finished up the final draft of my original fiction that I've been writing, and now, I'm waiting for it to be read by beta readers before I start querying. Anyway, since I'm not writing anything original, I need to flex those writing skills somehow, so I decided let's get back to my daily dose of writing trash fanfiction. Well, I hope you enjoy this chapter!

End Notes

Here it is. Here's the end.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!