### My Wingman, a Centaur

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**My Wingman, a Centaur**

by [Thewindowishhare](http://archiveofourown.org/works/17237825)

### Summary

After being sent back in time by a rogue centaur to fulfill a prophecy he's determined to see through, Hermione struggles to accept her new life in the year 1943. Not only does she struggle with helping her new centaur friend in forming a centaur revolution, but also the fact that the same centaur is pushing her to romance a certain young Dark Lord.

### Notes

I took some liberties with some of the magical aspects of this story, particularly the time travel part of it. I wanted a unique form of time travel to differentiate this work from others, so I hope you all enjoy. Please leave feedback to assure me that I should continue, or even any suggestions or directions that you would like to see the story go! A very short prologue, but chapter one will be following right after this upload.
Feedback is lovely! On a side note, I promise everything will have an explanation, including the fact that a centaur managed to steal from the Ministry of Magic. They will all appear in due time! First three chapters are stylistically lacking, please read until the fourth chapter to truly get a good understanding of the work's style!

The song of crickets harmonized with the soft thumping of hooves as a shadowy figure made its way to a clearing. Emerging from the darkness of the shrubbery, the being laid his eyes upon his destination, the image before him being lit by the natural light of the new moon and the thousands of stars above him. The future was staring down at him, judging the action he was about to perform. He’s seen it, the future that is, but the stars do not reveal how it happens.

And when destiny doesn’t show you the how, it is up to the holder of the knowledge to decide how. He already brought his concerns to the other members of the colony, yet all warned him to simply leave it be, to let the stars do all the work. Refusing such advice normally would have granted him expulsion from the group and threats toward his safety for such utter disrespect.

The expulsion wasn’t unwarranted in his opinion though; he knows his kind is extraordinarily proud of their abilities and their history. He was grateful that they had allowed him to stay even after he first denounced what his fellow centaurs believed; it was when he had decided to steal a time turner from the Ministry of Magic that they threw him out. It wasn’t the fact that he had stolen from the government, or even that he had stolen at all, it was the fact that it was wizard technology. In his opinion, centaurs had their priorities in odd places. Which led him to the present.

The centaur approached the center of the vast clearing that was sparse with grass, revealing the earthy tone of the ground. He dragged a hoof in the dirt to form a circle of a well-sized diameter, then begun his work drawing in archaic runes in the interior of the freshly forged shape. The ominous sounds of the forest echoed as he continued his task. As a final touch, he broke open the time turner and allowed the sand to fall in the center of the shape as he crouched down and spread it along the dirt with his hands. He sat down in the circle with a soft plop and awaited the arrival of the main component of his prophecy.
Chapter One: An Encounter with Fate

Chapter Summary

Fate works in peculiar ways, sometimes in the form of a half-man half-horse combo.

Complete silence had its own way of speaking in volumes is what Hermione had concluded as she laid in her plush bed in the Gryffindor dorms. The only notable noise was her Himalayan cat snoring, sleeping peacefully unlike Hermione. The bushy haired witch stared at the red velvet canopy above her bed as she wished that sleep would whisk her into a world where she could forget about her stressful N.E.W.T. classes and investigating Harry’s peculiar potions book.

_Not to mention Harry’s incessant ramblings of Malfoy’s “obviously nefarious” schemes..._ Hermione thought as she gazed wistfully at Crookshanks who seemed to still be in a deep slumber; Oh, how jealous Hermione was of that cat right now.

Reluctantly, Hermione sat up in her bed and reached for a small beaded bag from under the wooden frame of the bed.

“Accio Sleeping Draught.” Hermione said with great annoyance evident in her voice. Her mind had the tendency of racing before she went to bed every night and after explaining this fact to Madam Pomfrey, the older nurse gave her a small supply of the potion for restless nights. Hermione was grateful for the witch’s generosity.

_Cheers to hopefully a good night’s sleep... _she thought to herself as she uncorked the glass vial and took a small swig of the contents, placing the cork in its proper place and returning the bottle to the bag. At last, the young witch resituated her body under the covers and curled up next to the ginger fluff ball resting atop the soft comforter, joining her cat in the whimsical place known as dreamland.

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A yawn broke away from the sixteen year old’s lips as she stretched her upper limbs above her head, eyes fluttering open and expecting to see the familiar sight of Crookshanks greeting her waking form as her roommates pulled back her bed curtains to insist the three of them go down to breakfast together. However, this was not the case, she noticed.

Instead of her comfy mattress and thick blankets, Hermione took note of the stiffness and odd texture of what she was laying on. Hermione popped open her eyes and looked around curiously and quickly, sitting up as she did so. Dirt, hard, rough soil. Definitely not her bed. Panic started to settle in as Hermione took in her surroundings, or what she could see at least as the moon was her only source of light.

“Hello, it’s nice to finally meet you, Hermione.” stated a masculine voice. Hermione’s head turned slowly towards the source. Her eyes did not believe what she saw; a centaur staring at her with a smile graced upon his handsome features. He was sitting across from her in a decently sized circle marked in the dirt, with his hands on his lap, patiently waiting for her reply. Her expression demonstrated the utter confusion crossing her mind.

“Oh, come now, it’s rude to stare, Hermione.” the voice stated softly. Hermione began to laugh in
disbelief, how in the world had she managed to appear in the Forbidden Forest at this hour? Not to mention the last time she was in contact with centaurs they threatened her and Harry. The situation was completely unreal.

“This is a dream right?” Hermione inquired, a hint of drowsiness detectable in her voice. A deep chuckle sounded from the creature as he gazed towards the sky.

“Venus does not appear that bright tonight, how unusual.” he replied, returning his gaze back to the witch in front of him.

“Did...did you just call me slow?” Hermione asked dumbfoundedly, squinting slightly at the being in front of her. He had a look of reconsideration on his face,

“Perhaps I spoke too soon, perhaps a cloud was simply blocking my view.” he smiled smugly at Hermione. Disbelief, not only at the fact that she’s in the middle of a highly-dangerous place with the member of a species that has tried to kill her in the past, but at the fact that said creature was taking his time to belittle her before probably ending her life. Her Sleeping Draught must have been expired or something, causing hyper realistic dreams...

“With all due respect, Sir, how and why am I here?” Hermione asked cautiously.

“Please, no honorifics, simply call me Aion.” he paused for a moment, then continued,

“And you, Miss Granger, are here because fate states you must be. The how is a bit more complicated to explain.” Aion finished. Hermione slowly nodded, allowing the information to settle in her mind so she could fully comprehend the situation. No such process occurred. Aion saw the confused look that she portrayed and retorted,

“I see there are more clouds covering Venus…”. He sighed as he stood up, patting out the dirt that decided to settle in his tail as he had waited. He offered a hand to Hermione who gingerly took it.

“Look sharp now, witch, we have a visitor.” Aion stated as he faced the shrubbery. Hermione stood a bit behind him, afraid of what may appear, her anxiety increasing as the rustling got closer to their clearing. A rather tall individual, his height surpassing even the centaur in front of Hermione, made his presence known as he walked into the clearing.

“Welcome, Hagrid, have the arrangements been made?” Aion asked casually. Hermione denounced her entire perception as a drug induced dream as she saw what she believed to be a much younger Hagrid greet the centaur.

“Well, yeh know how it be sometimes. I talk’ta Professor Dumbledore about the accommodations for the young lass, seem’ta bit weary o’ the situation, but I put in a good ‘ord for yeh.” stated the young half-giant. Hagrid made his way through the bushes, encouraging the duo to follow in his trek. Hagrid held his lantern up to guide them.

“It’s almost as if Hagrid is Hades, guiding me to my death with his lantern lighting the way to the underworld...” Hermione considered as she grabbed a strand of her maine nervously. Hermione felt a small nudge in her side as she continued to follow Hagrid,

“Now, Hermione, you may have noticed some things are a bit off.” Aion mentioned; Hermione assumed he was referencing the fact that Hagrid appeared younger.

“Yes, I suppose you could title them as ‘a bit off’.” She replied wittily, she was finally coming to her senses as the adventure continued. The centaur cleared his throat,
“As I was saying, you may be curious as to the details surrounding your presence here.” he continued quickly as to not allow her sarcastic comeback,

“But, I can assure you that you are here with a purpose. You are here to fulfill a prophecy that has been written amongst the heavenly bodies.”

Hermione let the information sit in. She had never been one for Divination.

“Aion, why exactly is Hagrid a teenager?” Hermione questioned.

“Because he’s thirteen.” was the reply that came.

“Aion?”

“Yes, Hermione?”

“What year is it?”

“1943.” Hermione choked back a hysterical sob at the answer.

“Aion, what is the prophecy?”

“We will have plenty of time to speak on a different occasion, witch. Here is where we part ways.” Aion shut down the conversation instantly. Hermione calmly nodded as she attempted to not freak out at the current situation. She followed Hagrid along the path as the stone towers of Hogwarts were now in her sight.

“Yer just in time, too. Got the ‘alloween feast goin’.” Hagrid stated casually as Hermione gulped at the once familiar scene of the castle, though now feeling completely alienated from reality.
Chapter Two: Fate Enjoys Secrets

Chapter Summary

Hermione is kept in the dark about her true purpose. Oh, how fate enjoys to tease the knowledge in front of her, yet she does not recognize the hints.

Chapter Notes

Some hints about Hermione's purpose have arrived! Try to spot them, let me know what you guys think it is! I hope you enjoy. Next chapter finally has Tom and it should be uploaded by tomorrow!

Hermione followed the gameskeeper into the monolithic building. The hike up the grassy knoll had taken toll on the teenage girl’s limbs, just as the situation had taken a toll on her mental state. The two arrived at the entrance, Hagrid urging Hermione to enter before him with a polite ‘ladies first’. The walk through the courtyard seemed to last for centuries in the bright witch’s mind as they finally walked through the stone threshold that dictated they were in Hogwarts. The gentle half-giant went back to guiding Hermione through the dank halls, making small conversation on the way.

“So, what year yeh be in?”

“I’m in my sixth year.” she stated matter-of-factly.

“I see. I would be meh fourth year.” he replied. Hermione nodded in response.

If any of this is actually real, I suppose that information would be good to know… the brunette thought to herself as the duo’s footsteps reverberated along the corridors, the sound drowning out as she was lost to her thoughts.

“Yeh know, it was pretty difficult to get ol’ Professor Dumbledore to accept yer plead for help. It must be tough bein’ a refugee in the war.” Hagrid punctuated his sentence with a pat to Hermione’s back. The girl had to re-analyze the words spoken to her.

“Hagrid?” she asked curiously.

“Yeh can call meh Rubeus, if yeh want.” He replied with a sincere smile.

“Right, Rubeus, how much do you know about the reason as to why I’m here?” Hermione inquired as she gazed up towards his face, having to crane her neck a bit to properly see him.

“Oh, not much. Aion is a good friend o’ mine, just told me about a young girl in need o’ help. I’m just the messenger for him and Professor Dumbledore. If yeh ask me, the Professor’s got a soft spot for anyone affected by the war. But, yeh didn’ ‘ear that from meh.” He strung the last part quickly to the rest. Hermione chose to go along with whatever plot Aion had created, even if it did not quite make sense to her; she was certain that Hagrid would not question it, especially since Dumbledore
had conceded to it eventually.

“How nice of the man.” the witch responded, but her words lacked enthusiasm.

“Professor Dumbledore is one o’ the best men I know. If yeh are ever in need of anythin’, you should go to ‘im.” Hermione took the idea into consideration and filed it away for perhaps another time. Sounds of chatter and festivities increased in volume as the two approached what Hermione recognized as the Great Hall.

Why does everything bad happen on Halloween? She thought to herself as she recalled the troll incident and Harry’s parent’s unfortunate demise. The lioness braced herself for one of the most awkward events in her life as Hagrid opened one of the large, mahogany doors that separated them from the rest of the school’s population. A majority of full fledged conversations transformed into whispers as Hagrid escorted Hermione to the staff table. Her anxiety heightened as she felt pairs of eyes flee their previous occupants to settle on her form. Oh, how ridiculous she must have looked in her deranged state: hair sticking in all directions, pajamas on, and her frightened expression. It’s no wonder why astonished and confused stares followed her as she walked up to staff with Hagrid. She was thankful for the fact that Armando Dippet seemed to notice her tense state as he encouraged the school to return to the feast. The pair finally reached their target, a remarkably younger looking Albus Dumbledore, who welcomed the group.

“It’s splendid to finally meet you, Miss…?” he trailed off and Hermione froze, not knowing what to say. She did not want to ruin the cover Aion had created for her, whatever that identity might include. Dumbledore seemed to think to himself for a moment before continuing,

“Perhaps it would be in our best interests to speak in a more secluded location. You never know whose ears might be prying into our discussion.” his deep blue eyes twinkled as he looked at Hermione over his half-moon spectacles. To her surprise, the familiar action did nothing to ease her disheveled state of mind. To her, she still felt as if she had just read too much of *Hogwarts: a History* and her unconscious self formed a weird universe to fit all that she had learned from it. Everything felt so disjoint to her.

Dumbledore sat up from his chair, coaxing Hermione to follow him as they strolled down the path in between the Slytherin and Ravenclaw tables. Eyes continued to follow her movements, but no comments were made that she could hear. She supposed it was due to the authority figure in front of her.

Hermione and Dumbledore continued their quest for a private speaking space. Hagrid had been told to stay behind at the feast so he could enjoy the holiday’s celebration as well. They came across a classroom that Hermione assumed belonged to him; the subject taught inside was most likely Transfiguration considering her prior knowledge of the school’s staff during this time period. She weaved through the dark wooden tables as she tried to keep up with Dumbledore’s pace. He opened a door with wordless, wandless magic and the young witch followed the older man into the office space. An intricate rug laid upon the ground, decorated with depictions of lions, all in the colors red and gold. She recognized some of the priceless artifacts that littered the room, items that she would see in the future she supposed. A small squawk sounded in the room causing Hermione to turn to its origin. She found the majestic phoenix perched on a marble basin, keening his feathers in earnest. This was the only sight that she had seen that had gifted her some amount of comfort, however miniscule it was.

“Lemon drop?” the wise wizard offered the witch. She meekly grabbed one from the jade bowl that he had presented to her, nodding in appreciation at the gesture.

“I apologize about the manner in which you arrived. It could have been executed much better I
admit. If it helps any, I adore your silk night robes, you have a good eye for comfy clothing.” he stated in attempt to diffuse the tension surrounding them.

“Thank you I suppose. I enjoy your...sparkling midnight robes, Sir.” she replied weakly, fidgeting with the wrapped candy in her hand. Dumbledore seemed to appreciate the compliment.

“Now, let us talk about why you are here-” he started, but Hermione was eager to prove the validity of her cover story,

“I’m truly sorry to impose on Hogwarts like this, it’s the war has been-” Hermione frantically tried to explain, but the wizard put a hand up to signal that it was unnecessary.

“I know the true reason you appear here, Miss Granger.” The young girl tried to keep her breathing steady and keep her retorts in check, yet,

“That’s nice. I still don’t.” she placed her hands over her mouth as she understood the disrespect evident in her words. Dumbledore chortled softly,

“It is completely understandable to be in a state of disarray considering the situation, but I urge you to hold your tongue from now on, Miss Dumbledore, after all you will be representing years of proud lineage from now on.”

To say that Hermione was dumbfounded was a bit of an understatement.

“But. Sir, there’s no known Hermione Dumbledore where I came from…” she alluded to the fact that she was from the future.

“Which means we must have done a great job at hiding such an identity, let us have faith in our capabilities.” Dumbledore stated to ease her concerns.

“So, I imagine that I will be a student here?” Hermione asked for confirmation in which the wizard nodded to.

“When shall I be sorted?” she questioned, this was all new to her as no transfer student ever came to Hogwarts during her time. The wise man took a deep breath before he replied,

“That won’t be necessary. A house has already been chosen for you.” Hermione was baffled at the revelation.

“Pardon me, Professor?” she urged him to explain.

“What Aion has seen must be done for the greater good. He happened to see you in Slytherin.” Dumbledore stated cautiously as if the news might cause explosions to go off. The witch was not content with this information in the slightest.

“For the greater good? What exactly am I doing here, Professor?” A desperate plea for knowledge pertaining to her purpose escaped from her lips.

“As I have been told, you are an extremely dedicated pupil, remember to use your smarts in the journey ahead of you.”, he paused, “I have heard that you have a certain affinity for subjects such as Arithmancy and more. I took the liberty to incorporate those classes into your schedule. As well as my own N.E.W.T. level Transfiguration course.” he winked at the girl who gave him an incredulous look. She’s honestly not even surprised at his behavior, the man did have a habit of holding information back from the people.
The man is definitely good at keeping secrets, I suppose if my journey back in time was meant to happen, then he must have kept his knowledge of me a secret for all of my years at Hogwarts… the bold witch thought as she continued to contemplate her purpose. Dumbledore’s voice interrupted her thinking,

“Well, now that we have gone over the basics, it would be my pleasure to call upon your head of house so that he may guide you to your dorm, Miss Hermione Dumbledore.” The twinkled reappeared, but hidden behind it Hermione found intense worry.
Chapter 3: Fate is Cruel

Chapter Summary

Hermione is thrown into the mess Fate has created for her and she recognizes Fate's sadistic side. (Ft. Tom Riddle's appearance in the story, finally.)

Sitting silently, Hermione waited impatiently for her new head of house to whisk her away from Dumbledore’s office. The incessant tapping of her foot demonstrated her nervousness, the sound amplifying in her ears in the silence. She had been given a uniform in the meantime with the appropriate house colors and she fidgeted with the clasp on her new cloak. Fawkes cooed as the door opened, signifying that new occupants were entering the lavish room.

A man of short stature entered the room, his rounded belly proceeding him and passing the threshold before the rest of him. Another person followed him through the doorway, the man wearing a peculiar hat. He appeared much older than his chubby companion and held onto the younger man’s shoulder as the pair walked. It seemed as if the older man would break at any moment and had to support himself on his counterpart to assure he wouldn’t fall and shatter across the floor. The short man spoke in a chipper voice, his walrus-esque mustache moving animatedly with every word,

“Well, hello there Albus!” he greeted the Transfiguration Professor. Acknowledgement of the statement came in the form of a small smile.

The plump male turned his attention to the young girl in the room,

“You must be the new girl in my house! What a pleasure it is to have such a bright and promising witch in my house and a Dumbledore no less!” Hermione raised from her seat to greet him properly. She recognized the man to be Horace Slughorn, a man who she had already met in the future.

That explains the odd double takes he would make during classes in the future I suppose...Probably a sense of deja vu for the man.

Hermione was used to his constant flattery at this point of time. She had been subjected to many comments of fascination at his parties in the 90’s. The frizzy haired witch put on her most sincere smile, her pearly whites shone. One of the many benefits of being a daughter to a pair of dentists, not to mention how she used a bit of magic to get rid of her buck teeth.

“Ah, ah, how could I forget, this is Armando Dippet, your headmaster. He wished to come along to give you a proper welcome into Hogwarts.” Slughorn stated as he presented the feeble looking man. The old wizard’s eyes gazed through Hermione, appraising her silently. Slughorn got closer to Hermione and whispered through her thick maine,

“Don’t mind him. He’s not actually judging you, he’s just a bit weary of letting new students into the school. We had a bit of a security issue last term. But that’s in the past, and besides, how could we ever deny one of Albus’s family? He insisted you stay here for protection due to, well, you know.” he finished and backed away.
It was quite ironic, the bit about ‘you know’. She in fact did not know the actual reason, but she believed Slughorn assumed it was because she was escaping Grindelwald infested areas. She would allow him to continue such.

The Slytherin Head clasped his hands together as a way to bring attention back to him.

“Now, let us venture to the dungeons!”.

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Armando Dippet had abandoned Hermione and Slughorn as the two made their way to the dungeons. Hermione’s sense of awareness was distorted to an incredible degree as everything had a haze across it. As their footsteps echoed along the halls, Hermione’s ear focused on the soft drip of water meeting the floor of the dank dungeons. Her surroundings were calming, yet full of ominous promises.

“Normally, Headboy or a prefect from our house would have shown you the way, but I didn’t have the heart to bother them during the festivities! I wouldn’t pass up an opportunity to meet such a bright witch anyways. I find it peculiar though that a Dumbledore was sorted into Slytherin.” he commented with confidence clear in his tone.

“It was a bit of a surprise to me as well, Professor.” the witch replied. The Potion Master gave a hearty laugh,

“Yes, I wonder how your dear uncle reacted when the hat announced it. I am particularly fond of the fact that his niece belongs in my house. You know what’s odd though? I didn’t even know good old Albus had a niece!”.

There’s probably a lot that you don’t know about ‘good old Albus’. Hermione reckoned in her head.

The bulbus wizard stopped in front of a seemingly normal stone wall. The witch almost bumped into him due to the abrupt stop. He glanced back at her and said,

“The password is ‘Ambition’.”

At the mention of the password, the wall opened up as if it were a door on hinges. What was revealed was a small corridor, decorated with deep green wallpaper. Concrete steps leading downwards could be seen at the end of the narrow hall, and a sharp turn that she presumed led to the rest of the common room. Muffled chatter could be heard from her spot. She turned back to Slughorn after taking a few steps into the dark hall. He smiled at her, knowing the man it was most likely an action filled with jubilance and was intended to radiate positivity. But the light must have played tricks on his form as his smile appeared as if it belonged to the devil himself, mischief written across it as clear as day as the shadows of the dungeon danced before her. The wall-door combo closed, the sight of Slughorn disappearing as Hermione’s breath hitched.

I’m just nervous is all. This is just a very, very, intense experience for me. There’s no way Slughorn is a malicious being, he’s practically a marshmallow! Relax. Became her mantra as she steadily made her way to the rest of the common room.

A plethora of students occupied the premises, lounging on the black leather couches available. Hermione took note of the opulent interior. It was not as quaint and cozy as the Gryffindor common room had been. This space was the exact opposite in her opinion. Despite the roaring fire that was
supposed to spread warmth throughout the room, Hermione felt a chill overcome her, her legs shaking as she continued forth. Eyes met her figure, raising the intensity of her paranoia as she ventured into the snake pit.

“You’re the girl that went up to the staff table in her pajamas!” was the first thing she heard. Embarrassment engrossed her features. She bashfully turned away and continued to walk farther into the common room until she was intercepted by a young blond fellow. He was wearing the standard boys uniform without his cloak, face pointed and had shoulder length platinum blond hair tied back by a green ribbon.

“You’ll have to pardon some of our first years, they have no manners. Welcome to Slytherin, Miss Dumbledore.” the masculine yet posh man greeted as he lifted her hand up to his lips. The 90’s witch was taken aback at this behavior, but she wrote it off as just being period typical. She mumbled a soft thank you. He offered her an arm at which she hesitantly took, but it wasn’t like she really had any other option. He started up conversation again,

“I am Abraxas Malfoy. I hope you don’t mind if I introduce you to my group of friends? You seemed rather lonely and it would be a good start for you to get to know some of the faces you’ll be seeing in class.” Hermione gave no response because of the shock that hit her.

A Malfoy? Being an absolute gentleman to me? Fate truly is a cruel, ironic being. It must be because he thinks I’m a Dumbledore. Wait, how did he already know that? Hermione’s thoughts raced.

Malfoy helped her dodge students and furniture as he led her to a group of boys, aged around fifteen to seventeen she assumed, that were sitting around a jade coffee table in a secluded corner. The prattle of other students dimmed down as her and Malfoy arrived at the location. The boys stared at her, judging her worth almost as if she were cattle being bought off the market.

“A Dumbledore, in Slytherin? Practically blasphemous!” came from a young boy, perhaps around 15 if Hermione had to guesstimate.

“Oh hush, Avery, don’t you realize that’s a bit rude to say to our new friend?” Abraxas defended. The retort caused the boy to look away, ashamed. The remaining pair of eyes that were focused on her could be linked to four unknown boys. Two of them seemed to be of relation due to their similar appearances: dark black hair, angled jaw, and a roman nose. Though, one’s features seemed a bit harsher than the others, but that could have been because of the poor lighting. Another boy seemed like the sort of rough and rugged type, had sandy hair and a crooked nose. The same boy possessed rather broad shoulders and had a humble amount of muscle. The last boy stared at Hermione with such intensity that she thought she would burst into flames at any moment. His gaze caused her immense discomfort as she awkwardly shuffled a bit behind Malfoy. The rest of the boy’s face didn’t reveal any clue to what he could be thinking, though he seemed to be deep in thought as he ran a hand through his inky dark locks and fumbled with an odd ring on his finger. Her mind drifted off as she was hypnotized by the ugly jewelry adorning his finger. She snapped back into reality at the mention of her name,

“Dumbledore? These are my friends. The twit over there is Avery.” he stated while gesturing to the boy who childish huffed. Abraxas continued to speak,

“The two dark haired boys are Orion and Cygnus Black. Known for being Pure-blood, essentially.” The two greeted Hermione. She was informed that Cygnus was a fifth year and Orion was a seventh year. Cygnus appeared to be the kinder of the two.
“The boy with the brooding boy with shaggy, sandy hair is Dolohov. Known for being brash, but loyal.”. A careless wave told Hermione that he at least acknowledged her presence.

“And that, is our future Headboy, Tom Riddle.” Abraxas said with a sense of pride.

“Known for being top student at Hogwarts and devilishly charming according to the ladies.” the blonde finished.

Hermione’s ears were ringing at the new information. She recognized all of these names, but that one in particular struck her the most.

No wonder he was staring at me! He probably smells my Muggle born heritage in my blood! Oh, why in the heavens do I have to be in a house full of blood purists! Hermione thought frantically.

Due to her panic, she did not even realize that Riddle had gotten up from his place on the leather couch, his svelte build travelling toward her as he stopped not even a foot away from her. Her mind went blank as he grabbed her hand, his skin unnaturally soft. The physical contact caused electricity to course through Hermione as warning bells went off in her head. He brought her hand up to his lips, placing a gentle kiss upon the back, keeping eye contact the entire time. He offered a small, seemingly sanguine smile, but it did not reach the dark eyes that bore into her soul. He allowed her hand to fall limply at her side,

“It’s lovely to meet your acquaintance, Miss Dumbledore. I happen to be a prefect,” the witch took note of the gleaming prefect badge on his cloak, “so if you ever require any help, it would be my pleasure to come to your aid.” Tom offered the girl one last smile.

Fate truly is cruel. The lioness thought in disdain.
Chapter Four: Fate Despises Hermione

Chapter Summary

Hermione is forced to listen to her new peers prattle on about views that she has no interest in hearing. However, she is intrigued by a certain article in the newspaper.

Chapter Notes

I've never felt so inclined to update a fanfiction so frequently! I just really enjoy what I have conjured up and I hope you guys do as well, please leave feedback, I really enjoy reading comments and such. Thank you to those who have left kudos, bookmarked the piece, and commented, I strongly appreciate the support!

Brunette strands of hair were scattered about the pillow, the cover of the pillow now damp as sweat caused the thick locks to stick to the back of the owner’s head. The plumage of the luxurious pillow had since been matted due to the girl’s constant readjustment. The situation reminded her of the night before, where the young girl had been absolutely restless until the Sleeping Draught had come to her rescue. Except now, the room was not silent and so Hermione was not just laying there, being haunted by her own thoughts. Instead, her two new roommates had decided that the quiet did not suit them.

“Is it not weird that there’s a Dumbledore in Slytherin?” a hushed, feminine voice spoke.

“Well, Walburga, there’s a first for everything.” came the reply in a remarkably higher pitch.

“I don’t know, but I don’t like it, not one bit! What if she’s just here to spy on us? It sounds like something Professor Dumbledore would put us up to. She’s probably here to report any comments about blood purity. The old mudblood-loving fool would so do it and you can’t deny it!” Walburga replied. An exasperated sigh came from the other witch.

“If that’s the case then I would recommend speaking a bit quieter, she happens to be our new roommate. Now, if you don’t mind, I need my beauty rest.” A snort came from Walburga when she heard the retort.

“I do mind! I’m not finished talking. Did you see the way Tom was looking at her earlier? Something is up and he obviously caught wind of it.”

Hermione’s mind seem to accelerate at the possibility of Tom Riddle finding her out. Not just her heritage, but also the fact that she’s from the future. It would definitely be problematic for her. Her mind was bombarded by all of the cruel things that he would do to her if he ever got hold of that knowledge. Images of torture flashed across her thoughts, countless Crucios sent her way so that he could extract the future from her.

“Oh, please, Walburga, do you even hear yourself? You were probably just over analyzing Riddle, as always. Probably a bit jealous that he was giving more attention to her within the first
minute of knowing her than compared to the years you’ve known him.” Annoyance was transparent in the girly voice. Walburga’s demeanor seem to change from accusatory to adoration within the span of the statement,

“Well, Druella, can you blame me? Tom is just so, so, handsome! Honestly, words just don’t do him any justice. So, excuse me for paying so much attention to him.” the witch stated with immense attitude.

“Aren’t you already engaged?”

“That’s besides the point, Druella.”

“I just wouldn’t get your hopes up. There’s no way Tom would mess with Orion’s marriage, they’re good friends. Besides, have you ever really seen Tom interested in any woman before? He’s charming, but he usually keeps to himself in that regard.” Druella punctuated her observations with a yawn.

“Okay, but you’re completely right! He doesn’t ever express any interest in the opposite sex! Which is why it was so odd of him to treat the Dumbledore girl like that. That’s why I think there’s something up with her.” Walburga had returned to her frantic, conspiracy-esque tone with great earnest. Her companion deemed the conversation to be going nowhere and chose to ignore her friend and sleep instead.

The conversation did nothing to ease Hermione in a peaceful slumber.

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Tom laid awake in his bed, the rambling about him keeping his mind alert. The emerald curtains of the canopy were closed, yet Tom knew exactly what was going on outside his small sanctuary.

“She’s a weird one, I’ll give you that. Showing up in pajamas! Who does she think she is?” a masculine, English voice gave his two cents. Several groans followed after.

“Honestly, Avery, if we didn’t know any better we would assume you’re absolutely head over heels for this woman! Just let us get some sleep, mate.” Nott had stated with a bit of an Irish twist to his words.

“Was I even talking to you, Nott! The utter disrespect!” Avery reckoned. Tom stared at the ceiling of his canopy. He wasn’t annoyed by the conversation, in fact, he was quite intrigued by the topic. He was rather curious to see Nott’s opinion of the event as he was considering recruiting him into his little group. The teenager chose to stay in silence as he started to toy with his ring.

“To be fair, you happen to be in a room with several people, Avery. How are we to know who you’re addressing?” the mature voice of Abraxas Malfoy chimed in.

“Assume it! Since when do we talk to Nott?” Avery rebutted. The blond sighed,

“Anyways. You’re right to an extent,” Avery gave a snort of victory at the confession, “she’s definitely peculiar. Her legs were trembling when I approached her. Kind of cute, if you ask me.”

“Oh, oh, so I’m the one who’s obviously mad for her, huh? Did you hear that, Nott? Abraxas called her cute!”
Tom heard a loud, annoyance driven groan followed by the sound of a pillow colliding with something and a very upset Avery,

“What was that for you, prick!?”

“Oh? I thought ‘we’ don’t talk to Nott!” the Irish timbre replied.

Tom had to applaud Nott for his actions. As well as Avery for his resilient behavior, however that silent complement was awarded with immense hesitation. Tom was not amused by many things, but Avery’s short temper paired with his silly forms of retaliation reminded him of a feisty hamster.

“Back to the topic at hand, boys. How do we feel about the newest addition to the Dumbledore lineage?” Malfoy gathered the group’s focus back to the girl. Tom subconsciously started to listen a bit more intently.

“An absolute travesty to be completely honest. Pajamas for crying out loud! What on earth would possess a lady to do such a thing?” Avery said.

“I heard a rumor that she’s a refugee that arrived via portkey during the feast. It was apparently urgent.” grumbled a sleepy voice, Tom recognized it to belong to Nott.

“Nobody asked you, you git!” Avery heaved. Two pillows were sent his way.

“Manners! Our conversations are always open to all opinions. Thank you, Nott, I had no idea that was the reason why she was here.”

Interesting. A Dumbledore endangered by the war directly? This only provides evidence for that theory I saw in the paper the other day, about Grindelwald and Dumbledore’s seemingly connected pasts...Noted. Tom thought to himself.

“It’s just a rumor.” stated the groggy Irish boy.

“I heard she’s got grades to rival our boy, Tom.” Abraxas mentioned off-handedly.

“Doubt it. You know the witches around here are nowhere near the level Tom’s at.” Avery scoffed.

“You seem to forget the fact that she’s not from around here though. And, admittedly, Dumbledore’s are known to be extraordinarily skilled wielders of magic. I’m just saying that it may be unwise of us to underestimate her just yet. Plus, who knows what she could say to her uncle if we write her off. You know just as well as I that the old goof has it out for us.” Malfoy concluded.

Tom decided it was his time to enter the conversation.

“I completely agree, Abraxas.” the deep voice emerged as Tom opened the curtains connected to the walnut bed frame.

The others appeared shocked that he joined the discussion. Avery looked appalled.

“You can’t tell me that you actually agree with him, Tom? I mean, a girl, with the same capabilities as you?” the feisty hamster asked incredulously

“Although I’m flattered, if the rumors are true about her mind then I think the best course of action would be to befriend her. Let her feel welcome in our group, then we can actually decide based on trials and tribulations if she should remain an ally.” the brilliant boy declared casually. He
crossed his legs over one another as he lounged against the wooden headboard of his bed. The boy fumbled with one of the silver buttons on his silk pajamas, the set being a gift from the Malfoy’s ridiculous bank account.

“Well, I didn’t think you would go as far as wanting to keep her as an ally. Though, I suppose if you believe that to be the wisest decision then I’ll follow you through it.” Abraxas replied, his tone wavering a bit at the beginning.

“That’s good. I’m glad we see eye to eye, Malfoy. Shall we go over the plan to befriend the new girl?”

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Morning came, and along with it came a yawn from a certain bushy haired witch. If she had to approximate, she would say she got about four hours of sleep in total. Her mind was plagued with stressful subjects last night, but not the usual N.E.W.T related topics. Instead, her mind was infested with dreadful, paranoia filled imagery regarding her new life. It was unbelievable that just yesterday she had been ready to fall asleep and wake up, then consume breakfast with her friends Ron and Harry. She missed them deeply, despite only being away for about a day. She missed the warmth that her cat had provided in the mornings. Hermione slowly raised from her sleeping position, opening the rich green curtains of her bed to reveal her worn out form. She was disappointed by the lack of dazzling light that would normally have assaulted her eyes in the Gryffindor bedrooms. The girl glanced down at herself and took note of her disheveled state. Her hair was atrocious, she knew it, she just hoped that her roommates would pay her no mind. She saw their beds from across the room. The two appeared to be engrossed in their actions of applying makeup, both had already changed into their uniforms. It was a Monday after all, so no matter how tired students were from the Halloween festivities they had to attend classes today.

Hermione raised from the plush mattress, stretching out her body like a cat when she stabilized herself on her two feet. She quietly trotted across the room towards the singular bathroom occupying the dorm, uniform and toiletries in hand. She was thankful that there was a rug on her way; she did not wish to imagine how cold the stone of the dungeons felt this early in the morning. Neither of her roommates bothered her as she closed the wooden door, secluding her from the two.

The bathroom was much more luxurious than Gryffindor’s own. The towels themselves were decorated with elaborate serpent details and the sink had a marble counter top. A large, oval mirror hung above the sink, framed in what Hermione noted to be genuine silver.

_Slytherins are so...extravagant._ Hermione thought, though she did admire their eye for interior design. The bathroom was well lit, unlike the common room.

_Honestly, I don’t even know how they can even recognize one another when in there._ Her mind rambled on as she brushed her teeth.

She grasped the sterling silver handle of the sink to shut off the water then grabbed her uniform. She slipped on the charcoal skirt that went a little past the knees, the only real distinct difference from her uniform in the future. The brunette continued on with dressing into her school regulated wardrobe. Her chestnut eyes stared contemplatively at the brush she had resting on the counter top. A sigh of defeat was released as she grudgingly grabbed the brush and started to pull it through the tangled mess on her head. She did not want to give her new peers another reason to judge her.

Finished, she accessed the space she shared with Walburga Black and Druella Rosier. The two mentioned girls already left the premises, presumably on their trek to breakfast. At the thought of the morning mealtime, Hermione’s stomach growled as she recalled she did not partake in the feast the
night before. The witch decided it was time to embark on her journey down to the Great Hall. Exiting the room and walking down the corridor that offered entrances to other year’s dorms, she followed a spiral staircase down to the common room. The boy’s dormitories had been the staircase opposite of the girl’s, but led downwards instead of up. The common room was empty. The witch made her way across the room and toward the exit. Being alone in the dark halls of the dungeon unnerved her so she noted to ask someone to accompany her next time, despite the fact that the ‘someone’ will probably be an annoying Slytherin.

Her excursion to the Great Hall was lonely and uneventful. Though, the scent of breakfast goods comforted her a generous amount. No one stared at her as she strutted to the Slytherin table, an exuberant expression graced her face at the promise of a full stomach.

*That’s a very Ron sort of thing to be happy about.* A twinge of remorse hit her as she recalled her ginger friend, though she dismissed it quickly as she sat down.

“Well, well, look what we have here. Pajama girl.” a snide voice interrupted her rejoice. Her attitude immediately switched from happy to agitated. It was Avery, one of the boys she had met the night before. As she was about to respond, a certain pointed faced individual came to her rescue,

“You’ll have to excuse him. He’s not around women often.”

A soft yelp was heard from Avery as Malfoy nudged him harshly in the side.

“Mind if we sit here?” the blond asked. Hermione nodded as a form of agreement.

The male duo sat on the bench across from the bright witch.

Suddenly, a parade of owls flew above the tables, dropping off packages, letters, and newspapers for their respective student. Tom made an appearance during the dropping of mail, his body sliding next to Hermione on the wooden bench. He was given a copy of *The Daily Prophet* in which he seemed to instantly engross himself in. It was almost as if the paper had bewitched him. His black waves fell in his eyes as he hanged his head over the literature. The proximity of the man made Hermione severely uncomfortable and jittery. She was slightly surprised by the fact that he even read such garbage, but before she could make any comment, Avery spoke up,

“I can’t believe Professor Dumbledore managed to convince Dippet to let McGonagall into the boy’s Quidditch team.” Hermione’s eye twitched involuntarily.

*So he’s a blood purist who hates Dumbledores and is also sexist! Wow, can’t believe the luck I’ve drawn today by sitting right across from him.* Utter disbelief forced Hermione to listen to the rest of the conversation.

What made her truly astonished however, was what Abraxas had replied with,

“Well, good for Slytherin then. It’ll be easier for us to crush the Gryffindor team then.”

*Do they even realize the fact that they’re sitting across a female at this moment?* Hermione wondered.

“And you know it’s because McGonagall is Dumbledore’s favorite too. Wonder what she had to do to the old goon to persuade him-” Avery continued but was stalled by Tom announcing an intriguing article he found in the newspaper.

*‘Centaur Breaks into Department of Mysteries and Steals Time Turner’? What a peculiar occurrence.*” Tom noted aloud. Hermione quickly wretched the paper from his hands, taking a closer
look for herself. Time seemed to stop in that moment as she read the headline over and over again.

“Well, that was bit rude to do, don’t you think?” Tom asserted as he went to grab the item back.

The bushy haired girl handed it over without a fight, her eyes locking with Tom’s obsidian ones as he gave her a curiosity filled expression.

Hermione decided that after her lessons today, she would visit Professor Dumbledore to plan a trip to the Forbidden Forest to talk to a certain centaur.
Fate is Feisty

Chapter Summary

Hermione has a bit of a problem; one moment she's intimidated by the young Dark Lord, but the next she's in a fully fledged word war with the boy. Mistakes and regrets lie here.

Chapter Notes

Some Tomione interaction! Small, but building up to a big scene that should happen next chapter ;). You guys will enjoy the next chapter I believe. It involves the reuniting of Aion and Hermione and some advice from the centaur ;).

Conversations were happening all around the smart witch, but its contents failed to soothe her as she could only focus on what she would do later. The Great Hall was now thriving as more students joined the site. Hermione began to dissociate from her surroundings, too focused on the many outcomes that could occur later.

“Dumbledore? Do you mind sharing your schedule with us? I want to know how many classes I’ll be sharing with you.” Abraxas had brought her back to reality.

Hermione fumbled with the piece of parchment in her cloak pocket, handing it to the blond Pure-blood. Avery peered over the boy’s shoulder as they read the contents.

“Quite ambitious are we? All advanced core classes in addition to Advanced Arithmancy and Ancient Runes? If I didn’t know any better, I would assume I was looking at Tom’s schedule.” Malfoy finished with a chuckle.

“Except I plan on taking Divination instead of Ancient Runes. I was going to take Alchemy instead of Arithmancy this year, but I was the only one who requested it.” the young Dark Lord said haphazardly without looking up from the newspaper.

Hermione couldn’t help it, with all of her experiences with Divination she just had to add,

“Divination is a load of bunk.” Hermione stated as she dug her fork into the breakfast she had been neglecting.

The boys across from her were astonished. They could not believe that she had just said that in front of one of the brightest wizards ever. Tom slowly faced her and asked,

“What makes you think in such a way, Miss Dumbledore?”

“Well, Riddle, I just think that there’s better ways to predict the future.” Hermione started.

At this point in time, Tom had placed his copy of The Daily Prophet on the mahogany table before him, neatly folded back into its original condition. The controversial witch had his full
attention now, and the fact made the teenager in question sweat profusely. Her confidence vanished.

“Arithmancy provides better proof. It’s one thing to look up at the sky and guess what the stars say, but if one incorporates exact numbers that define specific values relating to the future, then I would say that Arithmancy bestows us a better foundation to work on. With Divination, it’s all approximation. Arithmancy at least has some form of information to back up the claims.” she babbled out.

Tom scrutinized the witch. Her words had validity, he concluded silently. A small twitch of his lips caused them to turn upwards in the tiniest of pleased smiles.

“I suppose you don’t have Seer blood running through those Pure-blood veins of yours? Is that why you’re so against Divination? Found something you can’t be good at?” Tom waited for her reply, he rather enjoyed egging her on as she began to fume.

*Where on Earth did the polite boy from yesterday go?* Hermione wondered.

One of the many things that could trigger Hermione was the mention of her being a know it all. Tom didn’t even know her in the slightest, so how could he think he has the right to just attack her in such a manner? One of the other things that could cause Hermione to tumble into an enraged state was the mention of Seers and how she was not one. It did not matter if she was or was not, she had perfectly acceptable ways of producing the same results a Seer could, but with Arithmancy. Unfortunate for her, she could not stop the retort falling from her tongue,

“And I suppose you don’t have pure blood running through your veins? Is that why you’re so against the possibility of someone with Pure-blood being better than you? Is that why you felt the need to belittle me?” Hermione ceased her speculating.

Malfoy and Avery were gawking at the two across from them. It was no secret that Riddle was most likely not a Pure-blood, but to mention it right to his face took vast amounts of stupidity enforced courage. Tom was staring at Hermione with such ferocity, but instead of backing down like the majority would have done, she challenged him with her own intense gaze. Tom stood up abruptly, the table rattling a bit at the sudden departure. He stormed out of the Great Hall, his cloak trailing behind him. Several people turned their attention to the boy, curious as to what could have set the quiet prefect off. Hermione felt a pang of pride at the results mixed with regret. She felt bad to stoop so low as to pestering him with heritage, but it is not like she had actually denounced him because of it. The girl simply asked him if he felt the need to prove his superiority over others due to his insecurities tied with blood.

“You have no idea what you just did, Dumbledore. On very rare occasions have I ever seen Tom get remotely upset. He usually just sits there in silence, just reading or listening to us talk. You must have really peeved him off and I wish you Godspeed, Miss Dumbledore.” Abraxas consoled her.

“He’s the one that started it though!” Hermione huffed like a child. It was completely unfair that she was the one being reprimanded.

“Yes, I know, but that does not mean you should continue to push him.” Abraxas stated wisely.

“Just whose side are you on, Malfoy?” Avery intervened. The blond sighed,

“Neither. I enjoy both of their company thus far, so I’m attempting to mend the situation and prevent future casualties.” Malfoy drawled out.

The bell rang, signaling the occupants of the Great Hall to evacuate and go to their first class of
the day. Hermione looked down at her schedule and noted that Advanced Ancient Runes was her first class of the day.

*At least I don’t have to be around Riddle right now…* Hermione thought solemnly.

The brunette witch approached the exit of the grand room as two boys caught up with her,

“Aye now, you didn’t think you could just walk away so easily from me?” Abraxas said as he smiled down at her. The boy accompanying him was one of the members of the Black family she had met the day before.

“Hope you don’t mind if we walk to class with you. Orion happens to be taking Ancient Runes just as I am.” he voiced, but did not really give Hermione an option to refuse.

The three weaved their way through the mass of students loitering in the halls. Conversation was futile as the loud jabber of various students flooded the trio’s sense of hearing. They arrived at the small classroom, a total sum of six, wooden tables were present, arranged in two rows with three in each. Two students were capable of fitting comfortably at a singular table. Hermione started towards one of the front desks, but Abraxas guided her to a middle one instead. A black chalkboard with ancient scribbles littered across its surface was at the front of the room. Bland was the word Hermione would choose to describe the atmosphere of the room. Students started filing in to the rest of the open spaces, several Ravenclaws, one Gryffindor, and another Slytherin entered the vicinity. If Hermione had any choice, she would have went to sit by the gruff, but kind looking Gryffindor boy, but Abraxas had decided that she would sit besides him instead. The other Slytherin sat beside Orion, the pair sitting in the back row.

“I did not imagine that you would be taking Advanced Runes, Rosier.” Malfoy lulled as he turned in his seat.

“Parents want me to be a Curse-Breaker for one of the wizarding banks in France.” He stated in a dull voice. He appeared to have heavy lidded eyes, but it did not seem to be due to drowsiness. The banter ended quickly as the instructor walked into the room.

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For the life of Hermione, the witch just could not focus on the lesson. The teacher was a foil to her teaching space; very eccentric and teeming with energy. The woman was of Germanic descent, her accent thick. Her hair could rival Hermione’s own bushy curls. Though normally the topic of archaic runes originating in the Alps would have been riveting to Hermione, she was too focused on her mistake from breakfast.

*He’s probably already plotting my demise as I sit here.* Hermione’s paranoia caused the thought to remain in her head, distracting her from the teacher’s instruction for the rest of the class period.

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Slender legs passed the threshold of the secluded, stone room. A thick haze prevented the owner from being able to navigate his way through the maze of cushions and tables scattered on the floor, but he eventually settled on a circular pillow towards the front of the room. Rich perfume infiltrated the boy’s nostrils as he inhaled deeply, incense easing him into a state of relaxation. The future was a stressful point of discussion for most, but the subject had the opposite effect on him.

A rough pat on the back interrupted his state of bliss, his sense of annoyance hitting him full force again.
“Aren’t you glad that we’re in this class together, Tom?” Avery questioned rhetorically as he sat on the lavish sapphire pillow next to the dark haired teenager.

More peers passed into the room, selecting their spots carefully. Some choked on the feeling of the smoke entering their lungs due to the amount of incense filling their system. One student in particular Tom recognized as Walburga Black, who flashed a flirty smile in his direction as she played with her short, impeccably styled curls. He smiled back for the sake of appearances. Druella Rosier followed in close behind her as the female duo sat behind Tom’s ever growing group. Mulciber was the last to enter to the room, only one spot being available due to his late arrival. Tom welcomed him to his table, hoping that he could get to know the boy better.

I’ve heard his family had a famous Seer in it not too many decades ago. Let’s hope it shows in him as well. Tom thought as the boy of darker complexion accepted Tom’s invitation to sit.

The lesson bored him. Divination never bored Tom. His mind wandered to what the feisty witch had told him that morning, her words suddenly becoming more appealing at the thought of hard facts backing up his predictions instead of the flimsy art of Divination. She seemed intelligent, to an extent.

Yes, the same girl that had the nerve to call you out on your blood, though. Tom reconciled with himself. It seemed members of the Dumbledore family had it out for his jugular.

She had more nerve than Tom had ever seen in any woman. Perhaps the seventh year, Minerva McGonagall could compete in that department, but Minerva never had the confidence to call Tom out on anything before.

Not that I have given any reason for her to do so. Tom prided himself on his preppy, quiet boy persona. He has accumulated a vast multitude of followers and admirers with his facade.

The prefect had never encountered any person that chose to oppose him in such a direct manner. Of course, his Transfiguration professor had attempted to through passive means. Stalking his actions, constantly inquiring his whereabouts at the time disaster happened to strike a student. But that was all the older man possessed; weary speculations.

Tom could not fathom the sheer audacity of the latest addition to Dumbledore’s lineage. She had to pay. He had to formulate a plan.

Find her weaknesses. I already know she’s prideful, specifically in correlation to her magical abilities and academics. She seemed to have a strong sense of justice when Avery and Abraxas had talked about McGonagall. She also appears to get flustered easily, enraged at the most miniscule of matters... Tom’s thoughts drowned out the teacher’s prattle.

Amber and lavender blended together as the scent wafted across the room. The scents cleared Tom’s mind as he finalized his plan. It would start the next time he ran into her. A satisfied smile crept onto the handsome boy’s face as he leaned forwards onto the rounded table, elbows grounded and hands supporting his head. His eyes glittered with promises of mischief as light refracted by the crystal ball lit the smug expression on his pale face.
Fate is Convoluted

Chapter Summary

Hermione finally reunites with her centaur friend who has a strange request from her. She follows through, but not in the way she had anticipated it to go.

Chapter Notes

Long chapter ahead! Also we're finally diving into risque content! I hope you guys enjoy it, and please do remember to be kind to our centaur friend, he's just trying to make the future happen :). No update tomorrow and possibly the next, I'll be busy with extra-curriculars. See you guys then!

On a side note, if you guys ever have any questions relating to the chapter's contents, feel free to ask! Thank you to everybody that's reviewed this work and have continuously read it, it means a lot to me!

The chiming of a bell informed the class that the instruction period was now over. The Ancient Runes teacher portrayed a disappointed look as her students started to maneuver their way out of her classroom, Hermione being one of those students. The bushy haired teen managed to escape the boring room without being harrassed by Malfoy. She was thankful for being able to be alone for a moment, the constant company of her Slytherin peers beginning to exhaust her. Hermione made her way to her “uncle’s” office, determined to schedule a voyage out to a certain centaur’s dwelling place. She fortunately had a free period in between now and lunch.

The Transfiguration classroom was void of students, its only inhabitants being objects skewed about the room and her. Hermione could have sworn she saw a porcelain teacup with a mouse’s tail and legs scurry across the floor as she walked up to the door of Professor Dumbledore’s office. Her hand gently knocked on the wood, a muffled “Come in” told her she was not intruding. The door creaked as she opened it to reveal a young Professor Dumbledore grading a massive stack of papers at his desk. He gestured to a cushioned arm chair in front of his desk, Hermione opted to accept the offer and sat down on it.

“For what do I owe the pleasure of talking with my niece?” the man asked, eyes not lifting up from their spot on the parchment before him.

“Is there any way I could go out and talk with Aion?” A sense of urgency was weaved into her words.

The bespectacled wizard looked at the witch for a moment before opening a drawer of his polished desk. From it, he grabbed what Hermione inferred was a calendar.

“Today is the first of November, yes?” he questioned. The teenager nodded.

“I’ll call down Hagrid to escort you to Aion’s current whereabouts. The centaur has to change his living space quite often.” Albus commented.
“Is it because he’s been casted out from his own kind because he stole a time turner?” Hermione investigated boldly. The man with the crooked nose cracked a smile,

“Ever observant, Miss Granger. I wish you luck on your journey, do try to be on time for Transfiguration. I’m afraid I can’t give you a pass for being late, many of your peers would interpret it as favoritism.” He dismissed the young sorceress as Hagrid appeared in the doorway.

Sunlight gleamed at the duo as they trekked through the courtyard of Hogwarts. Few students were on the grounds, most likely due to the chilly climate, winter approaching quickly. Hermione tightened the hold her polyester robes had on her to conserve heat. No student questioned the two as they passed through the monolithic, metal gates. Traversing to the edge of the Forbidden Forest in silence unnerved Hermione. It was unlike Hagrid to be so quiet.

“’Ere yeh go. I see Aion just up ahead. Stay to the outer rim of the forest, dangers are lurkin’ the farther you go in.” The half-giant said in a timid voice. The concerned witch was about to ask if he was okay, but he had already started to climb up the grassy hill leading back to the castle. A despondent sigh left her mouth, worry forcing her brows to burrow.

Crisp leaves being crunched urged Hermione to search for the cause. She found Aion, the centaur, closing in on her cautiously, his head turning to survey the land around him. Now in proper lighting, Hermione could notice his distinguished features: auburn hair with a natural wave to it cascaded down his naked back and sun kissed skin that seemed to glow in the sun gave the creature an ethereal atmosphere. He trotted with purpose. He presented a grin to the witch, dimples forming on his face. As he got closer, Hermione noticed the scars that clustered on his abdomen, chest, and arms.

“So, how was your encounter with Mars?” The centaur asked as he settled in the grass, encouraging Hermione to do the same.

“Pardon?” Dumbfoundedness was evident in her tone.

*If I’m Venus, then who is Mars?* She wondered.

“It seems that Mercury has taken an interest in you. I wonder how Mercury’s orbit will affect the alignment of Mars? Mercury and Venus are indeed naturally close already.”

“Must you always speak in such convoluted ways?” Hermione tested.

The young centaur allowed his hands to wander in the grass idly.

“There’s a question plaguing your mind, why don’t you ask it?” the masculine being questioned.

“Were you the centaur that was featured in *The Daily Prophet*? Did you steal the time turner? Is that how I was transported back in time? Is that why you had to leave your colony? How in Godric Gryffindor’s name did you manage to successfully steal such a well protected item from the wizarding government?” She ran out of breath as she drew her thoughts to a close.

Hermione observed the centaur as he picked up a green caterpillar from the grass, playing with the small animal in an absent minded manner.

“Yes, yes, partially, yes, and are you really surprised that I was able to do that? The government entrusted thirteen year old you with one. The whole lot doesn’t have their priorities in check.” Aion declared, his eyes focused on the little creature crawling up his arm.

Hermione let out a tuft of air, frustrated with the centaur’s antics. Before she could protest, the
centaur continued on,

“Speaking of a group not having their priorities in check, I have a favor to ask of you.”

The witch crossed her arms, displaying her reluctance to whatever he was about to say.

“I require your help in...a political effort. You see, centaurs are tremendously proud beings. They have a terribly thick head when it comes to opinions contrasting with their preordained beliefs. Not that a witch of your standing wasn’t already aware of that fact.” he grasped at the stem of a dandelion, ripping it gently from its earthy prison. He talked of his ideas so casually, as if the notion of forming a political movement involving centaurs was not completely absurd.

“And you believe that I could aid in this task how exactly?” Hermione fervently questioned with genuine curiosity.

“You work with house elves when you were fourteen was admirable. You have a kind heart that can convince all species, it would do you well to recall upon that in times of doubt.” Aion looked up at her, a polite disposition was bestowed upon his masculine features.

“You always speak as if you know something that I don’t.” the female replied as she watched the human-horse hybrid continue to uproot dandelions and other small flowers surrounding the pair. She felt a little bit silly after saying it, of course the centaur knew something she didn’t. A warm chuckle came from him, the rumble soothing Hermione’s nerves a bit.

“Will you help me in my cause, Hermione?” he requested.

“I don’t have the best luck with your kind, so I’m going to politely refuse.” she said with great valor, recalling her experiences from fifth year.

Aion did not appear to be fazed.

“I figured you would say such. How about we strike a deal then?” the centaur proposed.

“A deal pertaining to what exactly? What would be in it for me?” Hermione asked.

“Ah, you’re starting to act like a true Slytherin,” the sorceress cringed, “And think about it, Hermione. Think about who you are here. A Dumbledore that appeared out of thin air, no one even knew that a Hermione Dumbledore existed up until last night. And all of them believe you to be the great Albus’s niece, a man who won’t reveal if his brother is the father or not. That’s a bit suspicious, wouldn’t you agree? Why would Aberforth not step up and claim his daughter? Afterall, that’s the only sibling alive right now. Your existence is causing a bit of an uproar in the community, it would be unfortunate for you if someone were to reveal how and why you’re actually here.” Aion proclaimed, Hermione giving him a skeptical look.

“Oh, so you would incriminate yourself further just to blackmail me instead? That sounds bit counter productive.” Hermione retorted, a little bit surprised at the creature’s change in demeanor.

“You are absolutely correct. Which is why I would tip someone off about there being a spy belonging to Grindelwald’s army within Hogwarts’s secure walls. Headmaster Dippet would be forced to remove the threat in fear of losing his position considering one security related tragedy has already occurred while the school was under his protection. Who else would they suspect than the girl’s whose arrival is shrouded in mystery? And with a connection to Albus Dumbledore, no less. The blame would be placed on the Transfiguration professor, his mere presence would be considered a threat to security. Would you be able to deal with the guilt that would burden you if Albus Dumbledore were to be fired because you wouldn’t accept my plea for assistance?” the centaur
smiled sweetly at her, his freckles enhancing the jubilant expression.

Hermione gaped at the creature. How on Earth could the creature before her switch from benevolent to willing to blackmail her within seconds!

“First off, that is a hyperbolic fallacy that you’ve created. Secondly, you and I both know that Professor Dumbledore has not been fired from his job during this time period.” the bright witch responded with a factual tone.

“You’re right, he has never been fired from his job during this time period. Do you think it could be because you’re having second thoughts about your new centaur companion and his quest?” Aion suggested.

The girl considered the notion briefly, applauding the centaur for his valiant persuasion techniques. Exaggerated guilt-tripping mixed in with a confession of logic.

“What should I do to help?” she conceded.

Aion had a giddy appearance due to her surrender.

“Study up on your centaur knowledge. A visit to the library would be practical. A particular author, Susan Squire. She’s one of the few individuals that have ever actually had the opportunity to interview a centaur colony. I would recommend searching for her works primarily.” Aion replied, happy that she had decided to help.

Hermione couldn’t help but smile at the centaur’s excited expression. She remembers being eager to change the world when she had established S.P.E.W. Hermione took note of how he had stopped messing with the flora around them, he seemed to be satisfied with his previous toiling.

“Before you leave me, I have a gift for you.” he announced, presenting a flower crown to the young witch. It contained dandelions, small yellow flowers, lavender stems, and other brightly colored plants.

“Aion, that is the kindest thing anyone has done for me since I’ve arrived, thank you for the time you took to make this.” she thanked him, gratefulness pouring out with every syllable.

She took the fragile crown from him, her soft dainty hands coming in contact with his large rough ones. The lavender stems provided a strong, but relaxing scent. Adjusting it so it would not fall, Hermione placed the band of flowers on top of her unruly maine.

“It is the least I can do for practically bullying you.” Aion said.

Gusts of wind blew softly as Hermione began to stand up. It was about time for her to go to lunch, her meeting with Aion had lasted well into her free period. The two shared their goodbyes and Hermione started to travel up the hill back to Hogwarts.

“Another piece of wisdom and advice, my friend, always remember Ferdinand writes in elegant prose!” the centaur shouted from afar. The courageous witch looked back him with a confused ridden face.

*What does he mean by that? Who is Ferdinand and why did I need to remember that?*

The female teenager continued on her way, choosing not to focus on his words and completely oblivious to the pair of eyes that watched the whole interaction from a classroom window.
Tom was uninterested in all activities it seemed. Both his male friends and Walburga Black had tried to coax him down to the lunch room, but his appetite was nonexistent. He opted to venture to the library instead. Currently, he sat down at a square table with two chairs on either side, attempting to focus on his Divination homework. He tapped his quill against the wooden surface of the table, unable to place his thoughts on the parchment on the desk. Nothing was able to hold his attention for longer than a few minutes.

*All except for that frivolous Dumbledore girl.* A voice pestered him in the back of his mind.

It was true. It was her fault that he could not put his work into fruition. He had not seen her during her free period at all like he was hoping for. He was anticipating her to show up in the common room, after all its her first day and she does not know how to maneuver around the castle yet.

*At least I have her beat there. I know more hidden passageways in this castle than she will ever be able to find.*

He reprimanded himself at the thought. It was such a silly thing to be better than her at, considering all of the other circumstances that he was sure he would best her in. Absentmindedly, the boy swirled his dove quill in his ink bottle, the pure white tarnished by the inky substance.

“Where might your guide to magical creatures section be?” a soft, feminine voice infiltrated Tom’s sense of hearing. It had a melodic tone to it. The dark wizard stopped his ministrations in favor of finding the owner of the gentle voice. His tenebrous orbs scoured the library for any sign of the individual, yielding no result.

The boy sighed, running his manicured hands through his dark waves, pushing them to the side so that he could read what he had down on his parchment. He let off a huff in annoyance, crumpled the offending piece of paper, and casted a wandless Incendio on it, watching as it went up in flames and the ashes formed a small pile on the table. For the life of Tom, he could not concentrate.

The sound of a girl struggling and huffing could be heard not too far from Tom’s location. The boy looked around the corner and through the shelves to see a sixth year female jumping repeatedly in attempts to grasp a book near the top shelf. What he could not believe is the fact that a large bush of hair jumped with her form during the action.

*So this is where she wandered off to?* Tom thought to himself, he got up from his chair, vigor renewed. He intended to act on his schemes. Step one consisted of luring Hermione in a state of ease with his charm.

He snuck up behind the short witch, watching her futile attempts to manually grab the book in amusement. He was at least a head taller than her, but that was not unusual for him, he had always been tall compared to his peers.

“Would it not be simpler to use magic, Miss Dumbledore?”

The voice caused her to yelp in startled surprise. His warm breath ghosted over the shell of her ear, causing a shiver to rack through her entire body. She immediately turned to him, shocked by the proximity of the man. He surpassed her in height easily. The smooth baritone of his voice brought her back from her shock induced dissociation,

*“Which book were you trying to grab?”*
“The one by Susan Squire.” she answered meekly.

*Oh, get a hold of yourself! He’s just interrogating me, it’s not as if he’s ripping out my entrails just yet!* Hermione berated herself mentally.

Tom reached a limber arm above her head, successfully retrieving the book of the aforementioned author.

“Thank you.” Hermione said swiftly, determined to end this dynamic as soon as possible.

“It’s the least I could do for you after being so rude this morning. I truly apologize for my ungentleman-esque behavior.” Tom drawled, his words having an abundant amount of false congeniality.

He had yet to hand over the tome. Hermione thrust her arms forward as a way of saying ‘Thanks for the fake apology, please give me the book now’, but Tom had his grip trained tightly on the novel. Curiosity seemed to have bested him as he flipped the book open to a random page and began to read aloud,

“The witch needily gasped, spreading her legs earnestly so that she could feel the dark wizard’s thick, throbbing cock. He flipped the woman over, so that she was laying on her stomach, and pulled her to the edge of the bed, allowing his girth to rest wantonly upon her perky ass.”

Rouge dusted Hermione’s cheeks. Dusted is an understatement, it was almost as if someone had taken the color red in a paint format and had literally pasted it on her. Tom looked to Hermione for an explanation on the book she chose.

“I had no idea Dumbledore’s niece would ever read such garbage.” His profound voice caused Hermione’s blush to deepen.

“Honestly, I swear to the founders themselves, I had no idea that’s what the book contained.” the flustered witch began to say frantically, keen to prove her innocence.

“You’re right you don’t know what this book contained. Putrid dribble is all this book contains. Where’s the eloquence?” Tom’s face contorted into a baffled expression.

The bushy haired witch was suddenly unsure if he was asking where’s the eloquence in all erotic literature, or just that specific piece.

“Might I recommend something with a bit more taste? Alphanzo Ferdinand’s *Verdrehte Wünsche* is a bit obscure.”

She was baffled, absolutely baffled.

*Voldemort. The Lord Voldemort, homicidal tendencies and all, is giving me erotica recommendations. This is a cruel and twisted fate.* Hermione thought as her confused state remained.

“It’s just something about his style. He has a graceful way of stringing words together. Ferdinand just writes in such-” Tom started.

“Elegant prose.” Hermione finished.

Their eyes connected in a heated gaze. Tom was astounded that she appeared to know the author and the book; it implied some peculiar details of her tastes. Hermione was astounded that she was just now realizing that Aion had set her up. One thing was for certain, Hermione thought to herself,
I’m going to murder that centaur.


Fate vs Instinct

Chapter Summary

Hermione has some qualms with fate. Fate notices these qualms and decides to punish Hermione with detention and ghastly dreams.

Chapter Notes

Explicit NSFW content near the end me laddies. You've been warned. Immensely long chapter ahead; next update will perhaps be on the weekend; school has started back up and I have a robotics competition so I am swamped! I’m sorry for the lack of update, it will be sporadic from now on unfortunately. Thank you too everyone who has reviewed, I’m surprised so many people have enjoyed it so far :)

Bewilderedness became a ghost of the past as Tom’s face returned to its usual stoic expression. Hermione had since averted her eyes in favor of looking towards the glossy tiles of the floor. The bell reverberated throughout the castle, its sound causing the frizzy haired witch to break hold of her metaphorical restraints and flee from the scene. She never wanted to look at Riddle ever again; she does not think she could ever look at him the same way.

Tom had been left there to contemplate what he had just learned about the new Dumbledore. Lavender had invaded his senses when she had briskly walked past him. What would possess her to wear such a silly thing as a flower crown? Memories of Wool's Orphanage came to him as he recalled how the children would weave the plants into the ring shape during the warmer seasons. Their merry laughter continued to ring through his head as the recollection haunted him. He was never one of those kids.

He snapped out of his cycle of thought, returning to his abandoned table to collect his personal belongings. The boy was about to dump his dove quill in the rubbish as the ink had caused the soft bristles to clump together, after all he had plenty of other quills that would suit him just fine.

"Scourgify." he whispered, watching the ink disappear as dark wisps dissipated into the air.

Quill back in its case, Tom left for his Transfiguration lesson of the day.

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Chairs squeaked as they were scooted across the floor, welcoming students to sit on the surface. Orange lighting fazed through the elaborate, gothic style windows. Candles lit themselves as they sensed the growing darkness of the room; the wax of the charmed candles began to slowly drip. Hermione scraped her chair across the ground, allowing adequate space between her and the table for her body to slip in. She was one of the first students to enter the room, no familiar presence had made themselves known to her yet so she dedicated the time to calming down and rationalizing.
It didn’t mean anything and it doesn’t have to so long as I put it behind me. Riddle is just the kind of guy to purposely mess with me. That may not have even been what was in the book! He’s just trying to embarrass me, get inside my head. That’s exactly what he’s doing; I have the upper hand though because now I know what he’s trying to do. I won’t give him the satisfaction of having something over me. Hermione thought, her nimble fingers threading through her curly hair as she began to plot.

“You look a bit deep in thought there, Hermione. Mind if I take this spot?” Abraxas Malfoy said as he gracefully slid into the seat beside her.

Hermione was starting to get peeved at his behavior of doing whatever he wants. Even if he gave the illusion of asking for permission, he still did as he intended to do regardless of the answer.

Who does he think he is? He’s far too entitled; all of his wealth goes to his head and he desperately tries to disguise it with elegance. Not to mention his total lack of boundaries, since when did he think it was okay to refer to me by my first name? Hermione’s agitation showed in her thoughts.

The brunette was about to protest for once, but someone interrupted her.

“Abraxas, why don’t you go sit by Avery instead? You know he’s a rather poor student when it comes to the practical arts, I think having you by his side would aid in his improvement.” the voice Hermione had been dreading to hear suggested.

The esteemed Pure-blood looked to Hermione, then to Tom. After clearing his throat, Abraxas began to say,

“Well, if that’s the case, Tom, then I suggest that you help Avery with such endeavors instead considering you have the second highest marks in this-”

“Oh, although you flatter me greatly, I do insist that you help him. You have such a way with words, perhaps Avery would be able to comprehend the class a bit easier if you were there to explain it for him.” Tom finished with a painfully innocent smile.

Malfoy fiddled with his green and silver tie. He gathered his school bag and reluctantly went to sit beside Avery, the location being in front of Hermione. A look of discontent was directed to Tom as Malfoy walked past him, the former replying with a victorious grin. Tom placed his things next to Hermione’s and promptly took the spot next to her.

I’m not sure if this is better or worse. The witch thought with great distaste as the lesson began.

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It seemed like no class of Hermione’s would be anything more than a lecture today. The studious sorceress jotted notes onto her parchment as her ‘uncle’ provided knowledge about human transfiguration. Diligently, her quill scratched upon the parchment in a frenzied manner, the topic of human transfiguration being composed of minute details. It seems she was the only one who showed nearly as much enthusiasm towards the subject as she witnessed Avery falling asleep and Abraxas drawing obscene shapes onto Avery’s empty note sheet. Even Tom didn’t appear to be taking notes, though he still paid attention to the Professor’s words.
A soft nudge to Hermione’s arm broke her from her concentrated trance. Chestnut eyes looked down at the source; a small piece of parchment offered to her by Tom Riddle. Mentally, she rolled her eyes and physically pushed the note away. She did not wish to engage in any disrespectful behavior during the class. Physically, Tom rolled his eyes as he forced the paper in her direction. Discreetly, she accepted it and unfolded the parchment.

*Where did you find a copy of Ferdinand’s works? I was under the impression they were rare. And definitely not typical to someone of your family. Care to explain why you were looking at Susan Squire’s work as well?*

Hermione sighed quietly as she finished reading the note. Rapidly, she scribbled a response back and flicked it to him.

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Tom’s dark eyes scanned the contents,

*What does it matter to you?*

How impolite. He just wanted to know how she acquired the piece of literature; he had found it in the Black family’s personal library when he had visited over the holidays a year before and became enthralled by the author. The focus of the works were miscellaneous, some revolved around dark artifacts or black magic, but that one in particular had revolved around an obscure topic. It was the first ever book he had seen about sex that was not for educational purposes. Yet, of course the work being related to Ferdinand, it was filled with dark undertones. Which is why he was baffled as to how a Dumbledore could have come into possession of it. And agreed with him about the author’s style, nonetheless. If she wanted to act defensive, then it only proves that he has found out something she was trying to hide.

As Professor Dumbledore began to explore the difference between a Glamour spell and genuine human transfiguration, Tom wrote a quick response. He watched as the mysterious witch read it, grinning slightly as her cheeks faded to a soft shade of red.

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*Does his work excite you?* Hermione read, the question echoing in her empty mind. Everything else left her head when she had read the inquiry.

For a moment, she was paralyzed. Did he mean in it in *that* connotation? How does she respond to that? She felt heat creep up her cheeks the more she dwelled on what he meant. She had to remember that he was just messing with her, trying to get the upper hand. And she would not allow such a thing to occur. She stifled her flusteredness and wrote what she deemed an appropriate response, one that would let him know that she had no plan on conceding to his whims.

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*Why are you so intrigued by what I read? Does the idea of someone sharing the same literary interests excite you? Perhaps I should be questioning how model student Tom Riddle gained such an intense interest for such works. Are you hiding something, Riddle? Would be shame if the entire staff knew you have an affinity for something so dark; Albus Dumbledore already has an eye on you, you know.*

Threats. Tom almost audibly scoffed. Who in Salazar’s name did she think she was? The ivory
skinned boy thought low of Albus Dumbledore already, but to think the man would spread his
distaste for the him to his niece was far below the bar he had set for the older wizard.

I don’t quite know what you would be referring to, Miss Dumbledore. Why would the esteemed
Professor Dumbledore have his eye on me? I think it’s a bit rudimentary of you to just assume ill
things of me based off of inference.

Tom read over his work, some of the inked words had smudged, but it was still decipherable. He
passed the shared parchment to the confident looking witch.

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Hermione wished to strike him over the head with the note. She knows what the future Dark Lord
did last term to set off Dumbledore’s suspicion; he opened the Chamber of Secrets. She recalled
Slughorn and Aion mentioning the event casually. But Tom of course, assumed he was in the clear
for his crimes as he passed the blame onto unsuspecting third-year Hagrid. But, Hermione could not
reveal to Tom how she knew this information. In fact, she believed it may work better for her if she
kept it untold. She decided it was the perfect time to throw him off and change the topic.

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You have such marvelous handwriting. Tom read it over and over again, searching for the hidden
symbolism.

Frustrated, he could not seem to find it. There is no way that the girl could have just paid him a
compliment after all of that taunting. Tom had to grip his quill tightly to hide the furious bafflement
from showing on his face as he wrote his reply,

I do not quite comprehend what you mean by that, but if it were to be a benevolent comment, then I
admit to being thankful. However, I must reinstate that I do not plan to let this conversation die and
the original topic will return. I tend to get what I want, and what I want is the truth, Miss
Dumbledore. You’ll find that I can be very persuasive when it comes to gaining what I desire.

Satisfied, the tall boy handed the note over, his large hand passing over her significantly smaller one.
He crossed one leg over his knee, his gray trouser leg rising a bit with the action. For good measure,
he threw the Dumbledore girl a smile fit for a model student.

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Filled to the brim with hubris, is what Hermione thought as she concluded her reading of the
note. Based off of his tone, she was not sure if she had intimidated him in the slightest. His words
admittedly put her off, but resilience caused her to keep it under control. She was about to write a
witty comeback, but the action of another stopped her in her tracks,

“Riddle and Miss Dumbledore, I have been giving the two of you warning glances throughout the
period, but it seems you were both too occupied with passing notes to notice. I regret to inform you
that such disrespect calls for a detention. The two of you will serve it in this classroom, tomorrow
night after dinner.” The auburn haired wizard spoke boisterously.

Hermione’s mouth dropped slightly. She had never been given a detention before her, and by her
‘uncle’ for goodness sake. It was downright embarrassing. The entire class population snickered, all
except for Tom and Abraxas, the former being as stoic as ever and the latter glancing back at Tom
with ever so slight disdain. The orphaned halfblood and wealthy pureblood met eyes, but Hermione
could not distinguish the emotion behind either.
“I apologize, Professor.” Hermione muttered softly.

“As do I, Professor. It was not my intention to display such utter disrespect.” said Tom, his tone unwavering.

“Naturally. I won’t tolerate it again. On a lighter note, it seems we are approaching the end of the hour. As a reward for the majority of the class being on their best behavior,” Hermione gave the teacher a doubtful look at that, “I will allow you students to leave early. You are welcome for your head start to dinner.” Albus Dumbledore finished cheekily.

The students began to pack away their stationery and writing utensils in haste at the announcement. Hermione opted to wait behind for a bit to allow the traffic to file out of the room, the Slytherin boys being apart of it. All that had remained of the students was Hermione. Her footsteps were filled with anxiety as she approached the large wooden desk that housed Professor Dumbledore.

“I truly regret doing such things during class, Sir. Tom was the one who start-” the worried witch began, but the Dumbledore typical motion of his hand raising up informed her not to continue.

“My dear niece, it is alright. For future reference, I would appreciate you ignore his advances or tell me. I do not blame you for responding to his notes.” The wise wizard stated with a heavy emphasis on the word ‘future’.

Hermione stared at the man wearily.

“Sir, are you trying to tell me that...was supposed to happen?” Hermione asked.

The man’s eyes twinkled.

“Brightest witch of your age, indeed. I wish I could continue further as to why, but even Aion neglects to inform me of the purpose at times.” The older wizard replied.

Frustration was evident on Hermione’s features.

“Sir, do you believe in free-will? I once did, but this entire experience has made me reform such beliefs.” the lioness stated boldly, a shady jab to the man and the centaur.

The ginger wizard placed his half-moon rimmed spectacles on the desk before him as he let out a weary sigh, his eyes demonstrating genuine remorse that shocked Hermione.

“Yes. I do believe in free-will, full heartedly. I would hate for you to see me as a puppeteer that controls your every move and so I offer you precious advice, Miss Granger. Nothing is forcing you to adhere to what we say, the future is not definite. Even if the future does not occur the way we say it, it does not mean everyone is doomed. That being said, the future that Aion has envisioned holds important aspects that the two of us believe will occur no matter what happens. The way in which it does, however, is up to you. Take it as you will. I do not wish to bring about paranoia and stress in your life, so the choice is yours, you can take any path you wish to.” Dumbledore said.

“Sir, I appreciate what you’ve shared with me. I’ll definitely think upon what you’ve said.” Hermione finished with a strong sense of renewed dignity.

A warm smile graced the wizard’s features as he replied,

“You truly are a considerate and bright witch, Hermione. The wizarding world will be thankful for your choice, but do remember that the future is still foggy, and Aion does not have all of the
answers. Instinct is an important quality to recognize in dire situations.”

Cheerfully, the Transfiguration master stood up from his scarlet cushioned chair.

“How do you fancy a walk with your uncle to dinner, Miss Granger?”

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Time had passed. Even at midnight, the population of the male Slytherin dorms seemed to be awake and in an excited state. Restless chatter and the bubbling of the Great Lake could be heard. A few of the boys had opted to sitting on pillows and blankets on the glass window on the floor that allowed the boys to spy on the lake’s inhabitants. Malfoy, Avery, and Riddle were amongst that group as Nott remained in bed, trying to drown out the banter. Abraxas chose to lay on his stomach on his sumptuous, indigo quilt. The ribbon holding his hair in a small ponytail matched the blanket. Avery opted to sit on a plain white pillow, his hands fiddling with the stark white feathers that drifted out of it. Riddle decided upon laying on his back on an emerald blanket that was soft to the touch, his eyes focused on the ceiling as conversation was created.

“Any new opinions on the Dumbledore girl?” A posh voice invaded the air, its owner being Abraxas.

A loud groan was heard from behind the curtains of an occupied four-poster bed.

“Do you lot ever stop talking about her? Your fellow roommate here is trying to get some sleep, you know.” Nott had said.

“Nott, why don’t you join us down here for a change. It’s quite cozy.” the blond replied.

Grumbling and angry muttering accompanied the shuffling of pillows and blankets as Nott made his way to the middle of the room, where the gossip circle was located. He chucked his pillow to the floor as he unceremoniously plopped onto it and maneuvered his quilt to surround him.

“I never said he could join.” Avery voiced with great offense as everyone ignored him.

“Let us talk more about Hermione.” Abraxas continued.

“Did she give you permission to call her as such, Malfoy?” Riddle broke his vow of silence. Tom turned his head to look at the wealthy successor, dark brown tendrils of hair casted over his eyes as he did so. No emotion was distinguishable on the teenager’s face.

“No. She never said I could, but I believe it was implied with how we are spending so much time together.” the pointy faced teen explained, but was interrupted by Tom’s ruthless truth,

“You mean the time that you have been forcing her to spend with you? Notice how you never give her the chance to even deny your company? I thought of you as more elegant than that, Malfoy.”

Tom went back to gaze at the ceiling, his mind recognizing patterns in the stone: skulls that seemed to cry out in agony, images that represented his mortality, the usual.

Not that it’s much of a concern now. Tom thought to himself as he raised his hand up to the ceiling to admired his birthright, the Gaunt ring.

“You’re completely right, Tom. It was rather barbaric of me to assume she appreciated the gesture. She just shows me such a kind attitude that I thought such. Does she not portray that side to
you, Tom?” Abraxas said as he laid his head down on his crossed arms.

Tom’s eyebrows raised fractionally at the insinuation. He chose not to stoop low again to denounce the blond teen.

“What was with that silly crown she wore on her head today? She looked like a child!” Avery voiced as he started mindlessly plucking feathers from his pillow.

“I thought it complemented her complexion quite well. I still smell the lavender that wafted off of her during class and dinner.” Abraxas paused for a moment, “Does anyone know where she got it? And now that I think about it, I don’t recall seeing her at lunch.”

Tom was about to reveal that she came to the library during lunch, but Nott intervened, “I remember going outside for a lesson of Care of Magical Creatures, from the window I saw her on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. It seems she’s testing boundaries as a family member of part of the staff. She was talking with something over there, but I couldn’t see it from my angle. As we walked outside I saw her in the distance, walking back towards the school with the flower crown. Woman seems completely mental, if you ask me.” Nott grumbled in his thick Irish accent.

All that followed was silence. Even Avery chose not to insult the messenger of the new knowledge. The intellectual wizard’s face displayed fascination and curiosity.

Now, what would a goody-two-shoes Dumbledore girl be doing near the Forbidden Forest to warrant a flower crown? Seems like two contrasting events. There’s no possible way that her uncle forgot to mention that death lurks around every tree there. She’s hiding something, not just from the student body, but also her own uncle. How odd. Tom remarked in his head, speculation filling his mind.

“She’s a strange one, I’ll give you that. But she’s far too nice to be doing anything nefarious out by the Forest. She probably didn’t even realize where she was.” Abraxas attempted to reassure the group.

Tom wanted to scoff at the notion. Malfoy likes to act like he knows all about the girl, but he knows minimal. Tom completely disregarded the blond’s explanation. A yawn escaped Avery’s lips, “All this talk is dreadfully boring now. I’m retiring to bed.” Avery said in a drowsy tone.

For once, Nott agreed with the lanky, feisty hamster of a boy and shuffled to his bed. Malfoy followed suit to his own, picking up his luxurious quilt that dragged behind him. Tom was the last to get up, his bare feet made contact with frigid floor. He would never get use to the dungeon’s floors.

A constant heating charm is necessary. I’ll make a note to place one soon. Tom thought as he climbed into bed, shutting the curtains of his bed so that he was closed out from the rest of the world.

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Snoring echoed along the stone walls of the female Slytherin dorm, the perpetrator being Druella Rosier. Hermione had folded her pillow over her ears in attempt to block out the assaulting sound waves. She huffed as she realized that the action did nothing to prevent the sound from being present, even the dulled version of it kept the bushy haired witch awake. Slowly, the girl sat up in bed, contemplating what she should do. Tugging on her bottom lip with her teeth, the teen thought that she could quietly go to the Hospital Wing and ask for some Sleeping Drought, if she were somehow caught by prefects at this hour, she would explain that her trek was for medical purposes. Gently, her feet hit the floor as she pulled back the heavy curtains of her bed. She walked to the door
of the dorm and stepped out into the hall. Her fuzzy, lilac colored socks did wonders to prevent the cold from seeping into her body from the floor. She walked down the spiral staircase, her hand pressed against the stone wall to guide herself as the place was dark. The soft, green glow of the Great Lake showed through the glass that stretched across one of the common room’s walls, several fish and other creatures swam past as Hermione stepped foot in the room. An orange glow was present as she noticed that a fire place was lit, two dark couches and an armchair were opposite of one another in front of it. The fire caused the room to have a warm, hazy look to it; it reminded Hermione of a dream. The girl stepped forward, her intent to travel to the exit, but she peered over to the fire. She was not the sole occupant of the room, apparently.

Tom was there, reading a leather bound book. On further inspection, Hermione mentally corrected herself as he was actually writing in the book.

“Are you just going to stand there or do you plan on joining me?” Hermione was startled, how did he already know she was there? His voice had been of a lower octave than usual, grogginess was probably to blame.

“Actually, I was going to go out to the nurse.” she announced with a confident voice; there was no way she was going to let Riddle prevent her from sleep.

“You know that you’d be out after curfew, yes? And that you happen to be sneaking out right in front of a prefect?” the baritone voice replied.

Her steps stalled at the mention,

“Well, let me look at my options, Riddle. I either go back up to my dorm where a snoring monster named Druella Rosier is or I go retrieve Sleeping Drought from the nurse and sleep peacefully. I much prefer the latter, I’m certain that my sneaking out won’t be a penalty to my record.” Hermione stated in a defensive tone.

“Well, be my guest then. Have a safe journey. I personally find passing time with conversation or writing helps me in my sleep efforts.” Tom replied, dipping his quill in ink as he continued his writing.

Hermione made no move to go towards the exit.

“What are you writing?” Hermione asked curiously, her body moving ever closer to the boy’s whereabouts. He was seated on a dark, muted green wingback chair.

“Decided on joining me instead? How kind of you to grace me with your company.” He stated sarcastically.

The witch sat across from him on a black, leather couch. She observed the boy as he continued to write. The male was wearing emerald, silk pajamas, the top few buttons of the shirt were undone. She’s never seen him out of his pristine school uniform; he never walked out of his dorm until his appearance was immaculate. Now was a different occasion however, as his perfectly styled locks were out of place and looked ruffled as if he just came out of bed and he looked comfortable in his nightwear than compared to the layered male uniform. It was a peculiar sight to Hermione as she did not know how to feel about it.

Suddenly, he placed his quill and diary on the coffee table between them and reclined back into the wingback chair, his hands intertwined on his lap as his legs man-spreaded. He looked at Hermione, causing her significant discomfort.
“Why are you staring at me?” Hermione stuttered out.

“It’s what you were doing to me.” He replied plainly.

Hermione shifted in her seat. The experience was doing nothing to help her sleep. Tom raised from his spot on the armchair and walked over to the couch that the girl occupied. Hermione stiffened as Tom wrapped an arm around the back of the couch, his masculine physique faced her. The orange glow of the fire danced across his skin in a way that Hermione had to admire; he was definitely taller than most in their year, probably hitting 183 centimeters at least. He did not possess a lot of muscle, but his arms and abdominal region seemed toned. She didn’t let her eyes drift below his abdomen for good reason.

“What? If you’re going to admire my physique you might as well bask in all of its glory.” Tom said, a smirk playing on his features.

“I’m sorry, how did you know what I was thinki-” Hermione started in a frantic string of words.

Tom placed his hand on Hermione’s chin and gently turned her head downwards so that she could ‘admire the rest of his body’. A gasp erupted from the teenage girl as her eyes were forced to look at his lower half. Silk pajamas did nothing to hide an erection is what Hermione concluded as her eyes met with an apparent bulge in Tom’s trousers. She was paralyzed.

“Does this excite you?” Tom inquired, his warm breath engulfed the flustered witch’s ear as he leaned in.

She remembers those words from earlier that day during Transfiguration. But now, she was seemingly incapable of protest or any witty warnings as Tom continued,

“Would you like to touch it?”

Hermione was panicking inwardly. Outwardly, however, she was hypnotised as he guided her hand the rest on the bulge. She involuntarily let out a soft ‘oh’ as her hand came in contact with his anatomy. A delicious chuckle rumbled through his body, the sound shaking Hermione to her core.

“This does excite you, doesn’t it? I wonder how good old uncle Albus would feel if he knew you were doing such a naughty thing. I would love to see the expression of betrayal on his face at seeing his most despised pupil intimately with his niece.” he cooed in her ear.

The witch did not know how to respond. She had no idea what Dumbledore’s reaction would be, but she could imagine it being in negative spirits. Her thoughts were interrupted as he grinded against her hand to gain her attention, the boy letting a soft groan out in the process.

“You know, Hermione,” For Godric’s sake, the way he spoke her name was enticing beyond belief, “this is all because of you.” he referenced his arousal.

“I-I don’t quite know what to say-” she started, her words falling apart as Tom continued to please himself against her hand and began to say,

“I’ve been thinking about you all night. You just won’t leave my mind, you pesky temptress of a witch. That’s why I came down here. I couldn’t sleep because the mere thought of you gave me a raging problem in my trousers.” His actions came to a halt.

“But low and behold, the cause of all of my problems just so happened to appear in my time of desperate need. Wearing a flimsy excuse of a nightgown.” His tone did nothing to quench her growing thirst; she did not know what came over her.
With the insult to her nightwear, he tugged it up around her waist roughly, her legs and cotton panties exposed to the cold air of the dungeons.

“You make a wizard go mad, Hermione. Several already have their eyes on you, but you’re probably too busy being perfect to even realize it.” The compliment is what startled the witch the most.

“I know Abraxas would be envious of my position right now.” Tom continued, one hand went up to cup Hermione’s face as the other went to her thigh, fingertips tracing an infinity symbol on the sensitive skin.

The shape confused Hermione, but it felt overwhelmingly good to the point where she could not question it. Tom’s large hand that cupped her cheek descended to her neck where he placed his grip lightly, warmth from his hand spread to Hermione and lit her insides on fire; she was aroused and there was no practical reason to deny it. Tom’s head bent to the side as he whispered into her neck,

“Part those legs for me, darling.”

The husky tone of his voice combined with the scent of mint rolling off of his tongue forced her rational thought aside as instinct commanded she spread her legs for the persuasive man.

She was rewarded with the hand resting on her thigh moving inwards, only to continue their ghost like quality of teasing her inner thighs. The girl whined in want as she lifted her hips off of the couch in attempt to coax the man to apply friction to the area she needed it the most. The action was met with a strong hand forcing her hips back down onto the couch as he chortled in amusement.

“Patience is virtue that I welcome, Hermione. Be patient and perhaps you will realize that what you desire is not far from you in terms of time.”

Incoherently, she attempted to convey that she would agree to such, but all that came was a garbled bunch of words.

“Oh, Hermione, I do love the way desperation rolls off your tongue. I must confess, ever since you showed up, you caught my attention. I am enraptured by the state of you.” he finished, the hand focused on her throat went back up the Hermione’s face, her cheeks a distinct rosy color. Abruptly, he turned her head in his direction to meet her chocolate eyes. The two held eye contact, ardor evident in his obsidian eyes. His hand caressed the outer layer of cotton, the only barrier between her most intimate place and the welcoming warmth of his fingers. Hermione practically jumped at the surprising contact, her eyes darting down to where his hand was. The action was met with a soft slap to her thigh, the impact barely painful.

“I want you to look at me as I make you shudder in bliss, I want you to know who it is that’s causing your unravel, whose granting you with such an enlightening and euphoric experience.” the dark haired teen stated, his tenebrous eyes trained on her brown ones.

His fingers pushed the thin barrier to the side, allowing one finger to attentively brush up the center of her heat; the singular digit staying to the surface to tease her. Her face scrunched up as she anticipated what was to come.

“I wish there were a mirror close by, so that you could witness how enchanting you look as I tease your folds.” Tom announced as he let his finger delve in deeper.

Much too slow for Hermione’s liking, Tom guided his finger through her arousal. On the upstroke movement, Tom found exactly what he was looking for as Hermione let out a moan. His
finger applied a genial amount of pressure to the small nub that caused the girl immense, overbearing pleasure. Smiling, Tom began to say,

“Oh, I do believe I’ve found where it really matters. Tell me, Hermione, how does this feel?” he questioned with playful malevolence.

His finger went to gather the wetness accumulating at her entrance, and brought it back up to the sensitive bundle of nerves. He started in slow, agonizing circles on top of the little pearl. Hermione respond with great yearning,

“M-More.” she commanded. What she received however, was the exact opposite as he pulled away his hand. The same hand that had been performing the lewd acts was brought up to Hermione’s lips as she opened her mouth to suck upon the digit, all involuntary.

“Good girls say the magic word.” Tom stated as he looked into Hermione’s eyes with discipline.

“Which word do you want? I’m a witch, Tom, I know a plethora.” She said with great cheek.

Both of his hands went to her breasts, his fingertips caressing the curve of them in a painfully slow manner. The witch’s breathe hitched at the motion. He grabbed her nipples through the thin material of the nightgown, pulling at them and tweaking them mercilessly.

“Good girls do not reply with cheek. Should I remind you that I enjoy girls who do as they’re told and that I feel the need to reward them?” Tom asked rhetorically.

Hermione did not respond with words at first, her mind being too occupied on the rolling of her nipples between the rough pads of Tom’s thumbs and pointer.

“Hm? I apologize, I did not catch what you said. Or did you choose to be silent because you don’t want me to bring you over the brink of absolute pleasure? Is that what it is?” the teenage wizard asked as his eyebrows raised in a questioning way.

“N-No! Please, just go on, Tom.” Hermione said needily.

Her plea was answered as one hand drifted to her flower, a finger invaded as he pushed the petals to the side, coming in contact with the neglected nub, resuming his previous actions but with more vigor. He watched in amazement at the control he had over the witch’s body, every convulsion was produced by him. Utterly bewitched, he continued his ministrations eagerly to coax more of a reaction from her dainty body, his other hand fondled her breast through the fabric of her nightgown.

“Please, don’t stop, Tom.” Hermione huffed out between labored breaths, her self control nonexistent anymore.

“Tell me, Hermione, how does my finger feel as I rub tight circles around your clitoris? How does it feel to know that I have the most intense erection right now because of the way your body contorts to my actions and the delectable sounds you make?” The phrase was whispered harshly into her ear, causing her orgasm to approach rapidly.

Hermione could not stop the sounds that escaped her, anytime she tried to say anything her voice betrayed her and moans of lust came out instead.

“How does it feel to be so temptingly wet because of me? For Salazar’s sake, you are practically dripping all over my hand.” Tom informed Hermione of the lewd fact.

A whine combined with the crackling of the fire was heard as Tom’s finger left Hermione’s clit.
The bold lioness opened her mouth in protest, but what came was a loud moan that she was certain would wake her fellow Slytherin peers. Tom had inserted two fingers into Hermione, dragging them out slowly as he watched her face contort in bliss. He closed his mouth over Hermione’s, swallowing her moans as he pushed his fingers back into her. His mouth worked well against her own, her hands threading into his dark locks to continue the passionate kiss. His head backed away from her, letting his forehead rest against hers as he urged her to make eye contact with him. Every fraction of movement inside the girl set her core ablaze, her form writhing in pleasure as she approached orgasm.

“Do hear how lewd you sound against my fingers, Hermione? It’s a miracle our peers aren’t already awake, could you imagine their reaction to the scene before them? Model student, Tom Riddle, finger fucking the new girl into blissful oblivion?” Hermione’s body shuddered at the sudden vulgarity, normally it would have been revolting, but coming from the handsome boy’s mouth, it seemed like a very welcoming invitation.

Shaking uncontrollably, Hermione could feel the familiar ripples of pleasure that preceeded her orgasms. Such movement informed Tom that his work would be worthwhile after all.

“Tell me, Hermione,” Tom dictated with great urgency, “how does it feel to come undone by Lord Voldemort himself?”

Realization hit Hermione just as hard as her orgasm had. Bliss cascaded down her body, jolts of euphoria spreading throughout every nerve. The witch could do nothing as Tom grinned sadistically down at her, watching her writhe in the pleasure that he wrought out of her, that only he could bring out of her. His satisfied smile only made him look even more charming than he normally was, her body grinding against the fingers still inside her despite her mind telling her to stop. Her orgasm came to an end as she heaved with heavy breaths, the energy seemingly taken from her with the stroke of Tom’s fingers.

Jolting upright in bed, Hermione awoke. Her mind was fried and she felt a familiar sticky substance coat the inside of her thighs. Her brain flooded with intense paranoia at what happened in her dream. The dream reminded her of the peril she was in when she was around Tom; she had been neglecting the fact that he was not just some annoying teenager, but was in fact the future murderer of her best friend’s parents and the sole reason why she grew up in a wizarding world plagued by war. She decided to keep her distance from now on, yet as she rested her head back onto her plump pillow, her mind wondered,

*Did I really just have a wet dream about the future Dark Lord?*
Fate is Exhausting

Chapter Summary

Weary of any interaction with Tom, Hermione attempts to avoid the malevolent boy.

Chapter Notes

This is a pretty short chapter, but I have half of the next chapter already finished. I’ve been rather busy lately, so I apologize for the shortness of the chapter, I just wanted to give you guys something to read :) . This chapter was originally going to be twice as long, but it’s probably better that I broke it up. Hope you guys enjoy it :D ps., cliches ahead. But will have twists to them in the coming chapter.

Ambient sounds of the dungeons awoke a certain witch. Bubbling water was heard in the space she shared with two young wealthy women. Hermione rose out of the bed begrudgingly, her brain was plagued with fatigue as her mind was enveloped in an overwhelming state of paranoia after her dream. The paranoia kept her awake through a majority of the night and set her on a nervous edge. Rubbing her eyes with one hand and opening the curtain of her bed with the other, the young lady exited her sleeping sanctuary. Though, considering the past few days, she deemed it a hell now.

Chestnut eyes scanned the dorm, noting that she was the only individual in it. She gathered her toiletries and headed to the unnecessarily lavish bathroom to perform her daily routine.

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Chatter echoed along the monolithic walls of the Great Hall, the room teeming with activity as breakfast was in full swing. Tom sat with his usual company of Avery and Malfoy, but now their other roommate had joined them. Nott sat beside Tom, the Irish boy dunking the individual oats of his cereal under the milk in his ceramic bowl. Tom noticed his new bench mate looked utterly uninterested in Avery’s prattle, just like the rest of the group.

“I’m just saying that I think good old Albus is testing us or something. How weird is it that his niece is actually willing to be in our company? We’re literally the exact opposite of what she stands for! I don’t trust her.” Avery voiced.

Abraxas rolled his light eyes.

“It could be because I was being a gentleman to her in her time of need. She needs the friends and I’m certain she’s gracious for my act of congeniality when I first saw her. That’s probably why she’s stayed around us.” Arrogance was evident in the posh boy’s voice.

“You lot are far too concerned with this girl. I highly doubt she’s just staying around you guys because of one miniscule act of kindness, Malfoy.” Nott countered as he took a spoonful of his soggy cereal to his mouth.
“Perhaps, she has completely different views than we had once assumed.”

The boy’s eyes followed the source of the voice, settling on Tom.

“Impossible, Tom. She’s a Dumbledore.” Avery explained.

“It would be unwise to make a claim with such weak implications, Avery. The girl and I have quite similar interests it seems.” Tom drawled out slowly, his mind wandering back to the incident in the library.

Abraxas and Avery shot Tom incredulous looks.

“What exactly are you implying, Tom?” Abraxas questioned with great caution.

“Exactly as I said, Abraxas. Miss Dumbledore is not all of which that meets the eye, it seems. I admit, it’s peaked my curiosity.” Tom replied.

“You mean to tell me that the old goon’s niece is dabbling in… the same things we are? Now that’s rich!” Avery laughed out.

“I have literally no idea what you guys are talking about. Does anyone care to explain?” Nott asked in an exasperated tone as he stirred his spoon idly in his cereal.

Just then, Hermione finally made an appearance at the table, intruding on the conversation as she opted to sit next to Abraxas instead of Tom. It would be odd if she decided to completely leave the group, no matter how desperately she wanted to escape Riddle.

“You’re a bit late, Herm-” Abraxas was cut off by Avery,

“You look like centaurs just trampled you! Good gracious, woman!”

Abraxas sighed and scolded Avery. Tom’s eyes were fixed on Hermione, but she attempted to forget his entire existence.

“You’ve never been one with the ladies, Avery.” Abraxas let out.

“Oi, you really do look like a bit of a mess. You alright?” an Irish accent bombarded Hermione’s ears.

Hermione looked to the boy beside Riddle, an unfamiliar presence at the table. Or, at least that is what she assumed, after all she has only eaten breakfast with the boys one time. The boy had auburn hair, freckles littered his face and he had a semi muscular build. The image reminded her of Ron.

“I forgot to mention, I’m Nott, I’ve unfortunately heard a lot about you from this lot,” he jutted a thumb at the boys around him, “they have a nasty habit of preventing me from sleeping with their ramblings about you.”

Hermione was taken aback at the declaration. Gossip at Hogwarts was not unusual, but she preferred not being the main topic of it.

“Way to go, Nott, now she thinks we’re a load of weirdos. Honestly, why did we even invite you to sit with us?” Avery announced, annoyance clear in his words.

“Take that up with your leader, it seems you guys can’t do anything without his presence-” Nott
began, but coughed at the end, abruptly ending his insult.

Tom asked if the boy was okay and Nott explained that he just felt like all of the air in his lungs was forced out. Hermione felt that this was not due to natural occurrences.

“Can’t do much can we, huh? Nott, you literally were incapable of tying your own shoes in the dorm this morning! You had to try three times!” Avery exclaimed, flailing his arms to emphasize his point.

Hermione’s eyes widened suddenly as she blurted out,

“Nott cannot knot.”

The boys looked at her curiously. They had expected her to remain silent through the whole remainder of breakfast due to her tired state, but instead were met with that phrase. Avery bursted into laughter, his finger having to wipe at the newly formed tears near his eyes. Abraxas gave a small chuckle, but both Tom and Nott looked unimpressed.

“Good one, Dumbledore! Quite clever. Never thought I’d say that to you.” Avery said in between fits of spontaneous laughter, approval at the scowl forming on Nott’s face due to Hermione’s words was noted by the young witch.

“You must really be sleep deprived, Hermione. What prevented you from sleeping to the point that phrase came to mind?” Abraxas inquired.

“Uh, nothing really. Just a bit nervous about the new school year, I suppose.” Hermione played it off, attempting to hide her anxiety at the mention of last night.

Her eyes betrayed her, however, as they drifted towards Tom’s figure. His eyes were already trained on her, the tendrils of his hair appeared much neater than compared to the Tom she saw in her dream. His eyes were just as intruding as they were last night however they portrayed no sense of lust currently. Gulping in a nervous gesture, Hermione quickly averted her eyes, hoping the male across from her would not notice.

“I think we should start packing up our things. I’d rather get a head start to potions so we don’t have to navigate through the horde of people when the bell rings.” the exhausted girl said, franticness bounced off of each word as she gathered her bag.

“But, Hermione, you haven’t even had breakfast yet. It would be bad on a prefect’s part to let a student go to their lesson on a hungry stomach.” the exact voice she had been dreading to hear spoke to her.

The abrasive witch was not in the mood to deal with his false congeniality. Her head whipped to his direction, the bushy bunches of hair swung with her.

“I’m not your responsibility, Riddle. I can take care of myself.” Pride concealed her previous anxiety as she grabbed a scone and marched out of the Great Hall, a black trail was made as her cloak fluttered around her being.

“Attitude. Don’t normally see that in the girls around here, I can see why you guys find her so interesting now.” Nott observed her retreating form.

“She’s peculiar, alright. Let’s head to class, boys.” Tom announced, vanishing the plate before him as he and the others grabbed their things and ventured towards the entrance of the Great Hall.

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Black Mary Janes clicked down the abandoned hallways of the castle. Hermione was grateful that she managed to escape the snake pit without any issues. She was blissfully alone, but she knew she would not be for much longer. Walking all the way down to the Dungeons was a task in itself, the many twists and turns of the corridors reminded Hermione of a labyrinth. However, she successfully arrived at her destination, the Potions classroom. As she entered, her nose was met with various scents of freshly mown grass, new parchment, some sort of woody scent, and mint. The teenage girl shuddered at the scent of mint that wafted through the air, her amygdala and hippocampus connected it with vivid memories of her dream from last night. Other than the inopportune recollection, the blend calmed Hermione’s nerves significantly, pulling her into a tranquil state. She was there before the professor himself, it seemed. She elected to sit to the front this time as she had no posh blond to dictate her seating arrangements currently.

The witch pulled out the potions supplies that Albus Dumbledore had gifted her with at the start of term; she was quite thankful for the action as she had no school supplies at all when she had arrived. As time passed, more students entered the classroom. There was an inverse relationship between her tranquil state of mind and the number of students entering the premises; as more students piled in, her mood lost its peace.

“Wow! It smells just like lavender in here today! Smells absolutely superb!” a familiar voice announced; Hermione recognized it to belong to Abraxas.

“Yes, it actually does smell a lot like lavender in here. Odd.” Tom agreed quietly.

Their words confused her immensely, but she was glad that the two had decided not to sit next to her. She assumed that the two must have already had partners, unlike her.

Her thoughts came to a halt as a rounded man appeared from the doorway leading into the classroom. His belly preceded him as he entered, his small legs walked briskly to the front of the room.

“Merlin’s beard! I do apologize for being late, I was writing out invitations for a Slug Club meeting, but now that I am here, we can start the lesson!” the jubilant wizard said gleefully.

He summoned a piece of chalk off of his desk as he positioned himself in front of the black board in the room, the attention of his students focused on him.

“Now, my NEWT level students, today we will be learning how to brew-” the walrus-esque man paused his speech as he began writing in capital letters across the board, each letter raising Hermione’s ever growing anxiety as she presumed what the lesson was going to be about.

“A-M-O-R-T-E-N-I-A!” Professor Slughorn turned himself to face the small crowd of students, eager to see their responses.

Hermione, was not surprised in the slightest. Fate was always testing her these days. But, as she glanced back to Abraxas and Tom, their expression revealed how they felt about the lesson already. Abraxas looked confused, he probably had no idea what the potion’s purpose was. Tom, on the other hand, had a tightly clenched jaw that portrayed anger, yet his eyes disagreed and followed in suit of Abraxas’s confused state.
Chapter Summary

Hermione finally can demonstrate her academic capabilities, all while evading a certain Slytherin Prefect. Fate’s a brewing and so is conflict.

Chapter Notes

Fun fact of the day: 143 is the number of love. Ps another update should be soon, featuring the detention scene. Have an extended weekend so I should be able to get it done! Hope you guys enjoy! Thank you for the reviews!!

Flames came to life as students lit fires beneath their cauldrons. The flipping of pages could be heard as the instructor guided them to settle on page 143. Hermione pushed her bushy locks out of her face, intent on proving her skills as the Brightest Witch of her age. None of the classes she had attended held any practical applications within them yet; finally, the girl was able to demonstrate her capabilities, eagerness spreading across her features. She admits that Advanced Potions is not her best subject and although she detested Harry’s habit of using the Half Blood Prince’s book, she managed to grab a few tips about today’s specific brew from it.

“Can anyone tell me what Amortentia does?” Slughorn’s voice carried along the stone walls.

Only one hand rose.

“Miss Dumbledore, what does the potion do?” the man called out to her.

“Amortentia is the most powerful love potion in the world. It is distinctive for its mother-of-pearl sheen, and steam rises from the potion in spirals. Amortentia smells different to each person, according to what attracts them.” Hermione recited. Several blushes arose at the declaration of the last part.

“Excellent, my dear! A text-book perfect answer, not that I expected anything short of a Dumbledore,” the Potions Master congratulated, “Now, class, let us begin the brewing proces-” his words stopped short as he noticed a different hand raise. Curiosity overcame him as he called to the boy,

“Yes, Tom?”

“Although I concede to Miss Dumbledore having a suitable description, I feel that it is lacking in pertinent details. Amortentia is described as a love potion, but it is anything but. It instills obsession, a raw desire of selfish intentions.” He had a pleasant expression and tone, but it all seemed forced. It almost seemed as if the boy was saying it for his sake rather than the class’s growth of knowledge.

“A very good point to make, Tom! I think points to Slytherin are due thanks to these two students,” a hearty laugh came from the man as he awarded the points, “What do you smell from the potion,
“Nothing, Sir.” Tom eased out. Disappointed sighs came from some of the girls in the classroom as well as relieved ones from the boys.

“A man of secrets, I see. We’ll talk about it later in private, Tom, you know your secret is safe with me.” the older man winked as he finished his statement.

“Actually, Professor, I recall Tom saying it smelled a lot like lavender when we walked in.” Abraxas Malfoy added, his elbow nudging Tom’s side. A glare was sent to the posh blond by the tenebrous teen.

“Is that so, Mister Malfoy?” Slughorn’s permanent grin increased at the news.

“Yes, Sir. In fact, I smelled the exact same aroma when I waltzed in, too.” Abraxas’s sight landed on a certain intelligent witch, the gaze burned holes through Hermione as she resisted meeting his eyes.

“How curious! I do hope you two aren’t smelling it for the same reason, if you catch my drift.” a cheeky wink was sent towards the two males.

“I can assure you, Professor, we are not.” Tom asserted, his jaw clenched slightly, but no noticeable change occurred in his demeanor.

“Splendid news, I wish you two the best of luck,” yet another wink, it amazed Hermione that the wizard did not have some sort of issue with his eye with how frequent he winked, “Now, we should start the brewing process, otherwise I’m not certain we’ll finish by the end of class. Time starts, now!” Glass clinked gently on the surface of Slughorn’s desk, sand descended to the bottom of an ornate hourglass, signifying the class of their timely endeavors.

Dress shoes clacked against the tiles of the dungeon, the sound mingling with the bubbling of ingredients and frustrated groans of students. Abraxas made his way to the potions supply pantry, grabbing double of everything required so his benchmate, Tom, would not need to. A shout of “Constant vigilance!” echoed throughout the classroom due to the dome shaped ceiling, as well as a chastisement of “Mister Moody, although I admire your diligent attitude even in the face of failure, please refrain from shouting in the classroom.” from Slughorn himself.

The blond rolled his eyes at the Gryffindor’s antics as he returned to the table he shared with Tom.

“Here you go, chap.” The pureblood said as he spread out the materials and divided them evenly. Narrowed eyes searched the ingredients.

“You forgot the Pearl Dust.” Tom’s nonchalant tone off put Abraxas.

“Right. I suppose I should go get it then.” Abraxas replied curtly, he turned on his heels towards the direction of the supplies closet.

“I would not worry about it right now, it’s one of the last ingredients. It’s best to start immediately so you are not docked off points.” the lack of emotion in his words drove Abraxas closer to the edge, but he kept his cool. He watched Tom as the secretly malicious teenager kept his eyes trained on his task.

“Right. Thank you, Tom.” A feint of congeniality showed through his words, but did not provoke the quiet boy.
Abraxas rolled his sleeves to his elbows, his icy eyes scanned the contents of the page of instructions and he set to work by adding the primary ingredients. The silence between the two irked the wealthy blond.

“So, what made you smell lavender, Tom?” Abraxas asked, deciding to create idle banter.

“Focus on your potion, Abraxas. Your father would not be pleased to hear of your lack of discipline.” the orphan replied. The inky haired boy’s potion began to steam, the particles coming off the surface of the liquid in spirals.

Slughorn rounded the corner of their shared table, excitement evident on his face.

“Your potion is shaping up quite well, quite well indeed, Tom!” the teacher announced, the bushy stash of his bounced incessantly. He craned his neck around Abraxas’s toned figure, “Malfoy, perhaps you should pick up the pace? You seem to be slacking and,” the man paused as he looked at the putrid green embodying the cauldron, “may just want to vanish it and start again. I’m certain Tom could assist you, he is quite the brilliant boy!” Abraxas’s muscles twitched involuntarily at the praise directed to the boy beside him. Slughorn urged the very tall boy to come down to his height as if he were about to share a secret with him, yet talked not quietly at all,

“You know, I think Miss Dumbledore is going to give you a run for your money, Tom. She’s practically finished, all while she was helping Alastor Moody with his potion as well, might I add! I’ve seen you two at breakfast, I do wonder if she’s the reason you’re smelling lavender.” A quiet thank you was given to Slughorn for his compliment, but no comment on the parts regarding Hermione. As always, Tom’s facade was able to fool the faculty and a majority of the school’s student population; Abraxas did not belong to that group, however.

“You’re very good at evading questions, Riddle.” Abraxas stated as he stirred his disgusting, murky green potion until it turned lilac.

“I do pride myself on such a quality, Malfoy.” Slight bitterness could be detected.

“Did you know that Hermione had lavender stems in her flower crown the other day?” the blonde asked, his hand fumbled a bit with the mortar and pestle as he grinded Moon Stone down.

A mason jar of Ashwinder eggs slammed down onto the walnut table; the perpetrator being Tom. It was a warning.

“Is that so? I didn’t even notice.”

Stoic, no emotion, impassionate, absolutely apathetic. It was as if the boy was the void itself.

“Yes. Pardon me if I’m assuming, but I believe that perhaps you are growing a bit fond of Miss Dumbledore, already.” His pointed face was in the air and his voice bold.

Tom turned to look at the arrogant heir of the Malfoy title, an amicable smile presented on his lips. Abraxas decided that a smile did not suit the taller boy; it reminded him of a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“I can assure you that I do not fancy Miss Dumbledore. Now, I suggest we drop the topic at once.” The veins of Tom’s forearm bulged slightly as he stirred the brew into a slight pearl sheen.

“You are so full of shite, Riddle.” Abraxas mentioned offhandedly, returning to his own potion.

A rough pat to the Pure-blood’s back caused him to cough as his body surged forward, bumping into
the table and causing its contents to shake. A low voice spoke in a dangerous tone near Abraxas’s ear,

“I wouldn’t consider that dropping the topic, chap.” Tom spit out the friendly endearment with venom.

Abraxas glanced at the pale face of the boy, his complexion reminding the teen of a ghost or demonic figure.

“Now, if we’re going to settle this like gentlemen, I’d prefer to do it the wizarding way. I know you came from a muggle orphanage so I know your tendency to use your fists in such a savage way is ingrained into you, but I thought you better than that, mate.” Abraxas patronized. His insults were met with fire igniting in Tom’s eyes.

“Listen to me, Malfoy. You are going to regret that phrase, but for now I’ll chalk it up to you being distracted. Let us think about what started this whole mess; some slag that you’ve only met two days ago? You’re better than that.” Tom reasoned, his eyes squinting as he continued, “Besides, I wouldn’t even need my wand to defeat you in a duel.” Tom rose to his full height.

“You know, I have this peculiar feeling that that phrase was directed towards yourself to keep you from realizing that you like her. No shame in admitting it, Tom.”

Chaos broke loose. Tom discreetly grabbed Abraxas’s pristine collar, the sudden motion causing both of the boy’s cauldrons to stir violently. Abraxas yanked on Tom’s wrists to release the hold he had on him resulting in the boy rushing backwards and slamming into the table, causing his already unstable potion to splash out of the cauldron. The liquid did not splash across the melancholy tiles, however.

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A girlish shriek let out.

“My uniform is absolutely soaked!” Hermione blurted out. She had been walking past the table to head to the supply closet, keen on obtaining the ingredients to remedy Moody’s potion, but was instead met with a tidal wave of Amortentia splashing onto her form.

The chubby professor hastily strolled over to the crime scene.

“Merlin’s Beard! How did this happen? Here, Miss Dumbledore.” Slughorn pointed his wand in her direction, determination ghosted over his features as he casted a drying spell.

“It’s not perfect, but at least you aren’t dripping anymore!” the man offered a sincere smile. He walked closer to her and cautiously sniffed,

“On the bright side, you smell stupendously!” the optimistic wizard exclaimed. She gave a sheepish grin in reply, unsure of how to proceed. Of course her potion making endeavors had been met with such an obstacle.

The class had been a peaceful escape for her, regardless that the boys she was trying to avoid were seated near her own table. She could hear chatter from their table, but could not distinguish any of the words. She even encountered a familiar looking individual, a certain Auror in the making.

Hermione was happy to help him after his potion blew up in his face, the event reminding Hermione of Seamus. It provided a great distraction from the Slytherin duo’s banter; not knowing what they were speaking about made the situation worse and increased Hermione’s growing anxiety. However, meeting with Alastor Moody had also forced her to think of her past; she supposed it was everyone
else’s future. The abrasive boy had made a comment of wanting to introduce her to another brilliant girl that he knew from Gryffindor; Hermione had accepted as she believed she needed more non-Slytherin friends. If she could really define the green and silver clad boys under such a title.

The entire class had their gaze set on Hermione and time seemed to pause as she was gawked at. Slughorn broke everyone’s fascination with the scene as he conducted the class to continue brewing with what little time they had. After that, Slughorn turned to the trio consisting of Abraxas, Tom, and Hermione.

“Truly sorry that happened to you, Miss Dumbledore, I’m certain these boys can concur.” the older man said, an expectant look on his face as he turned to the two males.

“Of course, Sir.” they replied in rehearsed unison, their tones seemingly sincere.

“I don’t quite know what caused all this mess to occur,” Slughorn eyes accused Abraxas as he continued, “but I suppose it’s besides the point now. Tom, Abraxas, I’ll have to ask you two to come in at some point to rebrew the potion so I can give you two proper marks for your work. Anytime should be sufficient.” he assured the boys.

Students frantically added items to their potions in attempt to finish before the last grains of sand fell to the base of the green hourglass. A choir of groans; the melody conducted by Slughorn as he announced time was up. Hermione had returned to her seat as she finished helping her new Gryffindor companion, confidence levels high as she strut to her cauldron. She was very pleased with the results of her potion crafting, steam rising in perfect spirals and a pleasant aroma wafted through the room. Slughorn had given her perfect marks, not that she expected any less. Once she got back to the future, she would have to apologize to Harry for pestering him about ‘cheating’ in Potions. She would leave out the part about her using its knowledge for her own gain.

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The bell rang, signalling that it was time to advance to lunch; she was grateful for Advanced Potions being a double hour class as it allotted for more brewing time. The girl held her head high as she walked to the Great Hall, confidence coming off of her in waves. Being able to demonstrate her academic abilities had made her feel assured, despite the whole situation of being thrown back into 1942.

“Over here, Hermione!” a gruff voice called out to her as she passed the threshold of the Great Hall. Finding the culprit, Hermione stalked over to the Gryffindor table.

Alastor was seated across a stern looking teenager, her eyes appraised Hermione as the bushy haired witch came up to them.

“Minny, this is Hermione. She’s the smart girl I told you about.” Alastor announced, the low treble of his voice gave it a growl like quality.

The dark haired witch rolled her eyes and huffed, “Please refrain from calling me Minny.” she chastised. She turned to address Hermione, a small smile appearing, “I’m Minerva McGonagall. You’re Professor Dumbledore’s niece, correct?” she inquired in a soft tone. Her tone juxtaposed her skeptical gaze.

“Yes, that’s me.” awkwardness was apparent as Hermione replied; she had to contain herself from completely exposing her true self to her future Transfiguration Professor.

“Come now, sit. Don’t mind the stares, it’s not every day a snake eats in the lion’s den.” Alastor
encouraged playfully.

Hermione was weighing her options mentally: she could sit down and be gawked at the entire time or trek her way across the Hall and sit with the pesky Slytherin boys. She promptly slid onto the bench beside the ragged boy.

“So, Miss Dumbledore, how are you enjoying Hogwarts?” Minerva pushed a loose strand of dark hair past her ear as she questioned.

The bushy haired witch was about to reply, but Alastor interrupted,

“Don’t mind Minny, she’s just asking pointless pleasantries to keep up with her Headgirl position. Drop the act and talk to the girl how you really wish to, Minny. You’re a Gryffindor for a reason.”

Minerva raised a brow at the brutish boy,

“You have always been good at seeing through people, Alastor. Your career choice is fitting.” McGonagall praised.

“If I may be so bold, how on earth did you get into Slytherin when Albus is head of Gryffindor?” the stern looking witch asked brazenly. Hermione was surprised at the tone shift.

“Well, to be fair, she isn’t the Professor himself. Though, you don’t seem like much of a snake, do you?” Moody commented as he examined Hermione, his silver fork pausing on it way to his mouth.

“No, I suppose I don’t…” the bushy haired witch replied meekly.

“Too willing to help me out in Potions. Brilliant help you did, too. That Riddle fellow never offered any aid and Slughorn constantly treats him like a deity.” Alastor snidely said, aggression woven into his words.

“I appreciate the compliment.” Hermione gave a genuine grin, yet she felt out of place. She had expected the experience to be homely, but she still felt foreign as she sat with the Gryffindors.

“How do you feel about Riddle, Hermione?” the witch across from her asked. The more she looked at her, the more Hermione noted the familiarity of her future Transfiguration teacher: she wore her hair in her signature tight bun, dark eyes curious as the cat she was, and looked as if she was about to pounce on Hermione if she gave a lacking answer. The qualities would have been more comforting if the teenager did not have her trained eyes on her.

“Do you want my honest opinion?” Hermione cautioned.

“Yes.” Minerva’s hands clasped in front of her as she interviewed her future pupil.

“His facade is sub-par. I’m astonished that so many people can even tolerate him; he’s not a good person.” she ranted on, but stopped. How would she know he is not a good person?

“What makes you think that?” the feminine voice asked, a bit of a Scottish accent chased the syllables. Alastor had decided to listen to the two of them with interest as the conversation progressed.

“He seems fake…” Hermione said slowly, unable to reveal the true reason of why she knows he is not what he portrays himself as.

“As do most Slytherins, Miss Dumbledore.” a slight jab to Hermione’s background.
“I can assure you I’m not like them.”

“Prove it.”

“What do you want me to do?”

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“This is a load of bunk.” a posh English accent broke the air of silence as the owner tossed his textbook on the table in front of him.

“What? Astronomy too difficult for you, Abraxas?” Avery teased. His remark was met with silver eyes rolling in distaste.

“Sod off, Avery. Who are you to judge? If I recall correctly, you got a Troll on your Astronomy OWL.” Abraxas reckoned.

“Hey! It was only a Poor and it’s only because Tom asked to switch telescopes because the lens in his was scratched!” Avery defended. A harsh “shh!” was directed toward the pair as the librarian overheard them. It seemed the blond Pure-blood’s eyes had an affinity for rolling, today.

“Tom this, Tom that, I’m getting really peeved with all of this Tom nonsense.”

Avery gave Abraxas a look of warning, his mood suddenly changing.

“You know you shouldn’t talk about him like that, Abraxas. You know what will happen if he finds out.”

“Don’t you see it, Avery? He’s just using us! We’re just his pawns in this sick, twisted game he has made up. Haven’t you noticed he gets everything he wants?

“It’s a bit ridiculous. The teachers only see him as this perfect student and half of the students are too obsessed with wanting to snog him that they can’t notice his grossly fake personality! For Merlin’s sake, Avery, he forced you to switch telescopes so he could pass the exam!” Abraxas shouted in harsh whispers. Avery’s eyes widened at the man across from him.

“Mate, this conversation is not going to end anywhere pleasant if you continue.” Concerned warnings came.

“I swear, Avery, you have got to build up more of a backbone. We can’t let Riddle just control us in fear like this. Practically the old goon and his niece are the only ones that see it…” Abraxas trailed off, his mind wandering to the intelligent witch.

“Now that you mention it, she seemed to be avoiding Tom today. Didn’t sit by him like she did yesterday during breakfast and completely avoided us during lunch. I saw her speaking to that McGongall girl, too. She’s going give Slytherin a bad name by fraternizing with the enemy…” Avery trailed off with conviction.

“I noticed that as well. She also didn’t sit next to us during Potions…” Abraxas gazed wistfully out the window next to the mahogany table the duo were seated at.

“You’re interested in that Dumbledore bird, aren’t you?” realization evident in the smaller boy’s tone.

“Is it because she’s the only one who seems understanding of Tom’s true self?” Avery wondered
aloud as Abraxas looked at him appraisingly.

“I admit, it’s one of the things most intriguing about her.”

“You only like her because of her sixth sense right?” Avery asked in worry. He would not allow his friend to fall for a girl he barely knew.

“Of course.” Abraxas lied.

“Phew! You practically sent me into cardiac arrest right there, mate.” Avery joked as he settled a hand over his heart.

“We got a bit sidetracked from the original topic, didn’t we?” Abraxas inquisitively commented.

“Hmmm, what do you mean?” Avery questioned as he attempted to focus on the pages of his History of Magic textbook, flipping through the precarious paper.

“The topic of Tom being a complete prick and how we’re going to perform a coup within the Knights of Walpurgis.” Abraxas waited for his lithe friend’s reaction.

Avery laughed as he continued flipping through the thin pages of the decrepit book.

“Good joke, mate.” Avery glanced up to Abraxas, noting his utterly serious complexion.

“You are joking, right?” Avery attempted to reassure.

“Can’t say I am, Avery.”

“You are completely bonkers if you think that’s even possible, Abraxas. There’s no way Tom would allow it.”

“I think you’re missing the point of what a coup is all about.”

“Seriously, this is not a wise idea and there is no way you’re going to get me involved.” Avery stated, voice frantic as he began packing away his things into his brown, leather bag.

“Consider it, Avery.” the blond examined his fingernails as he said so.

“Abraxas, honestly, what you’re talking about is nonsense. If Riddle hears about this, he’s going to-”

“He’s going to what, Avery?” a new voice joined the conversation.

“N-Nothi- Nothing, Tom!” Avery replied, clearly surprised by the sudden intrusion.

“Lies don’t suit such an innocent face. Abraxas, would you like to inform me what you two were discussing?” Tom stoically questioned as he set his bag on the table the boys sat at.

“Nothing of your concern, Riddle.” Defiance evident in his voice.

“Is that so.” It was not a question.

Both Abraxas and Avery stared at their tall peer, but with two drastically different expressions. Challenge was presented in Malfoy’s eyes while panic was demonstrated in Avery’s.

Cold indifference was shown in Tom’s.

“We have a meeting tonight.” Tom mentioned nonchalantly.
“I thought you had detention?” Abraxas rebutted.

“Yes, with Hermione,” Tom was certain to use her name to push Abraxas back in his place, “once I return from it, you will gather the rest of the members and meet down in the common room. Make sure to invite Nott to our gathering, I’m interested in recruiting him.”

“And if he doesn’t want to be a part of our little organization?” Abraxas asked.

The tenebrous teen had already grabbed his belongings again and hoisted his bag onto his shoulder, his head turn as he cast Abraxas a look of apathy.

“Then we Obliviate him, like we do to all of the members who refuse our salvation.”
Fate Contains Many Allusions

Chapter Summary

Detention has arrived, secrets have been revealed, and concerns arise.

Chapter Notes

Long chapter ahead! Many references to literary works I enjoy are found here, because, well, I felt like it added to the story. I hope you guys enjoy, Thank you to all that constantly review, everything you guys say is taken into consideration :) I appreciate all of the positive feedback you people give :)

Sun beams had long abandoned their duty, welcoming moonlight to peer through the arched windows of Hogwarts. Candlelight accompanied the weak source of light to illuminate the halls for navigational purposes. Frizzy curls bounced atop of a young girl’s head as her lissome legs stretched the path to Professor Dumbledore’s office.

Dread apparent on her face; she was not anticipating the evening she had to spend with the Dark Lord. Granted, he was only a teenager at this time, but she knew she should not underestimate him because of this fact. She had been doing such a great job at avoiding the threatening teen, even being able to evade him during her second class and dinner.

Hermione turned the corner, mustering the courage she had earlier in the day. She was determined to stand her ground against him this evening instead of cowering as she did previously. It was about time she showed him that she was a Gryffindor at heart.

The word ‘Gryffindor’ caused the witch to recall her lunch and dinner conversations with Moody and McGonagall, particularly the proposition they proposed. Hermione should have realized how mischievous McGonagall truly was; after all, her Animagus form is a cat. Or would be a cat? Hermione was unaware if she had gone through the training yet. But, what the trio had discussed was to be acted upon at a later date, right before the next Quidditch match between Slytherin and Gryffindor.

She arrived at the Transfiguration classroom, darting immediately to the office on the other side of the room. Slowly she opened the door, revealing two equally tall males. Hermione noted how Dumbledore’s height rivaled the teenager, surpassing him barely, but in a few years Tom would most likely catch up to the older wizard; assuming his epiphyseal plates had not closed already.

The inhabitants of the room turned to her, the auburn haired wizard welcoming her with a beckoning hand. The older gentleman adorned ruby robes with intricate gold details; a very Gryffindor inspired ensemble.

“My niece is punctual as ever.” a warm smile graced his lips. Tom stood silently.
Dumbledore urged the two to follow him, his slippers dragging across the ground as he lead the intelligent duo into the halls of the castle.

“I unfortunately do not have any tasks for you two to do, so I decided to lend your abilities out to another teacher in need of it.” the wise man spoke.

“Our destination is the Muggle Studies room. The teacher is on holiday, but the teacher’s assistant requested help sorting books.” Dumbledore said as the triad continued on their venture through the eerie corridors of the Scottish castle, whispers heard around them from students hidden in the alcoves.

Hermione had no qualms with the punishment; it was far more tame than other forms of discipline she had heard from Ron and Harry in her time.

Tom on the other hand, seemed to raise one eyebrow at the revelation. His expression did not reveal any insight to his thoughts during the moment, but Hermione could guess considering his future self’s ambitions.

Dumbledore stopped at a door on the first floor of the monolithic castle, his hand maneuvering in a lazy manner to unlock the barrier with wandless magic. Following his lead, Hermione and Tom stepped into the vicinity. Various objects of Muggle origin littered the room, from appliances to toys. Nostalgia coursed through Hermione’s veins as she recalled her roots, the sight comforting her in the alienating world she had been thrown into.

“Miss Burbage? I have arrived with your two workers for the next two hours.” Dumbledore called out into the candlelit room.

A head of brown hair popped out from behind the desk at the sound. A young woman walked around the desk as she smoothed out her long skirt.

“Hello, Professor Dumbledore, fantastic of you to bring me some helpers.” Burbage thanked as she pushed the pointed frames of her glasses up the bridge of her button nose. The witch had a sheepish smile on her face.

“Of course. I'll be back in time to collect them. You are free to force them to do your bidding now.” the Transfiguration master smiled playfully. He took his leave and shut the door behind him.

“Alright! Now if you two will follow me,” Burbage lead the pair to a wall of bookshelves, “the Professor asked me to sort all of the titles for easier locating purposes. You see, most of these books were in the library, however some of the parents found the material to be… a negative influence on their magical children.” the happy woman turned to a sour tone.

“So! Me and the Professor had decided to host our own library of sorts so students may check out any Muggle information if they wish to. I’d appreciate if you two would sort alphabetically by author’s last name. If you two have any questions or concerns, I shall be in office right up there.” she pointed up to the staircase that led to a balcony surrounding the edges of the room.

With that, she hoisted her skirt so she would not trip on the steps as she climbed to her sanctuary, leaving the two alone with the mountains of books piled on the floor waiting to be placed.

Silence was the third companion in the room as the two teenagers began their work. Physical labor was the punishment aspect of the task as Dumbledore had specified for them to not use magic. Several familiar titles flashed across Hermione’s vision; not all of the books were observational studies of Muggles, but instead literature written by Muggles.
“Odd. Nathaniel Hawthorne wasn’t a Muggle.” Hermione commented offhandedly as she grabbed a copy of *Young Goodman Brown*.

“What makes you think that?” Tom’s interest piqued.

“Consider all of his topics. He constantly condemns the Puritans for burning witches and mocks their beliefs. I think it’s rather clear that the man had some magical blood in him.” Hermione reasoned.

“If he was a wizard, then why didn’t he do anything about it?” Attitude displayed clearly for all who could hear.

At first, Hermione had stiffened at the vindictive tone, but remembered her resolution for that night. Stand her ground.

“I think you may be neglecting some key facts, Riddle. Consider the repercussions if he had used his magic to defend those witches. He would have exposed the entire wizarding world to Salem, the world we know it as would be completely different. Besides, perhaps he was a squib and only knew about magic but was unable to perform any.” the witch stated, her arm reaching to place a signed edition of *Billy Budd* next to *Moby Dick*.

Tom snickered lightly.

“Perhaps it would be better that way. Perhaps Grindelwald has it all figured out.”

It was the first time the boy had actually said anything alarming in front of her. For the most part, what he had said up to this point could have been played off as a jest, but knowing Tom’s background Hermione knew that was not the case.

“Never took you for an idiot, Riddle.” Valor lined the statement. “Also never took you to be so inconsiderate of admitting such a thing to a war victim.” It was not a complete lie, she had indeed been a war victim. Just not to the dark wizard, Grindelwald like everyone believed.

“We’ve all been affected by a war at one point or another, Miss Dumbledore. If such a comment causes you that much grief then you need to learn how to transform your weaknesses into strengths.” he replied coolly.

It was not what she had anticipated from the man, her eyes dared to look at his stretching form as he robotically placed books on their proper shelves.

“Do you know from experience?” Curiosity bested her.

“Considering we live in the same era, Miss Dumbledore, I think it’s safe to assume that the current war has affected me as well.”

“That’s not the war you’re referring to and you know it.” her observation caused Tom to turn to her.

“I’m not certain I know what you’re talking about.”

“I really think you do, Riddle.”

“Go on, tell me what I don’t know myself.” he tested.

“Hitler’s regime has taken a toll on the orphanage, hasn’t it? Rations on everything from food to clothes, not to mention the nightly blackouts. You weren’t there for the Blitz, were you…?” Hermione asked with slight remorse.
“How did you know about the orpha- Forget it. Your uncle has no sense of privacy, he probably told you.” he remarked in contempt.

“If you must know, yes, it took a great toll on me. But from the ashes I rose and I converted the fear I had then into power. It would be a wise lesson to learn, Hermione.” he addressed. The usage of her name struck a chord in Hermione.

“And I only experienced one bombing of the Blitz. Right before term had started two years ago, the rest occurred while I was at school.” Indifference never left his voice.

“I wouldn’t consider detaching yourself from that part of you to be converting your fears into power. In fact, it sounds like you’re running away from them. Are you afraid of death?” she asked, already knowing the answer. She fingered the pages of Brave New World, as she waited for his answer.

“I fear nothing.” his tone was light, but his expression betrayed him.

“It’s natural to fear death, denying its existence will only cause further paranoia.” Hermione reasoned.

“I fear nothing.” the boy repeated as he stepped upon a wooden stool to reach the top shelf.

The conversation ended with his proclamation, the duo working in silence as the night grew later. The atmosphere was tense after the heavy subject of fear and death. The air seemed dense and made it difficult for the young witch to breathe as she continued her ritual task of organizing novels.

“I don’t think I’ve seen a proper translation of Homer’s Odyssey, well, ever. It was one of the few books the orphanage had. I soon became obsessed with mythos of Greek origin. I would sit inside and read as all of the other boys wrestled savagely to impress the girls of the establishment.” Tom recollected, breaking the silence.

Hermione looked to him, curious as to why he would share such personal information after he had shown his disapproval of such earlier.

“You know their literature is superb considering other empires modeled after it. Hermes, the god of wealth, boundaries, and eloquence became Mercury to the Romans. Ares, god of wrath, had become Mars. I personally always found that Ares was misinterpreted by the Greeks; all they saw was the chaos and destruction in his wake, but failed to recognize the purpose of his actions. Peace.” Tom finished as he stared at the battered cover of the epic poem.

“Something tells me you might enjoy this book.” Hermione stated as she handed him a copy of The Art of War.

A chuckle escaped him as he read the cover. The sound made Hermione shudder; in moments like this, she could almost ignore the fact that he was evil and consider him a normal boy. Almost.

“I’ve already read it. I feel that the philosophy makes sense.”

“Hm, can’t say that I agree with it. War can be avoided through communication and violence deterred.” Hermione combated.

“Right. You seem like a ‘Be the change you wish to see’ kind of girl.” Tom teased as he stepped off of his stool.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she huffed in her offended state.
“Nothing at all. You just seem like the sort who goes out of her way to change her environment. Probably social justice related topics considering your family.” He paced around the room, his dress shoes clacking against the floor. He had opted to leave his robe in his dorm, his apparel consisting of the wool gray suit mandatory for school.

“It’s rude to assume things, Riddle.” she suggested.

“Not if they’re spot on, Miss Dumbledore.” His pearly white teeth shown as he gave her a condescending smile. She would have paid the gesture no mind if she did not have dentists for parents; she could not help admiring the set.

“Anyways, if we’re going to continue our discussion, I’d like to change the topic.” she pronounced boldly.

“Be my guest.” he replied in a chivalrous tone. He resumed his work by picking up a stack of books and examining them.

“Well…” the girl trailed off, unable to conjure any subject.

“That’s quite the deep subject.” Sardonic tones coated the phrase.

“That was a really poor pun, Riddle.”

“Consider it my specialty, Miss Dumbledore.”

It was increasingly difficult for Hermione to see the boy beside her as anything other than a highly intelligent and ambitious boy with behavior like that. But the most important adjective she needed to include was dangerous.

“Who is your favorite Greek god, Riddle?” Hermione asked suddenly, herself being surprised by the question her mind created so quickly.

He did not reply immediately, his mind debating whether or not to answer.

“The god of fate and time, Aion.” he seemed lost in thought, “Yes, definitely Aion. As a child, I was jealous of him. His being is not bound by time because he’s the embodiment of time. It’s said that he would shed his skin as he aged, akin to a snake. But I would have to disagree, I think that behavior is much more like a Phoenix.” Tom verbalized his knowledge and reasoning to his claim.

He received no response as Hermione appeared dazed. The information hit her like bludger to a quaffle, the inner gears of her mind forced to turn at the revelations revealed to her.

Just then, the door leading out to the halls swung open, displaying the man who bestowed detention on the pair.

“I hope this occurrence has been enlightening for the two of you,” Dumbledore said, Hermione clearly heard the double meaning directed towards her, “I hope the two of you will know not to disrespect a teacher again. You two are dismissed.”

The two students went to the door, Tom easily passed through, but Hermione was stopped by Dumbledore.

“A letter has arrived for you. It seems you were late to breakfast and missed the owl’s delivery. Here you go.” he explained, pulling out an ornately decorated envelope addressed to her pseudonym.
Impatiently, the girl ripped open the letter to see who sent it.

_Dear Hermione Jean Dumbledore,_

_Do wizards not have a more efficient form of communication? Honestly, by the time I write this, capture an owl to deliver it, and the time you receive the message is ridiculous and wasted. You guys have magic, you could literally create an entire postal system based on teleporting letters to the person directly._

_But I digress._

_I write to you to invite you to a chat out near the edge of the forest again, I believe it is time we meet again. Pun intended :)_.

_Sincerely, Aion._

_P.S. Meet tomorrow during your free hour. Have Hagrid guide you._

She agreed. In light of what has occurred in past few hours, she definitely concurred that it was time for them to have a little discussion.

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Only one pair of footsteps echoed in the abandoned corridors. Despite that fact, several other beings made themselves known as apparitions fleeted his vision. Their blue haze did nothing to distract Tom’s rampant thoughts.

_I said too much. Far too much._

_But I didn’t even need to say much, did I? No, she knew too much. Is the old goon really that loose lipped?_  

_No, that would breach his code of honor. The man has so much hubris that I wouldn’t be surprised if he ended up like King Lear. Does that make me Edmund? Hermione does fit the part of Cordelia…_  

Further and further his legs carried him to the dungeons deftly. His teeth gritted as he attempted to calm himself.

_A familiar scent lapped at his nostrils; lavender._

_He had smelled it on her, accompanying the scents he associated with success: metallic substances such as gold and iron, and certain concoction that he could not name perfectly, but it was akin to the elements; a great representation of the rawest forms of magic._

_He had to restrain himself from commenting on it when he was around her; he had revealed too much weakness already. And when the air was thick with silence after their talk of fear, he swore to his ancestry that he could feel his magic interacting with her own. For the longest time, he could feel his own magical aura, it had such a violent way of being, itching to lash out at any given chance; it had taken years to tame its powerful force. He had not been able to feel anyone else’s with such distinction, a majority of the wizards and witches he had encountered had weak auras. Or perhaps_
well hidden ones.

But hers was on display. And what a marvelous exhibit it was. Gentle, yet full of potential. He could feel it holding back; it seemed weary almost. And the way it tickled his own magic stirred something inside him-

*Stop that.* He reprimanded himself.

His body paused in the hallway as he attempted to ground himself. Taking in a few deep breaths, he continued his stroll to the Slytherin dorms. He had to take control over his mind right now as there was no way he was letting his followers see him in such a disoriented state.

Yet, his thoughts kept drifting off to her.

*She seemed interested in that Brave New World book... Ironic. I suppose she’s similar to John in the sense that she’s been thrown into a new world. Who knew homeschooled children were so different from the students at Hogwarts?*

His voyage to the Slytherin common room halted.

*Was she homeschooled? I don’t believe she ever said. Who taught her everything that she knows? Who are her parents? Why does she know so much about me, yet I know not even the minuscule amount of information about her?*

Eyebrows furrowed, Tom walked with more confidence as he resolved to bring about answers.

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Torches lit the path back to the Slytherin common room, two pairs of feet clacked against the tiles of the castle. Velvety red robes swished beside Hermione’s black robes, her auburn companion walking in time with her.

“I hope you do not mind that I walk you back to your common room, Miss Granger.” the congenial older man smiled.

“Sir, don’t you think it would be a bit suspicious if anyone over heard you calling me that?” Hermione inquired, worry creeping upon her features.

“No student should be lurking about at this hour. Besides, I find that by using your genuine name, my words leave more of an impact on you. Instead of the alternative of using the name of a role you have been forced to play.”

If Hermione had turned her head to look at her escort, she figured that his eyes would do that peculiar twinkle they have a habit of doing.

“And what is so important that it must leave an impact on me?” she asked brazenly.

“I’m concerned about you.” The usual playful tone converted into consideration.

It was not what Hermione had expected, but many things occurred that night that she could not have foreseen. A deep inhale chased his declaration as he prepared to continue,

“This role you have assumed. I feel that you are forgetting yourself, Miss Granger. You are not Hermione Dumbledore, you are simply acting as if you are. Never forget your roots, Miss Granger.” Wise words flowed from the man’s lips.
“I can assure you haven’t forgotten that I’m not some Slytherin pure-blood, Sir. Was that why you had me work in the Muggle Studies room?” Moodiness accompanied her words.

“That’s not what I was referring to. I know you could never forget your heritage. I’m worried that you’re forgetting about your previous life, which relates to the entire reason why you’re here.”

Shock coursed through the witch; a slight reveal of her time travel’s purpose?

“The reason why I’m here relates to my past life?” she repeated but with curiosity.

“You are here for a great mission, Hermione. To accomplish this mission, you must not forget those you have left in the future.”

“It would be great if you could be less cryptic, Professor.” Hermione sighed.

“Revealing to much I feel would be hazardous. For everything to go accordingly, you must do act upon your own free will. Allowing you to turn into a mindless husk working upon given orders would bring about chaos and would destroy the plan.

“And so I remind you that you are here because the people you care about in the future will benefit from your time here.” he finished.

“All of this talk of the future frightens me, Professor. I would agree that perhaps I’ve played the part of your niece a bit too well and I think it’s because I’ve just been out of my element since I’ve arrived. Being thrown into a whole new world where I’m being scrutinized by everyone has affected me greatly; I suppose I tried clinging to the persona as to avoid suspicion…” Hermione trailed off.

“Wise in theory, it would not be beneficial to us if anyone were to find out about your secret. Particularly any of the people you’ve surrounded yourself with as of recent.” Albus Dumbledore concurred, the last part seemed to be in reference to a particular scheming boy.

“Believe me, it’s not my choice to associate with them. In fact, I was attempting to avoid the group today.”

“I would not recommend avoiding them, Miss Granger. Such actions arouse a great deal of suspicion. I regret to inform you that in this instance, you must set aside the Gryffindor in you and act the part. Just do not lose yourself in that identity. I know how tempting it is to lose yourself, particularly when persuasive creatures are factored in. You may be a Slytherin on the outside, but a Gryffindor spirit embodies you.”

“That’s a bit ironic, usually it’s the Slytherins who are wolves in sheep’s clothing.” the witch voiced, the melody was only a bit louder than the echoed footsteps.

“That’s a good thing to remember as well, Miss Granger.”

The two ventured quietly down the halls, the sound of steps and the flames of torches was deafening to the teenager. Her mind was clouded by the sudden barrage of information; had she truly already forgotten herself? It was very unlike her to just adhere to such a different personality, had travelling back in time really produced such a traumatizing shock? All of Dumbledore’s words had a subtle reminder to them; well, perhaps not too subtle.

How were Harry and Ron doing? Are they still going through their sixth year, with her missing? Are they looking for her? What could she be possibly missing for every second she spends in the past? Is that even how time works?
“Sir?” Hermione gathered Dumbledore’s attention abruptly as the two maneuvered through the dungeons. The man had signaled to continue her inquiry.

“How and when will I be getting home? This discussion of my past has, well, brought about a really intense worry that my friends may be looking for me and that they may need me.” Dainty hand went to grab a loose curl of hair, wrapping the tendril around her twisting finger in a nervous gesture. When no reply came, chestnut eyes looked to deep oceans in fear. Just as any regular sea or ocean, you cannot really see what’s lurking beneath the water, only the seemingly calm surface.

“There is a way to bring me back home, right? I mean, Aion managed to bring me here, so the question is more of when will I be returning?” Hermione attempted to reassure herself.

“I am unaware, Miss Granger. I am not the one who holds all of the answers, however I do imagine there are ways to catapult you back into the future. When that should occur, is more of a question for our centaur friend.” His tone was vacant of any emotion, simply a reflection of his thoughts that he cleverly covered with words.

“Professor, I am no fool to the implications of time travel and what happens to those who meddle with it. If someone strays from their place in the loop for extensive amount of time, bad things happen to them...What happens if that happens to me, Sir?” Paranoia encapsulated her question, eyes boring into Dumbledore who refused to meet her gaze. From her perspective, she could see slight remorse and concern grace his worn features. The torch light of the dungeons dramatized his expression, creating intense shadows along to growing creases of his face.

“There’s not enough research to conclude anything bad will happen to you, Miss Granger.”

“Well, yes, of course there isn’t, because anyone who has ventured from their time for too long wasn’t able to come back to record their findings!” She said dreadfully. Why did tonight have to be filled with such painful realizations?

“In dark times we must find our own light, Miss Dumbledore,” The usage of her pseudonym caught the girl off guard,” it is best that we keep a level head so that our endeavors are not skewed. Many people are relying on your work, Miss Dumbledore. I bid you a goodnight, niece.” The man gave a soft pat to the girl’s back, his hand cold and startling; what was supposed to be a comforting action only disturbed the already mess of a woman.

“Goodnight, Professor.” Irritation evident in her voice. Why was it that everytime she brought up her feelings on the situation she was shut down? She could feel her blood beginning to sear as frustration over came her. None of the situation was fair; all she wanted to do now was go home, back to her time, laugh with her good Gryffindor pals, study at Hogwarts, and most of all just lead a normal witch life. But Fate has decided otherwise and now she has realized its threat to her; essentially she must stay here long enough to accomplish whatever she must do, but not too long otherwise she could be erased from time altogether. If that’s even what happens to wandering time travelers. Perhaps she should brush up on some Horology soon.

She attempted to compose herself as she prepared to say the Slytherin password,

 PURE-BLOOD.” Came the sultry whisper. An opening appeared in the stone wall as Tom’s limber legs stepped through and rounded the corner that led to the bulk of the common room. Several students were seen studying at tables, a group of first years lounged on the leather furniture by the roaring flames of the fire, and in a secluded corner was a group of older students.
Destination located, Tom strolled to the secluded corner at a leisurely pace. Witches gawked at his casual confidence from across the room; the lake light from the wall panel did wonders to his cheekbones and amplified his sallow complexion in a positive manner.

He arrived and stood in the middle of the group, basking in the attention they placed on him; they were ready to listen to whatever he preached.

Silver eyes fixated on the tall figure that demanded their attention silently, the form was very commanding in itself. Abraxas swallowed nervously; he was worried as to what the subject of this meeting would be and hoped that his earlier statements had not been heard by the leader of the group. Malfoy was certainly conflicted; he regretted his words, yet did not believe them to be unnecessary at that time. The tall figure gestured for one of the five boys to move from their seat so that he could rest.

“Now that I have arrived, this meeting can begin. This is is not our usual meeting place, however given the topic of tonight’s gathering I believed it was well fit.” the malicious teenager spoke in a pleasant tone, though to the trained ear threats underlined the announcement.

“As you may see, we have a new member here, you all may know him, his name is Nott. This is more of an, introductory meeting for him to see what we as the Knights of Walpurgis have to offer.” Tom explained, seated upon a lavish arm chair.

Abraxas had let out a soft sigh of relief; he was thankful that this meeting was not called to punish him publicly. A familiar Irish timbre interrupted the wealthy wizard’s thoughts,

“You call yourselves the Knights of Walpurgis?” Nott asked incredulously.

“It’s a peculiar name, I know, but I find it fitting for a group focused on creating well rounded wizards.” Tom replied.

“What does being a well rounded wizard entail exactly?” Nott questioned as he propped his legs on the jade coffee table in front of him.

“Would one of our other members wish to inform him?” Tom asked the group, gaze pointed at Abraxas. The blonde took his cue,

“Wizards who have an advanced knowledge of all magics and who are capable of performing difficult spells with immense expertise. If you have not noticed by now, we are all well mannered and have an abundance of resources at our disposal: these are qualities that we wish to utilize in efforts of creating a network of top class wizards, if you will. By doing so, we can establish ourselves in positions of power and create a better wizarding community. We hope that after this meeting that you desire to help us in our quest.” Abraxas finished; ever the most eloquent of messengers.

“Thank you, Abraxas.” Tom thanked cordially.

Nott looked at the group around him; the Black family’s boys were seated across him on a sectional piece, Avery next to them on a wooden chair that belonged to a neighboring desk, Abraxas at his side on the leather couch and Tom at the head of the group. A peculiar bunch.

“Is it just this lot?” Nott speculated.

“Some of our other members were unable to join us this evening. Others include Lestrange, Dolohov
and Rosier. In the near future, I’d like to ask Mulciber to come to one of our meetings.” Tom informed, his dark eyes narrowing at Nott in scrutiny.

“Quite an odd bunch. Isn’t Dolohov a transfer from Durmstrang? Something about cursing other students? Got expelled and had to come here? Bit rough around the edges, don’t you think?” Nott challenged skeptically.

“I’m a firm believer that everyone has a chance to redeem themselves no matter their background. One of the most praiseworthy actions in life is turning your negatives into positives.” Tom replied, arm resting on the arm of the chair, holding his head up.

“And why exactly do you think I belong in this little group?”

“You have potential that you’re holding back. It’s not because you’re doing intentionally, it’s the system that forces you to hold back. Magic is powerful and wild force, but the education system as caged your gift, teaching you that anything outside of the curriculum is ‘dark’. And Merlin forbid a Muggle sees you perform any form of magic. I hate to reiterated another person’s words, but don’t you find it odd that we have to hide our talents from the world? We have magical blood pulsating through our bodies and you’re a fool to let anyone of lesser blood tell you what to do.” Passion was exerted with every syllable, the charismatic young boy felt satisfied with his answer.

“So, essentially, you want me to join so we can start a wizarding revolution to establish people like us in power? So we can perform magic to its full extent?” The irish boy inquired cautiously.

“Absolutely. What do you say?” Tom’s hand reached forward for the boy, offering the appendage to him.

“I’m ready to lead the wizarding world to a better place.” Nott’s hand grasped the svelte boy’s, signifying the deal had been sealed. The occasion reminded Nott deeply of a deal with Old Scratch. The blond boy beside Nott took a sharp intake of breath as the hand had made contact, slight perspiration sliding down the Malfoy’s forehead.

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The meeting carried on with useless prattle and another meeting date. As the group was dismissed, many of the boy retired to their dorms, however Abraxas was the last to abandon ship. Being left alone in the presence of Tom irked him greatly as the taller boy strode up to him.

“How do you feel about Nott joining us, Malfoy?” Tom asked. The boy had pulled out his stark white wand, his dexterous fingers toying with the Yew wood absentmindedly.

“I believe he will be a great addition to our group” Abraxas stated with little emotion in attempt to mask his truly feelings.

“Is that so? I’m honored.” the blonde replied, nose pointed in the air to show his resilience. It was evident that this conversation was going in a certain direction.

“I see.” Was all that came as the twisted teenager continued his idle play.

“You know, Abraxas, I trust you a lot. You know many things about me that no one else does.” Tom declared, eyes glancing up to Abraxas.

“Is that so? I’m honored.” the blonde replied, nose pointed in the air to show his resilience. It was evident that this conversation was going in a certain direction.

“I bet you are. Do you think you could do a favor for me then?” A small smile was plastered on the pale boy; such a kind expression did not suit the boy.
“Of course.” Abraxas agreed.

Tom began to pace a bit, the tip of his wand tapping his chin in thought.

“I require your elegance. I want you to find out anything about Hermione that you can. Court her if you must, just get her comfortable around you, enough to reveal herself to you. I figured you would prefer to do this rather than someone like Avery or Nott since you seem to be enamoured with her.”

“I appreciate the nod to my elegance, may I question why you ask me to do this?” Worry had coated his words, though he hoped it was subtle. Abraxas was concerned that this knowledge could be used against the innocent girl.

“She’s hiding things, and I am a most curious creature. However, I would rather not interrogate her myself as she seems, reluctant around me.” Tom finished.

“I wonder why.” Abraxas belted out. Tom ignored the disrespectful comment.

“But I digress. I trust that you are capable of making her placid enough to coax the information from her, and do remember to remain unattached. I don’t trust her and I would hate to see one of my friends fall for a worthless girl.” the apathetic boy remarked.

So it was a test. To see which side Abraxas would chose. The joke is on Tom, for Abraxas knew his loyalty must lie within Tom if he ever wanted to dethrone his malevolent reign. The girl is simply collateral, was the mantra Abraxas had echoing in the corners of his mind. He only wanted the girl to not be tainted by Tom’s twisted ideals.

“Of course.”

“Of course, what?” Tom asked expectantly. A nervous gulp came from Abraxas.

“Of course, my Lord.”

The title made Abraxas shudder in discomfort; it gave the being before him too much power over him and recognizing that fact made it worse.

“On a side note, Abraxas, don’t think that I’ve forgotten your words from earlier. Consider my request a means of redemption. Turn your negatives into positives. Or the next meeting may well be about you.” Tom concluded, a saccharine smile battled the pure evil that manifested in his tenebrous eyes.

“Of course. Goodnight, my Lord.”
Snores sounded throughout the room, accompanied by the ambient sound of bubbling water. It was a rare, serene moment for the Slytherin sixth year dorms. Tom laid awake in his bed though, as he often did after everyone had been asleep. Call him paranoid, but one too many times at the orphanage, boys had sneaked into his room to pull practical jokes on him. The occurrence only stopped when Tom had decided to pull a practical joke of his own; the Matron of the orphanage did not find the burning of the young bully’s clothes quite as funny as he had.

That was around the same time of which Dumbledore had been sent to retrieve him.

Tom apparently, had an odd relationship with the Dumbledores. So far the two he has encountered have managed to get his darkest secrets out of him; he had told the Professor of his Parseltongue capabilities and had told the man’s niece all about his time at the orphanage.

What was with his niece anyways?

Of course, his thoughts always found their way to the subject of her.

A soft groan was emitted from his lips; no matter what he tried, everything he thought of turned back to her.

If he was not so open minded, he would consider the girl atrocious. She stated her opinion boldly and clearly excelled in academics; most of the women that surrounded him were focused on pleasing others and becoming the perfect housewife. Excluding the current Headgirl, naturally. It was stunning how Abraxas fancied the girl considering her qualities; Abraxas had always been rooted in tradition due to his family ties.

Who is Tom to judge though? He too has become overwhelmingly interested in the new girl. Perhaps it is because she is the apparent niece of Dumbledore or her knowledge of that dark book in the library. Maybe it is due to her knowledge of his past. An intriguing character no doubt, but those factors should not have such a strong effect on the boy.

Perhaps his true interest lies in the fact that she seems weary around him; if that is the case then he
questions just how much of his past she is aware about.

But that is a silly thing to consider; there is no possible way of her knowing of his familial encounters and basilisk related endeavors. The most she could have is speculations.

Unless she is proficient in the art of Divination.

But she called Divination a load of bunk! There is no way she was some sort of prophetess.

Unless that was just a ploy to make him think otherwise. Perhaps she foresaw that he would have these suspicions about her and so she took the necessary precautions to eliminate them?

*I’m overthinking this too much. There’s no way she could possibly think that far ahead just to throw me off for no reason.* The boy considered as his eyes closed, his expression calm.

But the voice in the back of his mind reminded him, *She’s a Dumbledore, they’re always hiding something from the public.*

Frustrated, Tom rolled onto his side, tugging the heavy quilt with him. The situation was beyond ridiculous. Why would the girl hide that she was clairvoyant?

Tom’s eyes snapped open at the mental question.

What if she was not clairvoyant at all? Maybe she did not get the information from her uncle, perhaps she got it from Tom directly.

The Slytherin Heir rolled back onto his spine, eyebrows furrowed as he continued to think,

*Is she a Leglimens?*

It is a rare skill to possess. Even he was having trouble in mastering it, and his skills are far from where he wishes them to be still, but what if she knew how? It is not a completely radical notion; if she truly has Dumbledore blood in her, it would not be unwise to consider that she may possess the sort of magic to accomplish it.

His mind flashed to all the times they had intense eye contact; was she so proficient that he could not even feel her probing at the deepest corners of his brain?

A deep inhale followed the action of his eyes fluttering shut, annoyance grossed his face. The annoyance was not directed to the witch, rather himself for not realizing the signs sooner and more so not noticing the intrusion of his privacy.

If she wanted to make it a habit of venturing into other people’s minds, then he’ll just have to demonstrate the repercussions of such behavior.

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Bustling crowds of students made their way through the many halls of Hogwarts, all eager to eat breakfast. Students carried their conversations through the threshold of Great Hall as they took their seat; peculiarly, the student population had an abundant amount of energy this morning. The enthusiasm radiated off them as Hermione weaseled her way through the crowd and she could not help but allow the enthusiasm to infect her.

The witch trotted to the Slytherin table; she wished to sit by her Gryffindor friends, however given Professor Dumbledore’s advice last night, she chose against it. She had thought over the matter that
night before after countless hours of reflecting sorrow due to the absence of her ‘future’ friends. The most she could conclude was that she was destined to interact with the Slytherins of this time period (a matter she would confirm with Aion later); if her assumption is correct, then she should sit by them any given chance to accelerate the process of her task completing.

She arrived at the same time Tom had. Brief eye contact was made before he averted his gaze to the table before him. Bafflement showed on Hermione’s face; usually he would hold the contact for long periods of time to unnerve her. Neither spoke as other members of the posse arrived. Abraxas sat beside the witch and greeted the dark haired teen in front of him politely. In return, a satisfied smile was given. Nott has assumed the free spot on the other side of Abraxas. Avery was the next to arrive, his face contorting into confusion.

“What’s this? Abraxas!” the lanky boy shouted as he came upon the scene.

A head of platinum blond hair turned to the aggressor in an uninterested manner. The figure’s large hands went for the the plate of toast and grabbed a piece and a butter knife idly,

“Yes, Avery?” the Malfoy asked dully.

“What the bloody hell is this!” the feisty boy flailed his arms, gesturing to the blonde Quidditch player and the two seated next to him.

“Are you referring to Hermione? I know you’re not used to a woman’s company but-” Abraxas started his sarcastic retort, but was interrupted by Avery huffing,

“No, you twat! I’m talking about how Nott is sitting next to you and not me! We always sit together!”

“You sound like a fairy, Avery.” Nott commented. A chuckle came from Abraxas.

Flabbergasted, the abrasive brunet boy rebutted,

“I’m not a homosexual for Abraxas, you cunt!”

“Avery, language.” Tom mentioned offhandedly, a silver fork in hand poking at the whites of an egg.

“You said not for Abraxas. Are you implying you’re a homosexual for someone else, Avery?” Hermione questioned. The suggestion was met with a very angry Avery.

“Look here, you-” Avery started in annoyance, but was cut off by Abraxas’s hubris,

“Yes, Avery. Besides, no one would blame you for being a fairy for me. Have you seen me? I’m absolutely irresistible.” the snootish voice announced in pride.

Several members of the table scoffed.

“Whatever, you guys are just jealous that I have so many female admirers.” Abraxas said in defiance. Nott looked to him in disbelief.

“Not as many as Riddle has. Every girl here fawns over him.” the Irish boy assured. Abraxas glanced at Hermione.

“Not all of them.” Abraxas said quietly with a small smile.
What she presumed was supposed to be meaningful comment and gesture was taken as rather creepy.

“Indeed.” Tom agreed. His hair was disheveled today, the jet black locks falling over one of his eyes. Yet, it did not look shabby on him as it would another; on him it could be passed off as intentional and stylish.

The hoot of owls sounded above the group, the horde of the birds flying over the tables as packages were dropped from the fleet. A petite, scarlet box landed in front of Tom. His face held no reaction to the gift as he set it aside nonchalantly.

“Well? Take a look on the inside, Tom!” Avery urged as he poked the box in Tom’s direction.

“So you guys would see what I received in the post? No thank you, I rather enjoy my privacy.” a glare was sent Hermione’s way; her eyes squinted in confusion at the meaning.

“It would perhaps be best if you opened it now so he won’t pester you later.” Abraxas suggested wisely. Tom blew out air as his hand retrieved the small box. A neat, black bow adorned the top. Wrappings were shredded off as Tom teared into the paper encasing the package. Everyone leaned over the mahogany table to glimpse at the contents, Avery so much that he was balancing on his arms as he gazed. Folding back the flaps of the cardboard box, Tom reached in to grab the items found within. A round, ornate container decorated in an ivy green with intricate black detailings. Lifting the lid, Tom’s eyebrows raised slightly.

“Don’t keep us waiting, mate!” Avery encouraged.

“Chocolates. Expensive ones.” Tom claimed as he tilted the container to show the opposite side of the table.

“It looks like there’s a note on the bottom.” Nott observed, spoon motioning to the stated location.

Tom carefully maneuvered the box so nothing would spill out of it and removed the piece of parchment from the bottom.

“‘Sweets for the sweetest boy at Hogwarts, after all you are what you eat! Thank you for escorting me to my dorm after the last Slugclub party. Love, Walburga.’” Tom read.

“I guess speaking of Tom’s admirers…” Abraxas trailed off. The group watched as Tom popped a lavish truffle into his mouth.

“It’s my favorite too, dark chocolate.” casualty clear in his tone.

“You are what you eat, Riddle.” Hermione mentioned. Mostly, she just wanted to see if he would even respond to her considering his previous behavior.

“I’m glad you think of me as sweet, Miss Dumbledore.” the boy replied with his congenial facade.

“I was referring to the bitterness of dark chocolate.” Hermione gave a victorious smile at the comeback she produced. Tom’s grin dropped and the other boy’s eyes widened.

A harsh pat to her back caused her to fall from her accomplished state.

“Good one, Hermione. You are such a clever girl.”, Abraxas praised as he swallowed a piece of toast, “You’re so clever that I’m surprised Slughorn has not invited you to his club yet. Especially
since you’re the niece of the great Albus Dumbledore.” he finished, silver eyes gageing her reaction.

“There’s no girls in Slugclub for a reason, Abraxas.” Avery retorted.

“Perhaps that should change.” Tom spoke up. Malfoy cleared his throat to bring the attention back to him.

“Until it does change, would you like to accompany me to the next meeting? It’s short notice, but it’s tomorrow night. Slughorn is hoping to brag about Slytherin’s victory after the Quidditch match tomorrow evening. I would be honored if you were to be my date.” silver eyes questioned chocolate ones. Obsidian bounced between the two in anticipation of the answer.

Hermione stiffened a bit at the invitation. Today was much more relaxed than compared to yesterday; it was difficult to accept, but in hopes of finishing whatever mission she must, she did so.

“I suppose I could accompany you. I’ll have to transfigure some robes. I unfortunately did not bring any formal attire.” she announced. It took a lot of effort to hold back the rejection she wished to give him. His eyes lit up in a pleasant manner,

“Splendid! I’ll be sure to meet you in the common room beforehand.” the eloquent teenager replied, “I promise to show you a great time.” A flirtatious wink added to Hermione’s inner disgust at the situation. How ridiculous of a notion it was for a Malfoy to court her; if only she could somehow explain to Draco how his ancestor adored her.

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Animated chatter bounced off of the halls of Hogwarts, the excitement from this morning not fleeting as students left the Great Hall. The group of Slytherins rounded a corner of the castle, trekking to their next class.

“Oh, I absolutely adore the hype of students when Quidditch matches come around, it riles me up!” Abraxas gritted out with a smirk, reveling in the students’ anticipation of tomorrow.

“I just can’t wait to put that silly McGonagall in her place. Quidditch is not a woman’s sport.” Avery huffed. Hermione had to hold her tongue back from defending her friend.

A nudge came to her side as the group continued their walk.

“You seem a bit tense, Miss Dumbledore. Whatever could be the matter?” Tom commented, his gaze fixated in front of him.

“Nothing of your concern, Riddle.” Hermione replied, looking curiously at Tom’s rigid stance.

“Is that so? I thought we were on decent terms now, you can tell me anything, Miss Dumbledore.” he assured her, but benevolence was void in his tone, “I find that relieving the soul of secrets unburdens an individual greatly.” A quick glance to the short female was all he offered.

Vagueness was beginning to become one of Hermione’s greatest pet peeves.

The brash witch turned to Tom,

“No, I think you’re hiding a plethora of secrets. But, only recently have I discovered what one of
them is.” The smile present on his face was evident as he spoke.

Before Hermione could retort, the rest of the Slytherins left as they bade their partings. Tom’s legs took long strides, Hermione’s efforts in keeping up with him proved fruitless as the two headed to the Arithmancy classroom.

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Chalk scratched against the slate board at the front of the room. The smell of tattered, old books wafted through the air just as dust particles floated in a haze across the beams of light infiltrating the room. An older man stood in front of the black board, a stream of numbers littered the surface as he stepped back to admire his work. The sound of students entering the room was drowned out by the man’s own thoughts; he had a peculiar new student in his class and he was eager to pick at her brain. Absentmindedly, a hand of his went up to push his round glasses up the bridge of his nose. The bell of Hogwarts reverberated along the corridors, signalling that class should begin.

“Today, my class, we shall learn how to write equations for spells,” The bearded man turned to the small amount of students in the room, eyes scanning for a particular frizzy haired witch,”But first, I would like you all the welcome our new student, Miss Hermione Dumbledore.” a German accent followed his words.

The witch in question stood up from her seat and offered a smile that seemed forced.

“I’m quite eager to be your Professor for this subject, Miss Dumbledore. I’ve heard great things about your work.” His hand gestured that she should sit at the end of his statement.

Hermione was used to being pointed out in class by teachers, but everything else in the situation felt surreal to her. The man looked so familiar to her, yet she couldn’t place where she had seen him before. He dressed like a Muggle, his form absent of the extravagant robes wizards often adorned themselves with. Instead, a plain black suit with a black tie complimented the wrinkles of his face. Unfortunately, she did not even have his name to cross examine her mental database of people she knew; it was peculiar that he did not really introduce himself to her.

“Now can anyone tell me what number constant we should place in front of the variable for a splitting charm and how they got it?” The Professor asked, his eyes were hidden behind the glare of his glasses.

A rather easy question to start of the lesson; given that Arithmancy is Hermione’s favorite subject, the witch conjured the answer instantaneously.

Two out of seven students raised their hands,

“Riddle?” the teacher inquired, his voice echoed along the worn walls of the castle.

“I found the answer of four by taking the derivative of the Reducto curse and then simplifying the equation further, Professor Hilbert.” the tall boy explained.

“Very good work, Tom. Could you please come to the board and show your work? Also do try to find what variable would give us the best result of the curse.” Professor Hilbert requested. A soft nod came from the boy in agreement.

An arm still dangled in the air, waiting to be called upon. As seconds passed, the arm began to wave slightly in an impatient manner, warranting the attention of the Professor.

“Yes, Miss Dumbledore?” Hilbert asked curiously.
The bushy-haired witch let her arm fall to her side as she stated,

“Tom, although not completely incorrect, did not choose the most efficient answer.”

The elderly wizard leaned his hip against the bulky wooden desk near the board, waiting for the bold girl to continue. Tom too, had become interested in the manner, his work with chalk coming to a halt as his eyes squinted at Hermione.

“Although four is the correct constant and the number for the variable would give us the maximum power of the curse given that the constant is four, it is not the most efficient answer.

“If we follow Bridget Wenlock’s Theory of Seven, we could substitute the constant for one and just use seven for the variable. This will automatically give us the best equation to maximize the spell’s effectiveness.” The intellectual girl finished proudly. Incredulous looks were thrown her way.

“Who is Bridget Wenlock?” A Ravenclaw in the back of the classroom whispered to her friend.

“No clue. Do you think the lass is off her rocker?” replied the friend in the silence. Several other confused mumblings sounded off in the room.

“Honestly, Miss Dumbledore, I think I know what I’m doing.” Tom Riddle assured the girl, going back to his mathematical demonstration.

Bafflement struck Hermione’s features. How could Advanced Arithmancy students not know Bridget Wenlock!

“Actually, Riddle, if you did know what you were doing, then you be replacing that variable with a seven right about now.” the witch stood from her seat as she marched to the front of the room, yanking the piece of chalk out of the snide boy’s hand and setting to prove her claim. Tom stepped back in astonishment at the rude gesture.

“Bridget Wenlock-” the dainty hand scribbled on the board with intense speed, the sound echoing in the quiet room, “- was a medieval witch who procured the significance of the number seven in magic theory,” the white dust of the chalk fell to the floor as the witch continued her rant, “The number seven is the most powerful number in all of magic. It is the number of balance. Think of it in terms of Ph if you must! Seven is neutral while the others are either acidic or basic. Only seven will give us the best-outcome.” the frustrated teenager emphasized the last words with the harsh strokes of chalk against the board.

“Is she on poppy?” a whisper came from the back as the others stared in silence.

“She’s far too brash to be on poppy, but she certainly is loony.”

Hermione held back the roll her eyes so desperately wanted to perform.

“I think it would be best if you would return to your seat, Hermione.” Tom urged the annoying girl to leave, taking the piece of chalk from her hand.

On her walk of shame back to her seat, the Professor spoke up.

“Impressive, Class, our dear Miss Dumbledore is absolutely correct in her calculations.” the man gestured to the board as Hermione revealed in the defeat written on Tom’s face. “I do question how you may know of Bridget Wenlock’s work though, it has only recently been discovered.” the Arithmancy expert commented.
Hermione’s eyes widened a bit.

*How on Earth could I have been so daft! I should not have said anything about that!*

The witch took a moment to reconsider something,

*I know for certain that her work has been discovered for ages now, the real reason why no one knows about it yet is because the Ministry considered it to be confidential to the public...why would Professor Hilbert say it was recently discovered? How am I going to play this off?*

“Something tells me that you’re Dumbledore status keeps you on your toes in the realm of current events.” A congenial smile graced Professor Hilbert’s face, causing the crow feet of his eyes to crinkle.

“Naturally, Sir.” Hermione’s words carried relief with them as she had no need of an excuse now, the teacher making one for her.

“How about we give the marvelous Miss Dumbledore a round of applause for her brilliant usage of Wenlock’s theorem?” Instructed the teacher as the class obeyed.

Tom begrudgingly clapped along, his eyes focused on the victorious looking witch.

Victory did not suit the nuisance of a witch, Tom decided.

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Cold air flitted through Hermione’s robes as the wind whipped at her hair. Clouds casted over the sky of the day. The gray overcast usually brought about a sour mood, but oddly enough, Hermione’s demeanor was the exact opposite.

Mary Janes sloshed against the marshes of the forest boundary. The girl stood at the edge, grasping the flaps of her cloak closer to one another as she waited. A familiar figure protruded from the shrubbery of the forest, limping out to meet her in the marshes.

Worry quickly flooded Hermione’s system as she saw her centaur friend limping towards her, a rather large gash evident on his cheek. Instead of waiting, the witch jogged up to the creature.

“Aion, are you okay?” she urgently questioned.

“Oh, yes, my wounds are long closed and are healing. But for the time being, I have a nasty limp.” he mentioned casually. With a plop, the centaur sat on the grass; Aion winced slightly as he settled into a comfortable position. Hermione followed suit.

“Aion, how did all of this happen?” the girl inquired.

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Was it your old clan?”

“Perhaps.”

“Aion!” Hermione let out a frustrated groan. “You need to be really careful in the forest!”

“I know, I know. Albus is actually making an arrangement for me due to my injuries.” Aion announced, a reassuring smile appeared on his face.
“Well, I suppose that’s good.” the witch mumbled.

“Yeah, can’t say that an atlatl to the knee is much fun.” the centaur chuckled at the memory.

“Aion, do you mind if I check your injuries? I could use some healing spells to accelerate the process.” Hermione offered. Aion gave consent and Hermione stood from her spot to look at the various wounds that adorned the hybrid.

“I did not see Hagrid with you.” Aion stated.

“I was very impatient to see you, also, last time Hagrid didn't seem to enjoy my presence.” she replied, recalling the solemn look on Hagrid's face during her last excursion to the woods.

“Ah, quite the contrary,” Aion let out a soft giggle, “he’s quite fond of you. The poor boy just gets so flustered around women, not to mention he’s worried that you look down on him for being a hybrid.” the centaur finished, wincing slightly as Hermione’s hand came across an open wound.

“Well, please do inform Hagrid that he is welcome to talk to me anytime and that I do not look down upon him. That would be a very silly thing to dislike someone for.” Dainty, glowing hands washed over torn flesh, mending the tissue.

“I’m certain he will appreciate the offer,” a hum came from Aion as Hermione patched his wounds, “so why were you so impatient to see me?” Aion asked.

“I have several complaints, to start off.” the witch’s demeanor reverted back to the frustrated state she was in during Arithmancy.

“Oh, do you? Do go on.” Aion chortled mischievously.

“For starters, I looked up that author you suggested. You know, to help out your silly revolution.”

“And did you find any useful information?” a playful grin could be heard in the centaur’s voice.

“Relating to centaurs, no. Relating to a pesky school boy’s twisted interests, yes.” Aion roared in laughter at Hermione’s annoyed tone.

“He is indeed into some peculiar things, as far as I have seen. The stars hold so much useless detail sometimes.”

Hermione’s fingers threaded into the auburn locks on Aion’s head, gently braiding the loose pieces.

“Yes, quite peculiar. Another thing I would classify as peculiar would be your name,” birds squawked in the distance, “how ironic it is for fate to be testing me these days, only to learn that Aion is the God of Fate in Greek mythos.”

“Quite ironic indeed, Hermione. I find my name to be rather fitting given the circumstances. Names hold great meaning and often assign us a destiny.” Aion agreed.

“What destiny does my name assign me to?” Hermione inquired.

“That depends on which name you’re asking about.”

“Oh.” was all Hermione said in response. Silence fell upon the duo.

“Speaking of destiny, you’ve made progress.”
“Oh?” Surprise coated the simple phrase.

“Indeed.”

“Are you going tell me how I’ve made progress?”

“No.”

A frustrated groan escaped Hermione, the sound stretching out as her vocal chords continued. Aion chuckled in response.

“I heard that today was your first class of Arithmancy in this year?” came the sudden topic change.

“Yes, why?” Hermione proceeded cautiously.

“What do you think of David Hilbert, the teacher?” neutrality laced the inquiry.

“He seems oddly familiar. I feel like I read about him in my Muggle history class as a child?” realization struck the wondering witch, “He’s a famous mathematician! How could I not have noticed! I had no idea that he was a wizard…” Hermione trailed off.

“Is that all you think of him?” Aion furthered.

“To be fair, I’ve only had one class period with him. I actually may have made a mistake during that class…” the girl recollected that morning.

“Oh? Proceed.” Aion urged.

“I mentioned the significance of the number seven. I had forgotten that it’s not common knowledge in this time period…”

“I wouldn’t necessarily classify that as a mistake.”

“I revealed confidential knowledge that the Ministry is keeping from the people.”

“Good, stick it to the man.”

“Something tells me that you would enjoy the 1960’s a lot.” Hermione laughed out.

“Let us hope I live to see that time. If I get more atlatls to the rest of my knees, I may not live much longer.”

“A little bit of advice: don’t start revolutions within the centaur community.” Hermione suggested.

“More like get better revolutionaries to do my bidding.” he teased. A light smack to the back of Aion’s head was the response.

“Maybe if you gave your revolutionaries proper resources instead of leading them to erotica you wouldn’t have this problem!” Hermione shouted in retaliation, causing the creature in front of her to laugh.

“I jest, I jest! My apologies.” Aion sighed as his fit of laughter left his system. His eyes twinkled as they gazed at the clouded sky.

“I unfortunately cannot see the stars right now.”
“Is that a problem?” the witch stood back a bit, glancing at the work she did with the centaur’s mane.

“The stars can be misinterpreted, especially since our position change overtime. Sometimes what I believe the Heavens may be trying to convey is a fault on the bias of my earthly perspective. A clear view of the stars reassures me that my predictions are correct.”

“So, some parts of your predictions could be incorrect?” Hermione questioned, concern intertwining in the fabric of the statement.

“Perhaps. Only time will tell really, though.” Aion glanced back at Hermione,

“Oh, fret not, my dear, all will be well.”

“You sound an awful lot like Pangloss and we saw that he died.”

“Hermione, I don’t read human literature.”

“Oh.” was all that came from the anxiety stricken teen.

“Speaking of time, you should hurry to indoors. I’m afraid that it is about to rain soon.” the wise centaur spoke, “And thank you for making my wounds practically disappear, the tissue looks absolutely immaculate!” Aion stressed the last word.

A peculiar way to say thanks, but Hermione ignored it as her legs lifted her from the marshes and she began her stroll up the grassy knoll.

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The Hospital tower was thankfully void of many students for two reasons: it meant no student was injured and Hermione could easily sneak back into the building without witnesses. Her shoes clacked against the tile of the floor, the silence swallowing the ambience of the hallway, converting the feeling into that of an eerie one. Drops of water slid off her form onto the tiles, unfortunately she had not been quick enough to escape the outdoor showers. The sound of drops hitting the floor accompanied by the dimly lit halls irked the girl, yet heightened her senses.

“Oi! What’s this I see? A lass drenched it be!” A strikingly familiar voice infiltrated Hermione’s surroundings as she gasped at the sudden appearance.

Peeves the ghost floated above the poor girl, a smile filled with mischievous malice matched his personality all too well.

“Goodness, you startled me!” Hermione shouted at the poltergeist, clearly not in the mood for his taunts.

“How did you come to be all wet, dear Dumbledore? Was it that Malfoy boy that shook you to the core?” Peeves teased suggestively, the bells of his jester hat jingled as he changed his position.

“What do you mean by Malfoy?” the witch questioned.

“What travels faster than a Nimbus here, my dear!”

Of course, Hogwarts’s gossip mill was on task as always.

“Or was it that boy named Riddle? I bet you would like him to play your fiddle!” Peeves eyebrows wiggled in emphasis as Hermione attempted to flee the situation by walking faster. The apparition
swooped in front of her and shook his finger in a tsking manner.

“If you continue to play with a young boy’s heart, I’m afraid most will call you a tart!” The poltergeist jested in rhyme.

“Peeves, leave! I’m just trying to get back to my dorm!” Hermione voiced in agony.

“You are what you eat, my sweet!” Peeves announced as Hermione’s face was met with a tart pastry.

The ghost cackled violently as he watched the girl's temper grow. The bells of his hat jostled and rang throughout the silent corridor. Hermione went to grab at the offending ghost in retaliation, only for the figure to wave goodbye as he vanished.

“This is ridiculous!” Hermione huffed as she wiped some of the pastry off of her face, the offending sweet getting on her uniform. Chestnut eyes scoured for a nearby bathroom.

“Of course the only bathroom near is the Prefect’s bathroom! The only bathroom I literally don’t have access to!” the desperate witch looked to the door in anguish. An idea popped into her mind as she approached the statue next to the door.

“Immaculate.” the teenager whispered, both hoping for the door to open but also hoping it would not because she cannot handle any more antics today.
A creak announced that the password worked. Both thankful and downright annoyed with Aion, she entered the bathroom. She decided that she would transfigure a stick into an atlatl the next time she saw him as a greeting.
Fate Can be Satisfactory

Chapter Summary

Prefect bathroom encounters and Quidditch game hype. :)

Chapter Notes

I'm on break/sort of. Hopefully I'll have a bit of time to work on the next couple of chapters and post them for you guys.
P.S. Beware, risque behavior ahead.

Steam rose in lines to the arched ceiling as bubbles floated across the liquid’s surface. The source of the water and foam came from a stone waterfall, the sound of water pouring into the large pool becoming white noise to its occupant. Stark beams from the moon shone through the stained glass window behind the waterfall; the cool light of the moon blended well with the warm light from the floating candles in the room, creating a tranquil atmosphere.

One of the best perks of being a prefect. A separate bathroom. The water’s occupant thought as he sunk deeper into the warmth the water offered.

He had been waiting his turn for the Prefect Bathroom for a week now. The prefects had decided to create a schedule for when a prefect could enter the bathroom as to avoid conflict. Another way to help in this was the creation of a password for each prefect; the statue outside the room would only respond to a certain password at certain time specified by a certain schedule.

Tom could appreciate the organization, especially since it guaranteed him no interruptions as he bathed. The qualities of the room attacked him in such a way that his physical body was subdued into relaxation, leaving him to his thoughts.

He particularly enjoyed the warmth that swallowed him as his shoulders broke the barrier of water, soothing his usually clenched muscles. His little group of followers had the habit of annoying him, urging him to retaliate but hesitation came in the form of clenched teeth and a fake forgiving smile. Facades force the body into stress, but basking in the bath renewed his vigor to uphold the persona.

Speaking of personas-
She’s becoming increasingly annoying as the hour passes. She has a facade of her own. But when would be the best time to comment on it to her?

His mind wandered back to the moment he left for the bathroom this night.

He had been walking down the hall, clothes and products in hand as a follower had approached him.

“Hello, Riddle, do you mind if we have a word?” a blond with short hair said.

“I suppose so, Rosier. Do make it quick though?” the teenager in question replied.

“I heard something curious the other night. I wasn’t at the Knight’s meeting because I was with-”

“I know who you were worth, no need to explain.” Tom interrupted.

“Right, but as I headed back to the dorms, I heard something extremely strange,” the boy had glanced around himself before continuing, “It was Professor Dumbledore and his niece.”

“Oh?” The news had peaked the devious boy’s interest.

“I’m not sure if I should really call her that, though.” the boy stated slyly, his heavy lidded eyes attempting to gauge Tom’s reaction.

“I’d appreciate an explanation quickly, the Prefect Bathroom is only available for a short time.” Tom explained.

“Of course, my Lord. I heard him call the girl ‘Miss Granger’.”

Tom’s eyes widened slightly.

“Are you certain?”

“Definitely, my Lord.”

“You will be rewarded well, Rosier. “

What a curiously non-pure-blood name. If the information is true, then Tom just made another breakthrough. Professor Dumbledore is, for some inexplicable reason, protecting some half-blood or mudblood girl from who knows what and she is also a Legilimens. A peculiar combination.

He couldn’t wait to see the look on her face when he announces that he saw right through her.

A victorious smirk crept onto his face, the image surly sending shivers down any viewer’s spine. His arms held him above the water’s surface, bracing them on the edge of the in ground pool and his head tilting back onto the cool tiles as his eyes fluttered shut. A wave of his hand caused the candles
in the room to extinguish, his form basking in the relaxing hold darkness had on him.

The creaking of a door ruined the brief moment of utter bliss.

The wake of water rippling toward him absolutely destroyed it.

The string of curses, however, made him confused.

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When she had entered, the room had been dark. The aroma of sandalwood and fresh smoke had smacked her in the face as she closed the door. Judging by the darkness and lack of verbal response at her intrusion, Hermione presumed no one was present with her. Her lithe form crouched down by the water, cupping some of the fluid up to her face in attempts to clean the forsaken pastry off of her skin.

“Why in the bloody hell isn’t it coming off? How in Merlin’s beard has Professor Dumbledore not banished the bloody Poltergeist from these halls yet?” The angry mumbles echoed along the arched ceiling of the premise.

The ramble continued as foul words of frustration fell from the witch’s lips, her damp hands scrubbing her face in a futile effort.

“It’s probably enchanted or something else ridiculous. Bloody Peev-” the complaint died from her lips in exchange for a yelp as her body crashed into the pool of water.

A force dragged her under by the wrist, the grip restrictive. Water flooded her airway as she screeched for help. Her eyes burned as the warm water came in contact with them as she searched for her attacker; the moonlight did nothing to aid her in the search effort. Abruptly, her figure was forced upwards, sputtering as her lungs met oxygen again and a violent cough racked through her body.

“What are you doing here?” a deep voice demanded to know.

The perpetrator had a hand on her chin and his chest pressed against her back, preventing her from twisting and identifying him. The tip of a wand pressed into the flesh of her jugular.

“What are you doing here?” she called out gruffly, water still expelling itself from her lungs.

“I’m a prefect. This is the Prefect’s Bathroom. I’m bathing. Therefore, I’m supposed to be here, unlike you.” The masculine voice resonated in her mind.

“Tom? Is that you?” she asked furiously, her body trying to turn to face him. Her attempt was met with a tighter grip that caused her to gasp, “Release me, you dolt!” she struggled against him.

“Can you please stop? Your flailing is causing water to go everywhere.” the boy advised calmly in juxtaposition to the livid girl.

“Can you release me? Your grip is cutting off my circulation!” she mocked. Her body met with the wall of the pool, a clear response to her childish retort.

“Stop and I’ll consider it.” his voice was too melodic for such a wrathful being. Slowly, Hermione’s
body relaxed and Tom’s grip loosened. He allowed her to turn to face him.

“What is on your face?” he asked plainly.

“Tart. I can thank Peeves for the great new look.” she replied in distaste.

“Close your eyes.” the demand was strange to Hermione.

“Pardon me, what? Why?”

“Trust me.”

“And if I don’t?”

“Do you really think you have a choice?” Hesitantly, her eyes shut. Her lids were tightly closed in fear of what was to happen next.

“Scourgify.” Tom whispered, the mess on Hermione’s face vanishing.

“You can open your eyes now.” he announced as he waded to the other side of the pool.

Chocolate met with the world once again, but now the room was illuminated by dozens of floating candles. She stared across the pool at the baffling boy; his head was turned away from her.

“W-Why are you naked?” the witch stuttered out.

“Because I was bathing? Do you bathe with all of your clothes on?” he asked incredulously.

Thankfully, the plethora of bubbles that adorned the water’s surface prevented the rest of his body from being on display.

“R-Right.” she quietly agreed. It was normal to bathe while naked. She’s silly to think otherwise. The bushy haired witch turned to leave the pool, her legs carrying her form up the marble steps that led to and fro the body of water. Her saturated clothes dripped as she emerged.

“Your hair looks significantly less like a tumbleweed when wet.” Tom commented, his tone apathetic with a tinge of tease to it.

“Gee, thanks.” Hermione said as she wrung out her hair. Taking her wand from her pocket, the tip directed at herself, she stated a drying spell that evaporated the water from her clothes.

“You know, I found it odd that you didn’t think of using magic to clean the tart off in the first place. But, then again, it seems like something a mudblood like you would do.” Tom’s voice rang in her ears as she froze.

“What could you ever be on about now, Riddle?” Vindication was there, but worry covered and betrayed it.

“So now you use my last name? How odd of you to, Miss Granger.”

Damp ringlets of hair whipped her in the face as she turned to face him, astonishment evident on her features.

“Come here, Granger, let us have a quick little chat about this.” he beckoned.

“I need to go.” she declared, walking quickly to the door and opening slightly as it slammed closed
in her face.

“It’s a but rude to dismiss a gentleman who just wants to talk to you.”

“I see no gentleman here.” she retorted.

“Come here.” he urged again.

“No.” she refused.

“Granger.”

Begrudgingly, her legs approached his form. His tenebrous hair was slicked back with water, his head rested on the arms he had on the pool’s edge. Tiny, colorful bubbles littered his arms, the same ones that floated on the water.

She lowered herself to his eye level, her arms around her knees as she spoke,

“I don’t know what you’re on, Riddle, but my name is Dumbledore. I was already in a pretty bad mood when I entered this bathroom and this little encounter isn’t helping. So if we’re going to talk, you better make it worth my while.” The girl’s chin tilted up, looking down on the nuisance of a wizard as he smiled up at her.

“Sources have told me that your name is contradictory to what you’ve told everyone. Pardon me if I’m so inclined to believe them rather than you.” he replied, droplets of water falling from the dark tendrils of his hair.

“Check your sources, Riddle.” her arm swiped through the water, causing it to splash onto the boy’s face.

“You are full of barbaric gestures, aren’t you?” he questioned rhetorically as he grabbed the same arm that caused the splash.

“Let go of me.” she gritted out as she tried to retract her arm.

“Perhaps what you’re saying is true. Maybe you are a Dumbledore. But there’s something else I know about you.” His tone changed mid-sentence; wrath converted into sultry elegance.

“Considering your wrong hypothesis from before, I highly doubt it.” the witch countered.

His wet hand slowly slid the sleeve of her clothes up her arm, his fingertips ghosting over the hairs and leaving gooseflesh in their wake. His eyes met with Hermione’s; the expression they held, Hermione could not determine.

“Do you know what I’m thinking, Hermione?” he lulled as one hand kept her arm in place as the other continued it’s feather-light ministrations.

“Am I supposed to?” she choked out, eyes focused on his in scrutiny.

His body bent slightly as his lips came in contact with her hand.

“Stop playing these games. You must know what I’m thinking,” his lips kissed the tender skin of her hand as he looked up at her, “I know you’re a Legilimens.”

Hermione had to keep back hysterical laughter. Did he genuinely think she was a Legilimens?
“We have a lot in common, I noticed. Our abilities, our literary interests.”, his lips advanced upwards, exploring the surface of her arm further, “So look me in the eyes and lie to me that you can’t read my mind again, for I know the truth.” His tongue swiped in a line up the soft tissue of the witch’s salty skin.

“Riddle, I genuinely have no idea what you’re talking about, now unhand me this instance!” she revolted in horror of his actions as he continued.

“Yes, exactly like that, Hermione.” he hissed out, “As lovely as that sounds from you, I think hearing you admit I’m right would be better. Go on, confess that you know exactly what scandalous thoughts went through my mind not moments earlier.” running out of space on her arm, he grabbed her by the back of the neck, pulling her to down to him.

It felt like ages that he just had her in that position, eyes boring into one another’s. He flooded her system and it was suffocating her: the sound of the waterfall was drowned out by his voice, the smell of the candles was overpowered by his scent, everything else was encompassed by his being so that it was only him.

“Confess that you know that I want to ruin you in every possible way.” his breath fanned across her lips, the wizard closing in on their proximity.

“Tell me, how does it feel to come undone by Lord Voldemort?” Echoed in the frozen witch’s mind. The similarities between her dream from nights ago and now were too similar for her liking.

A splash was heard as Hermione forced the wizard back, his body dunking under the water. She quickly stood up, her head spinning and her vision blurry.

Tom’s body emerged from the bubble infested water, his expression sickeningly sanguine,

“Oh? Is that how you feel about this? How about you join-”

Both of their heads turned as the door creaked open.

“I-am s-so sorry! The schedule said it was m-my time, but take as long as you need!” a Hufflepuff fifth-year nervously exclaimed, her feet shuffling across the tiles of the bathroom out the door and slamming it shut.

“It’s about time I leave too. See you tomorrow, Riddle.” Anger transparent and directed to the young wizard as she glanced at him once before storming out of the room.

The closing of the door was deafening to his ears, the sound waves resonating with him as he tried to focus on other things. His plans of melting her to the point of confession did not produce the results he anticipated.

Swiping the locks of hair matted to his forehead back, Tom looked at his own reflection in the water and consideration locked eyes with him.

I appreciate her. She’s a challenge actually worth my while. He thought to himself, though his thoughts were lined with utter distaste toward the girl who refused to bend to his will.
Plush pillows and comfy pajamas did nothing to put Hermione’s winding mind at ease. Her thoughts were in a race without a finish line in sight. She stared at the roof of her canopy, waiting for her roommates to be asleep so she could sneak out.

More than anything else, Hermione wanted an actual friend in this time period. Naturally, she could not just grasp one of her future friends to pull back and so McGonagall was the next best option. But the Headgirl did not trust her yet. Keyword “yet”.

As Druella’s snoring began, Hermione knew it was time to venture off to the boy’s dorms. She had gotten a list from the Alastor Moody of all the boys on the Slytherin Quidditch team. With her wand by her side, Hermione was ready to prove to McGonagall just how non-Slytherin she is.

The spiral staircase creaked under her feet, but the sound was negligible as no one was present in the common room. Silently, she tip-toed down the staircase leading to the male’s rooms. Winky Crockett and Jonah Mulciber were the only two from seventh year room, another two from the fifth year dorms, one from the fourth year room, and then Abraxas Malfoy and Xavier Avery from the sixth year dorms.

She saved those two for last for two reasons: it would be awful to be caught in that dorm because of the occupants and she heard of their late night ramblings.

Quietly, she walked down the dark hallway and peered into the small crack of the open door. Finding nothing warding her away, she placed her ear to the door.

The corners of her mouth stretched into a grin as she heard several snores from inside the room. Swinging the door open more, she allowed her frame to squeeze through. Mentally, the witch sighed at the sight before her; all of the curtains were closed on the beds. The other students had theirs open enough to at least see their faces, yet it seemed the sixth year boys would prove to be a nuisance as always.

Pulling the curtains of the first bed back a bit revealed Nott with his ginger wisps of hair tousled as he snoozed peacefully. Hermione stepped back cautiously to not make sound as she advanced to the bed beside Nott’s. Tugging on the green fabric, she identified Avery. Raising her wand at the boy, she placed a charm on him. Closing the curtain, she had to decide between the two beds remaining. A chill coursed through her as her feet met the glass window on the floor, the cold water of the lake participating in thermodynamics efficiently. Walking closer to the sound of snores, who she imagined to be Abraxas, Hermione raised her wand in preparation.

“Mmph.” an unknown voice mumbled. The sound startled Hermione, causing her to turn to the source. The bed she didn’t bother to check. Of all the people to be possibly awake, Tom would probably be the worst. Turning away from Tom’s bed, she gently grasped the curtains of Abraxas’s bed and whispered the enchantment. Rustling was heard from Tom’s bed, the sound causing Hermione’s heart to thump wildly. Adrenaline took over as she quickly ran from the premises and closed the door as quietly and rapidly as possible.

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Her thick locks of hair had bounced just as her body did. Their pace wasn’t fast; he always preferred to savor the moment. The way her figure glided in an up and down motion was beyond sensual and the sounds she emitted only helped him to the brink of orgasm.

“Is it that good, my Lord?” was all she had to say for him to finish.

Tom awoke from his dream annoyed for many reasons: he regretted his attempt at seduction from
earlier as she plagued his dreams, he was not getting any peaceful slumber, the girl in his dreams wasn’t even truly her and he could tell that his pants were ruined.

It wasn’t a true representation of the girl; there was no way she would be compliant with him like that. That part bothered him the most. The girl in his dreams looked like her, but did not wield the same spirit as the real life rendition. He shuffled in his bed, wandlessly vanishing the mess in his pants. Reclining into his pillows, he allowed his eyes the shut, hoping for better dreams to come to him. Sleep almost took him away, but his ever perceptiveness took control as he heard footsteps in the room. Groggily, he moved to check who was up, but decided against it for his body was too worn with the stresses of being a future Dark-Lord. Drifting off into sleep, a familiar voice welcomed him back,

“Back for more, my Lord?”

Sunlight gleamed through the waters of the Great Lake, the green haze dazzling through the windows of the Slytherin sixth-year girl’s dorm. Bunches of brunette hair tangled in all directions, the owner fingering the locks in attempt to free them of each other’s hold. Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, Hermione braced herself for today’s events: a sure-to-be-funny breakfast, a Quidditch match, and then one of Slughorn’s parties. If she were not stuck in a completely different time period, she might consider the day exciting and enjoyable.

Fuzzy lilac socks met the stone of the dungeons, the barrier protecting the girl from the harsh cold.

“Who thought putting students in these dank dungeons was a good idea?” Walburga questioned as she walked across the room, black curls of hair hidden by a fuchsia hair wrap.

“I don’t know, but my feet are cracking because of the cold and that’s not okay.” Druella replied while she examined stated body part.

Hermione strolled to the bathroom, clothes for the day in hand and toiletries to accompany. From the other side of the door, she could still hear the two girls complain. Pulling her hair brush through her wild hair, she thought of what heating charm she could possibly place on the floor. Clearly, it was a problem not just for her, so she might as well help out her roommates.

“Honestly, do you think it’s too late to see if Tom has a date?” Worry coated her words as Walburga powdered her nose in a hand held mirror.

“You are literally engaged to another man.” Druella’s voice rang out, the high pitch not complimenting to her.

“Maybe my parents will see how great Tom is and would see how much we truly love each other, so they would let me marry him instead!” Walburga exclaimed, practically swooning at the thought.

“Doubt. These are your parents, remember? Cold and indifferent.” Druella commented as she pulled her hair into a bun.

“It’s like they want me to be bitter for the rest of my life…” Walburga grumbled.

Hermione exited the bathroom, standing in the doorway as she pulled out her wand.

“Umm, Dumbledore, what are you doing?” Druella asked, her legs hiking up the bed to the center.

“Why do you have your wand out?” Walburga questioned, eyes widening at what she deemed a
“I’m just putting a heating charm on the floor? You guys were talking about how cold it was so I decided to fix it.” She replied lamely. Her feet shuffled across the floor as she stretched the charm to the corners of the room.

“O-Oh! Why, that’s actually quite nice of you.” Walburga thanked, though her eyes squinted at Hermione as she searched for a deeper motive.

“Oh, yes.” Druella hissed out as her feet made contact with the stone, “This. this, is good.” she emphasized by pointing at the floor.

Hermione smiled happily; she was glad that the girls appreciated it.

“No problem, I suppose I’ll see you guys in the stands at the Quidditch match?” the bushy haired witch looked to her roommates.

“Of course.” the two confirmed in unison. As the witch left the room, Walburga and Druella looked at each other.

“That was nice of her.” Druella mentioned.

“Yes. I don’t like it.” Walburga snidely stated, primping her dark locks into perfection.

“You would prefer to have your feet cracking every time they come in contact with this dreadful excuse of a floor?” the high pitched witch inquired in disbelief.

“No, of course not. I’m just confused as to why she would do something so nice. We barely know her.”

“Her feet were probably dying too, Walburga.”

The green eyes of Walburga rolled at her friend’s reasoning.

“She’s in Slytherin, there’s always a different motive underneath.”

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Devious was not a word Hermione usually could classify herself as, though there were the occasional instances such as putting Rita Skeeter in a jar. Right now could be considered one of those devious moments as she sat at the Slytherin table in the Great Hall.

“I have no clue, what the-” sneeze “-bloody hell is going on!” Avery shouted as he marched up to the table. Nott, Tom, and Abraxas already present.

“You’re telling-” sneeze “- me, mate. My nose has been non-stop sneezing all morning.” the blond pure-blood stated with a handkerchief up to his nose.

Hermione could not help but let out a giggle at how great her spell had worked. Just as planned, the boys were sneezing every time someone said a word that started with the letter ‘T’. Often enough to mess with them, but not often enough for them to figure out the trigger.

“You have no idea, Dumbledore. I was trying-” , Nott paused to look back at Abraxas and Avery as they sneezed in unison, “-to grab a few extra minutes of sleep and these dunces couldn’t stop sneezing.” Nott jutted his thumb in the direction of Abraxas and Avery.
“How unfortunate. Have you guys tried taking any potions?” Hermione asked with fake concern.

“Yes! I took a full dose and the—” sneeze “- thing isn’t working!” Avery stated exasperatedly.

“I hope it clears up before the—” both of the boys sneezed again “-Quidditch match starts.” Hermione consolidated.

“Thank you, love, but for some reason the—” sneeze “-sneezing just won’t stop.” Malfoy stated, wiping his handkerchief across his nose for the nth time that morning.

An oh-so familiar hoot came from above as parcels and packages dropped from the air. One box fell right in front of Abraxas.

“Oh? At least something may go right today…” he trailed off as he tore into the packaging.

“You’re kidding me. Who the—” sneeze “- bloody hell is this from?” Avery cursed as he looked at what Abraxas pulled from the wrapping.

The bushy haired witch began to laugh as she saw Abraxas holding a tissue box.

“Someone has a sense of humor. Looks like a note written on the—” both Abraxas and Avery sneeze “-side.” Tom said, drawing attention to the scribbling on the box.

“‘Heard your dilemma all the—” sneeze “-way across the—” sneeze “-Great Hall. Thought these might help, may not be enough for the whole team. -Our greatest concerns, the—” sneeze “-Gryffindor Quidditch team.’”’ Abraxas read, tossing the box across the table in frustration in favor for his handkerchief.

“Those bastards are going to regret this.” Avery angrily announced.

“Avery, you have the stature of a five year old, practically. You can’t beat them up.” Abraxas grumbled, annoyed at the situation.

“The—” both boys sneeze in unison yet again, “-real question is how did they accomplish this?” Nott questioned as he took a chunk out of an apple.

“You know, I heard a peculiar noise in the—” the Quidditch duo sneeze again “- night. I assumed it was one of you guys.” Tom casually mentioned as he ate his breakfast.

“So, somehow, a Gryffindor got into the—” sneeze “-Slytherin dungeons?” Abraxas questioned.

“It would seem that way.” Hermione pretended to ponder. They were not technically wrong; she is a Gryffindor in reality.

“We should head out. It’d be nice to get in some practice before the—” sneeze “- unholy match begins!” the Malfoy shouted in frustration as he sneezed again. Glaring at the Gryffindor table, Abraxas and the rest of the Slytherin Quidditch team left for the pitch.

“I too, should probably get going. I promised some friends that I would help them with homework before the match.” Hermione announced as she stood from her seat.

“Is that so? What friends?” Tom asked before she had the chance to leave. Skepticism exuded from his words.

“Oh, just Walburga and Druella.” the witch replied. She had anticipated the question and thought of a cover beforehand.
“Really? I do hope you help them well then.” Tom’s fork tapped against his plate as he thought for a moment, “You should sit by me in the stands during the match.” he suggested.

“Actually, I had other plans.”

“We’ll see about that.” the boy offered a smile as she turned and left the Great Hall.

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Footsteps seemed to tread on forever as the witch walked to a secluded hallway. Accompanying herself were two figures who strolled up to her from the opposite side of the corridor. Both that approached appeared ecstatic.

“You are a bloody-genius, Hermione!” Alastor Moody called out to the girl.

“I’m going to be honest, I didn’t think you would do it.” Minerva Mcgonagall commented as she met up with Hermione, her Quidditch robes bellowing behind her.

“I told you that this one must be a Gryffindor on the inside.” Alastor teased as he nudged Minerva in the side.

“All I did was the spellwork. You two are the ones that really peeved them off with the box of tissues.” Hermione giggled as she congratulated the two.

“All Minerva’s idea. Who knew Headgirl could be so mischievous?” Alastor joked.

“It’s not like they don’t deserve it. You would not believe the amount of times they’ve spouted nonsense at me for being the only girl on a Quidditch team.” The eyes of the stern witch rolled.

“Anyway, I wish you luck out there, Minerva.” Hermione said.

“Thank you, Miss Dumbledore.” Minerva placed her goggles on her eyes as she ran out to the Quidditch pitch with Alastor in tow, screaming for her to slow down. Both laughed as they disappeared from Hermione’s sight.

Maybe Fate was giving her a break and is gifting her with a good day.
Gusts of wind flayed the flags of the Quidditch Pitch, whipping the fabric wildly. Cheers from the exuberant students dominated the howling of the wind. Players boarded their brooms and flew around the field in preparation for the match, practicing in the little time they had left.

Hermione struggled to keep her hair from tangling due to the wind’s powerful force. Walking up the stands, she wrapped her silver and green scarf closer to her neck. Breaching the top of the stairs, she could see the students on their brooms over the peak of the stands as well as all of the Slytherin students loitering the benches. Many appeared to be in the middle of idle chatter and paid her no mind as she positioned herself on the front bench.

“How curious, I do believe you said you would be sitting with friends during the match, yet I see no one beside you, Hermione.” Tom Riddle said as he slid onto the bench next to her. He had his hands shoved into a lavish coat that Hermione had no doubt came from the Malfoy’s bank account.

“They haven’t arrived yet. Might I add that I was saving their seats and now some rude man decided to take them.” Scoffing, Hermione focused on the field, scouring the sky for her Gryffindor friends.

“How unfortunate that some rude man would do that. Thankfully, I, a gentleman, have decided to save you from such a fate.” Hermione could hear the smile in his tone.

“You’re going to have to move when my friends get here.”

“We’ll see.”

“Are we ready for the Quidditch match of the season? Today we have Slytherin and Gryffindor facing each other to see who will be playing against Ravenclaw in the finals!” exclaimed the enthusiastic announcer. The match was about to begin.

“Hermione, could you explain something to me?” Tom asked.

“Unfortunately, I can’t explain all of the reasons why no one likes you, Riddle. The list is far too long.”

“Unnecessary quip won’t be tolerated for long.” the wizard took in a deep breath before continuing, “How did you get into the prefect bathroom yesterday?”
“I’d rather not talk about this with my peers so close behind me.” Attitude was evident.

“\textit{It appears that Abraxas Malfoy, Beater for Slytherin sneezed so hard that he missed the bludger! And he keeps on sneezing! What a bad day for a cold!}”

“Why would it bother you? Are you, perhaps, embarrassed?” Tom scooted closer to Hermione’s body. Expecting warmth as he came closer, Hermione shivered when in reality he exchanged coldness. Fitting for his frigid personality.

When no response came from Hermione, Tom’s demeanor changed.

“Prefects are rather meticulous to their schedules, you know.” he stated in a matter-of-fact-tone.

“Is that so?” Came the uninterested reply. She had never been one for Quidditch, but focusing on the game was much preferred than being interrogated by Tom.

“Yes, in fact we have a schedule for the bathroom. Every allotted time is given a specific password that only the Headboy, Headgirl, and selected prefect knows for that given prefect’s time.”

“How interesting.” Hermione clapped earnestly as Gryffindor scored yet another goal.

“You know, Abraxas would be quite upset if he saw you clapping for the wrong team.” Tom mentioned.

“Pardon me for supporting inter-house unity.”

“Anyways,” Tom cleared his throat and adjusted his scarf, “I simply find it peculiar as to how you got into the bathroom if only a select few should know the password.” His eyes tracked the girl’s every movement, waiting for her response, waiting to catch her in her lies.

“I heard the password from somewhere.”

“And it conveniently happened to be the password for my specific time?”

“Well,” Hermione began, her eyes still trained on the sport, “I didn’t know it was for your specific time. I figured it was just the password for the bathroom all of the time, but now that you mention it, it is a little weird why she would know it.” Hermione grasped her chin in fake thought.

“What? Who’s ‘she’?” Tom’s bafflement surfaced.

“Oh, just Walburga. I heard her mentioning the password. I figured she must be a prefect or something.”

“Walburga isn’t a prefect.”

“Well, isn’t that strange. I wonder why she would know the password. You don’t think she was going to try to surprise you, do you?” Hermione asked in faux surprise.

For the first time during the match, she turned to Tom who had an expression of masked disgust on his face.

“No, no, Walburga is such a,” he swallowed hard, “a sweet girl. She would never try anything like that.” Though, he knew deep down that the girl was so obsessed with him that it was every ounce possible.

“Well, speak of the devil!” Hermione grinned at Tom.
Walburga and Druella entered the stands, searching for an open space. Hermione waved them over. Walburga appeared reluctant at first and seemingly discussed the concept briefly with her female companion before heading over to Hermione’s spot.

“Why, hello, Tom! So odd to see you here!” Walburga greeted. She squeezed herself in between Hermione and Tom as Druella sat on the other side of Hermione.

“Sorry, Riddle, I told you I was going to sit by some friends.” Hermione shrugged indifferently.

Tom physically stiffened, clearly uncomfortable by his potential pervert being right next to him, though he still managed a polite persona.

“That’s just fine, I should leave you girls alone. I actually forgot that I have to run prefect rounds in the stands, you know, make sure none of the Gryffindors snuck in any Firewhisky and the likes.” He went to stand, but Walburga snatched his wrist before he could exit.

“Oh, Tom, won’t you come back later?” She batted her long lashes to emphasize of her plea.

“Of course, afterall, me and Hermione weren’t quite done talking, were we?” His gaze set on the witch in question. His outer disposition radiated calmness, but his eyes spoke of a fiery promise of payback for summoning Walburga.

“Actually, I have to get ready for Slughorn’s party after this. I’m afraid we won’t have anytime for banter.” an apologetic smile graced her features.

Aggravation coated his expression as he parted the group of girls. Walburga sighed deeply as she looked at Tom’s retreating form wistfully.

“I didn’t even get the chance to see if he has a date for tonight or not.” Walburga puffed, her lips forming into a pouty frown.

“Perhaps you have a chance to catch up to him still, I’m certain prefect patrols must get very lonely. I bet he’ll even thank you for gracing him with your company.” Hermione offered a sanguine smile.

Walburga perked up at this. Nodding feverishly in agreement, she fell into pursuit of the dark wizard.

“You know, I didn’t really know why you were placed in Slytherin at first.” Druella started off.

“But now I see just how devious you are. I can admire it to an extent.” the girl shrugged as she complimented Hermione.

“I don’t really know what you’re talking about-” Hermione began to lie, but was cut off by the announcer,

“*It appears that the Slytherin team is calling for a time out and are discussing strategy!*”

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With a soft thud, Abraxas Malfoy landed on the grass of the playing field, waiting for his teammates to gather around.

“What in the bloody hell can we do about the match now? We’re already down by ninety points!” Avery shouted as he wiped his nose.

“It particularly doesn’t help when the Gryffindors taunt us when they whiz past.”
“Listen, are we at least on board with thinking that Gryffindor managed to curse us?” Abraxas asked the group. They nodded in agreement.

“In particular, have you guys seen the way McGonagall smirks at us everytime we miss?” They admit to noticing her behavior.

“Something tells me she’s the one who orchestrated this whole thing.”

Avery pointed a finger in Abraxas’s direction,

“You’re absolutely right! She probably realized she was no match for us so she had to jinx us so they could win!” The rest of the team seemed to concede to the notion.

“Well, if they’re willing to play a bit dirty, I don’t see why we shouldn’t either.”

The volume of the pitch increased as the students boarded their brooms and flew into position again. The Slytherin team appeared determined and prepared as they nodded to each other. With a whistle, the match began again.

Hermione sat in silence with Druella by her side. The bushy haired witch pretended to be enthralled by the match as to avoid further conversation with her roommate. Paranoia crept up on the witch as she questioned what suspicions Druella may have of her now.

“Druella, what a surprise to see you here. How is my darling sister?” a boy with short blond hair asked. He sat down next to the girl, crossing his legs as he did so.

“Evan, I’m having conversation with a friend. Could you politely be annoying somewhere else?” Exasperation was evident as the girl rolled her heavy lidded eyes.

“Evan, I’m having conversation with a friend. Could you politely be annoying somewhere else?” Exasperation was evident as the girl rolled her heavy lidded eyes.

“Aren’t you going to introduce me to your friend?” He asked, completely ignoring her jab.

“No.”

“Then I shall do it myself.”

Evan Rosier reached over the lap of his sister, extending his arm to Hermione as he took her hand.

“It’s lovely to officially meet you. I believe we have Runes together?” His lips ghosted over the flesh of her hand to his sister’s utter disgust.

“Yes, I believe so.” Hermione retracted her hand from the boy.

“Druella, could you give me a moment with Miss Dumbledore?”

“No.”

Evan clapped his hands to his thighs.

“Well,” he sighed out, “I can tell when I’m not wanted,” Druella commented on how he does not usually under her breath, “I shall take my leave of you ladies.” He stood from his spot, walking toward the staircase of the stands.

Chocolate eyes squinted as Hermione perceived a limp in the young boy’s walk.
“My apologies for him. You see, I strongly detest my brother.” Druella mentioned as she examined her fingernails.

“Oh, why so?” Hermione was astonished by the girl’s blatancy.

“He’s a bastard. Literally,” Druella pushed a piece of hair past her ear as the wind blew it out of place, “Different mothers. And yet, he gets the inheritance. And I’m left to marry rich.”

The story struck a chord in Hermione; she could not relate, but she noticed the struggles of being a witch in this era.

“I assume it’ll be an arranged marriage?”

“Already engaged to Cygnus himself.” Druella gestured indifferently at the situation.

“I’m sorry, that’s really not fair to you. Witches really don’t have the rights we deserve here, do we?” Hermione gave the girl a solemn look which shocked Druella.

“You know, you’re the first person to offer me any sympathy on this. Most others say it’s simply how it is and that I need to stop complaining.”

“You have a right to feelings too, Druella. Don’t let anyone forget that.”

“If only other people believed the same as you do, Hermione. I’ll see you at Slughorn’s party tonight, I’m off to get ready.” she announced.

As Druella disappeared from sight, Hermione’s mind wandered to the match.

The Slytherin Beaters and Chasers appeared to be flying in crazy directions, bobbing and weaving for no reason. The Gryffindor players earnestly tried to follow them in their endeavors. One dark ponytail whipped in the wind furiously as Hermione noticed McGonagall chasing one of the Slytherin members for the quaffle. A giant smile broke out on Hermione’s face as McGonagall successfully caught the quaffle and headed for the Slytherin goal posts. From across the pitch, Hermione could hear the loud roar of lion pride as the Head Girl flew to the other side of the field.

“It looks like Gryffindor is about to score yet another ten points! It’s crazy how the Gryffindor Chaser isn’t tired from following the Slytherin’s weaving!”

The tension on the pitch grew as students leaned over one another, looking to see if McGonagall would make the goal or not.

“It appears that the Slytherins aren’t giving up without a fight though as they try to intercept the ball!”

Hermione became one of the many students who leaned over the walls of the stands; another goal would mean that Slytherin would have to score another goal and catch the snitch to win.

“She’s almost there, look at her go! By far one of Gryffindor’s fastest-,” a chorus of gasps came from the crowd, “ Hold on! She’s falling down! A rogue bludger hit her!”

Hermione’s smile fell from her face as she saw McGonagall’s body fall from her broom. Her limp form cascaded through the air, landing on the invisible safety net casted by professors.

“It seems like McGonagall is down for the count and with one less chaser, it’s still possible for Slytherin to win!”
Adrenaline pumped through Hermione as she stood in place. She was not sure if she should run down there and help, if she even could help. As her breathing increased, she noticed Alastor Moody flying down from his own broom to help carry off McGonagall. Sweat formed on Hermione’s forehead and the beads fell only to land on her scarf. The perspiration caused Hermione to shiver; she willed her body to move, to come to her friend’s rescue, but could do nothing.

“That’s all Slytherin needed! With ten more points added to their total, all Slytherin has to do now is catch the snitch!”

Hermione’s eyes followed the medic witch as she walked alongside a stretcher with McGonagall’s body on it, performing spells to diagnose the injuries presumably.

“And that’s the match! Mulciber caught the snitch! Slytherin wins and will be playing the Ravenclaw team in the finals!”

Obnoxious screams of joy surrounded Hermione as she stood dumbfoundedly. All around her was excitement, yet only despair embodied her as she saw Alastor sulking off into the direction McGonagall vanished in. On the ground, she saw Abraxas and Avery fist bumping the air in victory, their joyous yells rung in the witch’s ears as she hurriedly approached the exit of the stands, hoping to escape the hell around her.

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“And that’s how I caught the Quaffle that pretty much won us the match” Avery boasted, mimicking the same motion he performed during the game, ignoring the sneezing that came with his words.

The clattering of wine glasses and soft swing music joined in celebratory harmony. Students and teachers danced off in the distance, the twinkling light of the jaded ceiling shimmered on their moving forms.

“Oh, please, we all know the only reason why you guys won was because we lost our best teammate.” a Gryffindor sneered.

“Look, I don’t mean to offend anyone, and I’m not saying girls shouldn’t play Quidditch, but girls really shouldn’t play Quidditch.” Avery held his hands up in a defensive manner, “If you can’t handle the heat, get out of the kitchen, you know.”

“Like he even knows what a kitchen is like, blood purist only knows of House-Elves doing the work.” a snide remark voiced.

“You are insufferable.” Alastor Moody stomped away from the braggart of a boy, stalking off to a lonely punch table.

Grumbling, he filled his glass, only to be interrupted by a tap on the shoulder.

“Listen, I’m in a really peeved off mood, so this better be-” Alastor paused as he turned around fully.

“How is McGonagall doing?” Hermione asked, concern laced between every syllable. Vibrant red trailed her body, the fabric of the gown visibly smooth and soft. Gold accents lined the collar of the dress.

“I see you’re showcasing a little Gryffindor pride, I bet that pissed off Malfoy-”

“I actually haven’t seen him yet.”
“Goodness, I want to be around when he does. Boy will have a riot when he realizes how much you clash with him.” the gruff teen chuckled, “and Minerva broke three ribs. They think she might have even ruptured her spleen, but they escorted me out of the room before they confirmed it.” His grip tightened on his glass, the liquid jostling as he moved.

“Great Godric, all because of a stray bludger?” Hermione asked incredulously. She fumbled with a loose curl of hair, wrapping the strand around her finger nervously.

“Yeah, I find it a bit hard to believe myself.” His eyes casted over to the group of Slytherins laughing proudly as Slughorn congratulated them.

“None of them have even asked if she’s okay,” Moody downed the punch in his flute in one motion, “it makes me sick.”

Despite the younger version of Alastor lacking his scars and false eye, he still embodied the justice seeking spirit as he would in the future. It was something Hermione admired in him.

“Do you think I could sneak out of the party at some point to check up on her?” Hermione questioned.

Moody shook his head.

“No, they’re not allowing any visitors,” Cheers echoed along the arched ceiling as another bottle of firewhisky opened, “Professor Dumbledore thinks Minerva was targeted for being a girl. Honestly, I wouldn’t put it past those savage Slytherins.” Moody grumbled.

“What do you mean? As in the Slytherins were directing the bludger to hit Minerva?”

“It’s what Dumbledore seemed to be implying.”

“This is outrageous. Who do they think they are?” Hermione huffed.

“More importantly, why hasn’t Dumbledore acted on these suspicions?”

“ Probably needs more evidence. Wouldn’t look good for the head of house of the losing team accusing the winners.” Moody evaluated.

“I suppose that just means I’ll be having a busy night tonight.” Hermione turned to face the swarm of people scattered throughout the room.

“Hermione, what do you plan on doing? What do you mean by that?” Alastor’s face contorted in confusion.

“It means I’m going to collect evidence, Alastor. Enjoy your drinks and remember to not get absolutely wasted.” Hermione called out as she left.

Moody raised his glass in her direction.

“Constant vigilance, Miss Dumbledore!”

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“There’s something up with the girl.” Evan Rosier stated as he swished the liquid in his flute.

“Which one? Hogwarts has all sorts of strange girls.” Abraxas stated plainly.
“Yeah, like that Olive Hornby girl. Did you know she’s still going on about how that Warren bird is haunting her? Honestly, how absurd.” Avery noted, his insults having less impact due to his constant sneezing.

“We literally have ghosts in the castle, how absurd would it be for Myrtle Warren to have turned into one? Honestly, Avery, I swear you have at most three brain cells.” Abraxas scanned the crowded premises in search of his date for the evening.

“No, you two, I’m talking about Dumbledore’s niece. I don’t think we can really call her that anymore.” Rosier said.

“Oh, and what do you mean by that?” Abraxas asked, suddenly intrigued by the topic of conversation.

“I heard her talk to the Professor the other night, and he called her ‘Miss Granger’. I told Tom about this, but after he came back from the Prefect Bathroom, he went off on me like I was totally bonkers!” Rosier took a sip of his glass, the liquid making his tongue looser by the minute.

“I’ll be back lads, a certain Hufflepuff is eyeing me and I intend to make it worth their while.” Avery stated as he wiggled his brows in emphasis, placing his glass in the hands of Abraxas as the short boy drunkenly swaggered across the room.

Abraxas gawked at the boy’s lack of manners, but set down the empty glass on a neighboring table.

“Are you certain you heard the Professor say it? Maybe you misheard.”

“I know what I heard, Malfoy.” Rosier’s heavy lidded eyes gazed at Abraxas with a fiery intensity, “Hermione isn’t who she says she is and somehow she’s convinced Riddle that I was lying to him.”

“What exactly do you mean by he ‘went off on you’?”

Rosier grabbed the sleeve of Abraxas’s wizarding robes and carted him off behind a green silk curtain, looking around the pair as to assure no one would intrude.

“This, this is what I mean.” Rosier lifted one leg of his trousers. Revealed was a nasty mark that started from the ankle and trailed past where his trousers stopped.

“He cursed you? All because you said she may not be a Dumbledore?” Baffled expression aside, Malfoy looked at Rosier in disbelief.

“Yes. I think they had a run in between the time of my meeting with him and by the time he came back from his bath.”

“But there would have been no time for them to have talk-”

The silk curtain was pulled back by Avery who had his arm wrapped around a giggling Hufflepuff.

“Oh, you wankers. Must you be here? Me and my new friend were about to have a little chat!” A clearly intoxicated Avery whined, “Why are guys back here anyways?”

As Abraxas was about to say ‘no reason’, Rosier said,

“We were talking about Riddle and Miss Dumbledore.”

Avery opened his mouth to say something, but his companion interrupted,
“Oh geez, funny thing about that,” the Hufflepuff tried to stifle their inebriated laughter, “I actually saw those two in the Prefect Bathroom yesterday,” the Hufflepuff spoke in a hushed tone as Abraxas and Rosier looked to each other, “But you didn’t hear that from me, okay?”

Avery ushered his companion to the party, following the Hufflepuff out and leaving Rosier and Malfoy alone.

“I guess that confirms it.” Rosier commented.

“Why in Salazar’s name would he have her in the bathroom with him?

“Maybe she’s the one who followed him in?” Rosier suggested.

“We should confront her on this.” Abraxas voiced.

“We don’t have enough evidence for that.”

“Then I suppose I know what I’ll be doing tonight.” Determination filled Abraxas’s words.

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“Have you seen Abraxas Malfoy tonight?” Hermione asked a random student. A shake of the head informed her that the student had not seen him, causing the witch to pout.

It was a disappointed pout, not because she could not find her date, but because she could not interrogate her date.

She turned to continue her search, only to run into a person.

“I’m so sorry!” Hermione announced as she regained her position after stumbling.

“Ironically, I was looking for you.” The voice belonging to Abraxas Malfoy.

“And I, you.” Hermione gave a small smile, though it was rather forced.

“You look,” he paused, his face betraying his polite tone as he scrutinized Hermione, “gorgeous. Very red.” he acknowledged.

“Red happens to be a favorite of mine.”

“The color of love and passion.”

“And of wrath and hatred, but that’s beside the point.”

“Shall we get some beverages?” Abraxas changed the subject abruptly as he ignored Hermione’s comment, mostly in fear of it being a threat.

“Naturally.” Hermione took the arm Abraxas offered and the two strutted over to a punch table.

“So, I heard you and Riddle had a run in at the Prefect Bathroom.” the pure-blood stated nonchalantly as he poured two drinks.

“I’m sorry, could you repeat that?” Hermione requested, hoping her ears had betrayed her.

“You. Tom. In the Bathroom. Together.” He gestured with his glass for her to explain.

His expression was the thing that baffled her the most. She expected to see jealousy or maybe
betrayal, but his face was most keen to that of a disappointed father.

“How did you find out?”

“News spreads quickly in Hogwarts, Hermione. It’s something you should learn quickly, or else you’ll be eaten alive here.” His tone was of the utmost seriousness, quite contradictory to his usual flirtatious eloquence.

Malfoy, breathing deeply, grasped one of Hermione’s shoulders and looked into her eyes.

“I’ve been told some outlandish things about you, Hermione, and I hope with all my heart that they aren’t true,” he paused, looking around himself, “For better or for worse, I need to tell you something. Tom isn’t someone you should be associating yourself with.”

Hermione, of course knew this already, but part of her whole being here probably revolved around the dark young wizard.

“I thank you for your concern, Abraxas, but I will be fin-”

“Hermione, no, you don’t get it.” Fingers rubbed at his temples, as if the situation was giving him a headache. Either that or it was his sinuses as he continued sneezing throughout the conversation.

“Look, just, avoid Tom, okay?”

“Malfoy, I will do what I want. I am fully capable of defending myself.”

“Hermione,” Malfoy slammed his glass down, the liquid splashing out and onto the table cloth, “Just, avoid Tom. And Rosier for that matter. Rosier is trying to-” Abraxas’s rapid warnings died quickly as a figure approached the duo.

“How lovely the two of you look together.” the baritone voice of Tom declared.

“Hello, Tom.” Abraxas resumed his ever-eloquent tone.

“Congratulations on the win, Abraxas. Once Crockett leaves, I expect you’ll assume the position of Captain next year?”

“Far too soon to say, but perhaps.”

“This party is a bit bland, would you not agree, Abraxas?” Tom questioned as a grin tugged the corner of his lips.

“I suppose a bit.”

“I was discussing something with one of Slughorn’s buddies earlier. He shared an amusing line with me. Would you fancy hearing it?”

“I suppose.” Abraxas agreed reluctantly.

“It’s a bit of a tongue twister. Incredibly difficult to follow along with, but that’s the amusing part,” his eyes gleamed with the mischief of a child, “are you ready?”

Malfoy nodded. Riddle cleared his throat.

“I think I thought that a thought that I thought was not the thought that I think that I thought though the thought that I thought was the thought that I thought and not the thought that I thought that I
thought.”

By the time Tom was finished, Abraxas had sneezed twenty-seven times.

“Of course I left my handkerchief in the dorm!” Abraxas frantically patted his body down in search of the fabric. Snot dripped from his nose in an unattractive manner, urging the boy to excuse himself from his date and Tom.

“That was rather rude, you know.” Hermione glowered at Tom.

“So is cursing the entire Slytherin Quidditch team so they sneeze every time that they hear a word beginning in ‘T’.” he countered.

“How did you find out?”

“Those who observe learn best. Besides, what Gryffindor could possibly get into the dungeons without actually being a Slytherin?” he grabbed a flute and swished the scarlet liquid.

“Bold of you to assume it was I.”

“You demonstrate hospitality to McGonagall and Moody too openly for it not to be you.”

Hermione was silenced by his logic.

“Your gown also gives it away. Lion pride much?” Tom sipped from his glass.

“It’s a much better color combo than green and silver.”

“Hence why I’m wearing black on black.”

“How edgy of you.”

“What?”

“Nevermind about that.” Hermione waved her hand in a dismissive manner.

Time passed as Hermione watched people in prime gaiety, jubilance coming off in waves, but dissipating as they reached the witch, just barely allowing the tingly sensation of happiness to lap at her mind, making her crave the overwhelming emotion her peers were experiencing.

But she was stuck next to Tom. A buzzkill who did nothing to satisfy her needs as he stood in silence, observing the crowd.

Hermione sighed wistfully at the cluster of people, wishing to be a part of it with her future friends. The witch turned to the fountain of firewhisky, filling her flute, and downing the fluid in one gulp. The burn soothed her anguish in a way she did not anticipate. She knew she’d regret it later, but losing herself in the whiskey’s scorching flames sounded much more preferable compared to wallowing in inner agony. Drink after drink did not seem to satisfy her. She whipped around back to the fountain, searching for the raving relief the alcohol brought. Arm stretched forwards towards the fountain, she prepared to bless her flute again, but a hand gripped her wrist tightly, preventing her from taking a swig from the lustrous liquid.

“What the bloody hell, man?” Hermione attempted to shrug off the hand.

“I’m not going to just stand here and let you become a sot.” Tom grabbed the flute from her hand.
“Hey! I was drinking that, arsehole.”

“Such vulgar words don’t belong in a ladies’s mouth.”

“Oh, sod off. I’m ladyest lady of all the ladies to have ever lady, I’ll have you know!”

“I bet you are.” Sarcastic agreement riddled Tom’s words.

“Can I have my drink back now?” she asked, reaching around Tom’s lithe figure in search of her drink.

“How about we dance instead?” Tom suggested impatiently.

“I don’t want to dance with you.” Her words were slurred.

“Don’t tell me you don’t want to, I saw how you were looking at the crowd earlier. Dance with me.” He did not let her protest as he grabbed her arm and led her to the floor.

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The song was slow. A good thing for Tom because the peak of his dancing abilities consisted of swaying side to side and the occasional spin.

His hands landed on her waist, caressing the soft fabric subconsciously. Even in her inebriated state, she managed to defy him. Perhaps even more so than beforehand.

Her dainty hands laid on his shoulders gently, occasionally tightening around his clothes when her balance would fail her, but he was there to catch her. He always would be to catch her; preferably to catch her in her placid truths though.

“Abraxas was the one who came up with the strategy to injure McGonagall.” Tom suddenly stated.

“What? Why?” Hermione clutched onto Tom’s shoulders as the two spun.

“Revenge for the sneezing jinx.”

Hermione groaned as she laid her head on Tom’s chest. The action took him by surprise, but eventually he adjusted.

“Any proof so I can tell Professor Dumbledore to take action?” Hermione’s head still laid on his chest, her hair getting rustled due to the contact.

“That won’t be necessary.” He whispered in her ear.

“But, justice for Minerva-”

“I’ll take care of it. Don’t you worry about it,” He bent his head down to her own, “You see, Abraxas is a bit of traitor to me. Not that he’ll remember once I’m done with him.” His hand brushed her winding locks, causing the witch to look up at the wizard.

“Why are you telling me this?” She gazed into his tenebrous eyes.

“Odds are, you won’t be able to even recall this moment in the morning due to how much liquor you drank.”

“Is that all?”
“Those who observe learn best, Hermione.”

She giggled and snorted in laughter.

“How fitting for Tom Riddle to use riddling phrases.”

Tom stared at the girl he held. The way her eyes lit up as her pearly teeth displayed themselves, all of it piqued his curiosity as something within him stirred, something he knew nothing about until this moment. It was consuming, it felt like he was on fire, but in that fire was pleasure, abnormally painful pleasure that made his insides crawl with both ecstasy and agony, blending to create abhorrence and astonishment towards the intrusive feeling.

Just as it started, it extinguished. Relief and emptiness filled him, confusion at the brim, causing overflow that cascaded and embraced him as it dissipated. Indifference resumed its natural place on his features.

Before he could consider anything that happened, he heard from across the way,

“Oi, you wanna fight!” the voice of Alastor Moody bellowed in Tom’s eardrums.

“What the bloody hell?” Nott screeched.

“Constant vigilance!”

Shattered glass followed the phrase.

Others stopped their celebration to look towards the two.

Hermione however, continued to sway in Tom’s arms, giggling uncontrollably.

“Get away from me, you nut!” Nott yelled.

“Constellation vigilante!” Alastor was so intoxicated that Tom swore he could smell the whiskey that oozed off the Gryffindor’s breath.

Hermione’s hands drifted to the hair on Tom’s neck, twirling the pieces gleefully as she coaxed Tom into another spin.

“What the hell, mate!” Nott exclaimed.

“Conservative violins!” A hard thud accompanied the declaration of war. Snoring soon followed after.

“Did he just, fall asleep?” a Ravenclaw asked.

“God, I wish it were that easy.” Nott gazed at Alastor’s unconscious form wistfully.

Hermione tugged at Tom’s suit jacket and pulled him down to her level,

“We should go.”

Tom obeyed the request, choosing ignorance of the Nott v.s. Moody incident that he would undoubtedly hear about tomorrow.

The two walked out into that hall, passing couples hidden in the corners of the castle as to avoid the scouring eyes of authorities.
“Where are we going?” Hermione asked, though the words came with pauses of laughter.

“To the dungeons.” Tom stated plainly.

“How risque.” Hermione commented as she fell into a fit of giggles.

Tom was annoyed at this point. His night had been ruined by the girl. Not only did she manage to tempt information from Abraxas, but her inebriated being distracted him from staying after and talking to Slughorn.

“Hey. You know what you should do?” Hermione teased, a finger in her hair wrapped around a wild curl.

“Oh, and what would that be?”

“You should give me a piggyback ride.”

“No.”

“But my legs hurt from all that dancing!” Hermione whined, her feet stomped on the ground childishly.

“Absolutely not.”

“Give me a piggyback ride.”

“No.”

“Give. Me. A. Piggyback. Ride,” she emphasized each word, “or else I’ll tell Dumbledore about the diary. And the ring.”

“What?” Shock coursed through him.

“Oh, please. Don’t act too shocked. After all you’re the one who said I was probably a Legilimens.”

Tom gripped Hermione’s wrist with unforgiving strength as he dragged her along to the dungeons.

“I trust that you are so intoxicated that you won’t recall a spec of this in the morning. However, if you insist on playing this game, then I’ll entertain the idea,” he trapped her body against a stone wall, “But I can assure you I’m a sore loser.”

“You are such a knob, Riddle.”

“And you are such an insufferable know it all,” his body pressed up against the girl, “You know things that can get you into some dangerous situations.”

“I would consider this pretty dangerous, so you’re not wrong.” She gasped at the way his fingertips caressed her shoulders, the thin fabric of her dress doing nothing as a barrier.

“You’re always in a dangerous situation around me.” His palms rested on the wall on either side of the witch, encasing her as if she were prey.

“You’re right.” she stuttered out with uncertainty, her eyes targeted his own and watched for any change in movement.

He looked back with determination.
His hands left the wall in favor of her waist, small circles traveling upwards. Climbing to the peak, his fingertips met instead the nadir of her breasts. Hermione’s breath labored as she waited for his next move.

And slowly they traveled onward, with barely any pressure. The touch was so faint that it could be akin to a specter.

“Oh.” Both gasped in bewilderment as the very fingertips from before ghosted over brazen nubs of flesh covered by the fabric of Hermione’s gown.

The two locked eyes for seemingly an eternity. Various emotions passed through the pairs, but confliction was the most evident.

Tom was the first to back away. He awkwardly cleared his throat, which snapped Hermione out of her dazed state.

“We should go to the dungeons now.” He stated benumbedly.

“I agree.” She conceded silently, wiping the tears that threatened to fall from her eyes. She was just so confused: how could she let herself get drunk? How could she let Tom whisk her away? How could her body betray her in such a manner? How could she want it to continue?

“Hello from over yonder!” Nott called down the hall, causing the pair to turn toward the source.

He carried with him a passed out Alastor whose arms were hoisted over Nott’s and Abraxas’s shoulders.

“Hermione, I’ve been looking for you!” Abraxas ran toward Hermione, dropping Alastor who landed with a thud and a mumbled “Concrete Vatican!”

Abraxas stopped in his tracks as he saw who she was with.

“Riddle.”

“Malfoy.”

“I’ll take Hermione to her dorm.” Abraxas announced, offering an arm to her which she gingerly accepted.

“Naturally,” Tom concluded, “We have a meeting tomorrow night by the way. Your presence is required.”

Abraxas sighed, knowing exactly what the topic of the meeting will be.

“Of course.”

Abraxas and Hermione headed toward the dungeons while Tom and Nott dropped Moody off at a very baffled Slughorn’s office.

The gift Fate gave Hermione was not happiness, but instead an experience that would eventually lead to such.
Fate is Unfair, but Sometimes Rewarding

Chapter Summary

Hermione is done with Fate testing her, but it seems Fate is vacationing. In the meantime, Hermione decides losing simply doesn't suit her.

Chapter Notes

Aye, some comedic relief because boy do I enjoy some funny moments. Thank you all once again for all the comments, the fanfiction is growing in popularity rather quickly and I appreciate that a lot :) 

Bloodshot eyes stared at the ceiling of a green canopy. Tear stained pillows rested underneath a mass of frizzy tresses.

Hermione laid awake, tortured by the ghost of sleep as it wisped over her, but never fully embraced her. The soothing sounds of the lake’s activity did nothing to aid her journey to the land of dreams.

After the soiree, Hermione had been led back to the Slytherin common room by Abraxas. Their walk had been silent, but there was an air of acknowledgement that assured Hermione that Abraxas knew what had happened, or at least the general idea of what occurred.

Immediately she had trudged up the winding steps to her room and transitioned into her night clothes, eager for the Sandman to visit her.

But now, Hermione laid there, suffering as her thoughts were haunted by the evening’s events. Silent tears fell as she recounted the way his hands felt on her, the way his voice persuaded her, the way he intoxicated her as if he was the liquor she gorged herself upon, the way he seemed like a normal teenage boy.

That was the worst part she concluded. She knows how charming he is, that's part of his whole act, that's how he rises in power. But in a moment of lapsed judgement, a connection made her feel like perhaps destiny was rubbish.

Wiping her eyes, Hermione rose out of bed and trotted to the large window displaying the Great Lake. The inhabitants of the lake appeared at ease, either dormant or simply following the current that pulled them. Hermione was envious of them.

She crossed her legs as she sat down in front of the large window, not particularly concerned with her roommates catching her. Time still belonged to the night, the glittering stars struck the water of the lake with magnificent rays that danced with the gentle wake of the water.

The tears began again as her thoughts raced; so many things could have been prevented if she had just been more careful. Minerva could have been safe and sound if she had not pulled that prank, Alastor would not have gotten wasted, and Hermione herself would not have been carted away by
Tom’s seductive lull.

But it was not even that was it? He had been cruel and savage, his true self, and yet she went along with it.

Quietly she sobbed, refusing to make any sound as to wake her roommates.

Though, she more so knew subconsciously that allowing herself to wallow aloud only gave the situation more power over her and that was certainly not something she wanted to admit.

Casting a barely audible “Accio”, a tissue box flew to Hermione. Gratefully, she took several.

Tears blurred the witch’s view of the lake, just like how the lake blurred the view of the stars.

It was nothing like how Hermione would stare at the stars from the Gryffindor tower.

The sadness crashed into Hermione like a wave, leaving in its wake emptiness.

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Emptiness was a usual feeling for Tom.

Or at least he thought it was emptiness.

One never really knows true emptiness without being filled first and then being stripped of the feeling.

Just like so many other nights, Tom just laid there. The boys had all passed out already, leaving Tom to ponder over the obscure occurrences of the evening and the mistakes that accompanied it.

But no thoughts came regarding the subject.

His mind was afloat on a whimsical stream that lead to nowhere; the harder he tried to think of what went wrong that evening, the less he could conjure on it.

Instead, his mind fell into a hypnotizing cycle of evaluating his faults, to Hermione and his encounter with the witch, to just Hermione. Then he would notice he was dwelling on her too much, and so the cycle would be born anew.

He tried to rationalize with himself, he truly did. The most he could muster was the possibility of his hormones controlling him, but that would not necessarily explain the hold on his psyche that she possesses.

Although he was baffled by the emptiness that embodied him after the whole Encounter, something else puzzled him more.

*How did she know about the diary and the ring?*

More importantly, *What about the diary and the ring? What about them would extract such a threat from her?*

It was one thing to know about the ring, he wore it every day. But never once has he told her of his journal. And besides, they were just normal items.

Abruptly, he got up from his bed. He shoved his arms into the sleeves of his school robe and put on shoes. Agitation clouded his mind and he intended to clear it in the way that worked best for him.
A relaxing stroll in nature.

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Sunlight filtered through the water of the lake. Bubbling water and the chatter of aquatic beings reverberated against the glass of the sixth year girl’s dorm.

“Was she there when we went to bed?”

“I don’t think so…”

Hermione awoke in a startling manner. Her forehead was cold with the condensation of the lake, it would seem that she had fallen asleep with her head pressed to the window. Rubbing the spot, Hermione got up from her position on the floor, wobbling as she walked to her trunk of items.

“Uh. Hermione, are you alright? You look a little…” Druella trailed off.

“You look like rubbish! What happened?” Walburga finished rudely.

All Hermione could respond with was a groan. She did not wish to discuss the matters that occurred not even a day ago.

“Couldn’t sleep. Watched the lake to see if it would help. I guess it did.” Hermione groggily explained.

“Odd, but okay I suppose.” Walburga dismissed the conversation and went back to her own trunk, grabbing a plethora of beauty products.

Druella, however, did not drop the conversation there. With quiet steps, Druella approached Hermione’s crouched form.

“Are you alright, Hermione?” Though Druella was probably not used to comforting people, she at least tried and that’s what Hermione appreciated most. Even if her tone of voice did sound rather forced.

“No, but I’ll be alright. I’m just trying to find time to talk to a friend later today,” Hermione took a moment to reconsider, “perhaps two friends actually.”

“I see,” Druella gave an uncomfortably long pause, “I was wondering if you would like to visit the library with me before first period. Eating in the mornings doesn’t sit well with me, so we could go as soon as you would like.”

Hermione weighed her options: go to breakfast and see Malfoy and Riddle or fancy a friendly library date with her new found friend Druella.

“That would be lovely actually.” Hermione mustered the most sincere smile should could. It was not that she did not feel sincerity in her actions, but rather showing it was extraneous on her mental state.

“Get ready and then we’ll go.” Druella returned the smile.

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“Where were you this morning?”

“Yeah, we didn’t see you at all. We asked Nott and he just chucked a pillow at Avery.”
“I wasn’t even the person who asked the question!”

“Bold of you to assume that matters.”

Tom’s hands wiped at his face. It was far too early to have a battalion of questions directed towards himself.

“I went for a walk.”

“Before sunrise?”

“I’ll have you know that the grounds are splendid before sunrise.” Tom stared at his plate of food. None of it seemed appetizing at the moment.

“Well, how was the walk?” Abraxas asked as he slathered jam on an English muffin.

“Enlightening.” Tom replied short handedly.

“Care to elaborate?”

“Not particularly.”

Tom thought back to the wee hours in which he had ventured out into.

He had casted an illusionment charm over himself to ensure no one would see him leave the castle. He trekked through the dungeons, pass the kitchens in which he heard House-Elves toil away even in the early hours. And when he was met with the grand doors that led to outside, with no hesitation he slipped through them.

Wind had greeted him in the dusk. Strands of hair gently followed its influence and he took in a deep breath.

Nature was one of the things Tom could appreciate.

Something so seemingly delicate was in fact rather dangerous; he had witnessed nature’s true force back at the cave the orphanage would visit during the summer holidays.

The way the waves would crash against the stark white cliff, violently, relentlessly, and yet that was not what the waves were praised for. Their beauty was what the children fawned over.

But Tom did not find the waves beautiful as they had. In fact, he considered the waves to be nothing special at first glance. But their power is what drew him in, the danger that accompanied each crash is what defined the beauty in them for Tom.

He so clearly could recall the mist that met his skin as he had led those two children into the cavern.

And so he exhaled, with the breath he let go of his memories in favor of the present.

The grass crunched under his shoes, the oncoming winter causing the flora to turn brittle. He made way to his favorite spot, a little clearing within the Forbidden Forest.

The familiar sight gave him ease. It erased the tribulations of daily life and their pointlessness. Here, in the clearing, he was reminded of the things that truly matter.

He rested in the middle of the clearing as he always did. Laying on the grass, he felt the dew of plants seep into his clothes but he did not mind.
The wind began again, with much more force than before, shaking the trees wildly as he focused on the dark sky. In the distance, Tom heard the snapping of branches, proof of the wind’s power. Proof of nature’s power. Proof of the things that truly matter. Power.

He could feel how his magic thrummed with excitement at the prospect of such power.

He allowed nature’s forces to demonstrate its power to him, a sign that he held respect for the mysterious force.

But as he was admiring the cracking of branches and the departure of leaves from their trees, an unnatural sound echoed in his ear drums. Within seconds he was up with his wand out. He circled the clearing, eyes darting to anything that made a sound.

“Who’s there?” he called into the great unknown.

He was met with an eerie lack of response.

“I know you’re here. Show yourself!” If anyone were to stumble upon him they would probably label him a lunatic; a teenage boy in his pajamas and school robes, crazily threatening seemingly nothing in a forest known for its hazardous inhabitants.

“Relax, I’m not here to harm you.” A deep voice came from the bushes.

Tom snapped to the source. What he saw was not something he had anticipated, but he did not let his expression falter.

“What are you doing here, Centaur?”

“I should be asking you that, Tom.” the creature identified the teenager.

Warnings bells rung in Tom’s head, but pride and curiosity shut them down quickly.

“How do you know my name?”

“It’s written in the stars so to speak. I should really say its written across an entire planet practically, but semantics.” The centaur shrugged carelessly.

“Introduce yourself.” Tom urged the creature.

“Ever so demanding, Tom.”

A jut of his wand in the centaur’s direction elicited a sigh from the beast.

“My name is Aion.”

Just as Tom finished reminiscing, the bell rung. Students filed out of the Great Hall in haste. On his way out, he noticed Hermione was absent from the masses leaving. Deep in thought and tongue to his cheek, he wondered if Aion was right in saying she would try to avoid him.

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The library was vacant as Druella and Hermione stepped through the threshold. Sunlight poured into the large room through the giant arched windows. The tweet of Scottish Highland birds distracted Hermione as Druella escorted her to her usual table.

“So, now that we’re alone, would you like to talk about what happened last night?” Druella asked as
she pulled out a chair.

“Nothing happened last night.” Hermione lied.

“Call it intuition or something, but I feel like you’re lying.” Druella held her head up with her hands.

“Perhaps. Perhaps not.”

“Cut the games. You can tell me anything.”

“We barely know each other.”

“Yes, but you’re the first person to ever sympathize with me, so I feel the need to repay you.”

Looking out the window, Hermione saw a flock of brown birds fly by.

“I got extremely drunk.”

“I could smell the liquor when you came into the room. I’m talking about what led up to that and what happened afterwards.”

“Well,” Hermione took in a deep breath, “I was feeling rather sad due to some memories. So I drank a glass of Firewhiskey. Then another. And you can imagine the pattern.

“But then someone stopped me.”

Druella became intrigued at the tone shift.

“Oh, who was this mysterious hero? Was it Abraxas?”

Hermione looked away from Druella’s inquisitive stare.

“Not exactly. If I remember correctly, Malfoy had to excuse himself after he realized he forgot his handkerchief.”

“Well, do keep me in suspense then, Hermione.”

“It was Riddle.” Hermione’s eyes were casted down in shame. She hated thinking about this.

“That’s to be expected, he’s quite the gentleman.” Druella fixed some of the loose strands falling from her braid.

Hermione’s leg bounced nervously. How was she supposed to continue the story if Druella knew Tom as the perfect schoolboy?

“Druella, do you ever question Riddle?” Hermione’s tone bordered conspiracy theorist.

“I question how he’s so great at academics.”

“But never how seemingly perfect and polite he is?” Hermione’s disbelief was evident.

“He’s a Slytherin. Being silver tongued comes with it.” Druella shrugged.

“Druella, I can’t continue my story if you don’t humor me in my perspective.” Hermione warned.

The witch across Hermione pondered for a moment.
“Alright. Continue onwards, then.”

“This may be hard to hear for you since you’ve been in school with him for six years, but Riddle isn’t who you think he is.” Hermione breathed out, looking at Druella expectantly.

“Elaborate.” Druella’s hand waved in an urging motion.

“He’s twisted. His background is filled with sinister actions.”

“But why would you know all of this?” Druella appraised Hermione.

“Some of it he admitted to me when we were in detention. Some of it... consider it intuition.” Hermione’s form cowered under Druella’s judgemental stare.

“A majority of Slytherins enjoy things considered ‘twisted’. Our families have a lot of history with the Dark Arts. I don’t consider this revelation to be alarming.”

“Okay, but, Tom has a following. They practice the Dark Arts.” Druella stared indifferently at Hermione.

Hermione huffed in frustration, how could Druella not see Tom’s malevolence?

“The group’s purpose is to eradicate Muggle-borns and place pure-bloods in positions of power. Your brother is a part of the organization.”

“That’s all you had to mention to make me hate the group. If my brother is apart of it, it must be dreadful,” Druella leaned in towards Hermione, “so what do they call themselves?”

“I believe it’s the Knight of Walpurgis. But they’ll be called Death Eaters later.”

“What? How would you know what they’ll be called later?”

“Uh, Malfoy told me.” Hermione came up with a quick fib.

“Ah, I see. So is Malfoy also a part of this group?” Hermione felt relief wash over her as Druella bought her lie.

“Yes. But him and Tom don’t see eye to eye.”

“Okay, so how does this all relate to last night?”

“Tom, the not so benevolent boy you knew before, took me into the corridor and things happened.”

“Don’t let Walburga hear about that.” Druella giggled slightly.

“No, no, nothing like that.” Hermione lied again.

“What did he do then?”

“If I had to equate it to anything, it would be him threatening me.”

“But why would he threaten you?” Hermione could not simply reply ‘because I’m from the future and he knows somethings up because your brother apparently tipped him off about my true name.’

“He’s suspicious of me. He thinks I’m a spy for Professor Dumbledore to see if he does anything wrong.”
“That makes sense, his relationship with the Professor is complicated it seems.”

A smile graced Hermione’s face, she was thankful that Druella was believing her.

“That’s what’s been going on since I arrived. Last night was just when things escalated.” Hermione concluded.

“I see. So what are you going to do about it all? Couldn’t you just go to your uncle?”

“I-” Hermione wondered for a moment. Why should she not go to Dumbledore?

The bell rung, interrupting the conversation between the two girls. They filed out of the library to their next class.

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“Goodness gracious, I apologize for my tardiness,” a thin, elderly woman appeared in the doorway, “As you may have noticed, I have vanished the desks away for this lesson. You all must know what that means!” A giddy laugh punctuated the statement.

Students from all houses littered the room, most chatting animatedly with their neighbors. The elderly witch walked to the front where only a singular desk was, her maroon robes followed her in a trail. Her eyes viewed the crowd of students, lingering on a certain frizzy haired witch with whom she shared a smile with. Taking a Beech wand out of her sleeve, the woman tapped the walnut desk in front of her to gather the student’s attention.

The chatter decreased significantly and students focused on the teacher. All except for one group.

“I’m totally going to kick your arse today in dueling.”

“Avery, shut the hell up before you get us in trouble.”

“Abraxas, I doubt she can even hear us,” Avery sniffed the air, his face contorting into confusion, ”Hey, do you smell that? It smells like something burnin- Oh, Merlin my trousers are on fire!” Avery quickly tried extinguishing his pant leg by patting the material excessively.

“And that,” the elderly woman blew the tip of her wand, “is why you all should pay attention the first time.”

The class erupted into laughter at Avery’s attempts of putting out the fire. A string of curses flowed from the boy’s mouth as he continued.

“Five points from Slytherin for language.” The professor announced.

“That’s Professor Merrythought for you.” Druella quietly explained to Hermione.

“Now, wands out! We shall split you up into genders, and of course then you should partner up.” Merrythought instructed.

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What perplexed Hermione the most was that Merrythought was splitting up the genders. No such practice occurred in the future.

As Druella beckoned Hermione to join her, Hermione raised her hand.
Professor Merrythought quickly scampered over to the teen witch.

“Yes, dear? Do you need help with anything?” Rosy cheeks gave the woman a gentle air.

“I was simply curious as to why you split up the sexes when dueling?”

“Believe me when I say that I’ve tried to obliterate the archaic practice, but the school board never listens to me. It may or may not be one of the many reasons I plan on retiring.” She had said the last part a little bit quieter than the rest.

“I see.” Was all Hermione had to offer.

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Half an hour had passed as the students practiced with one another. Tournaments among the groups would naturally form, to see just who exactly was the best spell caster of the class.

“Hermione, where on Earth did you learn the cast like that?” Druella asked for the upteenth time.

Nothing was truly special about the casting itself; yes, she had practice from Dumbledore’s Army the year before, but the only thing she had over the girls was her variety of spells.

“I had a bit of heavy practice last year. But other than that, I wouldn’t say it’s anything to praise me over.” Hermione smiled sheepishly.

“Honestly, I think you could give the boys a run for their galleons.” A Hufflepuff girl commented.

Several of the girls agreed, all to Hermione’s dismay as she tried explaining that she was not truly talented. One girl in particular shot her hand up in the air, waving the appendage around crazily to get the teacher’s attention.

“Yes, dear?” Merrythought questioned.

“I think Hermione should duel whichever boy wins the male bracket.” The student stated with a large grin as Hermione’s eyes widened.

“Actually, Professor Merrythought, I really don’t think that’s appropriate considering the rules-” Hermione frantically tried dissuading the woman.

“You know, I’ve been wanting to try out something like that for awhile now.” Merrythought’s fingers went to stroke her chin, her face contorted as she thought deeply on the subject.

“Professor, I really don’t think it’s necessary to do this. I’m really not that good at dueling-”

“Nonsense, darling, I saw your work, it’s efficient.”

“Professor, please, I think it’s best we stop for the day-”

“Is there a problem, Hermione? Are you scared of losing to me?” Tom Riddle emerged from the crowd of students.

There were many things that peeved Hermione to no end; most of them just happened to relate to Tom in some manner.

“You wish, Riddle.” Hermione sneered, revolted by the narcissism that poured from Tom.
“Then do please try to prove me wrong.” Tom strolled where Hermione and Merrythought were with casual elegance.

“You’re going to regret those words, Riddle.”

“So I take it that means you guys are on board with a duel?” Professor Merrythought was practically bouncing from leg to leg, her voice conveying her excitement.

As no contrary statement said otherwise, Merrythought let out a squeal as she demanded students to form a circle.

Hermione and Tom traversed to the middle of that circle, all eyes focused on the pair.

“My Galleons are on Tom.” Nott said as he saw the two cordially raise their wands and turn away from each other.

“I have faith in Hermione.” Abraxas commented.

“A hundred Galleons and a good ole’ Knut from my parent’s trust fund on Tom.” Avery proudly pledged as the two students paced to opposite sides of the clearing.

“I have to disagree, my money’s on Hermione.” Druella said, confidence trickling from her words.

The four shook hands in agreement on the bet.

Hermione’s heart beat with such velocity she was sure it was going to burst. Sweat already began to slip down her forehead, her breathing increased with every second that she waited for the signal to begin. Fluttering her eyes shut, Hermione let herself calm down briefly.

“Begin!”

Curls whipped her face as she turned to her opponent. Her stance yelled that she was a predator ready to claim its prey. Tom’s stance, however, juxtaposed her own. One arm was held behind his back and his other braced in front of him with his wand in hand. He had long ago abandoned his cloak and suit jacket in favor of sporting his jumper.

The scene befuddled Hermione, how could he appear so calm? The thought of him not taking their duel seriously irritated her greatly.

“*Stupefy!*” the witch shouted as she brandished her wand.

No verbal reply came, but Tom slashed the air with his wand, preventing the offending spell from reaching him.

“*Aguementi.*” a jet over water flowed from his wand, directed at the girl.

She dodged the stream easily by stepping to the side.

“*Expelliarmus!*” the witch called out, recounting how the spell seemed to always work for Harry.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were a first year, Hermione.” Tom taunted.

Several spells came in quick succession from the boy, all nonverbal. Students’s eyes widened at the sight as they shared murmurs with one another on the spectacular capabilities of the boy.

A wide shield charm appeared within seconds, encompassing Hermione as the the spells rushed
toward her.

“Excellent shield charm, Miss Dumbledore! Five points to Slytherin!” Merrythought shouted.

“Truly impressive, Hermione.” Tom congratulated, though with the lack of emotion behind the words, Hermione was unsure if it was sarcastic or not.

“Incarcerous.” Hermione willed her wand forwards with the quiet incantation. Blinding light filled the room, causing even the students to shield their eyes away and forsake the light. The action even took Tom by surprise.

Spell after spell followed afterwards, all sent in the direction of Tom.

When the light dissipated, Tom was on his knees, one of the many curses seemed to have hit him, yet his wand was still in hand. He stood up, his expression transitioning into determination as he began walking along the circle the students formed. Hermione mirrored the action.

The two continued in their dance, firing no spells at one another. Students began whispering, hypothesising when one of them would strike. Eagerly, the class waited for the action to continue.

Hermione was heaving. Her hair was beyond disheveled and she regretted wearing her cloak, the temperature rising to an extreme degree with all of her physical efforts.

There was a gentle buzz in the air. The sound hummed in the witch’s ears, soothing her. Almost like static electricity, the buzz gave the girl gooseflesh, causing the hairs on her damp skin to rise. A shiver rattled through her as she soon relaxed under the buzz’s influence.

“Stupefy, Expelliarmus!” Tom casted.

Hermione gasped as she felt her wand leave her hand. She desperately tried grasping onto the wood as it fled from her grip.

“Riddle is the winner!” Merrythought proclaimed.

Tom gave Hermione a victorious smile. The class clapped vigorously. The sound was deafening to Hermione as she stood there in astonishment. The Slytherin boys gathered around Tom, patting him on the back as he thanked them for their kind praises.

A soft tap came to Hermione’s shoulder.

“Hermione, the match is over. You were still good, Tom just has a lot of experience.” Druella consoled the stricken Hermione. But her efforts were ignored.

Hermione began to walk toward Tom, practically marching up to the boy.

“You cheated.” She pointed a finger directly in his face.

“That’s a rather bold accusation, Miss Dumbledore.” Tom replied, eyes glaring down at her.

“And I stand behind it full heartedly.” The lioness roared.

“How unfortunate for you that I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Oh, please, you know exactly what you did. That weird buzz in the air. It was probably some illegal spell.” Hermione rolled her eyes at the boy.
“Oh?” Tom’s eyebrows raised at the revelation, “How peculiar. You feel it too.”

Hermione’s brows furrowed with confusion; leave it to Riddle to be unnecessarily cryptic.

As she was about to interrogate further, the bell rung.

Her peers pushed passed her, some offering words of praise toward her and Tom, but all fell from her ears. Druella had strutted up to her, hand on her shoulder in an attempt to defuse the situation, but nothing seemed to break the heated gaze between Tom and Hermione.

“I’ll confront you later on this.” Hermione swiveled on her feet.

“Can’t wait.” Tom’s courteous persona surfaced.

Hermione shook her head in agitation, grabbing her bag and slinging it over her shoulder. Druella tried to catch up to the abrasive girl.

“Hermione, wait, where are you going?” Hermione heard as she joined the herd of students in the hallway.

“I’m going to Professor Dumbledore’s office.” she called back as she trudged forwards.

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“Lovely job class. Mr. Lovegood, do refrain from transfiguring the chandelier into an albatross next time, though.” Albus Dumbledore’s voice called out to the boy as he left the classroom.

The wizard went up to his office, ready to be productive during his break. As he entered, Fawkes cooed at him affectionately.

“Thank you, Fawkes, my robes do look quite lovely today, don’t they.” He smiled at the bird, gifting the creature with a treat that the bird happily took.

As he sat down, an abrasive knock came to the door of his office.

“Come in.” he called out.

The door swung open, revealing a disheveled Hermione.

“I need to speak with Aion. Where might I find him?” Hermione braced herself against the doorway.

“How lovely to see you, my niece, how did your duel go?”

“How did you even know about that?” Hermione’s expression melted into befuddlement.

“How did you even know about that?” Hermione’s expression melted into befuddlement.

“Word travels.”

“Faster than a Nimbus here, my dear, yeah I know, should have figured.” Hermione huffed as she approached the plush chair in front of Albus’s lavish desk.

“Forgive me if I’m incorrect, but you seem exhausted and annoyed.” The wizard commented.

“You’d be absolutely spot on, Professor.” Hermione slouched into the comfort the chair offered. Her arms crossed childishly.
“Care to explain what’s got you so worked up?” Dumbledore presented a bowl of various sweets in which Hermione denied.

“Riddle. It’s always Riddle,” She paused, her eyes wandered to Fawkes who crooned his feathers, “I need to speak to Aion.”

“He’s unfortunately in Hogsmeade currently.” Dumbledore said.

“What, why?”

“We had to make accommodations for him since his clan was targeting him in the forest. He’s staying with a friend of mine.” The wizard elaborated.

“So when could I see him next?” Hermione inquired.

“Well, let’s see,” Dumbledore sighed in thought. “Oh,” he pointed a finger up in faux realization, “tomorrow is a Hogsmeade day. You could possibly talk with him then.”

“Alright…” Hermione trailed off, confused by Dumbledore's odd mannerisms.

“Perhaps it would be wise to find someone to accompany you to his cottage. The path can be quite terrifying alone.” The oceanic blue eyes sparkled through the half moon glasses seated upon Dumbledore’s crooked nose.

“I see.” Hermione uttered. It was clear he was suggesting a date of sorts.

“That’s all I have to offer for now. I do hope you enjoy your trip down to the dungeons.” A warm smile crept onto the man’s features.

“Of course. Goodbye, Professor.” Hermione stretched as she got up from the ornate chair.

Hermione exited the room, allowing the door to shut behind her rather roughly, the sound causing Fawkes to squawk loudly.

“I know, Fawkes. Fate is not fair.” he said, his large hand petting the bird.

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Hermione’s classes for the rest of the day were uneventful. Most periods consisted of shared glares between her and Tom, and even Abraxas at times. She had not forgiven the blond boy quite yet. Revenge was certainly in order.

Her legs carried her all the way to the dungeons after dinner. She had avoided the Slytherin table even after Druella had invited her to sit with her and Walburga. Instead, she made conversation with Alastor Moody while eating. The main topic had been concern revolving around Minerva McGonagall.

The dark ambiance of the dungeons irked Hermione. Few candles lit the passage as she walked.

Coming to a set of familiar stones, she said the password that caused the wall to open, revealing the Slytherin common room.

“Chess is rubbish!” Avery shouted, swiping at the few pieces of his left on the board.

“That’s because you’re bad at it.” Cygnus and Orion Black said in unison.
“That’s my great grandmother’s set, I swear on Salazar’s grave if you break those pieces, you’ll owe me thousands of Galleons. It’s an antique.” Evan Rosier said.

“Just like your grandmother.” Avery stated savagely as he stood up from his chair that Abraxas soon slipped into after. “Besides you could just fix it with magic!” Avery huffed.

Hermione approached the scene, noticing the cluster of boys who gathered around a black pedestal holding up an intricate Wizard’s Chess set. The flames of the fire warmed her as she stepped further into the snake pit.

“Care to join us Hermione?” Malfoy spoke up, beckoning the girl over.

Out of curiosity, she obeyed.

“Hello, Hermione.” Druella smiled. Next to her was Walburga.

“Spectating?” Hermione questioned. The two girls nodded.

“Why don’t we play, Hermione?” Malfoy suggested, gesturing to the spot across from him that was occupied by Nott.

“I’m rather tired actually-” she tried to convey, though in reality she was beyond frustrated with the events that transpired today.

“Nonsense, you have got to wake up a little. The night is still young.” Abraxas grinned.

“Perhaps she’s just worried she’ll lose like she did during our duel today.” Tom snidely remarked.

The comment attracted Hermione’s attention, her eyes darting to Tom who lay against the mantle of the fireplace. His arms were crossed casually, yet despite his relaxed posture, his eyes screamed of challenge.

“You know what, Malfoy, I’ll humor you. Let’s play some chess.”

Nott stood from his chair, offering it to Hermione. She scooted in close to the pedestal.

“Ladies first.” Abraxas said as he tied his hair back.

“How polite of you.” Hermione stated apathetically. She commanded her knight to jump over her pawns.


“Unfortunate for you, I guess you personally just never win then.” Hermione made her next move.

“Careful, Abraxas, it seems like Miss Dumbledore is out for your throat.” Orion stated.

“I’ll have you know, Hermione,” Abraxas took one of her pawns, “that I have beat every single person in this common room at Wizard’s Chess.”

“Except for me.” She said as she claimed one of his own pieces.

Everyone ‘ooed’ at the interaction.

“I bet my money on Hermione winning.” Druella announced.
“Wanting to win your Galleons back from earlier?” Nott questioned as he slammed down a few Galleons of his own on a neighboring table.

“Count me in for Malfoy.” Avery said as he tossed a few Knuts on the table.

“Cheapskate.” Nott said under his breath.

“Tom, who are you going to bet on?” Cygnus whispered to him.

“I prefer not to gamble,” He stated plainly, “but if I were to bet, it would be on Hermione.”

Cygnus simply nodded as he placed a few Galleons in the pile.

The match continued onward, both sides losing pieces from time to time.

“Hermione, are you aware that there is a Hogsmeade trip tomorrow?” Abraxas asked as he positioned a piece.

“Fully aware, yes.”

“Would you care to accompany me on it?”

“No, not particularly.”

Several spectators laughed at the straightforward rejection.

“That was rather,” he moved a piece, “blatant of you.”

“Quite.” She placed her own piece.

“If not Abraxas, then who would you like to accompany you?” a very nosy Orion questioned.

“Perhaps you would fancy a date with me, Hermione?” Tom asked sardonically.

People looked at the two expectantly. Walburga practically gasped as he asked.

“Absolutely not.” Hermione replied rapidly.

Widened eyes was a popular trait amongst the spectators as Hermione rejected two of the finest suitors in Slytherin.

“Why not, are crazy?” Walburga asked frantically in a hushed tone.

“Well-” Hermione tried to think of a reason. It would be poor of her to denounce the boys in front of her peers.

“I’m already going with someone you see.” Hermione strategized as she watched Abraxas pause.

“What, with who?” Malfoy questioned.

“Rubeus Hagrid.” Hermione blurted out of panic.

“What?” several students called out, though Tom and Abraxas appeared the most puzzled.

“He asked me the other day when I was walking around the grounds. He’s seems very sweet.” Hermione quickly came up with a lie. Though, it was true, Hagrid did indeed seem very sweet.
“You’re going on a date with a half-giant?” several members of the group questioned in disgust.

“Go figure, sounds exactly what a Dumbledore would do.” Evan Rosier rolled his eyes.

“You guys are so caught up by your prejudice that you sometimes forget what decent people are like,” Hermione moved one piece, “check.”

“I-I have no way of defending my piece.” Abraxas trailed off as one hand went through his hair.

“Then checkmate.” Hermione said as her rook demolished his king.

She stood from her seat and bade everyone a goodnight. Many stared at her in awe as Abraxas was left to wallow in his defeat.

“So glad I only betted a few Knuts.” Avery said as the winners collected their money.

“Did you bet so few because you felt like I was going to lose?” Malfoy questioned the boy.

“Aye, at least I supported you.” Avery raised a finger in Malfoy’s direction. The boy proceeded to let out a yelp as he was smacked upside the head by Malfoy.

“That was an impressive feat by her.” Tom declared from his position.

“Yes. It was. Doesn’t make my loss any less annoying, though.” Malfoy said as he watched Hermione retreat up the stairs, Druella and Walburga following suit.

“It’s quite curious that she should be attending Hogsmeade with the assistant groundskeeper.” Tom noted.

“Yes, quite.” Malfoy’s eyes narrowed.

“I think we should postpone tonight’s meeting. Instead, I’d like to come up with a plan on how we’re all going to do a little surveillance on Miss Dumbledore tomorrow.”
Chapter Summary

A trip out to Hogsmeade! A visit to Aion! And a bunch of shenanigans from the Slytherin boys.

Chapter Notes

It's been awhile since I posted! But here's an abnormally long chapter! Thanks for all of the support, once again, it really keeps me going :)

Heavy quilts and lavish pillows were lovely in Hermione’s opinion. The sheets in Gryffindor were never quite this luxurious, but that was most likely due to the lack of wealthy families in the house. Or at least the lack of spoiled children in those wealthy families that demanded materialistic donations.

Hermione rustled a bit under her large blanket, a brief tickling sensation on her nose causing her to do so. Faint breathing came in contact with the young witch’s face.

“Stop it, Crookshanks. I'll be up in a second.” Hermione mumbled.

“What’s a Crookshanks?” a high pitched voice asked.

Hermione woke with wide eyes. Leaning over her was Druella Rosier.

“Druella?”

“Yes, Hermione?

“What in Merlin’s name are you wearing?” Hermione looked Druella up and down.

“Fashion.” The girl replied as she flipped one end of her feather boa across her shoulder.

Hermione took in the details of her roommate’s apparel: A black, feather boa accompanied by a long sweater dress of the same color. An enormous hat adorned the witch’s head. Druella opened the curtains of Hermione’s bed fully. The angle change caused light to shine on the myriad of feathers on Druella’s boa, the effect being the reveal of dazzling colors. If Hermione had to guess, the feathers were probably enchanted to mimic a Starling.

“See, Druella, I told you that you look like you’re about to go to a funeral.” Walburga shouted across the room.

Druella rolled her heavy lidded eyes in response.

Hermione stepped out of bed, her bare feet landing on the (thanks to her heating charm) warm floor. On her way to the bathroom, she saw Walburga and her own outfit.
“At least I don’t look like a Troll regurgitated on me.” Druella called out.

“Hey! I’ll have you know that Tom’s favorite color is green.” Walburga stumped as she marched to her belongings to retrieve jewelry.

“You’re literally engaged!”

“That’s besides the point!”

“So, uh,” Hermione started as she stood in the doorway of the bathroom, “why are you guys dressed like that?”

“It’s a Hogsmeade day!” Walburga answered as if that in itself was enough explanation.

“We rarely get to wear what we want to, Hermione. Hogsmeade trips are a good way to show off our clothes and acquaint ourselves with suitors.” Druella informed.

Hermione nodded in acknowledgement.

“Are you going like that?” Walburga sneered as she glanced at Hermione.

Hermione looked down at what she was wearing: a simple long skirt, a maroon jumper with a white blouse underneath, and stockings to keep her legs warm in the cold of November.

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with my ensemble.” Hermione stated proudly.

Walburga scoffed.

“You’re right, it suits you and your Half-breed of a date,” Walburga lined her lips with a vibrant red, “Honestly don’t understand why Dippet would allow such a monstrosity into the school, let alone keep him after he killed all those Mudbloods.”

“Pardon me?” Hermione had to take a moment to consider the girl’s words.

“You heard me. He killed all of those innocent Mudbloods. But, maybe he was doing the school some justice in all actuality.” Walburga finished, smacking her lips together.

“The audacity!” Hermione stared at the girl from the doorway, shocked that the girl had turned from teasing Druella to full on discriminating people.

“Oops,” Walburga’s voice dripped with insincerity, “Sorry, forgot that you and your uncle are a pair of Mudblood-loving lunatics.” Walburga smiled briefly at Hermione as she capped the lid of her lipstick.

“Walburga, you’re going a bit far-” Druella began to warn.

“No, no, she isn’t. She’s absolutely right. Me and my uncle are a pair of, as you say it, ‘Mudblood-loving lunatics’.” Hermione smiled at Walburga.

The bushy haired witch made her way for the door, but paused and turned towards the girls before exiting.

“Oh, and Walburga, be careful what you put on your face. Makeup can have all sorts of crazy things in it.” Hermione casually mentioned.

Walburga worriedly picked up all of her makeup products, analyzing the packaging of each in search
of whatever Hermione could possibly mean.

The door slammed behind Hermione, breaking the silence of the dorm.

“She’s gone too far, Druella!” Walburga announced as she scanned a bottle of hand cream.

“Sure, Walburga, she’s the one who went too far.” Druella grabbed a handbag and walked out the door.

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The Great Hall was teeming with activity. Children and teenagers happily consumed their breakfast and giddily chatted about the upcoming Hogsmeade trip.

“It has been twelve hours since I have been ready to throw down!” Avery announced as he dropped his school bag on the table.

“Avery, do you ever not complain?” Tom questioned as he flipped through the pages of The Daily Prophet.

“Why do you want to throw down?” Abraxas asked before sipping from his pumpkin juice.

“This astronomy homework is beyond ridiculous.” Avery gestured to the pieces of parchment that stuck out from his bag.

“It’s the weekend, it won’t be due until Monday.” Abraxas reasoned.

“Yeah, but I’m failing the class. My parents refused to sign my permission slip for Hogsmeade until I get the grade up…” Avery trailed off, embarrassment rising on his features in the form of a rogue hue.

“Give me your permission slip.” Tom stated, folding up the newspaper.

Avery handed him the article of parchment.

“Quill as well.”

Avery obeyed.

Tom pointed his Yew wand at the quill, then pressed the tip of the quill to the paper. Tom let go of the feather, the quill moving on its own. The boys looked at the act curiously.

“There, does that look close enough to their signature?” Tom displayed the writing and presented the quill back to Avery.

“Impressive.” Nott nonchalantly said.

Avery held the parchment up to the light, looking over every detail in astonishment.

“It’s perfect! Thanks, Tom.”

“Don’t thank me, Avery. You’ll repay me by being at Hogsmeade today.” Tom stared at the boy with serious eyes.

“O-Oh?” Avery ceased his childish wonder at the parchment.
“Yes. You will be following Hermione today, along with Nott.”

“What? Why him?” Avery flailed his arm in Nott’s direction.

“Because I told you to, Avery.” Tom glared at the boy. Avery immediately conceded.

“And then Malfoy will be at the Three Broomsticks with Mulciber,” Tom turned to Malfoy, “Order him as much butterbeer or firewhisky he wants, it’s a good idea to keep him pleased. He comes from a rather prestigious family.”

“Isn’t his family known for being Seers?” Nott questioned with furrowed brows.

“Yes, but that’s not why we need him, anymore at least. His family has access to the Department of Mysteries.

“And then, Dolohov will be with Rosier, but they already know this.”

“Why those two together?” Abraxas inquired.

“Rosier tends to speak out of line and Dolohov doesn’t tolerate nonsense. An admirable quality.” Tom said.

“So, why exactly are we tracking down Hermione?” Nott asked.

“I have my suspicions of something. I’m worried that Hermione is trying to, incriminate me so to say.” Tom took a swig from his glass of pumpkin juice.

“Why would she do that?” Malfoy asked.

His question was met with a glare.

“Hermione isn’t the innocent little angel some of us may believe. She has intentions, most of which I still don’t know, but her affiliation with Hagrid irks me.”

“It sounds like you’re jealous, Tom.” Nott appraised as he leaned his head against his hand.

The pumpkin juice in Tom’s glass jostled as he set it down harshly.

“I’m not jealous of some Half-breed oaf. I am simply concerned for my reputation.” Tom clarified. He stood from his seat and went to walk out of the Great Hall.

“What’s got his knickers in a twist?” Nott asked.

“Don’t say that about him, Nott.” Avery warned.

“Yeah, not a wise idea to be overheard bad mouthing Riddle.” Malfoy spoke from experience.

The boys bade their goodbyes as they all headed in separate directions, all agreeing to meet up before the trip out to Hogsmeade.

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Hermione briskly walked across the stone floor of the Hospital Tower. Visiting hours occurred during breakfast and Hermione was determined to see Minerva.

The sound of her shoes reverberated against the walls, the portraits she passed commenting on her
As she rounded the corner of the hallway, she was knocked down by what seemed like a wall.

“I am so sorry there, ‘ere, lemme ‘elp yeh up.” A gentle, yet gruff voice said.

A large hand met Hermione’s line of sight.

“Hagrid!” She happily said.

“Er, yes, that’s meh.” He said sheepishly, confused by the girl’s excitement.

She took his hand gratefully, thanking him as he pulled her up.

“It’s no problem.” He said.

“Hagrid, I actually have something to ask you.” Hermione began, her hands nervously fidgeting with the hem of her jumper.

Hagrid looked at the girl in surprise.

“Is it possible for you to accompany me to the Hogsmeade trip?” Hermione asked.

Rose dusted over the half-giant’s round cheeks, his hands fumbled with one another.

“O-oh, why, I don’t think I should, yeh probably got lots of options-” He stuttered out. Sweat dripped down the nervous boy’s forehead. A monolithic hand went to wipe the substance, resulting in a large damp mark on his sleeve.

“Nonsense, Hagrid, I would love it if you were to join me.” Hermione gave a sincere smile to the tall teenager.

“I'll, uh, ‘ave to ask teh Professor.” Hagrid informed.

“That’s perfectly fine, just meet me out by the carriages if you get permission, okay?” Hermione’s warm smile made Hagrid’s heart skip a little.

“Of course, Miss Dumbledore!”

“You can call me Hermione, Hagrid.”

“And yeh can call meh Rubeus, ‘ermione.” Hagrid gave the witch a giant smile.

“I’ll have to be on my way now, I plan on visiting McGonagall.” Hermione declared, Hagrid allowed her to pass by him, once again apologizing for running into her but assuring her that he was on his way to ask Dumbledore for permission.

Hermione continued her walk to the Infirmary. Approaching the door, she noted that it was open, meaning visiting hour were not over quite yet.

One foot in front of the other, Hermione tried to quietly inspect the area in search of her friend. Most beds were unoccupied, save for a boy who was vomiting slugs. Hermione cringed as she heard the boy regurgitate into a nearby bin.

“Hermione, is that you?” McGonagall asked from her bed.
“Yeah, I came for a visit since I haven’t gotten time to come in before.” Hermione replied as she set down her satchel, taking a seat next to the bed her friend laid in.

“So, how are you doing?” Hermione questioned.

“I’m utterly miserable being stuck here. And when I get out of here, the Slytherins are getting directly sawked, Headgirl title be damned.” Her features contorted into a grimace as she finished.

“If it helps, I beat Malfoy in a game of chess.”

“Was he the one who orchestrated that ridiculous strategy?” McGonagall inquired.

“Apparently.”

“Where did you find this out?”

Hermione opened her mouth, about to reveal the source of the information then thought better of it. Minerva probably would not enjoy hearing how Hermione got drunk and ended up dancing with Tom.

“Overheard them in the common room, practically bragging about it.”

Minerva scoffed, “Naturally they would.”

“Is there anything I can do to make your stay better?” A sanguine smile presented itself on Hermione.

“Well, since I’ll be stuck here for a couple more days, I could really use something better to eat other than the putrid food here in the infirmary,” Minerva put a finger to her chin for a moment, “Anything chocolate would certainly perk me up.”

Hermione had never considered her future Transfiguration Professor to have a sweet tooth, but if it helped then she’d be willing to pick it up.

“I’m actually going to Hogsmeade today, a trip to Honeydukes sounds necessary.” Hermione flashed a smile to the bed-ridden witch.

“Thank you, I anticipate your return. I’ll pay you back.” McGonagall promised.

“Not needed, I can pay for it,” the bushy haired witch gathered her items, “I must head back to my dorm though to pick up a couple extra Galleons. I’ll be back around dinner to deliver your sweets.”

---------------

Anticipation, the tingly sensation that causes one to be jittery. The very sensation Tom was experiencing as he strolled through the halls after breakfast. His destination was unimportant. Sometimes, a casual walk around the castle was needed to calm one’s nerves.

He wanted nothing more than to catch Hermione in whatever scheme she has conjured. There was no reason for her to accompany Hagrid unless (and he could not stress it enough) she had learned about the Chamber of Secrets.

Besides, it’s not like his suspicions were completely radical; Aion had ensured that the witch was nothing to glance over.

What a peculiar instance that was. Tom had never felt much respect toward Half-breeds, but a
Centaur was something a bit more powerful than the average. Knowledge of the future was certainly something Tom yearned for.

The passages of Hogwarts never ceased to fascinate Tom; miles of wall, stretching along the grounds and every single particle of stone radiated mystery and magic; the ultimate concoction.

Walks around the castle were his close favorite, right behind the excursions he took in nature. Peaceful, silent, the perfect place for Tom to think.

That is, whenever the path is void of humans.

Inwardly, he groaned as he heard footsteps approach. Preparing his perfect prefect facade, Tom relaxed his clenched jaw and allowed dimples to form on his cheeks.

A familiar bush of tangles rounded the corner and Tom’s false smile soon melted into a snide expression.

“Fancy coming across you, Hermione.” Tom stopped in front of the girl, preventing her from continuing.

“We go to the same school, Riddle, you see me literally everyday.” Hermione attempted to bypass the fleshy barrier, “I’d appreciate if you could move.”

“Say it nicely and I’ll consider it.”

“I said I’d appreciate it, what more do you want?” Brows furrowed on the girl’s forehead.

“Well, for starters you could put your lip into a pout. Then, you bat those lashes of yours at me and say, ‘Pretty please, Tom, could you move for me?’.” His eyes looked down at her, teeming with mischief.

“I didn’t need to hear about your revolting fantasies, Riddle.” Hermione tried to push past him, but the corridor was narrow.

“I’m not letting you pass until you say it.” His arms stretched to the side Hermione tried to slide through, successfully caging the girl.

“I’m about to punch you directly in the mouth. Be thankful, I don’t usually give warnings.” Her eyes went to challenge his own.

“Oh, really? You wouldn’t. You could never punch someone.” Confidence exuding his words.

“Oh, yeah? Tell that to Malfoy.” Hermione once again struggled to push past him.

“You’ve punched Malfoy before?” Tom’s curiosity shone through.

Hermione paused in the hallway. Yes, she has punched Malfoy before. Just, not Abraxas Malfoy. She thought long and hard in the suffocating silence, wondering how she can get out of the predicament.

“Yeah. What of it?” Arms crossed and nose pointed in the air, Hermione decided owning up to it would be best.

“How peculiar. He never mentioned such an occurrence.” Tom’s eyes narrowed, scrutinizing the witch.
“Perhaps he was just so embarrassed he got sawked by a girl.” Hermione knew she was going to regret lying later.

“You know what, you’re probably right,” Tom immediately backed away from Hermione, allowing the lady to pass, “Forgive me for my lack of manners earlier.” a kindred smile graced his handsome face. “I suppose I’ll see you at Hogsmeade. Until then, Hermione.”

Hermione turned back at the wizard as she walked forwards, confusion settling in. The sudden personality switch was evidently not sincere; which meant Riddle was planning something. She watched as he stuck his hands in his pockets, nonchalantly continuing his journey. The clack of his dress shoes reverberated against the tight corridor, slowly fading as the distance between them increased.

Shaking her head, Hermione tried to get the image out of her mind and locate the Slytherin dungeons. Simultaneously she thought of a way to get Abraxas to say she has indeed punched him, just in case Tom was going to ask.

Little was she aware of the large grin that was plastered on Tom’s face, the anticipation coming full force at him as he was about to catch Hermione in a lie.

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Warm colored leaves fell from their trees, the foliage drifting in the wind. Third years and higher stood in the courtyard, eagerly chatting away until it was time to depart. The sky suspended the sun high in the air, allowing it to brightly shine.

“Students, turn in your permission slips! Single file line, please!” A dark man with an Arabic accent announced. He stood in the middle of the pavilion.

“So glad I don’t have Astronomy anymore. Professor Aerglo was a pain.” Druella said in a quiet whisper.

Hermione looked at the teacher who glared at any student who tried to board the carriages without a slip. A single glare was all that was needed. The man reminded her of Snape’s intimidating presence.

“So, are you really going to walk with Hagrid all day?” Druella turned to Hermione as they moved further in the line.

“Yes. Well, if he got his slip signed of course.”

“Can I ask why?” Druella’s face looked like she had just eaten something sour. No matter how hard she tried to hide it, she was still prejudice.

“He’s a very nice person. Really, I mean it, you can’t always judge a book by its cover. Besides, I really didn’t want to go with Malfoy.” Hermione fiddled with the cuffs of her jumper.

“I suppose there’s truth in your stateme-”

“Well, hello, ladies!” A loud voice interrupted.

Hermione was knocked forwards, her balance failing her for a moment as an arm was slung over her shoulder.

“Evan, could you politely not be a pest.”
“Oh, darling, sister of mine, you don’t mean that!” But the glaring daggers she sent said otherwise.

“How’s that ghastly limp of yours doing, Rosier? You should be careful, next time your nose may get hurt if you keep sticking it in business not pertaining to you.” Hermione watched as Evan’s jubilant face dissipated into a look of disgust.

He removed his arms from the girl’s shoulders, slinking off into the near distance. Hermione sighed as she turned forward. Another step. Time passed as slow as molasses. Her eyes scoured the crowd, searching for an abnormally tall boy. The wind tickled her ear, or so she thought.

“How strange, Hermione, I don’t see your date anywhere.”

She knew the wind felt too warm for November.

“Riddle, personal space exists.”

“Well, I can’t help it. This line is rather narrow and we’re forced to pile into it.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. She should have know that she wouldn’t be able to avoid him all day.

“So where do you plan on going first, Miss Dumbledore?” Nott asked from behind, though he at least recognized the concept of personal space.

“Not certain. I’ll figure it out when Hagrid gets here.” The laced boots she wore tapped against the ground impatiently.

“If he’s a no show, you’re more than welcome to join me. Though, on the condition you ask nicely.” Hermione turned back to see Tom sanguinely smiling down at her.

It was anything but sweet, of course.

“No, thank you, Riddle.”

“Her loss.” Avery said quietly.

Onwards the line continued until Hermione had to board one of the carriages.

“Six people to a carriage!” Professor Aerglo stated.

Hermione looked around her, hoping to see Hagrid as she stepped onto the carriage. But alas, no one was left in line as Avery, Tom, Nott, and Druella joined her.

“Seems like he won’t be joining you after all.” Tom lulled, he stuffed his hand into the depths of his coat, situating his face closer to his green and silver scarf.

Tom, being the naturally annoying individual he is, slid next to Hermione on the bench.

As the carriage began moving, a loud series of thumping came from the distance.

“Hold on there!” Heaving, Hagrid ran up to Professor Aerglo, giving him a slip of paper.

After inspecting the parchment, he signaled for the carriage to stop, allowing Hagrid to come aboard.

A gigantic smile stretched across Hermione’s lips as she saw the half-giant wave enthusiastically.

“I didn’t think she actually meant she was going with him…” Avery whispered to Tom. A scowl
grew on Tom’s face.

“Sorry fer bein’ late.” Hagrid said.

One enormous leg stepped onto the carriage, causing the vehicle to tip with his weight.

“By God, he’s going to break this thing!” Avery shouted, hands turning white as he clinged to the railing to prevent his body sliding.

The carriage landed back on the ground, jostling as it met with earth again. Hagrid stood there looking at Hermione. From his coat, he pulled a small bouquet of flowers.

“Little smashed, but there fer yeh.” Vibrant flowers with lovely aromas were presented to Hermione. Gratefully, she accepted them, thanking Hagrid for the thought.

Much to Hermione’s amusement, Hagrid attempted to scoot in between her and Tom. His stature allowed him to successfully push Tom out of the way, causing the brooding boy to squish against the fence of the carriage. The cart rattled as Hagrid took his seat, causing Hermione to giggle.

Everyone else looked appalled.

“So, where do yeh wanna go firs’?” The towering male walked alongside Hermione.

Students and village inhabitants stared at the pair, but said nothing.

“Well, I have to go to Honeydukes for certain. After that we could go to The Three Broomsticks. And then, I hope Professor Dumbledore mentioned that-”

“Yes, we’ll be seein’ Aion later.” Hagrid finished the statement for her.

“Thank you again, Rubeus, for coming with me.” Hermione flashed him a set of pearly whites.

“No problem,” he smiled down at her. A sincere smile, not like the ones Riddle would give her.

“I think I see Honeydukes!” Hermione dragged the half-giant behind her, leading him by the hand.

He had to duck through the doorway, bowing his head. A delicious aroma wafted through the air; pure sugar, fresh fudge, and fruity scents overwhelmed the pair as Hermione began looking for something to get McGonagall.

Scanning the isles and shelves stuffed with sweets, Hermione tried finding the perfect chocolatey substance to satisfy McGonagall. She shook her head as she read products such as “Chocolate Frogs” and other subpar tooth rotting candies.

“Oh, oh! Hermione, o’er here!” Hagrid said excitedly.

Behind a glass window, bakers prepared Treacle Fudge. Hagrid’s breath fogged the window as he watched the wizards and witches whisk their dish into perfection.

“I have always wanted to make Treacle Fudge!” Deep dimples formed on Hagrid’s face, jubilance displaying itself on his rosy cheeks.

“I don’t actually think I’ve tried it before.” Hermione tried to recall if she had ever had the desert.
“Nuh-uh. Yeh did not jus’ say that.” Hagrid escorted Hermione over to a man wearing a chef’s hat, holding out a platter of free samples.

“Yer tryin’ this right now.” Hagrid declared as he himself popped a piece into his mouth. He happily chewed the fudge, savoring the rich flavor.

“I suppose if you insist.” Hermione was hesitant; coming from a family of dentists had scarred her and her desire for anything sugary.

She took a piece into her mouth, letting the chocolate melt.

“I’ll take a whole box, please.”

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“This is ridiculous.” Avery crossed his arms and leaned against the shop’s walls.

“Shut it, will you?” Nott said. His eyes wandered over to Hermione and Hagrid, watching the two as they laughed loudly.

“They’ve been in here for practically an hour! Who needs to be in a candy store for an hour!” Avery pulled at his mittens, taking them off.

Nott ignored the complaints of the small boy. Through the tufts of his ginger hair, he intently watched the two from across the store.

“I think they’re about to leave.” Nott said. He grabbed Avery’s wrist, the boy violently protesting at the action as he was dragged through the store toward the exit.

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“So, as I was saying, in the Knights of Walpurgis, you’ll find many advantages.” Abraxas Malfoy took a small sip from his Butterbeer, a slight grimace chasing the sickeningly sweet taste.

“Many advantages?” A dark skinned boy sat across from him, reclining against the cushioned booth.

“A plethora.” Abraxas’s smooth tone infiltrated the man’s ears.

“Why do you guys want me?” Skepticism was evident in the boy’s voice.

“Well, you’re a naturally talented wizard, my friend. Tom has told me you excel in your guys’s Divination class.” Under the table, Abraxas crossed his ankles and above it he rested his head on his hands, waiting for the man’s reply.

“Has anyone told you that you have quite the charming voice?” he leaned against the table.

“Quite a few, actually, Mulciber.”

“Well, I’m not falling for it.”

Dumbfoundedness struck Abraxas.

“Well, we’ll see about that.” The blond called a waitress over, requesting another round of Butterbeers.

“Actually, I’ll take a Firewhisky.” Mulciber announced.
“You know what, get me one instead too.” Abraxas grinned at Mulciber who looked at him oddly.

“Why are you smiling at me?”

“How about, we have a little game,” Abraxas circled his fingertip against the rim of his empty Butterbeer, “Whoever can drink more without getting totally wasted, wins. If I win, you join the Knights of Walpurgis.”

“And if I win, you leave me alone. I frankly don’t want to be apart of your band of misfits.” Mulciber thanked the waitress as she handed him a shot glass of Firewhiskey. Sugar and cinnamon coated the rim.

“Curious of you to say that.” Abraxas immediately downed the liquid in one gulp.

The door of the establishment rung, signaling new customers had arrived.

“Oh? What do you mean by that?” Mulciber nursed his shot.

“Just, I suppose I’ve heard this little rumor that you and your family are spies in the Department of Mysteries for the Egyptian Ministry of Magic. Which, we all know is in full support of Grindelwald’s movement.” Abraxas asked for another round of Firewhiskey for the two.

“That’s a rather silly rumor.” Mulciber’s dark eyes gaged Abraxas.

“All rumors start with a little bit of truth.” Malfoy raised his glass and nodded to Mulciber’s.

Reluctantly, he clinked his glass against Malfoy’s.

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“Really, this mission is kind of lame.” Evan kicked the loose rocks on the road.

“Hm.” His silent companion grunted.

“Do you ever speak? Do you even know English, Dolohov?” Evan inquired, stopping his childish actions.

“Yes.” Dolohov stated simply. He glared at the entitled boy.

“How’d you get kicked out of Durmstrang? Did you curse someone?” Evan gasped loudly then got closer to the silent boy, “Did you kill someone?” came the rather loud whisper.

“Ow!” Evan yelled as he fell to the ground, clutching onto the leg Dolohov kicked.

“That was the bad one, you-”

“I hope you didn’t plan on cursing out our friend Dolohov here, Rosier.” Tom walked over to the pair. They were out in the open, watching students pass by.

“No, of course not, my Lord.” Evan grunted quietly while standing back up. His hand went to the wall to support his body.

“How is your leg doing, Rosier?” Tom’s head tilted to the side, tenebrous locks falling with the movement.

“It’s doing quite fine, my Lord.” Rosier said uneasily.
“Stupendous. Then I’m certain you wouldn’t mind Dolohov kicking it again if you get out of line. Isn’t that right, Dolohov?” A smirk pulled at the Albanian boy’s lips.

“I’m sure he wouldn’t, but there will be no need for that! Isn’t that right, Dolohov?” Evan’s heavy lidded eyes pleaded with the man.

“We’ll see.” Tom stated nonchalantly.

“So, have you seen the two fools?” Tom questioned.

“Avery and Nott?” Evan asked.

“No, you dunce, Hermione and that oaf Hagrid.”

“They were in Honeydukes for around an hour apparently. They recently walked into The Three Broomsticks.” Dolohov replied as he pulled his scarf over his nose. The temperature was dropping rapidly as the sun descended.

“I see.” Tom’s eyebrows raised slightly at the revelation.

“Where are you heading, Riddle?” Evan asked as the tall wizard turned away from them.

“I plan on buying a few things while I’m here.”

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“Bring me another!” Malfoy shouted as he slammed his fifth glass of Firewhisky down.

Mulciber cheered with him, demanding more of the addictive fluid. The two laughed wildly as they indulged themselves.

“They are totally drunk.” Hermione stated to Hagrid who nodded fervently.

“Hey, Hermione, get over here! I wanna tell you something!” The slurred words of Abraxas Malfoy alerted Hermione, her flight or fight response triggered.

“We should go to that corner all the way over there.” Hermione grasped Hagrid’s large hand, pulling him along.

“Hey, hey, wait.” A hand clasped over Hermione’s shoulder, causing her to look behind her.

“Why don’t you come sit with a real pair of wizards, Hermy.” Abraxas said. A rope of drool came from the corner of his mouth, though it seemed like he didn’t notice.

“Malfoy I strongly suggest you go back to your tabl-” A sudden thought came to Hermione. She knows she shouldn’t. She really knows she shouldn’t. But he seems so intoxicated that possibly he won’t remember it afterwards? Hopefully.

“I’m sorry, but uh.” Hermione stuttered, winding back her arm with great hesitance.

Then came the blow. Directly to the face.

Malfoy crouched down to the floor, holding his nose as he let out a groan of pain.

“Hermione, what’d he do? Was he threatening you?” Hagrid’s words were laced with concern as he
ushered Hermione out of the pub.

Her eyes were wide and adrenaline coursed through her. Her heartbeat was erratic, beating loudly against the confines of her chest, practically bursting to escape.

She really shouldn’t have done that.

But, at the same time, he kind of deserved it.

*Serves him right for hurting Minerva like that.*

She just hoped there wouldn’t be any obvious bruising; otherwise Tom would know it happened recently.

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The shop door creaked open. Musty was a valid word to describe the store. Sauntering, limber legs carried a form across the room. Hidden awe encompassed the figure, his hand stretching out to reach the aisles of books he passed, the tip of his fingers making contact with the surface.

Leather bound books were his favorite.

They were also incredibly expensive.

How kind of his friends to lend him some Galleons.

As Tom continued through the maze of books, he thought of his first encounter with the store.

It was not popular by any means; in fact, most avoided it entirely. How unfortunate that the neglected are often the ones hiding so much potential.

It was his little hidden treasure.

He recalled the first Hogsmeade trip of his third year.

He also recalled how he was not able to go on it, all because the Matron of the orphanage refused to sign that pesky slip of paper.

How dare a piece of parchment define his destiny? As if a silly, little piece of paper could control him. He found it ironic, the damage a silly little piece of parchment could do.

The Matron had not anticipated breaking out in boils after throwing the paper away.

And so here he was, contently reading the titles of various books. Dust flitted through the air, creating a haze when beams of sunlight mingled with the particles.

He was on a mission. He was on the hunt for a particular novel.

“Whatcha lookin’ for, boy?” the shop owner called from beyond the counter.

“Oh, just browsing.” Tom lied. His quiet boy persona seeped into being, covering the underlying malevolence.

“I see. You come in here quite often.” the shop owner noted.

“Oh, yes, I’m quite a fan of the little store you run here.” That familiar fake smile took place on his
“Whatever you decide on, it’s free. You seem like a good kid.”

Tom gave his thanks and continued browsing, sly victory encompassing his thoughts.

Charm paid well.

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“Rubeus, it’s snowing!” Hermione stated loudly as the two walked along a barren trail.

Flakes fell gingerly from the darkening sky, dusting the ground before fading.

“It’s pretty.” Hagrid replied, watching the snow fall.

The pair followed a winding trail that led to seemingly nowhere. The path was void of any students, let alone villagers. The wind picked up speed, the breeze becoming harsh to the exposed flesh of Hermione’s face.

“So, why do yeh gotta see Aion so badly?” Hagrid asked as they trudged forwards.

“Some occurrences happened and I need a solution.”

In reality, she couldn’t bare to tell him she wanted to return to her own time. Riddle was far too much for her. With all of his shenanigans, she was surprised she was still intact.

“That’s a pretty clearin’ o’er there.” Hagrid said, a large finger pointed in the direction he described.


“That’s where the Shrieking Shack should be!”

“The what.” Hagrid worriedly stared at Hermione.

“The-” Hermione paused. She must have been reminiscing subconsciously today, “You know what, forget I said anything.”

Hagrid slowly nodded.

“I think that’s it up there.” Hagrid hobbled up a small knoll where a lonely hut was.

Hermione caught up to him, eager for her conversation with Aion. The two knocked on the door, waiting. It opened, revealing Aion.

“Come in, quickly.” He urged them in.

The obeyed.

The cottage was scarcely decorated. A fireplace roared with life right across a dingy looking couch. A woven rug was between the two. A small kitchen was on the opposite side of the shack.

“Hagrid, you may make yourself welcome on the couch. Me and Hermione shall be in the back room if you need us.” Aion led Hermione to a door that led into another small room, about half the size of the hut. It was completely empty save for a bear skin rug.

“Sit. I know it’s not the best accommodations, but they do well.” Aion sat down. Hermione took the
spot across from him.

“Aion, I don’t want to be here.”

“Neither do I to be honest, this hut is rather janky-”

“No, no, I mean I don’t want to be here. This time period. I want to go home.” Tears welled in Hermione’s eyes. The past few days had only reminded her of how much she missed her friends and how they must be doing without her.

“I figured you’d come to me saying this sooner or later,” Aion sighed, “I can’t send you back. Not yet.”

“Is it because of some prophecy-”

“No, it’s not. You see, the world is peculiar in its ways. When I brought you here, it was Samhain. Every once in awhile, the Earth experiences certain periods of orbit that bring us closer to different parts of the universe. Makes it easier to pull someone from their own reality, you see.”

“Magical hotspots?” Hermione wondered with one brow raised.

“Yes, exactly! Clever girl.” Aion complimented.

“When’s the next magical hotspot so to speak?”

“Winter Solstice, unfortunately. You’ll have to endure another two months or so here. Not to mention I need to restock on sand. I’ll have to make a trip into the Ministry for that-” Aion made a mental to-do list.

“Aion, you cannot break into the Ministry of Magic, again! It’s completely irresponsible.” Hermione huffed.

He gave her a dull look.

“On a side note, if you could follow me into the kitchen.” Aion stood, motioning for the witch to follow.

Disappointed was an understatement. Hermione was wrecked on the inside. She wanted nothing more than to reunite with her friends, to be able to hug and chat with them, the smallest things she had never considered luxuries before. But what could she do?

“You may notice that the counter does in fact not have food on it, rather, weaponry.” Aion stated in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Aion, why do you have so much weaponry?” A mask of incredulousness overcame Hermione.

“Fighting, duh.” the young centaur explained.

“I require your help, actually.” He said whilst brandishing a bow and arrow.

“I know nothing of the art of weapon making.” Hermione gazed upon the scattered objects with apprehension.

“You don’t need to know how to make them. I was going to request you grab something from the potion closet at your school. I’m in need of substances to create healing balms.” Aion trotted over to a crossbow, marveling at his craft work.
“Aion, I would love to help, but I’m not sure if breaking into the potions cupboard is a good idea…”

“You don’t have to break in,” Aion set down his crossbow, “Let’s think about this real quick, Hermione. Who is in charge of the potion’s cabinet?” the centaur looked at Hermione.

“Professor Slughorn…” She looked at him warily, apprehension evident.

“And how does this Professor see you? Here’s a hint, think of your last name.” A cheeky smile graced his lips.

“I suppose he sees me very highly because of my supposed lineage…” Hermione continued. At first, she had wondered why the name “Granger” would mean anything, then recalled that person only exists in the great depths of her facade.

“Yes, exactly, and who is he to stop a brilliant witch from owning up to the great name of Dumbledore? Who is he to prevent his own name being flashed for being a mentor to the Hermione Dumbledore?” Aion tapped a hoof impatiently, waiting for her response in excitement.

“I don’t want to keep fooling people, Aion, I’m tired of this little game I have to play…” Hermione turned away from Aion, keen on storming out of the shack.

A hand gripped her wrist, preventing her from leaving. Aion tightened his hand around the appendage, pulling her toward him.

“Hermione, you said you would help me.” His eyes glistened and a sad expression adorned his face.

“Aion, I know, but you’re asking a bit much and how am I supposed to know this isn’t one of your weird ploys to get me to interact with Tom?” She exhaled through flared nostrils.

Aion’s eyebrows raised and eyes widened for a moment, as if he made note of something.

“Hermione, I have no one else to help me. My clan, they’ve abandoned me and have turned against me. I’m wanted by the Ministry. What am I to do if I get injured again? I’ll just lay in the forest and bleed out, every agonizing second, all alone,” He gently grasped her other hand, pulling both close to his face in a manner of plea, “I’ve seen your sense of justice. I’ve seen what you did for House Elves. Do me the favor of helping out a poor little forest creature?” His thumbs rubbed circles into the skin of her hand, coaxing her.

She gazed into the eyes of the creature; the humanity that they possessed, that reached out to her and begged for aid. Who was she to deny a being in need?

“Fine. I’ll do it.” she said in defeat.

“Splendid!” The centaur clasped his hands together and trotted over to a piece of parchment on the counter.

Hermione stood there wearily, completely and utterly done with the centaur’s antics. She was going to regret this, she knew it. She could feel it already.

“Here is a list of supplies I need. Some of these are a bit obscure, so no worries if you can’t find all of them. I should be able to find substitute ingredients if need be.” He presented the parchment to her.

She looked at it for a moment. Her eyes drifted up to the creature only to see gigantic grin spread onto his face. She sighed loudly and yanked the paper out of his hand, stuffing it in her pocket as she
called Hagrid over to leave.

“Thank you again, pleasant travels, my friends!”

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Wind picked up and harshly lapped at Avery’s scarf. He pulled the fabric up, hoping it would cover his nose from the wind’s rough treatment.

“Where are we even going?” he grumbled.

“I don’t know. I didn’t even know this path existed.” Nott remarked as they made their way up a hill.

“Fantastic,” Avery rolled his eyes, “What business does she have up here anyways?”

“Beats me.” Nott nonchalantly said.

Avery pushed onward, hating every second of their journey. The scenery was boring: a few naked trees littered the area and the grass was sparse on the trail. It seemed like Death had cleared the area, tending to the land just the way he wanted it. Death’s domain.

“What’s that up there?” Nott pointed up the hill.

“Looks like an abandoned shack.” Avery squinted, trying to focus on the landmark in the distance.

“You don’t think they went there to snog, right?” Nott said simply.

Avery gagged in an exaggerated way to express his disgust.

“I absolutely fucking hope not.” They continued their march up the hill.

“I don’t think anyone is up there.” Avery said.

“We probably made a wrong turn then. They are probably still down in the village.” Nott started on the way back down the hill.

“Great job, dunce. Have fun telling Riddle you messed up.” Avery chuckled to himself.

“You’re neglecting the fact that we were assigned as a team. So you made the mistake too, dunce.” Nott adjusted his earmuffs as he walked a good distance away from Avery.

“Hey! That’s not true, you cannot tell him that!” Avery shouted as he ran up to Nott, closing the distance between the two.

Nott heard rampant footsteps and heavy breathing approaching him from behind.

“Listen, it’s honestly better to own up to your own mistakes instead of blaming them on others.” Avery pointed a finger at Nott as he walked in front of him, backwards.

“You’re going to end up hurting yourself if you keep walking like that.” Nott continued his stroll.

“Stop avoiding my warnings-!” Avery was cut off short by his body trampling down the hill.

Nott laughed as he watched Avery’s body tumble and roll down the hill. A tree stopped the body and a loud yelp and string of curses followed the collision. Birds left their trees, scared of the sound.

“I told you so.” Nott said as he passed the tree Avery was slumped against.
“Not another, bloody word.” Avery huffed as he braced himself against the trunk of the tree. He hobbled along after Nott.

---------------

“This has been a very lovely evening, Rubeus.” Hermione said as she walked back to the carriage with Hagrid.

“Sure has been. I’m sorry about the news yeh got from Aion…” Hagrid said sheepishly.

A deep sigh elicited Hermione.

“It happens. It’s for a better cause. Let’s not focus on that though,” She put on her best fake smile to hide the pain, “Thank you for accompanying me.”

“Of course, would do it anytime fer yeh.” he smiled down at her.

“Um, I hate to ask this…” Hermione cautiously began, “You don’t have a crush on me, right? Like this was just a friendly outing to you, right?” Truth be told, Hermione was scared of possibly leading the half-giant on.

“Well, duh, Hermione. Yer not meh type.” Hagrid stated.

Dumbfoundedness struck Hermione.

“What?” She tried to hide the offense in her tone.

“Well, Hermione, I like my women, yeh know,” He raised his hand up, gesturing height, “Yer just a lil’ short fer meh.” He gave a hearty laugh and patted Hermione’s back.

The force of the gesture caused Hermione to stumble a bit.

“Looks like the carriage is watin’ on us.” Hagrid said.

Already there was Nott seated next to Tom and Avery with crossed arms on the other side of Tom. Druella was alone on the opposite bench.

Hagrid took a giant step onto the carriage and sat next to Druella, the witch wrinkled her face slightly as he did so. Hermione followed suit and placed herself next to Hagrid.

They sat in silence.

“So, er, how was yer guy’s day?” Hagrid asked. His question was met with glares from most parties.

As the carriage was about to leave, a man ran toward it. In the distance, a man ran while he stumbled on his way, yelling for the carriage to wait. As the figure closed in, blond, shoulder length hair whipped wildly and his shouts got louder.

“Wait for me!” he shouted.

“My Merlin, is that Abraxas?” Avery said as he squinted his eyes.

“Start the carriage, now.” Tom stated boldly.

But the Thestrals did not listen. The carriage idled, waiting for the student to arrive. He eventually did, with great effort. He stepped onto the carriage, noticing no available seats.
“Malfoy, you have to get off. It’s six to a carriage.” Tom said.

“Boo you, I’m just gonna sit riieeeight here.” Slurred words were followed by Abraxas sitting on Hagrid’s lap.

With widened eyes, Hagrid hesitantly patted the back of a clearly intoxicated Abraxas. The blond Pure-blood cooed as he continued. The carriage began to move, jostling the passengers as their trek back to Hogwarts began.

“Ya know, for a half-breed, you’re pretty snazzy.” Abraxas patted Hagrid’s shoulder.

“A bit of a light weight, am I right?” Hagrid whispered to Hermione who chortled in return.

Abraxas began to hum to himself, completely unaware of his surroundings as the ride continued.

“So, how was your date, Hermione?” Tom stared directly at her.

“It was quite nice. How was your day at Hogsmeade, Riddle?” She asked.

“Enlightening,” He seemed to fumble with something in his coat pocket for a moment, “Hey, Abraxas?” he called the attention of the blond.

“Yessir?” he questioned. He had changed positions, now he was laying across the laps of Hagrid, Hermione, and Druella. The last was tempted to push the poor inebriated fool off her lap.

“Has Hermione ever punched you before?” Tom’s attention was trained on Hermione, waiting for her lies to fall apart in front of her.

A groan came from the drunkard.

“I recall something of sorts. My head hurts a bit much to remember the details…” He trailed off, reclining into the people beneath him.

Brief surprise flashed over Tom, who quickly regained his calmness.

“Was simply curious.” He sent a small glare toward Hermione.

Hermione mouthed to him, “Nice try”.

The carriage followed along the path back to Hogwarts, hitting rocks along the way that caused the vehicle to shake.

Today, fate had delivered disappointing news for both Hermione and Tom.
Fate's Antics

Chapter Summary

Hermione wakes up to some trifling experiences that follow her throughout the day; she only wants to know who is behind them.

Chapter Notes

It's been awhile! But hey, now I'm done with school, so I'll have some more time to write. I hope you guys enjoy the chapter, feel free to comment on any of it, I always read feedback and take it into consideration!

Drip.

Everything felt fuzzy.

Drip, drip.

Where was that sound even coming from?

Drip, drip, drip...

Tousled, damp locks lashed wildly. Left, right, and through the cycle again. Eyes wide then narrow, frightened by the darkness and trying to discern shapes in the cloak of night.

Where was she?

Drip.

The witch stood, stumbling as she stretched to her full height. Each movement evoked a protest from her muscles, the tissue begging her to sit. Hermione withstood the pain.

Squinted, chestnut eyes scoured the area, surveying for light. Her plea was met with no such thing. One foot in front of the other and arms out to steady herself, she trudged through the silence blindly.

Drip.

Wet wisps of hair whipped her in the face as she turned to the source of the sound. Droplets dripped down her cheeks from the sopping curls. Mary Janes squelched as she walked toward the sound; a chill creeped through her as her feet rubbed against the saturated fabric of her wool socks.

The sound of a crash reverberated through the area, echoing. There was no way to distinguish the location.

Quickened breaths and quickened heart beats.
Exhale, inhale.

Exhale. Inhale.

Shaky steps allowed the girl to continue forwards. Her muscles ached. Her mind was fuzzy. She is alone, so she thinks, the gentle hum in her head being the only thing to gift her company.

Rolling her head, she corrected the stiffness of her neck. Slowly, she journeyed. Slowly, she met only the cruel embrace of darkness that lapped at her senses, coaxing them into complete numbness. Slowly, that hum in her head became deafening.

Frequencies high; the low hum transformed into a screech, rattling the ear drums of the girl. Her knees met the harsh, frigid ground. Water splashed around her as she fell. Hands tangled into her hair, clutching at the roots, beseeching the sound to halt.

*Drip.*

It was heaven to her ears.

*Drip.*

Hurriedly she stood, basking in the simplistic sound.

*Drip.*

Resistance in the form of water met her feet. Sore, but determined, muscles ventured on ward.

*Drip. Drip.*

It drew closer, exciting the witch.

*Drip. Drip. Drip.*

It became louder.

She struggled through the water, the liquid splashing up her legs as she waded through the shallow waters. The volume of the drips eased her through the discomfort.

*Drip, drip.*

They got more frequent. She was still hidden in darkness’s veil.

*Drip, drip, drip.*

Hope appeared in a ray.

Mustering the energy, Hermione forced her limbs through the water at a faster rate. Toward the single beam of light she went, passing through the wakes of water she created.

*Drip, drip, drip.*

Closer and closer-

*Drip, drip, drip-*

Dripping was now accompanied by the crash of waves against walls. So close, yet just out of reach-
Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip-

She could practically feel the way the sunshine danced on her skin, heating the flesh in its path.

Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip-

And then it all stopped. The waves stopped. The dripping stopped. The light was gone and the darkness pushed her back full force. She opened her mouth, syllables hanging, desperately trying to ask what was going on.

Inhale-

Claws sunk deep into her ankle, ripping her socks. The pain was searing, causing the girl to elicit a hiss. The sound harmonized with the sound of her face dragging across the rockbedded floor. Her head dunked under the water. Her leg felt out of alignment with her hip as she was dragged by it as if she were a ragdoll. Deeper into the water her form went, her nails scratching the earth beneath, dirt piling under the keratin. A force of unnatural strength continued to pull her under, pull her to certain demise.

Water flooded her lungs, unable to fend off the fluid from invading. She tried to call for help.

Quickened heartbeat.

Inhale, inhale, inhale, inhale inhale inhale-

With a sputtering cough, she encountered air again. Clothes soaked and freezing, a shiver racked through her body, leaving gooseflesh in its wake.

Finally, exhale.

Her surroundings were different, she noticed. Humid and certainly less water inhabited. Shaky fingers caressed the ground. Sparse grass here and there, damp with dew and welcoming to the logged girl.

Her eyes burned violently, stinging as she presumed the water must have had salt in it. A clear sign of being in the ocean. And with an echo like that, she must have been in a cave previously…

The marshes were much preferred, in her opinion. Trees guarded the clearing; a secret alcove in the forest. For a moment, she felt at peace.

Rustling disturbed the sanctuary.

“Who’s there?” Hermione choked out; confidence was void in the tone, coated in the hoarseness of her voice.

A familiar friend met her vision.

“Aion, thank Godric you’re here, I don’t know what just happened-” she explained as she crawled toward the creature that made his presence known. The edges of the centaur were blurry.

A flit of pages fell in front of her. The parchment of the book absorbed the dew of the ground quickly, tarnishing the paper.

“Aion, what is this?” her voice croaked. It didn’t even sound like her.

His hoofs moved along, out of range of the witch as he ignored the question looming in the air. Her
arm followed after his retreating form, desperate.

Her elbows dug into the ground and pushed off the forest floor, “Wait, wait, please stay!”

But he was already gone.

She turned back to the book. Her chest heaved from exerting that amount of energy. She contemplated.

A trembling hand of hers grasped the slightly worn edges of the thin book. Bringing it closer, she investigated the contents.

“It’s a book. It’s a gift.” A high pitched voice tickled the crevices of her mind.

“Where are you! Show yourself!” Hermione proclaimed. The voice rang through her mind like a telephone off the receiver.

“I am everywhere, but nowhere. I’m afraid my form is too ghastly for your eyes to lay upon.” It was a gentle caress to her mind, yet left burns in its path.

“Stop this, what is this?” She braced herself on her knees, struggling to stand.

“A book, a gift.” Warm breath embraced Hermione’s ear. She turned to meet the source only to be confronted with nothing.


In another moment, the black flashed on the other side of her, parading around her being as if in a joyous dance.

“It’s blank.” She noted as she flipped through the pages.

“Is it?” the voice countered.

“Who are you?” her voice was meek and riddled with confusion.

“You know who I am.”

“I’m afraid I don’t.” she insisted.

“You know my name.”

“I really don-”

A yelp erupted from Hermione’s throat as her hair was yanked backwards and to the ground. Her body contorted in an absurd manner, stretching her already exhausted and aching tissue.

Crows flew above her as trees shook wildly in their departure. Dawn had crept into the sky, staking claim over its domain.

“He-Who-Should-Not-Be-Named.” the voice hissed out next to her ear, enunciating every syllable with emphasis, magnifying the terror embedded in the name.

Her mouth hung open, words formed on her lips but could not depart. Tears streamed silently as her eyes were wide open.
Crows flooded her vision, an entire flock. Above her they flew, teasing her with the freedom she wish she had. How she wished she could escape death’s grip. Only she did not realize the crows were in cahoots with Death.

Drenched in sweat and eyes wide, Hermione woke up. Her hands clenched the sheets of her bed, feeling the fabric all over, ensuring the reality of her setting.

Quickened breath, quickened heartbeat.

Inhale, exhale.

Inhale. Exhale.

Her lungs were not breached with water. Her ankle did not possess any claw marks. Her eyes did not burn with salt water. None of it was real.

Her hands grabbed the curtains of her bed, peaking out of them in fear of whatever monster lurks behind them.

Instead of a creature, she was acquainted with the faint snores of her peers and sunlight gleaming through the haze of the lake. With a shaky breath, Hermione retreated back into her curtained sanctuary where she hoped her dreams were not to be plagued again.

---------------

Water bubbled quietly, creating a constant hum within the room. Scattered candles lit the premises, evidence that the sun was not in position. Quiet chatter was heard from beyond Tom’s curtained bed.

It had been awhile since the sixth year boys had one of their nighttime talks.

As usual, Tom neglected joining them on the floor and stayed in the comfort of his bed.

“My head hurts so much…” a voice groaned.

“Maybe you shouldn’t have challenged Mulciber to a drink off, Abraxas.” another voice countered.

Tom allowed the discussion to exit his consciousness, drifting off into thought. He admired the putrid gold and jade ring that adorned his finger to the best of his ability within the dim parameter of his bed.

What about the ring was so special?

A thought that would occasionally strike him in the middle of class or during the night. However, more importantly,

What about his journal was so special? And how did she know of its existence?

Lifting his hand, Tom ran a hand through his tenebrous locks. Dark brows furrowed in concentration as he reviewed any possible hint he could have given her. Gritted teeth was all he could muster as his mental search revealed nothing.

Why did she say no to him to Hogsmeade?

That was also another thing that loomed in the back of his mind, poking and prodding at his pride.
He had intended, if she said yes, to interrogate her. Charm her, provide the illusion of pleasantries and romance to woo her into answering him. She would be unresponsive at first; they always succumb to him though, it just takes time. A flash of the teeth, minty breath, and a few gentleman-esque gestures went far with women, regardless of who they are.

But she said no, so he would have to improvise.

A curious creature she is, he would remind himself, most unlike other girls.


A plethora of qualities that he abhorred. Not because the traits are inherently negative to him, but rather they embodied her and soiled his ambitions.

She deserved something.

Subconsciously, his eyes drifted to where his nightstand would be if his curtain were open.

She deserved something indeed.

All in due time.

---------------

A screech echoed in the sixth year girl’s dorm.

“Get it away!” a loud bang followed, evoking another feminine shrill.

Hermione awoke with startled eyes; immediately, she pulled her curtain back and investigated.

Walburga stood in front of the glass window that stretched across one wall. A Merperson bared its teeth at her from the other side, dragging its trident across the glass. Druella covered her ears due to the abrasive, scraping sound. Walburga copied Druella.

“What’s going on?” Hermione frantically asked.

“That monstrosity is trying to crack the glass and drown us!” Walburga shouted.

The trident met the glass, knocking it with force in several successions. Walburga emitted another screech, running toward her bed to hide behind it. The Merperson growled, bubbles rising to the lake’s surface.

Hermione’s feet patterned toward the glass. Her eyes scanned the glass, quickly and effectively.

The Merperson glared at Hermione and brought its trident to its neck, gesturing a stabbing motion. Baffled, Hermione watched as the Merperson swiftly swammed away.

“That’s not the best way to wake up.” Druella commented. She pulled her clothes from her trunk.

“No kidding.” Hermione stated dully. She was still looking out into the lake, pondering why the creature had done that.

“I’m going straight to Slughorn to request a room transfer for Hermione.” Walburga dictated, her chin high in the air.

Confusion contorted Hermione’s features, “What, why?”
“That creature was trying to break the barrier. Don’t know if you caught its drift when it pretended to stab itself, but it obviously has some grievances with you!” Walburga stomped to the door, “And I certainly don’t want to be here when it enters to kill you!”

The door slammed behind her, leaving Druella and Hermione in silence.

“Well, today is just splendid!” Hermione huffed, rapidly she grabbed her toiletries and marched to the bathroom. The slam of the door was deafening to Druella.

---------------

Students littered the Great Hall, idle banter bounced off the monolithic walls. It was still the weekend, many individuals choosing to sleep in. The sun was masked by clouds, urging the candles to flicker with warm light.

“Forgot to mention that Mulciber did in fact agree to join…” Abraxas nursed his water down.

“Really? How did you manage that?” Tom inquired, his eyes never left the copy of The Daily Prophet in his hands.

“Got him drunk, asked him to join while he was drunk, and naturally he said yes.” His platinum blond hair was in disarray.

“You seemingly forgot to mention the part where you got drunk as well.” Tom stated casually.

Light eyebrows raised and fell within a moment. Abraxas tilted his head back as he finished his glass of water, the liquid replenishing itself in a matter of seconds.

“Me and Nott’s quest didn’t yield anything.” Avery said glumly. His hands fidgeted with his goblet of pumpkin juice.

“How disappointing.” Indifference coated the words, but frustration was laced in the undertones.

“My apologies, my L-” A frantic Avery was shushed by the raise of Tom’s hand.

“Not in public, you know that.”

“Right…” Avery shrunk in his seat.

“Did you see where they went at all? Anything suspicious?” Tom asked, still his eyes scanned the contents of the newspaper.

“Well, they went to that sweets shop first. Spent a good chunk of time in there,” Avery raised a finger to his chin, “Then they went to the Three Broomsticks, and we thought we saw them go up this giant hill, but we lost them…” Avery trailed off, his eyes fell toward Tom.

“What was up this hill?” Tom’s hands subconsciously gripped the paper tighter.

“Just a creepy old cottage, dilapidated and small.” Avery’s brows drew close together, “Now that I think about it, there was smoke rising from its stack, but we just wanted to get out of there. We thought we might have missed them at a turn or something.”

Tom slammed the paper down, “You saw smoke and didn’t think to investigate?” His tone was steady and full of threats.

“If you were there, you would have wanted to bolt too, Sir, it, it, was just downright terrifying!
Thinking about it still gives me bumps!” Avery frantically pulled his sleeve up to reveal the rising bumps on his flesh, offering the appendage for Tom to look at.

Tom’s hand shot out to yank Avery’s arm, but paused on its journey.

“We’ll discuss the repercussions later.” A pleasant smile graced his face. Avery’s Adam’s apple bobbed.

Tom went back to reading the paper, its contents trivial and pointless. Avery and Abraxas had turned to their food, picking at it with disinterest.

Loud footsteps rapidly approached, causing Tom to look away from his paper. Avery and Abraxas followed suit.

Hermione’s frizzy hair bounced with every laborious step. Her face was in a constant grimace, displaying her dissatisfaction this morning. Her footsteps echoed in the massive room, the chatter of the few students present doing nothing to hide the force within her stride.

“Woah, Dumbledore, you look almost as bad as Abraxas.” Avery rudely suggested.

His declaration was met with glares from both mentioned parties.

“However rudely stated, he is right. What’s the matter, dear?” Abraxas asked, his eyes twinkling as he looked at her.

Her face contorted slightly at the pet name, “Today has been an absolute wreck.”

“It’s only the morning, how can you say that?” Abraxas asked with concern.

Hermione dropped her bag onto the table with a thud. Abraxas winced at the sound, his fingers going to his temples to soothe the pounding in his head.

“Love, I understand your quarrel, but could we do without the loud sounds?” Abraxas rubbed his forehead.

“You try waking up to a Merperson threatening you and your roommate demanding a room reassignment for you because they’re blaming you for something you can’t control! Not to mention an incredibly sleepless night!” The witch grumbled as she angrily chomped into a slice of toast.

“No need to take your anger out on that poor piece of toast, Hermione.” Tom stated.

“Sod off, Riddle.”

“Be a bit more polite.”

“Alright,” Hermione turned to Tom, “Politely sod off, Riddle.” A grin tweaked the corners of her mouth. Going in for another angry bite, she turned away from Tom and let the fake smile fall.

“So, let me guess, Walburga?” Abraxas questioned.

“Yes. You know, she wasn’t too bad when I first got here, but recently she’s just been downright obnoxious.” Hermione finished her toast, eyes focused on the platter where more of the substance laid.

“Perhaps-” Tom began, but to Hermione’s gratitude, was cut off by the hoot of owls and feathers falling gently through the air.
As the owls soared past, a parcel landed in front of Hermione. Her eyes widened at the package, curious as to why she received one.

“Perhaps things are getting better, a bit of redemption for your horrid morning,” Abraxas smiled wide, “go on, open it, silly.” he encouraged.

With a deep breath, Hermione grasped the corner of the wrapping, tearing it gently.

“Could you go any slower?” Avery scoffed.

With a little more fervor, Hermione ripped the wrapping more, eyes narrowing at its contents.

“Well, what is it?” Abraxas seemed to bounce in his seat, giddy like a child on Christmas.

Hermione’s face was crestfallen. She slipped the wrapping off of the item, holding tightly her newly acquired possession.

A book.

Her gaze was clouded, a blank expression appeared on her face.

Quickly, she flipped through the pages.

Blank.

“What is it?” Abraxas craned his neck over the table to see what Hermione was gawking at.

“A book, a gift.”

The words echoed in Hermione’s mind, her heart pounded in her chest and dew formed on her brow.

Abraxas’s arm reached over and grabbed the book, flipping through the pages,

“It’s blank.” He said, his voice riddled with confusion.

“Is it?” Tom asked nonchalantly. Hermione’s heart skipped a beat and her breath hitched.

“Oh, there’s a note!” Avery said as a slip of parchment cascaded from the binding.

“‘A curious item for a curious witch.’, strange.” Abraxas read aloud.

Promptly, Hermione stood and wretched the book from Abraxas.

“Hey, I was just looking at it, I meant no harm-” He explained, but his expression transformed into perplexion.

Hermione wind her arm back, book in hand, face determined. She was no Quidditch player, but she knew how much force to issue when needed.

“Not today!” Hermione yelled, her face scrunched.

“Hermione, wait-” Tom stood, as did the other two boys, all reaching for the book, but they were too late.

The book flew through the air, landing far away from the group.

“Wicked arm you’ve got…” Abraxas trailed, his expression dumbfounded.
Hermione gathered her belongings and stomped toward the exit.

“Hermione, your book!” Abraxas called out to her.

“I’m not dealing with this nonsense today!” Hermione shouted, not bothering to turn back.

Avery sat back down, head resting on the palm of his hand,

“Well, today has been exciting.” Abraxas turned toward Avery with incredulousness.

“What a curious book.” Tom mentioned, eyes trained on the witch’s retreating form.

“Hey, Riddle, can I pull you aside for a moment.” Abraxas motioned a beckoning finger.

“Yes, Malfoy?” Apathy.

“Did you give her that book?” Abraxas’s face showed clear suspicion. His body was hunched as he spoke.

Tom straightened his posture and left the Great Hall.

---------------

Time seemed to stretch on forever, just like the corridors of Hogwarts. Hermione’s impatient form waded through the few students that occupied the hall. Some relaxed in the alcoves, talking with friends, and others ventured to breakfast. She was suspicious of every single one of them. Today was out to get her and she did not want anyone to have any advantage over her.

Seconds, minutes, all passed, piling on more time. Her pulse quickened at even the slightest encounter. All she wanted was to go to a place where no students would be on a Sunday; the library.

“Oi, watch out!” A gruff voice warned.

Hermione turned her head only to be confronted with a spear swinging at her. She fell backwards, landing on the palms of her hands, barely missing the object. Her chest heaved.

“I’m so sorry, Hermione! Professor Dumbledore just told us to move a suit of armor down the hall,” Alastor Moody jutted a thumb at two other Gryffindor boys who waved energetically, “Didn’t mean to rattle you.” He offered a hand and pulled her up.

“Thanks…” She dusted off her skirt.

“You look terrible, you okay?” Alastor landed a harsh blow to her back, a gesture meant to be a friendly pat.

“Gee, thanks. Every woman loves to hear that,” Hermione rolled her eyes, “Today has been absolutely dreadful.”

“Let’s walk and talk.” He urged her along.

“Start from the beginning.” He said.

“I’m going to sound totally insane, but you asked for it,” she sucked in a shaky breath, “Last night I had a nightmare that involved a blank book. I received just that this morning. It was, extremely surreal to say the least.
“And I woke up to a Merperson scratching the glass of my dorm, along with the screams of Walburga later accompanied by the threats of Walburga…It feels like today is out to get me.”

“Don’t worry, you only sound a wee bit insane.” Alastor delivered more rough pats to her back, causing the poor girl to lurch forwards.

“That’s slightly reassuring, I suppose…” she shook her head at herself, continuing her walk with the brash boy.

“Better watch out, we’re heading straight toward Professor Ornamenti,” Alastor cupped a hand around Hermione’s ear, “She’s a bit of a loon, if you ask me.”

An eyebrow of Hermione’s twitched upwards as she was about to question who that was, but a dark woman decorated in fuchsia garments that bellowed behind her quickly approached. She had a skip in her step, almost as if she was prancing or dancing about.

“Mr. Moody, what are you and your friends doing with that suit of armor?” An inquisitive look struck her features.

“Oh, just preparing to defend against the army of trolls you prophesied that would attack us, Professor!” Alastor got close to Hermione’s ear, “Just play along.” He said through his smile.

“Stupendous! Glad you boys are heeding my warning. Do carry on.” She encouraged. Her wrists were loaded with bracelets that clanged together, her form a walking windchime.

“Will do Professor!” Alastor began to walk on,

“Don’t think I haven’t forgotten about your missing assignments, Mr. Moody,” Professor Ornamenti caught up to the Gryffindors,

“And who might be your female friend? I don’t believe I’ve had the pleasure of having her in class.” The woman pursed her lips and examined Hermione.

Hermione took note of how the woman was barefoot, several more bands of metal adorning her ankles. Manicured nails reached her chin, tilting her head all around.

“Pardon yourself…” Hermione pushed the older woman’s hands away.

“Tsk, tsk, dear. You deserve what’s coming to you with those manners.” The woman crossed her arms.

“Excuse me?” Hermione began.

“A foreigner. You aren’t meant to be here. Perhaps if you had taken the art of Divination you would have recognized that sooner.” With that, Professor Ornamenti left, small coils of hair falling from her hair wrap as she fled.

“Don’t let it get to you, she’s bonkers. Nothing she says makes sense.” Alastor nudged Hermione in the side.

“Normally, I would agree with you. But, that unfortunately did make sense.” Hermione gawked at the teacher’s retreating form, a mass of violet that danced away without a care in the world.

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The sound of chatter dulled to the listener. The Slytherin common room was teeming with activity:
several students talked, played chess, or studied. Blonde hair was quickly tied back by an emerald ribbon, the owner overwhelmed by even the slightest stimulus of hair brushing his cheek. He reclined back into the leather couch, his eyes focused on the low hanging ceiling and how it appeared to close the distance between him and it by the minute. His faux leather shoes tapped against the floor, the sound soothing him from the unwanted social interactions around him.

“Malfoy, for the love of Salazar you look like you’re about to have a stroke. What the hell is wrong?” Avery spoke.

Abraxas’s eyes snapped to Avery who was beside him on the couch. Orion and Cygnus sat across from them, the two idly fiddling with their wands; the brothers comfortably relaxed under the green light of the room with their feet resting on the coffee table before them. Abraxas straightened up and adjusted the wrinkles in his clothing.

“Nothing. Nothing is wrong.”

“Brax, you looked like you were about to Avada whoever tried talking to you.” Orion said.

Abraxas sighed, “Perhaps I’m just a bit on edge.”

“On edge about what?” Avery raised one brow.

“Oh, I don’t know, perhaps how suspicious Riddle has been lately. He’s out to ruin that innocent girl’s life, Avery. You just don’t get it,” Abraxas belted out suddenly, causing shock to ripple through Avery’s face. Abraxas turned directly toward Avery, “Riddle is far too invested in Hermione for it to be healthy. For both parties. What was the last thing Riddle got obsessed with, how did it turn out?”

“Um, I suppose the last thing was that ‘project’ last year.” Avery replied cautiously.

“Yes, and how did it result?” Abraxas gestured for Avery to continue.

“As far as I’m aware, nothing ever happened from it,” Avery propped his legs on the table, “You’re delving too deep, Abraxas. Thinking about this too much is not the best for you.”

“You complete dunce,” Abraxas scooted closer to Avery, a hand latching onto the smaller boy’s shoulder, “He spent hours in the library, missed breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He wouldn’t tell us where he was going or what he was doing for periods of time, and then, all of the sudden Mudbloods started vanishing, dropping like flies? Don’t you get it?” Abraxas searched Avery’s eyes, hoping for realization to dawn on him.

The interest of the Black brothers piqued at the conversation.

“Look, Malfoy, seriously, you’re going loony. That wasn’t Riddle and you bloody know it, so stop. You really need to reel back a little and consider that maybe you’re the one obsessing over the bird,” Avery spoke in hushed tones, “Drop the subject, you never know who is listening here.” His eyes held a warning to Abraxas.

Abraxas straightened, his eyes appraising Avery.

“Alright. Lovely chat with you lads. I’m going to catch up on a little, bloody studying in the library.” Progressively, the sentence formed into a mumble under his breath. He stood, keen on leaving the wreck of a common room.

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The library door creaked as it swung on its hinges, allowing a single occupant to enter. A soft sigh left Hermione as she passed the threshold, grateful for the lack of students. She gave the librarian a small wave as she passed by. The large windows of the library displayed the clouds covering the sun, allowing minimal sunlight in. Immediately, Hermione wandered to the nearest aisle of books.

Today called for a plan; a plan that involved avoiding literally everyone and everything; at least until later tonight when she could corner Slughorn. Most students avoided the library on Sunday in favor of procrastination. What harm could a bunch of books do anyway?

She paced down the aisle, scanning the wall of books. Just as an interesting title appeared to her, a tap came to her shoulder.

“We need to talk.” A masculine voice pierced the air.

A frustrated smile appeared on Hermione’s face. Naturally, her plans would be disturbed by a man who knows nothing of boundaries.

“If it’s about punching you in the face, I’m sort of sorry, but also not really.” Hermione said.

“What? No, I was going to talk about you and Tom.” Abraxas said.

“What do you mean, ‘me and Tom’? There is no ‘me and Tom’, there is singular me, then singular Riddle. Two separate entities.”

“Hermione,” a hand settled on her shoulder, “I know there’s something going-”

“There is nothing,” she forcefully removed the hand, “between me and him. I’m honestly perturbed you would imagine so.” Hermione walked around the shelf in favor of looking at the other side of it.

“Hermione, I’m, well, worried.” He spoke from the other side of the shelf.

“No need to be.”

“Hermione.” Abraxas opened a gap between books, expanding the opening to look at the witch.

“Malfoy.”

“Must you insist on my last name? I’m trying to help you.”

“We’ve known each other for roughly a week,” her hand skimmed the spines of the tomes, “And I already know Riddle is up to no good.”

“Okay, perhaps you already do know, but I’m not certain you understand the severity of the situation.”

“Oh, do tell.” She said with indifference.

“I’m being serious. He’s formulating something, I can feel it-”

“Malfoy, I appreciate the concern, but what do you mean you can ‘feel it’?”

“Hermione, I’ve been,” Abraxas search for the right word, “acquaintances with Tom for quite some time. He’s shared some peculiar notions of his. He gets easily obsessed with things. I’m worried that he’s getting obsessed with you and it could end poorly-”

“I am capable of handling him myself. I already know what he’s capable of.”
He turned the corner of the book shelf, “Hermione, can you just take this seriously?”

Hermione picked a book out, wrapping her fingers around the binding to pull it out,

“As much as I detest Riddle and whatever he thinks he can pull over me, I’m a bit preoccupied by things.” She had her face toward him, measuring the frustration on his features.

“Really, with what?”

“Well, I was about to spend my day in the library, reading this great treasur-” Her face fell as she glanced at the book.

“Oh, and what book would that be?” His hand reached and grabbed the book from her.

Hysterical laughter started bubbling in Hermione’s throat.

“Isn’t this the book from-”

“Yes, yes it is and I’m going completely nuts! This day is awful!”

“How peculiar. Tracking charm perhaps? Reappears when you throw it away?”

Hermione clasped her hands together, “Sounds like something that my luck would bring me today.”

“Any ideas who could have given it to you?”

“Well, let’s ponder, shall we?” she pretended to think for a moment, “My day has been practically hell, and we both know someone who loves to torment me occasionally.”

“I asked Riddle about this earlier.”

“Did he confess to cursing me to have the worst day ever?”

“The opposite, actually,” His eyebrows furrowed, “He commented on how strange the book was. I mean, this is most definitely something he would do-”

“Drive me into insanity all because I say no to him to his ridiculous requests? I would agree, something he would do”

“He didn’t straight out tell me that it was him. I found it odd that he commented on it.”

“Let me understand clearly. You come here, telling me Riddle is dangerous for the upteenth time, and now you’re defending him?” Hermione placed the book back onto the shelf and went to the exit.

“Hermione, where are you going?” Abraxas started pursuing her.

“To confront the egotistical sadist for ruining my day for no good reason.”

“What about the book?”

“Leave it, I don’t want it in my sight!” The library door slammed shut, causing the librarian to glower at it.

“I really don’t think that’s how that works…” Abraxas trailed off to himself and set a slow pace toward the door.
Hermione marched down the stone halls of the Hogwarts dungeons. Faces passed, marveling at the ferocity in her steps.

“Hermione, hold on, you’re faster than I thought!” an exhausted Abraxas said.

“Too busy.”

“Hermione, watch out!”

Hermione turned around, ready to lash out at Abraxas’s incessant antics, just as she got a face full of book.

“My bad, lass!” a Scottish accent rung out, the owner being some Ravenclaw third-year.

“Sorry!” his friend replied. He was on the other side of her; it seemed she walked through a game of catch.

She picked up the book, intending on returning it to the boys until she realized the familiarity of the object.

“Of course!” she yelled.

“Hermione, I was trying to tell you that leaving the book probably wouldn’t work.” Abraxas said as he caught up with her. He paused between words, catching his breath.

“You think Riddle is in the common room?”

“There’s a chance. He usually sits in the corner on Sundays, alone.”

“Perfect, I’m about to ruin his day.” She announced as she sped toward the set of stones hiding the entrance.

“Hermione, wait!” and their chase started again.

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The dim green light barely reached the corner he sat in.

All the better, in his opinion. Made it difficult to discern his figure, it was practically as if he was not there at all. It gave his peers the false confidence that no one was listening to their conversations.

No one bothered him when he was in that corner, seated upon a lavish arm chair he claimed as his own. It was akin to a throne. His throne.

He relaxed into the cushion the chair offered, watching the swarm of students socializing; it was a hobby of his.

“What exactly do you think you’re doing here?” Accusation was evident in the witch’s tone; he didn’t even need to look to know who it was. No one else talked to him in the manner she did.

“Relaxing. At least, until you appeared.” Tom turned and offered a charming grin.

“How unfortunate for you that I felt the need to confront the qualms I have with you.”

“Which ones? You’ll need be a bit more specific.”
“Oh, I don’t know, let’s start with how you cursed me.”

“I tend to bewitch the ladies, but not in that manner. I’m afraid I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Riddle, don’t feign ignorance. I know you sent this horrid book.” Hermione slapped the book down, the leather coming in contact with a small pedestal beside him.

“Oh, yes, that book. Curious is it not?” A finger of Tom’s ghosted the cover.

“Annoying is what I prefer to call it.” The corner of Tom’s mouth twitched at the frustration she displayed.

“Come join me, Hermione.” He gestured to a seat she could pull over.

“No, thank you.”

“Perhaps I could offer some information on the book,” His head turned to the side, “If you were to sit with me, that is.”

Tonguing her cheek and tapping her foot, Hermione thought for a moment. With a deep sigh she uncrossed her arms and reluctantly pulled a chair from a nearby table.

“Hermione.” He scolded her like a child.

“What?” she spat.

“How am I supposed to talk to you if you’re so far away? I can hardly hear you over the chatter of the room as is.”

With an indifferent look, Hermione picked her chair up and situated it closer.

“Are you content now?” She asked with attitude.

“Quite.”

“Alright, so, go on, tell me why you decided to plague my day.” Hermione said.

“Are you certain I’m the one who ruined your day?” Tom questioned.

“Are you trying to play mind games with me?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” An innocent facade masked the victory he relished in at her agitated form.

“If you’re not going to tell me why, at least tell me how to stop it.”

“I quite enjoy seeing your reaction to the situation. Your frustration is,” He paused, he reverted back to his apathetic, yet observant personality, “Intriguing. Why would I want it to stop?”

“Riddle.” Hermione grumbled.

“Do you truly want it to stop? Perhaps we could make an exchange of sorts.”

“What sort of exchange?” Hermione asked hesitantly.

Tom uncrossed then crossed his legs again, “Consider me insatiably curious, Dumbledore,” his tone
was serious, “But I just can’t seem to find any information about you.”

“So, if I tell you about myself, you’ll tell me how to get rid of the book?” Hermione looked the teenage wizard up and down.

“Something along those lines. However, I want my specific questions answered.” Tom had to control himself from smiling; he was told that if he pulled a stunt like this he could finally get the answers he desired so much, but he did not imagine it being this simple.

“Of course.” Hermione let out a hysterical giggle as she brushed away curls that had stuck to her face. All of the running earlier had caused perspiration.

“Glad we could agree on a deal,” Tom’s stare practically bored holes into Hermione, “Let’s start with how do you know about my diary?”

“Oh,” came from Hermione, “well, you see.” Hermione tried buying herself time. Tom gave her an unimpressed and expectant glance.

“When I went into the dorm to cast the sneezing charm.” She stammered.

“Go on,” Riddle insisted, “Did you fancy a rummage through my items? Revoke my right to privacy?” His elbows were planted on his knees as he held eye contact with her.

“I mean,” Hermione mentally plead for an excuse, “I suppose you could call it-”

“I knew it. Poor Malfoy thinks you’re such an angel.” He reclined back. He looked satisfied with himself.

“Well, Malfoy, just like you, knows nothing about me.” She replied.

“How right you are.” Sickeningly sanguine was a part of his persona.

“So, how do I get rid of the book?” Hermione urgently inquired.

“No idea.”

“What?” she deadpanned.

“I said, no idea.”

“No, I heard you,” she reassured, “Just don’t quite understand what you mean.”

The common room’s volume increased.

“It means I haven’t the faintest idea on how to get rid of it.”

Hermione could hear the blood rushing through her, her anger quick to rise.

“I’m sorry, I must be wrong, but I thought we had a deal.” Hermione quickly rose from her chair.

“I said ‘something along those lines’, when we made our deal. I answered to the best of my ability.” Tom stated simply.

Hermione glared at him. Maneuvering a hand through her bag, she felt her wand. As she brandished it and turned toward Tom, she was met with the tip of the stark white of his own wand.
“Bold little witch. I applaud the effort.” Tom said.

Hermione grabbed the book from the pedestal, “If you won’t help me then I’ll find someone else who will.” She marched out of the common room.

Fate’s antics were getting old, real quick.
Chapter Summary

Friends reunite, questions are answered, but naturally not the one's Hermione wants to be answered. Fate loves roller coasters and drags Hermione with.

Chapter Notes

NSFW content in this chapter, you thirsty individuals. This chapter ended up being over 8000 words, so woot woot. Hope you people enjoy, keep the feedback coming because it truly does help guide the story. Thank you for reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dark clouds inhabited the sky. The siege of coverage the clouds brought hid the sun away from the castle’s windows, causing the dim light of candles to flicker in the halls. Hermione shivered as she slid down the cold stone wall of an abandoned corridor. She exuded a deep sigh, contemplating what to do with the book.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen a Slytherin encompass so much emotion in one sitting.” A feminine voice broke Hermione’s trance.

Hermione tilted her head up to see a familiar Head Girl.

“Minerva! What are you doing out of the hospital wing?” Hermione wondered in astonishment; not long ago had the Quidditch player been placed there.

“I healed, I have duties to attend to.” McGonagall stated with a stern brow raised, but a curl to her lips nonetheless.

“I suppose you do.” Hermione mumbled, again she looked at the book in her hand.

“Thank you again for the fudge, it was,” Minerva gave a sly smile, “scrumptious.”

“It was no problem at all. I apologize for not giving it in person, I thought sending it through an owl would provide a fun surprise in the morning at least.” Hermione said.

“Yes. Now, what has you so disgruntled?” Minerva crouched down to Hermione’s level, eyes peering over her glasses as she tried to look at the book.

“This,” Hermione held the black covered tome, “is something I received today.”

“Yes.” Minerva said, silently urging the other witch to continue.

“Riddle gave it to me. It follows me everywhere. I get rid of it, it comes back.” Hermione abruptly took out her wand, performing a vanishing spell.
“I mean, you just got rid of it just now with the spell—” Minerva was interrupted by a young girl approaching the witch duo,

“I’m sorry, Miss, I think you may have dropped this back there?” The girl presented the book to Hermione.

“I did, thank you.” Hermione turned to Minerva with a clear ‘I told you so’ expression.

“So,” Minerva tried organizing her thoughts, “Riddle sent you this book to annoy you?”

“Seems likely. However, I’m worried that’s not the only thing it does. Riddle isn’t one for boyish practical jokes…” A chill crept through Hermione despite how much she fought the ominous feeling scratching at her mind.

“I would agree. His friends are more practical jokers, though us prefects rarely catch them in the act…” Annoyance dripped from Minerva’s words.

“Strange thing is, it’s blank.” Hermione displayed the fact by flipping through the pages.

“I imagine he would want you to read something if he were to enchant a book in this manner,” Minerva grasped the book to inspect it, “Are you certain it’s blank?”

Hermione slapped her forehead, “I’m a fool.” She stood up and went to the nearest alcove with Minerva in tow.

“Never did it dawn on me to test if the writing was enchanted. Hopefully a revealing spell will help.” Hermione set the thin book down, opening it and pointing her wand.

“Um, Hermione.” Minerva rested a gentle hand on Hermione’s shoulder. Persevering, Hermione tried another spell when the first yielded nothing.

“Hermione.”

“Respectfully refrain, I’m certain one spell will work.”

“Unfortunately, it’s probably protected from these spells, Hermione…”

“I swear, Riddle wants me to go mad!” Hermione plopped onto the bench the alcove offered.

“Maybe that’s his entire purpose. Just to make you doubt your sanity.” Minerva sat beside Hermione.

“Well, it’s working.” Hermione ran her hands through her frizz, coaxing through the tangles.

“Only one way to know for sure. Let’s take the book to Professor Dumbledore. If anyone has answers on how to get it to go away or reveal its print, it’s him.”

Minerva grabbed Hermione with her left hand and picked the book up with the right.

“I really don’t want to be a bother, after all you just came from the infirmary.” Hermione said.

“Nonsense, this is borderline harassment of a student and I’m Head Girl. I won’t tolerate it.” Minerva reassured Hermione with a smile.

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“You don’t know how to disenchant it, Professor?” Minerva deadpanned at the Transfiguration Master.

“I’m afraid not, girls.” Albus Dumbledore circled around his desk.

The whirring of various intricate ornaments displayed throughout the room persisted in the background. The girls were too busy to admire the artifacts.

“I apologize for my disrespectful surprise, Sir, I just anticipated that you knew.” Minerva said, her eyes were casted down.

“I have the sneaky suspicion that only the person who enchanted the book can unravel it.” Professor Dumbledore’s ocean eyes narrowed at the book, wrinkles of concentration forming on his face.

“We apologize for interrupting your downtime, Sir.” Hermione said. Her voice shook slightly, amplifying the disappointment in the visit.

“Quite alright, my dears. I apologize for offering no solution.” The sparkles of the wizard’s robe twinkled under the candlelight.

“It’s no issue, Sir. We have a feeling we know who the culprit is, we just need to gather proof. Isn’t that right Hermione?” Minerva asked.

“Of course.”

“Well then,” Professor Dumbledore paced in his office, “Perhaps, Miss McGonagall, you could relax the rest of the evening. You’re still healing.”

“Right, of course. Thank you for the concern in my health, Professor.” Minerva gave a genuine smile. It was evident that the Professor was requesting she leave.

As Hermione was about to walk out with Minerva, “Stay, Miss Dumbledore.” stopped her.

The door shut behind Minerva, the thud shaking nearby trinkets.

“Who do you believe to be the perpetrator?”

“Riddle, Sir. Me and him had a conversation beforehand.”

“Oh, I see.” Professor Dumbledore took a seat in his chair, gesturing for Hermione to do the same.

“So you confronted him?” Albus unwrapped a piece of candy, popping the sweet into his mouth.

“Directly, yes.” Hermione said.

“How did that exchange pan out?”

“We made a deal of sorts. One that, now I see, was not worth it.”

“Intriguing, do go on. Spare no details.”

“We agreed that if I answered one of his questions, he would tell me the secret to get rid of this nuisance.” Hermione pointed to the book.

“Yes, yes, it is indeed a nuisance.” The Professor stroked his beard as he gazed at the book.
“He asked how I had known about a certain possession of his.”

“Oh, and what might have that been?” Curiosity caressed the Professor’s words.

Hermione thought for a moment, her reply delayed, “Privacy is a very important concept to Tom. I apologize for not wanting to revoke it from him further.”

The wizard’s auburn eyebrows raised, his eyes twinkled, and his half-moon glasses glinted.

“That’s rather respectful of you. When did Mr. Riddle earn this newfound generosity in your heart?”

“I, I,” Hermione sucked in a breath, “I have no idea, Sir. Call it the basic humanity within me for now.”

Acknowledgement and some other emotion mixed together to form the expression that grossed the wizard’s face.

“I assume you lied to him. Afterall, we cannot have him knowing your true roots.”

(Of course, Professor.)

“I apologize for the strain you endure here.” The suddenly sympathetic voice of Dumbledore spoke.

“It’s worth it if it yields a beneficial outcome.” Hermione thought back to her friends. A month or two stranded in the 1940’s, wasn’t too horrid. Or at least, she hoped.

“Brave and selfless. I understand why you were chosen.” Albus Dumbledore commented.

“Sir, I have a question.” Hermione stated.

“Go on, dear.”

“In a hypothetical scenario, if someone were to find out that I am not as I appear to be, what would happen?”

“Well, let us hope that stays hypothetical.” The Professor gave an ominous grin.

“What should I do in that case?” Hermione pressed on.

A drawn out sigh escaped the wizard, “In the case of your true blood and identity leaking out to the world, a plethora of things could occur. You could be questioned by the Ministry. Rumors of myself would probably begin.” He continued to think aloud, “If that were to occur, immediately report to me. We can weld a solution together.”

Hermione nodded, her curls bouncing with the movement.

“That being said,” he held a single finger up, “I doubt any sort of thing would occur. Time mends itself, it protects this homeostasis it wields. Afterall, you are from the future and have never heard of the name ‘Hermione Dumbledore’, so we must have managed a way around any information leaking.”

Stress melted off of Hermione in waves, “Thank you, Professor, that relieves me a great load of worry.”

“Naturally, Miss Dumbledore. Good luck in your book ridding related endeavors.” A cheeky grin graced the man’s worn features.
Hours passed. She would leave the book resting someplace, hoping for it to remain there. No matter what she tried, however, it came back, haunting her with its monotonous pages and foreboding existence.

She sat in the library, at a table secluded in one of the corners. Books, with actual words that she could see, did nothing to comfort her. The piles were monolithic, covering the surface of the table. Searching for any sort of information on enchantments regarding the book revealed nothing helpful.

Outside, a low rumble began. Clouds accumulated, with them frigid rain fell. Darkness settled over the castle. Strikes of lightning flashed, illuminating the empty halls of Hogwarts.

Every once in awhile, a bolt would land relatively close to the window beside Hermione. The thunder rolled in, shaking the fortress in a way one could barely notice. Except Hermione noticed, every single time it happened, because today was already out to get her. Why wouldn’t lightning strike her? Seemed like a likely chance considering the events that transpired earlier.

Glancing toward a grandfather clock nearby, Hermione noticed dinner was about to begin. Magically forcing the books back to their origins, Hermione purposefully left the small, leatherbound book on the table.

She left the library and headed toward the Great Hall.

“Well, would you look at that. Nott finally graced us with an appearance.” Malfoy said jokingly.

The Irish boy walked to his spot on the bench, hair tousled as if he had just woken up.

“It’s rare to get a nice sleep with you people as my roommates.” Nott grumbled as he sat down.

“It’s rare to have a nice existence when you are breathing.” Avery said while still chewing his food.

A swift, invisible knock was delivered to the side of Avery’s head, protests flowed from the victim. The chatter of other students drowned out the complaints.

“Has anyone seen Hermione? I saw her in the library today, but after that, she vanished.” Abraxas inquired.

“I had a short chat with her midday.” Tom mentioned.

“Oh, about what?” Abraxas asked. He had already known that she went to confront him, he just wants to know what was said.

“We had an exchange of sorts.”

“How incredibly vague of you.” Malfoy replied.

“What can I say, I don’t possess the silver tongue that you do, Abraxas.”

Malfoy’s fork slipped as he accidentally delivered too much force through it, he couldn’t help the incident. He lost himself in the irony of Tom’s words.

The group consumed their food in silence. Several more students arrived, in that mass of students was Hermione.
“My apologies for arriving late.” Hermione set her bag beside her on the bench, on the other side of Nott.

“At least you’re not in pajamas like Nott.” Avery said.

Nott deadpanned at him for a few seconds then resumed his dinner.

“Let us not forget the time she arrived at Hogwarts in her pajamas.” Abraxas joked.

“Please, let us do forget about that. She looked atrocious.” Avery insulted.

Another, invisible slap upside Avery’s head occurred. His complaints transformed into low grumbles as he rubbed the sore spot on his head. Nott nodded in approvement.

“I’m sorry I chose not to wear a three-piece suit on a Sunday.” Nott commented then turned to Hermione, “How was your afternoon, Hermione?”

“Dreadful.”

“Still have the book?” Malfoy asked.

“Let’s take a look.” Hermione opened her satchel, where she pulled the dark book out. “Yes, it is here even though I left it on the library table.” She let the book fall to the table.

“How unfortunate.” Tom commented.

“Yes, how unfortunate indeed.” Hermione glared at Tom.

“Well, if you’ll excuse me, I have some business to attend to.” Tom stood from his seat.

“Where are you going?” Abraxas wondered.

“How like you to invade one’s private matters, Malfoy.” Tom said.

Malfoy scoffed as Tom’s svelte figure exited the hall.

“Any idea what he’s up to?” Avery asked in a concerned voice.

“Probably figuring out how to ruin my night further.” Hermione nonchalantly added. She poked at her food with utensils, appetite not apparent.

“Say, Hermione, I know it’s far away, but what do you plan on doing for Christmas break?” Malfoy’s eyes settled on the girl.

“Well,” Hermione paused, thinking when she would be leaving, “I-”

“I was going to offer an invitation to visit my manor over break.”

“Actually, I had plans with my uncle, I’m sorry.” It was not a complete lie.

“I see, family is indeed important.” Abraxas drank to that. Granted, he only drank pumpkin juice at that moment.

“Does Riddle plan on staying here again?” Avery asked.

“Of course, he always does.” Malfoy answered.
“Why is that? I wouldn’t want to be cooped up here all holiday.” Nott remarked.

Malfoy had a knowing look on his face, but said, “Parents and him are disagreeable at times. He also enjoys the unlimited access to the library he has during holiday.”

A quiet agreement came from Avery.

“I see. Can’t relate.” Nott said as he swallowed more food.

“I think I should get going soon.” Hermione said as she packed away the cursed book.

“You ate rather quickly. Are you alright?” Malfoy’s brows flexed in worry.

“Yes, of course-”

“She’s not much of a lady, of course she eats fast-” Avery was cut off by the pulsing throb on the side of his head, “Really! Is that necessary!”

“See you guys later.” Hermione said before she left the table.

“I wonder where she’s off to.” Malfoy said.

“I wonder if she and Tom are meeting up or something.” Avery said.

“Why would you think that?” Malfoy questioned, he seemed appalled at the notion.

“I don’t know, you’re the one saying he’s getting obsessed with her. Maybe, you know, they’re, you know.” Avery made an obscene gesture.

“What Avery means to say is he wonders if they’re snogging, or worse.” Nott said.

“Hermione is appalled by his general existence. They’re not doing that.”

“Maybe it’s some weird sexual tension thing, I don’t know, Riddle is weird about these things. Would you be surprised if a hate relationship is how he gets, you know, off?” Avery wondered.

“Avery, I have heard so many obscenities uttered from your mouth, why are you stuttering.” Malfoy gave Avery an incredulous look.

“I don’t like thinking about Riddle like this! It’s gross and absurd! Can you blame me?” Avery practically shouted, beckoning the attention of bystanders.

Realising the attention focused on him, Avery hid in his arms in fear of people noting the growing blush on his face.

“Well, even if they were to meet up, I guarantee they aren’t doing anything scandalous.” Abraxas’s words exuded confidence. He used his handkerchief to wipe his mouth.

“Hm. Wouldn’t be too sure. Both of them have odd tempers and have probably never been laid.” Nott commented.

“Honestly, is there anyone in this room that doesn’t think they’re secretly getting it on!” Malfoy pounded his fist against the table, the utensils and glassware shaking in the quake.
Hermione trekked all the way through the dungeons, keen on finding Slughorn and persuading him to borrow some ingredients. Her hand fumbled with a crumpled piece of parchment. It was the same scrap Aion had given her with a list of items.

The door leading to his classroom was ajar, light escaping through the crack. As she opened it, the door creaked on its hinges. She did not expect Professor Slughorn to be present yet, afterall dinner was still going on. However, she also did not anticipate a certain teenage Dark Lord.

“Fancy meeting you here, Hermione.” Tom greeted.

He was reclining against Professor Slughorn’s teaching podium. He wore semi-casual clothing, a dress shirt with his jumper over it, though there was the absence of his tie. His sleeves were rolled up to the elbow. Adorning him was the uniform slacks given to all male students and formal shoes, and naturally, the putrid golden onyx ring that juxtaposed his handsome complexion. Everything about him screamed casualty in a subtle manner.

“Of course, why would I imagine this being headache free.” Hermione mumbled to herself. Next time she saw Aion, she would live up to her atlatl threat.

“So, why have you ventured to good ole’ Sluggy’s office at this hour?” Tom questioned. His hands idly played with a few vials on the podium. His eyes followed the enclosed liquid’s swishing movement.

“I require a favor of him.”

“What a coincidence, I happen to as well.”

“And what might your favor be?” Hermione crossed her arms. She chose to relax against the stonewall of the classroom, far away from Riddle.

“Just in the need of some potion supplies.” Ambiguity and vagueness were popular qualities of Tom’s diction.

“What a coincidence, I happen to be in need of such as well.” Hermione said.

From across the room, it was difficult to tell, but she could have sworn his lips formed a genuine smile. Just the light playing tricks, she supposed.

The door creaked open, revealing a jubilant large wizard.

“Ohoh, what do we have here? Two of my brightest students?” Professor Slughorn passed the threshold of the door, gut first then the rest followed.

“Hello, Professor.” the students said in unison. They shared a quick glance.

“Now, what brings you pair here? I do apologize for causing you to wait, had to finish dinner.” The man laughed heartily, his hand rubbing his stomach as he did so. Food crumbs littered the walrusesque mustache above his lip.

“I was going to ask a favor of you.” The two said in unison again. Another shared glance filled with subtle annoyance.

“Oh?” Professor Slughorn seemed slightly unnerved, a bead of sweat falling down his forehead. A quick wipe with his sleeve erased the perspiration.
“I’m working on a project, outside of class. It relates to a potion I’m trying to craft, but I realized I had none of the ingredients on hand.” Hermione spoke up.

“Similar to her, I also was going to ask for some supplies. I apologize if I’m inconveniencing you at all, Professor.” Tom showed his charming Prefect facade. Slughorn believed it.

“How ambitious of both of you! Naturally, you two are Slytherins.” The jubilant man joked. The students faked a laugh to appease him.

“Come now, let me see what you need.” He raised a beckoning hand as he waddled to the potions pantry.

Tom and Hermione handed their parchment over to Slughorn. Thick, bushy brows furrowed in concentration as he scanned the contents.

“How amusing! If you two combine your lists together, the potion would result in poison,” Slughorn turned to unlock the door, then paused, “You two aren’t trying to make a poison together, right?”

The two paled, not knowing exactly how to answer.

“Just joking! You two are my brightest pupils, with futures so great it’s astonishing! Good luck in your revolutionary potion work.” Slughorn finished unlocking the door, presenting all of the supplies to the duo.

“If you need me, I’ll be in my office,” A loud, roll of thunder clapped, “Nasty bit of weather we have.” The Potion master mumbled as he waddled off to his office. “Take as long as you two need in there! It’s a great place for a deal of privacy!” He said from beyond the door.

Hermione cleared her throat at the implication.

“I suppose we just lock up when we’re finished?” Hermione asked. Tom simply nodded and headed into the small closet.

Hermione followed, making sure the door stayed open. Hermione searched the shelves for the peculiar items she needed to find.

“Just use a summoning spell.” Tom commented. A small bottle flew into his hand, no incantation needed.

“Don’t tell me what to do.” Hermione replied, attitude laced in the syllables.

“So be it then.” Tom ripped the parchment from her hand, reading the list.

“Hey! I was kind of using that.” Hermione tried to grab it back, but his height towered over her.

“And I’m kind of helping you now so deal with it. Stop trying to climb on me, you’re going to break something.” Tom said, items flying to his hand. He arranged them into to separate piles on a clear space of shelf.

Hermione huffed, not believing the way he treated her as if she were a child.

Thunder clapped again, with lightning trailing behind it. Lightning struck nearby, causing the castle to jostle slightly. The vials on the shelves shook, and the door swung close.

“Fantastic.” Hermione said as she went to reopen the door.
Once, twice, she jostled the handle.

She repeated the process.

“Of course.” Hermione accepted her fate.

“Stand back.” Tom said as he got his wand out and pointed to the lock. He tried the handle only for it to remain locked. Brief disbelief riddled his face.

With a sigh, he went back to gathering potion ingredients.

“That’s it? That’s all you’re going to do then you’re going to just go back to gathering?” Hermione looked at Tom with confusion.

“Yes.”

“We are trapped in a closet and you are completely content with that?”

“I never said that.”

“It seems like it.”

“Bold of you to assume I want to be stuck here with you.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Hermione asked boldly.

“We don’t like each other. You make that rather clear. Why would I want to be in the company of someone who detests me?” Tom rhetorically asked.

“Maybe if you didn’t make a strange book follow me around all day, you would be a bit more tolerable.”

“Oh, yes, and all of the other tragic things you blame on me.” Tom mentioned sardonically.

“Perhaps if you didn’t lie about not doing them, I could embrace you a bit more.” Hermione slumped against the door.

“I never lied.”

“Yes, you clearly did, this afternoon-”

“I,” Tom snapped to her, “Never lied. Believe me on this.”

“Okay, uh-huh, I’ll humor you for a moment. Then who gave me the book, Tom?”

The thunder came in waves, reverberating against the structure of Hogwarts.

“I haven’t the faintest clue.”

Hermione chuckled hysterically, “You just proved my point! You say you don’t know because you know you’re the one who did it. Malfoy told me that he asked you this morning-” A soft thud near Hermione’s feet caused her to stop.

“What’s this?” Hermione picked up the rectangular package. It had brown, paper wrapping concealing itself. Twine in a bow held it together.

“Open it and maybe you’ll see the truth.”
Hesitantly, Hermione gripped the twine between two fingers, pulling at the knot. The bow dissipated. Next, she grabbed at the wrapping, tearing the paper to reveal a dark blue cover.

“Riddle, what is this?”

“A book, a gift.” Tom replied.

Hermione pulled the book from the brown paper, noting the dilapidating condition of it.

“*The Odyssey*?” Hermione inspected the book, confused as to why he gave it to her.

“Yes.” Tom said. Hermione could see the way his eyes glanced over to her, even if he pretended to search for potion items.

“Why?”

“None of the other fools I know are willing to read Muggle works. I thought, since you’re willing to educate yourself on it, then I might as well have someone to talk to about it. And you’re the only one who really knows of my tastes in literature, so, I got you it.”

“Riddle…” Hermione stood up, steadying herself on a shelf.

“I didn’t give you that book,” he pointed to the book in her bag, “because I planned on giving you that book.” he pointed to the book in her hands.

“Riddle, I’m sorr-”

“Oh, are you about to apologize for assuming all I want to do is ruin your life? Honestly, Hermione, I have more productive things to do.”

Hermione giggled lightly.

“Thank you for the gift. I, really didn’t expect it.”

“Consider it a sign that I don’t completely abhor you.” Tom stated.

“I was honestly about to bring out the black book and start slapping you with it if you hadn’t thrown this at me.” She lifted her new, and much more pleasant, gift.

“Yes, you do tend to perform barbaric acts.”

“Don’t ruin it, I still have it in my bag.” Realization struck her features, “My bag!”

“Your bag?” Tom glanced down to see Hermione crouched over her satchel.

“Yes, there’s bound to be something in here that may help us get out.” Hermione reached shoulder deep in her bag.

Tom’s eyes widened and forehead wrinkled, “Excuse me?”

“I have an extension charm on it.” Hermione explained as she rummaged through the bag.

Tom crouched down next to her. Even when kneeling, his height surpassed hers easily. He shoved his own arm down into the depths of the bag.

“What kind of things do you even keep in here?”
“Helpful items.”

Tom pulled out a little stuffed mouse, “Such as cat toys?”

Hermione yanked the toy from him, dropping it back into the abyss, “Yes, it belongs to my cat.”

“You have a cat.”

“Yes.”

“I can’t see that. You seem more like a dog person.” Tom pulled his arm out and leaned his head against a low shelf.

“Well, now you know. And have been corrected.”

“I’m more of a snake person, you see.”

“How does that not surprise me?” Hermione smiled as she searched.

“At the orphanage, I used to startle other children when I would bring them in. Their terror was amusing.”

“Good job on traumatizing local children, Riddle.”

“What can I say, it’s a hobby.” The two chortled in amusement, but silence fell on them like a heavy veil.

The two sat in the wavering light that a candle had to offer. Rain pattered outside, creating a soothing atmosphere for the pair.

“Being trapped here vaguely reminds me of Potions class last week.” Tom mentioned.

“Oh? What about it?”

“Just I suppose the room itself. Speaking of which, what do you smell in Amortentia?”

“That, is a rather sudden question. And none of your business.” Hermione said. She long abandoned the task of searching the well of a satchel.

“I’m simply curious.”

“What did you smell?” Hermione turned the question on him.

“How about we both tell each other one thing we smelled and take turns.”

The entire scenario reminded Hermione of a cheesy romance.


“I suppose that’s fair since I suggested it.” He paused for a moment, “I smelled gold and iron in it.”

“Figures. Let me guess, is iron the blood of your enemy?” Hermione jested, then realized who she was talking with. Her inquiry was not satisfied. “Freshly mown grass.”

Tom’s features twisted under the poor light, scrutinizing Hermione.

“You find freshly mown grass to be attractive?”
“Hush, it’s your turn again.”

“I smelled the elements. It’s a strange, yet intoxicating concoction of all of them.”

“You find dirt attractive?” Hermione mocked.

“Yes, yes, I suppose that is quite similar to freshly mown grass.”

“Fresh parchment.” Hermione said. Tom seemed to think for a moment.

“Good, got it, your dream guy is made of paper and knows how to cut grass.”

A playful smack was delivered to his chest.

“No need to be ashamed in your desires, Hermione, I too can see the appeal in a paper person who can cut grass.” He continued to mock.

“Just say what else you smelled, you dolt.”

“Lavender.” He said it with such tenacity, such purpose. His eyes bored into hers.

“The only normal one thus so far.”

He slid closer to her. The wavering light formed shadows on the wizard’s face, accentuating his sharp attributes.

“Woodsy scents and-”

“And?” he questioned as he got closer.

“Mint.” She finished breathily.

“Tell me, Hermione. Can you smell those right now?” Tom craned his neck to her level.

“I don’t know what you mean, Riddle-”

“Yes, you do, you’re a clever little witch. Can you smell the mint when I get close, can you feel the fan of my breath when I’m near?” He was practically on top of her.

Hermione’s knees were drawn to her chest. He had both arms on either side of her, caging her in like prey. She had no choice but to stare into the abyss of his eyes. The void consumed her, suffocated her, pulled her into an intoxicating trance that begged her to just, let go. Enjoy the trip down, fall into an overwhelming bliss. Experience the lull that would transpire and fulfill her every whim. The temptation was there, coaxing her, caressing her mind with delectable promises.

“Yes.” she breathed out.

“You know what I smell when I’m close to you?” he lifted a hand that seeked refuge in her curls, “Those silly little lavender stems you had in your hair one day. It’s utterly enthralling.”

“Is that so?” Hermione’s chest heaved, the need for air increasing with his proximity.

“Of course it is, darling. Just give in and we can enjoy this together.” He spoke in hushed tones, emphasizing the intimacy they shared.

“Tom…’
“Do you feel that Hermione?” Tom paused, eyes looking around as if he was tracking some invisible force. Orange flares reflected off his inky hair.

“Feel what?” Hermione asked cautiously.

“It’s akin to static. The electricity ghosting over your skin,” A hand treaded over the gooseflesh present on Hermione, “That is the most precious feeling of all.”

“What is it?” Hermione was frightful of the answer, but anticipation and an insatiable curiosity provoked her to ask.

“That, my dear, is the melding of two people’s magic.” His voice was low, almost as low as the rumble of thunder in the distance, “Your magic and mine blend perfectly together, can’t you feel the lapping of mine at yours? Give way to your desires, Hermione, let go, relax, I’ll take care of you.”

She wanted to let go, relax, and believe him. His presence was consuming, mint and woody scents occupied her nostrils, his eyes captivated her, and the feel of his fingers massaging her scalp bewitched her.

She desperately reached for the rope dignity provided, but the end was charred, already burning in the wretched and damning flames of desire.

A sudden knock came to the door.

“Is everything alright in there? It’s been awhile. Remember, I’m still a faculty member that doesn’t promote the idea of students using private regions to mingle. Or at least remember that when or if ever asked.” Professor Slughorn spoke from the other side of the door.

Tom let his head slam into the wood.

“Don’t fret, Professor, we just got locked in here and no spell seemed to work.” Tom spoke.

Tom got up and dusted himself off. He offered a hand to Hermione, who was still overwhelmed by the previous experience. She took the hand and grabbed her things from the floor and piled potion ingredients into her bag.

“Merlin’s Beard, I should have warned you two about that.” A jostling of the handle from the other side could be heard. The door swung open, creaking on its hinges. “My apologies, we keep it that way so we can catch anyone who tries to sneak in unsupervised.” The chubby man offered a joyace expression.

“Completely understandable, Professor. Thank you again for allowing me the privilege of borrowing items.” Tom spoke calmly. A hardly noticeable twitch in his eye formed though, displaying his dismay at being stopped.

“Yes, thank you, Professor.” Hermione said meekly.

“Are you alright, Hermione? You look a tad flushed.” Slughorn pointed to his own cheeks to explain.

“Oh, yes, I’m alright. Just warm in the closet was all.” Hermione thought of an excuse.

“Uh-huh, I see.” Slughorn gave a sly smile, and a pat to Tom’s back, “Nicely done, my boy.” He congratulated Tom quietly.
“I have no idea what you’re on about.”

“Keep your secrets then, my boy.” He winked at the teenage wizard.

Tom and Hermione were already dreading the inevitable gossip bound to spread among the faculty.

“Right, well, I’ll be on my way then. I have prefect duties tonight.” Tom said as he left the room.

“It’s late, would you like an escort back to the common room, Miss Dumbledore?” the bounce of his mustache emphasized every syllable as Professor Slughorn talked.

“No, thank you for the offer. I’ll be fine on my own.” Hermione said as she exited the classroom. The door shut behind her, causing a deafening echo within the dungeon corridor.

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He walked fast. His mind was racing with thoughts, each contradicting one another. Tom was on his way to his dorm to grab his badge and drop off the potion supplies. Some point during the week he would meet with Aion and give him the supplies he asked for. Tom was never one to back away from his word and they had made a deal.

Everything was going according to plan. He made up for lost time at Hogsmeade. He finally was able to charm the enigmatic witch. If Slughorn hadn’t interrupted, he could have probably sealed the deal. Everything was going just as Aion had said it would; charm the girl, coax her secrets from her, and reap the gains. He just had to keep a flirtatious facade on around her and she would bend, they always did.

And he needed her malleable to extract what he wanted.

So why did he get nervous? He felt doubt during their interaction, a fear of rejection almost.

She was just a strange individual, that must have been it. She’s not like the others. She hides behind a foggy glass, peering out into the world that does not know any wiser.

How he longed for the security of knowing every miniscule detail about her.

In due time, in due time, he had to reassure himself frequently.

She’s a vast source of knowledge, according to Aion. A gold mine waiting to be unearthed. She has things even Aion could not offer him.

Charm the girl, learn from her, then that is one step closer to being the most powerful wizard of all time. Finally, he would be able to prove he is the best wizard and it would be irrefutable. He relished in the thought of that day.

He said the password and the wall moved, allowing his form to slither into the common room.

“Hi, Tom!” A girlish voice announced from across the common room. It was Walburga Black.

He faked congeniality in the form of a smile; the perfect amount of acknowledgement that required minimal effort. It satisfied the witch.

Quickly he waded through the students of the common room. The loose waves on his head bounced
as he jogged down the steps to the boy’s dormitories. Several doors were closed on either side of the hall.

“Salutations, Riddle.” Malfoy said from his bed. He was laying on his stomach, brush in hand working on the wet strands of blonde hair that laid on his shoulders.

No words left Tom’s mouth.

“Riddle, are you alright?” Avery’s head popped out from behind his curtains.

“Just running a tad late for prefect duties.” Tom said. He grabbed his cloak and pulled it on. A wipe to his badge with his sleeve ensured the pristine shine of it.

“So where did you go after supper?” Abraxas inquired as he sat up.

Tom paused. He turned and looked directly at Abraxas.

“I was with Hermione.”

Avery’s eyes went wide as he shared a look with Abraxas. The small boy ducked back behind the curtains of his canopy.

“Ruining her day, were you?” Abraxas’s words were strung together by vindictivity.

“Go ask her yourself. I think she quite enjoyed the alone time we shared in the potion closet.” A sinister smile twisted the muscles of Tom’s mouth.

Abraxas stood from his bed abruptly, a wet spot on the covers from his hair. He opened his mouth to argue, but Nott intervened.

“Look, both of you need to relax on the testosterone. I don’t know how you two can’t see it, but she doesn’t like either of you.” Nott emerged from his own bed, standing and stretching.

“Oh, shut up, Nott. You’re not a part of this.” Malfoy said.

“I think she quite likes me now, actually.” Tom fanned the flames.

Nott pointed a finger at Tom, “You’re late to your prefect patrol.” Nott then turned to Abraxas, “And your hair is sopping wet. Just use a drying charm. And stop arguing with Tom.” Nott retreated back to his plush cave after he delivered the advice.

“I suppose I’ll see you later, Malfoy.” Tom said on his way to the door, but he paused, “If I’m not back by midnight, come wait for me in the common room, Malfoy.” The door slammed behind Tom.

“I can’t just dry my hair with a charm, it takes away the shine.” Malfoy huffed, reluctantly pulling his wand out.

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Hermione’s feet shuffled along the abandoned halls. The common room was not far, but the journey seemed to last an eternity. The dungeons were similar to a labyrinth to Hermione: foreign and when you think you figured it out, it all seemingly shifts around. It did nothing to ease her rampant mind.

What in the ever-loving world just happened?

The future Dark Lord, aka the monster who would light Hermione’s dreams on fire and bask in the
ashes gave Hermione a book from the own kindness of his heart. But that’s not all! He also admitted
to being attracted to her and tried to persuade her into who knows what.

It left a fuzzy feeling in her head.

It was uncharacteristic of him.

It was uncharacteristic of her.

She told herself, particularly after her second year at Hogwarts, to not fall for someone based off their
looks. Lockhart was a gorgeous man, but an utter imbecile. After learning that, she would scold
herself for fawning over boys like her roommates had done.

She was no better now, though. She just almost did You-Know-What with You-Know-Who.

Mentally, she belittled herself for falling into the trap. He could never actually love her, it was just a
clever ploy.

But why would he get her the book?

Just to seal the act, that had to be it. The final nail in her coffin.

But she wouldn’t let it be. No, she had to show him, prove to him how strong she was. A force to be
reckoned with. The lioness would have to bring out her claws.

Plans formulated in her head. She walked through the Slytherin common room with confidence in
her strut.

“Hi, Hermione.” Druella greeted. She sat near the fireplace, the warm glow of the fire luring
Hermione in.

“Hello, Druella, is this spot taken?” Hermione motioned to the empty spot on the couch beside her.

“Not at all.” Drulla patted the leather.

Hermione sat down, the fabric of the couch squeaking beneath her. The flames of the fire roared and
flickered, soot piling at the base.

“So where have you been all evening?” Druella wondered, a strand of her hair intertwined in her
fingers.

“I had to run an errand with Slughorn.” It was better she left out the details.

“Oh? How did that excursion go?”

“Not the way I expected it to.” Hermione concluded.

Druella’s mouth opened in the intent of interrogating further.

“Hey! That was my spot!” Walburga Black stomped over to Hermione.

“I was told it was free.”

Betrayal flashed across Walburga’s face.

“Druella Rosier, how could you!”
A shrug was all Walburga received in condolences, “Just sit across from us, quit being a child.”

“Fine, but I’m going to complain the entire time.” Walburga grumbled.

The girls were already in their pajamas, heavy nightgowns protected their body from the harsh cold of the dank dungeons.

“Hermione, I’m not certain if you’d like to add to the conversation me and Walburga were having before, but you’re welcome to do so if you like.” Druella said.

“What were you two talking about before?”

“What Slytherin boys are suitable for marriage.”

“None of them.” Hermione quickly answered.

The girlish gossip was refreshing compared to the time she had to spend with the boys. It reminded her of Lavender and Pavarti. She never grew too close to any of her roommates, especially since Lavender became increasingly close to Ron before she left.

“What about Tom?” Walburga pouted, “You have no taste in men, Hermione.”

“I personally think Nott would be a decent choice. Perhaps even Abraxas.” Druella inspected her nails.

“Nott is the least annoying and most logical. Horrid sleeping habits.” Hermione announced.

“Say, Hermione, you’re rather close to the boys, what is Tom really like?” Walburga’s eyes sparkled with wonder.

A deep breath in, “Well,” Hermione exhaled, “He’s a boy.”

Druella bursted into laughter, the pitch just as high as her normal voice.

“Splendid observation.” Druella clapped her hands together.

“Thanks, didn’t know that.” Walburga rolled her eyes.

“He’s rather cold. Doesn’t talk often.” It was true.

“Unless you’re Hermione.” Druella commented.

“I suppose.”

“So what is he like with you, Hermione?” The tone shifted to judgement in Walburga.

“Still cold. Perhaps I could classify him as a bit maniacal.”

“Hm.” Walburga leered at Hermione, “Seems fake, but okay.”

“She’s just too blinded to see his faults.” Druella said offhandedly.

“Am not!” Walburga’s cheeks puffed and she crossed her arms.

“If I were not betrothed,” Druella let out a wistful sigh, “I wouldn’t mind Abraxas’s trust fund.”

Hermione choked on air, expecting to hear something romantic.
“Can you blame me? He’s the richest out of the tolerable boys. Nott, is the most personable one though.”

“He reminds me of my cat. Ginger and sleeping constantly. Occasionally feisty.” Hermione said.

“You have a cat? Why isn’t it with you?” Druella suddenly wondered.

“Left it home, I wasn’t aware students were allowed pets.” Hermione conjured a lie.

Walburga deadpanned, “You’re the niece of a staff member and didn’t know?”

“It was a bit of a rapid transition.”

Walburga didn’t seem too impressed by the answer. A manicured brow raised, appraising the lie.

“Hello there ladies!” An exasperated sigh left Druella as a male voice was introduced.

“Hello, Evan.” Walburga said politely.

“No greeting for me, sister?” Evan Rosier jested.

“Step-sister, mind you.”

“Well, I hope you three don’t mind if I relax and bring some of my friends over.” Evan spoke. Behind him were a few other boys, notably Mulciber, Orion, and Cygnus.

“Actually, I’d prefer if you went someplace else-” Druella began, but the boys filtered in.

She turned to Hermione, a silent way of saying ‘Do you see what I have to live with.’

“Time to party, lads.” Evan announced as he brought out a small bottle of Firewhisky.

Hermione tried to get up, but an arm wrapped around her shoulders. She turned to see Mulciber smiling at her. She froze.

Thunder rolled around again, reminding the students that it had not left,

“Nasty weather, aye?” Evan said with a ridiculous smirk on his face.

Hermione deemed the Forbidden Forest a better place than where she was now.

Tom was unforgiving tonight. His partner did not show, so he patrolled alone. Bestowing detentions to the souls that wandered past curfew.

“You there.” Tom called out as he saw a student turn the corner.

He pursued like a hunter, keen on catching his prey. Turning the corner revealed nothing, the student vanishing from sight.

It was ridiculous. That was the third kid that managed to slip past him, evading punishment. His time was almost done, where he could return to his bed and hopefully rest. The promise of lounging into the lavish quilts was the only thing keeping him from going insane.

The silence of the patrol usually soothed him.
Usually.

Now, however, was a different time. He was plagued with uncertainties. The girl would not leave his mind, a curse placed on him.

Perhaps that’s why she seemed so willing. Perhaps he was the one being played.

No, no, she was clever, but she’s not manipulative in the manner he is.

But, does he really know that? She was some random girl, apparently related to Albus Dumbledore, that just appeared one day. No trace. No prior existence. Everything about her could be false. It was an advantage she had over him.

Because some way, somehow, she knew him. The moment they met, she encompassed knowledge that took his acquaintances years to acquire. And if she knew when to hold her tongue she would still have it under lock and key, but her temper betrays her.

But now, he sees through her. Sees directly through the guise she carefully crafted.

So, he’ll play along. Let her think she’s won. Then, when she leasts expects it, rip her victory from under the dirt she buried him in.

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The party was long over. Druella had single-wandedly warded the boys off by casting jinxes on them. Evan now has several warts adorning his face and his friends are to match. Few students occupied the common room after the boys retreated to their dorm.

Walburga, Druella, and Hermione had remained. Druella and Walburga shared idle gossip while Hermione droned it out, slowly falling into a slumber on the couch.

A grandfather clock chimed. The sound startled Hermione, the witch suddenly waking up on the couch. She rubbed her eyes, then noticed she was the only one in the room.

“I would figure Walburga would leave me, but Druella?” Hermione mumbled to herself.

She was still in her day clothing. She never had the chance to escape to her dorm to change.

Wisps of fire continued their dance in their domain. The heat was welcoming. Hermione rose, stretching her limbs, granting them relief. She quietly ventured to the spiral staircase.

The common room door opened.

Innate instincts caused Hermione to turn to the sound.

Tom walked in. The flames of the fire illuminated him, shadows waltzing on his skin.

“Hermione.” He practically growled.

He stalked over to her. Hermione was petrified by the aggressive tone. Sweat beamed down her forehead as she stood in place.

He grabbed her roughly by the arm, eliciting a yelp from the witch. He used the appendage to haul her toward him. Their bodies met abrasively. A hand threaded through the forest of hair on Hermione’s head, taking refuge at the roots and pulling, contorting her body to arch backwards.
Hermione’s pulse throbbed, adrenaline rushing through her system. Her free hand went to grab her wand, shaking on its trek.

Tom’s other hand let go of Hermione’s arm, planting itself on the small of her back. Forcefully, the limber fingers of Tom pushed Hermione’s figure into his own.

Just as Hermione had finally felt the wood of her wand brush her fingertips, the hand in her hair forced her face toward his own.

Lighting struck the Great Lake, sparking the surface. Murky green transformed into brilliant light in a flash throughout the lake.

Lips crashed violently, like waves against a cliff. Beautiful, yet dangerous. Hermione lost herself, drowning in the act. Wide eyes searched Tom’s closed ones for answers.

Her pleas were met with no such gratifying answers.

His hand stroked her back, massaging her into tranquility. Fingers woven into her tresses pulled gently, carefully. He played her like an instrument. And like any good instrument, melodies were produced.

Their lips were locked. Vigor was evident in Tom’s actions. Hermione neglected to react still, confusion clouding her mind.

First, he had acted like he was about to kill her, then this happened.

It was another one of his schemes to catch her off guard, and she be damned if she was going to let Tom think he was succeeding.

Hermione’s hands worked their way to Tom’s hair, fingers filing into the black locks. Twisting and twirling, the fingers did wonders to the boy. Soft, pouty lips returned the vigor given to them. Pulling at one another, the two continued their dance, hot and wild just like the flames of the fireplace.

Tugging gently at the tenebrous tendrils of hair, Hermione made Tom gasp and back away for air. The two were breathless. Obsidian stared into chestnut. Mint rolled off of Tom’s tongue in waves, begging Hermione to come back. Tom ducked in again, keen on tasting divinity. He kissed her like it was the path to salvation; he had a lot of sins to atone for.

The two battled, never showing a sign of exhaustion lest the other think they have won. Flesh together, lips mingled, and limbs tangled.

“You,” Tom said in between kisses, “are absolutely,” another kiss, “enticing.” He pulled away from her, brushing the coils of hair past her ears, “I could do this all night.”

It was a challenge, one to see if Hermione truly was unperturbed by the intimacy.

She be damned if she would let him know how uncomfortable she was.

She pulled him down by the neck and went lips first. He spun them around, backing her into the rear side of a couch. He wretched her hands off of his neck, pinning them to the rim of the couch. Hermione reached to kiss him. He backed away.

“We play on my terms now.” His voice was a low hum that lulled Hermione into false peace.

Her eyes narrowed, focusing on the mischief on his face.
“I’m going to ask a question, and depending on your answer, you’ll receive a reward.” Tom stated. The grip on Hermione’s wrists tightened.

“Tom, I don’t know—” Hermione’s words were fumbled. “Hush, you’ll like it. Games are meant to be fun, Hermione.”

“I really don’t know, Tom—”

“Where to start, where to start.” Obsidian orbs took in every detail of the witch. “I’ve got it, who are your parents? If you answer this one, I might even share information of my own.”

Hermione struggled against the binds of his hands. She was suddenly not for this intimate session.

“Come now, just answer the question.”

“Distant relative of the Professor’s.” Hermione said.

“But it would be a brother, would it not?”

“He just calls me his niece, it’s not my actual title,” Hermione relaxed onto the couch, halting her escape efforts, “We’re cousins at best.”

“I see, how intriguing.” Tom dove in for a peck on the lips.

It was not nearly as pleasing as the previous ones had been. This was patronising. He tasted bitter.

“I’d tell you about my family, but I wouldn’t want to bore you.” Tom said, humor and sarcasm laced in the words.

“You’re right, I probably already know it anyways.” Hermione replied with cheek.

“Is that so? Prove it.” Tom said, but Hermione chose to remain silent.

“Hermione.” he gave a warning. A long, dramatic sigh left him.

“If I did not enjoy your presence so much, I would just use Legilimens.” Tom said.

“Gee, thanks for being so kind.” Hermione tried lifting her arms to emphasize her sarcasm.

“Next question. What is the relationship between you and Malfoy?”

“What?” Hermione’s face scrunched, “He’s a friend at best. Don’t tell me you’re jealous.”

Tom’s pearly white teeth glinted, he was about to speak but the sound of steps reverberated in the dungeon.

“Hermione?” Malfoy stood in the archway leading to the boy dormitories. Green light from the lake waved across his periwinkle and white striped pajamas. His voice was groggy.

The position was compromising. Either it looked like Tom was attacking her, or Tom was in the process of snogging her. Both were technically true.

“My apologies, Malfoy. I did tell you to come wait in the common room if I didn’t come back by midnight, so thank you for the dedication.” Tom released Hermione who immediately rubbed her wrists.
“Riddle.” Malfoy began marching toward Tom.

“I wouldn’t do that. We wouldn’t want the whole house to wake.” Tom scolded Abraxas.

Abraxas tutted, gave a confused and sorrowful look to Hermione, then trekked down the stairs back to the room.

“Don’t look so glum, Hermione. Malfoy is annoying anyway, you know that. It’s better he knows his place.” Tom followed Abraxas down, leaving Hermione to stand in the common room.

First he wants to kill her, then he gives her a book, almost kisses her, avoids her, finally kisses her, then manipulates her to his will.

Fate was bipolar it seemed.

Chapter End Notes

Going to start adding end notes from now on to explain minor things in the chapter, particularly allusions.
If you have any questions relating to the material, I'll also probably be answering them here then!
Fate Ponders

Chapter Summary

Aion dwells on his past while waiting out the storm.

Chapter Notes

Sort of a filler chapter, but necessary if you want to understand Aion's motives behind, well, everything.
Would anyone be curious to listen to a playlist I have for the fanfiction? I listen to it while I write, often times the songs are what inspire scenes. Let me know!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Night’s influence had reached the hill. The storm rocked the cottage, rain and wind combining forces. Aion sat on the floor near the fire. He had spare time. It would not be until another week when Hermione gives him her half of the ingredients. Tom, on the other hand, would be coming tomorrow assuming weather permits it. They will meet in the forest, the same spot he brought Hermione to the past and where he met Tom.

So many things have occurred in that clearing.

Aion’s eyes closed as he meditated on his own past. The entire reason why he took fate into his hands, the purpose. His purpose.

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The moon’s rays penetrated the atmosphere, illuminating the vast clearing. Trees surrounded it. Grass, the home of dew, was sparse.

A child centaur gazed at the night sky in wonder. His eyes reflected the galaxy, expanding and glimmering. His mouth was ajar, parted in awe. Freckles littered his face, the dark spots akin to the constellations.

“What do you see, Caedmon?” An elder centaur had asked.

“I’m not sure.” The kid had replied. He continued to gaze in the never ending sky.

The older centaur had chuckled and patted Caedmon’s back.

“It’ll come in time, you are young.” The older centaur crouched closer to Caedmon and pointed at a cluster of dazzling heavenly bodies, “Do you know what I see there?”

The child eagerly shook his head no.

“That is someone’s fate. Everything is in the stars, Caedmon. We look at them to see when we should harvest, decide impactful events on the community, and more.” The elder centaur explained.
His features were worn slightly, evidence that he had much experience in the world.

“Elder Quinn, what is fate?” Caedmon asked quietly, his eyes never leaving the lights of heaven.

“Fate is the concept that everything is predestined. Events will occur, and there is nothing going to stop it because it is meant to happen. Fate is written in the stars.” Quinn had explained.

“Can’t we write our own fate, Elder Quinn? What if it’s bad? Can’t we change it?”

“You are quite the curious boy, Caedmon. It’s not a matter of can we, it’s should we.” Quinn placed an arm around Caedmon, “This realm works in mysterious ways. It is like a twig. Fragile. Yet, it is akin to a tree as well. Come with me, Caedmon.” The older centaur stood and grabbed the small hand of Caedmon, leading him to a tree stump.

“Do you see these rings?” Quinn circled the rings of the stump with his fingers. Caedmon nodded fervently.

“When this tree was a sapling, we had no idea how long it would live. If a storm came around, the tree could fall. Someone could uproot it. But, it flourished for decades. These rings show that. We may not have known what the tree would be, but it did and it resulted in a beautiful apple tree that we used for food.”

“Why is it dead now?” Caedmon followed the path of the rings.

“Someone tampered with it. A sickness came to it and destroyed the quality of fruit. We had to chop it down.”

“Why would someone do that?”

A deep sigh came from the fully grown centaur, “People have good intentions, Caedmon. But most don’t have the gift of sight and so they don’t know how their actions will affect things. This is why we don’t tamper with the stars. We may have good intentions, but uncertainty resides in the mind of revolutionaries. What we think may result in good, will bring about chaos. We just won’t be able to see it until it’s too late.”

“But, what if the stars are wrong-”

“They are never wong. Caedmon, they guide us. Don’t question them in such a manner.” He replied sternly. The child huffed and stomped his hooves.

“It’s late, you should go to the other children, Caedmon.” Quinn began trotting away from the clearing.

“They don’t like me, Elder Quinn.” Caedmon pouted, following Quinn.

“You’re different, Caedmon, and they’re scared of that. They know you’re special, but you must give them a chance to not be disturbed by you.”

“Am I special?” Caedmon’s dewy eyes glanced up to Quinn.

The wrinkles of Quinn’s face contorted into sorrow.

“Yes.”
Fate. What an archaic concept. An age old enemy.

Aion glowered as he looked at the fire. Fate was the excuse that everything happens as it should. Fate determined that he be casted away as a child.

Aion brought himself back to reality. The flames beckoned him closer, the warmth enveloping him. The rug beneath him was rough, but better than the wooden planks of the cabin.

It was funny, looking back into his past. Special. He was certainly special, alright. Aion’s teeth shined as his lips curled at the memory.

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The clearing was void of all life, except for one centaur. He was no longer a child, though his voice was still pitched like a woman’s. He sat there, his hands on his lap as he focused on the stars.

“What are you doing here? The feast is about to begin.” Elder Quinn entered the clearing, pushing bushes aside.

“Honing my gift.” Caedmon said. His brows were furrowed and eyes narrowed.

“What do you see?” Quinn stood next to the boy.

Caedmon sucked in a breath.

“Nothing.” His seriousness faded into hysterical laughter, “After all this time, this practice, I see nothing! All I see is the glimmer of light, teasing me with knowledge but selfishly keeping it hidden.” The laughter died and clenched fists and gritted teeth followed, “All of the others can see now, except for I.”

“It comes with-”

“Time, I know. That’s what you always say.” Caedmon rolled his eyes and looked back to the taunting ornaments of the sky.

“Join me for the harvest feast, Caedmon.”

“You know what I see when I go into the clan? A bunch of fools too focused on silly conglomerates in the sky to take responsibility for their own poor decisions.”

“That’s enough, Caedmon. It’s time to come home.” Quinn said roughly.

Caedmon obeyed.

“You said I was special. When will I see that?” Caedmon asked before charging ahead of Quinn, leaving the centaur behind in his wake.

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Aion brushed his hair back, the strands sticking to his forehead. The flames flickered and his eyes followed every movement. He longed to return to the forest.

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He should not be there. He really should not be there. But the teasing, the taunts of the others, they never ceased. So Caedmon fled. He ran to a nearby human village. The streets were not busy, the
cold of autumn forcing humans inside. So he treaded on the pavement. The clop of his hooves soothed him. Night was approaching, the orange of day melting into violet.

He took a turn down an alley. The store he passed had no sign, but when Caedmon looked into it he could see shelves in rows, holding books. His breath fogged the glass as he peered in. He left with disinterest, it’s not like he knew how to read English anyway. Trotting along, he passed trash cans in the alley way. A book was on top of the lid.

Teachings of the past rushed through his mind.

Centaurs were not supposed to indulge in the human lifestyle.

But, honestly, who was he to care? It was not like the clan treated him as an honored member of society, so why should he adhere to their rules?

Temptations led him by the hand, provoking him to grab the book. He flipped to the first page.

He did not understand what it had meant, but the figures spelled, “A Study on Greek and Roman Mythos.”

He tucked the book into the bag that he adorned. He would understand the words soon enough.

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His nose was stuffed in the book. It intrigued him. The words were odd, but slowly he taught himself the language. Foreign, but preferred. He lounged against a tree in the clearing, the same one he would visit nearly every night to see the stars. Currently, he read about a being named ‘Aion’. He envied his freedom immensely, to not be bound to time and control fate. It was everything the centaur council had forbade.

“How peculiar, usually your head is up and drowning in the universe, yet here you are looking down. What are you reading Caedmon?” The voice of Quinn spoke as he approached the scene.

The teenage centaur quickly stuffed the book away, “Nothing, Elder Quinn.”

Quinn quirked one brow at the teen.

“Alright then. Tell me, have you looked at the stars recently?”

“No,” Caedmon grumbled, “I’ve been busy with more productive things.”

“Reading a mysterious book you won’t tell me about counts as productive?” Quinn jested, but Caedmon showed no sign of amusement.

“No point in trying when I know it will never happen.” Caedmon muttered. His hands went to rub his eyes that were strained from reading so long.

“Caedmon-”

“Don’t patronize me.”

The grown centaur sighed. Teenage centaurs all get moody, but Caedmon was the worst of the bunch.

“You know, you could try to do something else that would be worth the effort.”
“Oh, like what?” Caedmon’s snarky tone broke the air.

“Try getting on the council. You could revolutionize the system, Caedmon.”

“I’m not interested in spending precious time with people who wouldn’t so much as blink if I were to leave for good.”

“Caedmon, stop that. They care, you just have to open up to them. This is the perfect opportunity to wow them with logic, since their heads are stuck in the skies as you say.”

A chuckle came from Caedmon, “That is true, isn’t it?”

Quinn grinned, “Exactly, so take the chance, Caedmon.”

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He took the chance alright. And they did not listen. They never did.

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“You don’t know what you’re talking about, you aren’t one of us, you can’t see the stars.” A centaur with blond hair in a bun spat.

“Angus, let the boy speak.” Quinn said. Angus crossed his arms in defiance, but obeyed the elder.

They assembled in a large hut, a fire roaring in the background.

“As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted,” Caedmon glared at Angus, “I think we should wait to harvest. You say the stars say it’s the perfect time, but there are errors in your calculations. If you take the position of Neptu-” Caedmon explained, but Angus intervened.

“Look at him speak as if he knows about Astronomy.”

“I do know it, I know it more than you do because I can’t look at glowing orbs in the sky and guess whatever comes to mind!” Caedmon roared.

“How dare you disgrace the gift.” Another centaur spoke,

“If you were to plot the coordinates of the system and derive the equation for distance, you would find that we are bound for more storms.” Caedmon continued despite the insults that bombarded him.


“Human studies? Caedmon, those aren’t to be trusted, you know that. The humans are unreliable.” Quinn’s stern voice buzzed in Caedmon’s ears.

“Fine. Ruin the yield. But when you all are starving, do not come to me with apologies.” Caedmon stood from the meeting and left, hooves trampling with force. He slammed the door of the hut behind him.

His destination was the clearing. It always was.

He was going to show them. He’d draw it out with every detail if he had to.

He approached the spot, the familiar scent of fresh dew wafting to him. Floral scents intertwined with
the dew. Bloomed flowers decayed slowly in the crisp of Fall. He plopped onto the dirt, bringing out
parchment and ink. Neck bent down, he began to construct the figures to prove his theories.

But something scratched at him, barely noticeable at first. It was a tender stroke to his chin. It pulled
on him upwards, begging him to take a glimpse at the stars.

He fought the invisible force. Fixing his head into position, he refused to glance at what the night sky
had to offer.

It never had worked and it would not work now.

Right?

His muscles betrayed him. His neck craned upwards, bringing his head with it. His eyes widened at
what he saw.

Mind ran into overload, the images flashing by him in a series of randomness. People. Humans.
Humans he had never seen or met, their stories unfurled in front of him in a winding tale.

A boy.

Who is this boy?

It was an infant. An infant in the cold, dead arms of a mother no longer breathing.

No one else was around them. Caedmon could see a note.

Was it a note? It had writing on it.

Tom?

What is that? A place? A name?

Name, Caedmon’s mind answered instantly.

Muscles twitched throughout Caedmon. No matter how much the tissue tried to move, his body
remained stunned, eyes lost in the information stars thrusted at him.

The child would die if no one came around.

Where was the father? Everyone had a father.

Caedmon’s mind wandered aimlessly, scouring for answers.

The child was unwanted. Abandoned. Hopeless. It was going to die because no one wanted it, not
the father, not a relative, no one.

Where was this taking place?

Just as he mentally questioned it, Caedmon could feel the visions fading. Clear images became
blurred and distorted, the details lost. Caedmon’s arm reached out, to grab the items and align them
back, but his grip had nothing. Tears fell, drenching his cheeks.

“Caedmon! Snap out of it.” The voice of Elder Quinn yelled, worry evident on his complexion.

“What is that? A place? A name?" Caedmon asked as he came to. His body felt tight and any movement was a strain. Spots
occupied his vision.

“Caedmon, can you hear me?” The urgent tone confused Caedmon.

“Yes.” Caedmon slurred.

Caedmon’s body slumped to the ground, Quinn catching him on the way.

“I saw.” Caedmon’s words were quiet, almost silent.

“What?” Incredulousness passed over Quinn’s features.

“There’s a boy. He needs help or he’s going to die.” His vision was failing him. In his head flowed a feeling of light-headedness.

Arms enveloped Caedmon into an embrace.

“You did it, you can see.” Quinn wrapped his arms around him and squeezed like a boa constrictor.

“Quinn, unhand me, I need to find the boy.” Caedmon tried to wretch the hands off him, but his arms gave out.

“Hush, you don’t know when or where he is. Fate will do its course.”

A hysterical smile curved Caedmon’s lips as his head shook,

“No, no, no, I’m not dealing with that nonsense anymore. Fate be damned.” The words were a mess, barely coherent, “Fate has a new competitor and it’s me.”

He fainted. Laying limp in Quinn’s arms, the older centaur carried him back to camp.

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Wind lapped at the barren trees. Branches shook wildly, unable to fight against the invisible force. The village was a white canvas. Pristine, pure snow piled on roofs were tainted by soot from the rising smoke of chimneys. Everyone was indoors, celebrating the New Year.

Caedmon passed houses filled with cheer and festivities. Humans danced while dressed in lavish gowns, a tradition that failed to impress Caedmon. He had been studying the culture for a while now and most of it fell into the category of pointless.

Right now, what he was doing, however, was not pointless. It was an act of defiance against the gods. A direct declaration of resilience and free will.

He ventured through the village, kerosene lamps guiding him. Snowflakes kissed his skin, leaving frigid water to caress down his body.

Spending his time in human books was worth it. He mastered the art of mapping using the stars, just as the Muslim merchants did in the days of Indian Ocean trades, a topic that lead him to the art of cartography.

His eyes drifted to the stars, welcome to any knowledge that bestowed itself upon him. Searching for the right pattern, he finally found it. His lips curled into a victorious grin that started at the eyes.

Capricorn.
His hooves clopped against the cobblestone road. His insides felt like they were going to burst, excitement coursing through his body. Adrenaline picked at his heart, accelerating the speed.

Cobblestone merged into marsh. The area was heavily wooded and no light but the moon was present. A small run down cottage was at the end of the muddy road.

A savior was never born in the state of immaculation. They worked their way to that spot.

He ran toward the cottage, his young legs carrying him. Mud splattered, coating his fur but he did not care.

A wise man would trek an entire desert to meet his savior.

Glass windows were broken on the cabin. Cold air drafted into the room. The glow of a single candle flickered as the wind filtered in through the broken window, threatening to extinguish it.

Just like the way Fate was threatening to extinguish the child.

Caedmon tried the handle. It was unlocked, allowing his body to slip through the opening. He ducked his head down to pass through the doorway.

There he was. The boy from his vision.

The baby was silent. Cradling him was a gaunt looking woman with tangled wisps of hair that looked as if it had not been washed for years. She was on the ground, ratty blankets covering her modesty but blood was always difficult to hide. Next to her was the candle and a note.

Tom Marvolo Riddle Jr.

“Well, hello there, Tom.” Caedmon cradled the infant in his arms. It still had a pulse, meaning he was not too late.

“I’ve known you for awhile. You plagued my mind, you know.” Caedmon chuckled.

“According to health books, you cannot understand me yet, but that is okay. I’m going to take you somewhere where you’ll be accepted.”

Caedmon crouched and grabbed the note, making sure that he had a good grip on the infant.

“I’m a bit young to father a child. But I read about these places called orphanages, where they welcome unwanted children.” Caedmon spoke.

“You and I are alike. Fate does not want us to prosper. You were supposed to die along with your mother on the day of a New Year. But I’m here to give you a new beginning, because everyone deserves a new life on the dawn of a New Year.” He blew out the candle on the ground. Exiting the cottage, Caedmon made sure the swaddled baby would not be cold.

“You may call me Aion, Tom.”

And so he left him on the step of the nearest orphanage with the card that said his name.

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Caedmon quietly trotted back to camp. His fellow centaurs would wake if he were too loud.

“Where have you been?” The inquisitive tone of Elder Quinn asked.
Caedmon cursed under his breath.

“The clearing.” The two were in the middle of camp where a giant fire burned.

“I was just there, do not lie to your elders.”

No one had really understood Caedmon. Always looking down on him. Quinn was different. He could see the flame that burned in Caedmon, the one that wanted to reach out and scorch the earth to bring about a new one.

“Honesty, Sir?”

“Yes, Caedmon.”

“I did it.” A giddy grin broke out on Caedmon’s face.

“Did what?” Quinn pressed on.

“I fixed it. Don’t you see?” Caedmon pointed to the sky.

Stars seemed to rearrange themselves before Quinn, horror grossing his face.

“What have you done?” It came out in a single breath.

“I fixed the fate of a poor boy destined to die. Now he’s going to reign as a king, I just need to figure out how to get him to that point—”

A slap to his cheek stopped the flow of words.

Caedmon lifted his own hand to feel the heat of the sting. Disbelief swam in his eyes.

“Of all people, you called me special, you know this is my calling, I finally found it and this is how you react?” Tears swelled in the teenager’s eyes.

“I cannot look at you right now.” Quinn turned away from the boy.

“Come on, old man. Face me like a true warrior.” Caedmon gripped the wrist of the older centaur. A swift kick from his hind legs allowed Quinn to gain distance between him and the teen.

“Caedmon, go to your dwellings. The other centaurs will do much worse than I once they find out.”

Caedmon was left on the ground. The blow to his body from Quinn’s legs caused a dull throb of pain. He grimaced at the feeling, but when his eyes lifted to the heavens, a smile took place.

He was Fate now.

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The night was easy for him to sleep through. No tossing or turning. Caedmon was content with life. Dazzling gleams of light shined through the glass windows of Caedmon’s hut, waking the centaur.

Dozens of centaurs gathered around him.

He broke out into a sweat, the droplets lining the shape of his head. Backing away from the group, he blinked rapidly to assure that what he saw was no hallucination.

“What are you doing here?” Came the urgent question.
“We must take you to trial.” Angus, the blond centaur announced.

“What?” Laughs of disbelief rang through the hut.

“It is no laughing matter. There is proof of you meddling with fate and dabbling in human arts. Two things we strictly prohibit in our society.” Glares were focused on Caedmon.

“Alright. I’ll go with willingly, so no need to break out the bows.” He noted as he saw several members of the group raising their weapons.

They filed out of the house.

Immediately as the dawn of day touched his skin he bolted. His body was sore from the night before, his injury bruising terribly. Tendons stretched to their fullest extent, allowing the teenage centaur to dodge trees along his path. Stomping could be heard in the distant from behind him. The entire horde was following him.

His hair and tail trailed behind him, whipping with the wind. Hooves trudged through snow. He looked behind him, noting no presence. Victory masked his face in the form of a wide grin and vicious eyes. Resting, he braced himself next to a tree. Lungs expanded and pushed out air at an abnormal pace, Caedmon trying to regain his breath.

An arrow whizzed passed his head, planting into the tree near him.

With widened eyes he sprinted off again. Muscles ached. The chase had begun again. In his peripherals, he could see the army of centaurs with atlatls and bows drawn. Naturally, they focused on him.

Gaining good distance, he glanced behind him again. In his absence of sight, his face planted into a tree. The collision shook the tree free of its snowy burden. Shaking the flakes from his hair, he tried to run. Centaurs circled him.

“Now listen, perhaps if you tried to see it from my perspective—” Caedmon began.

“Caedmon, we have rules!” Angus trotted up to him, his fair skin amplified in the snowy forest.

“Did it never come to you to question them?” Caedmon’s voice turned heads.

“We are creatures rooted in tradition, are you really about to dish that away for some pesky humans?”

“To be fair, if you just gave them a chance—”

“You are weak. You always have been weak. You will always be weak.”

“And all of you are stubborn. Times change,” Caedmon preached to the crowd, “We are free thinkers, are we really going to let a silly notion such as Fate dictate the way we act?”

“Do not question the stars, Caedmon.” A dagger was held to Caedmon’s throat, a staring contest beginning between Angus and Caedmon.

“It’s Aion, now.”

A hearty laugh fell from Angus’s lips.

“What does that mean? Is that a silly human name? It certainly isn’t Gaelic” Angus shook his head,
“No trial needed, boys. You’re not welcome in our community. If you ever come again, I will make sure the arrow does not miss next time.”

“Wait!” Quinn the Elder trotted up to the group that started to retreat to the camp.

“Don’t waste your breath, Quinn.” Angus advised.

“I’ll house him. I’ll reform him. Just, don’t let him leave into the world.” Quinn’s eyes plead with Angus and the horde of centaurs he lead.

“I won’t let you inhabit that sort of shame.” Angus passed Quinn.

He was stopped by Quinn’s hand grabbing his shoulder.

“Trust me on this.” Quinn said, his eyes drifted up to the sky. It was a reference to the stars.

Angus glanced to Quinn and then Caedmon.

“Fine.” Was all he said as he left. Centaurs followed behind him, leaving Caedmon and Quinn alone.

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Aion let out a deep breath that he housed for what seemed to be an eternity. The fire began to smolder as the night continued. Yet, it still captivated him. His eyes glazed as the flames held him in a hypnotic trance.

He used to think of Quinn as his only father figure. Centaur communities kept the identities of parents hidden, promoting the idea that the clan was family.

But that was until he realized why Quinn had taken him in.

Quinn taught him everything he knew. Taught him the rules of society, the consequences of meddling with fate and more. Aion had thought it was from the good of Quinn’s heart.

But no. Aion had finally realized why he was special.

It was because he was destined to bring about a new tribe of centaurs, reform the rules. But first, he needed influence. If a darker force were to happen to take control of the centaurs, then Aion would be able to swoop in, free them and establish his own dominion.

That is where Tom would come in handy.

But Quinn saw this in the stars.

What a hypocrite. Preaching to Caedmon that centaurs should not change Fate’s path, yet he inhibited Caedmon every step along the way.

So when Aion had stolen the time turner for his ritual, they finally excommunicated him. He was perfectly fine with fleeing from the false congeniality.

Now, it was just a waiting game.

Chapter End Notes
Caedmon is a Gaelic name meaning "Warrior", Quinn is a Gaelic name for wisdom, and Angus is a Gaelic name for strength.
Hermione Knows Things, but Fate Knows All

Chapter Summary

The morning after a kiss is always awkward. Especially between two people who are constantly wondering what the other is thinking. Tensions rise in that realm, and the giver of the book is discovered. Not that Hermione knows, yet. Instead Hermione is forced to meet new people with clashing views; and then Tom shows his true colors.

Chapter Notes

Shout out to my friend Tim! He's a beta reader that occasionally gives ideas, such as the Great Pudding Debacle in this chapter. I appreciate this man so much, you have no idea. Thank you for all of the kind reviews and kudos, i appreciate it and it motivates me to write more! This chapter is the longest to date with over 13,300 words.

For seemingly once in her stay in the past, Hermione had a decent night’s sleep.

She was not sure if that was reassuring or not.

She had a dreamless slumber. No nightmares, no peaceful dreams, nothing.

A hand went to her head, spots in her vision. Blinking rapidly, Hermione sat up in her bed and rubbed the sleep from her eyes. Legs swung over the edge and she pushed the curtain aside to exit. Clouds seemed to linger outside, the Great Lake appearing darker than usual.

Hermione let out a small laugh of disbelief.

‘Usual’, she had used in her mind. There should not be anything usual about anything where she was. Since when did waking up to the Great Lake become usual in the first place, let alone the shade of it? Hermione was going to lose it if she dwell on it much longer.

Druella crossed the room.

“It seems you managed to find your way up here last night.” Her high pitched voice infiltrated Hermione’s ears.

“Yes.” Was the curt reply. She looked away from Druella after recounting the events of last night.

Why on Earth did she think trying to surprise Riddle would work? It is true, he probably thought she would squirm away from him, amusing himself with her own uncomfortableness. That was always the goal, was it not? Catch her off guard, poke and prod her until she fell apart and let something slip. So, she thought of reversing the roles, surprise him by reacting well to it. It did not work.

Maybe that is what he wanted after all. Force her to pretend to enjoy it, back her into a corner using her pride. He could use the experience against her, blackmail or anything. Afterall, he had a witness.
Poor Malfoy. Granted, he was a bit annoying. Though, he does look out for Hermione, despite the protests that flow from her. Though, it also is not her job to keep him happy. She has known him for a week. He should not be concerned with her. Yet another motive she would have to investigate at a later date and time.

“What class do you have first again, Hermione?” Druella said. She was dressed in the uniform already and had perched herself on Hermione’s bed.

“Today should be Ancient Runes and Arithmancy. Fortunately, I have a free period some time during the day.”

“What do you plan on doing during your free period?” Druella asked.

“Well,” Hermione pondered, “I’m not certain yet. It’ll come to me when I get there.”

“Just let me know if you happen to be lonely. I’ll be in the library. Goodbye, Hermione, Walburga.” The click of Druella’s low heels echoed as she left.

Hermione strolled to the bathroom, toiletries and clothes in hand. Locking the door behind her made her feel relieved. Being alone in the room with Walburga was never comforting.

Walburga.

Another bipolar one.

She seemed civilized yesterday. Yet, Hermione felt the excruciating, familiar jolt of judgement that pierced through herself as Walburga glowered at her. It was unsettling how Walburga of all people saw through her. Even Tom was someone Hermione fooled; an achievement that Hermione is rather proud of.

Pristine tiles reflected the dim light of the bathroom. Putting her hands on the basin of the sink, Hermione took a glimpse at the mirror.

Although she appeared as herself, she did not feel like it. The girl looking back at her was foreign. It was not Hermione Granger, but rather the falsehood she had veiled herself under, Hermione Dumbledore. Unsettled, Hermione turned away from the creature she saw in the mirror. Confliction swelled in her mind, brimming the edges.

Everything would work out, she had to constantly remind herself. Hermione Granger would see the light of day again, in her proper year. The facade is only temporary.

But the effects are everlasting A whisper probed her mind.

She ignored the voice, choosing to dress herself instead. Idle tasks allow the brain free roam, however.

After travelling back, she would never be the same. What if Harry and Ron do not like the new her? She could not just lose them, they meant everything to her, how on earth would she be able to cope with that, what about the people here, what are they going to do when she is gone, there are just too many things to consider-

Hermione forced her brain to stop the incessant worry. Anxiety flooded her system as she tried to ground herself.

Maybe she could just obliviate herself after this was all over.
No, that would be stupid and detrimental.

Hermione pulled her socks up and strapped her Mary Janes on.

What was she going to do with Riddle today?

She could feel that triumphant smirk that carved his face, almost as if it were against her skin. Bumps raised on her tender flesh. There was no way she would give him that satisfaction.

She’d act as if nothing awkward happened between them and would provoke him. It was her turn to make him feel disturbed.

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Abra\textsuperscript{xas} Malfoy stood in front of the mirror of the bathroom. Door locked, he was able to hide himself away from the rest of the group. A sanctuary of his own.

Brushing his teeth, he tracked every movement in the mirror.

Dark sacs under his eyes, untidy hair, everything was off. He tried to ignore the itch to think about the witch.

What in the \textit{bloody} hell had he walked into last night?

Mentally, he groaned. So much for not thinking about her.

Her.

Her spirit. The fiery way she has with words and actions. Her untamed frizz, akin to a lion’s mane. Little lioness was trapped in a pit of snakes. She did not belong, and Abraxas knew that. He relished the freedom she had, the way she back talked Riddle. He was envious of her.

Spitting out the mint infused water, Abraxas saw the determination that had left his soul long ago return in his eyes.

“Fucking hell, you take forever!” Avery waltzed in and pushed Abraxas away from the sink.

“I locked the door-” Abraxas’s confused words slurred.

“\textit{Alohomora’}?” Avery held his wand up and waved it. Avery’s expression was one that smacked Malfoy in the face and said ‘duh’.

“What ever.” Shaking his head, Malfoy left the bathroom. His suit jacket was lying on his bed, along with his tie. The room was surprisingly vacant.

“Avery, where is everyone?” Malfoy put on his jacket.

“Tom grabbed Nott and took him to breakfast,” the bathroom door was wide open, “I’m fine with it, I don’t like Nott being in our room for longer than need be.”

“Yes, well, that sounds sketchy, does it not?” Abraxas felt anxiety pick at him. The subtle raise in his heart beat that pounded against his chest.

“No?” Avery took a razor to his chin, shaving the little hair he had in the first place, “you’re just psyching yourself out.” Swears escaped Avery as blood dripped from a cut on his face.
“I used to be his right hand man.” Malfoy’s voice was so quiet, he was not sure Avery heard it.

Merlin, what had happened to those days? Maybe, maybe Riddle was right. Hermione has changed Abraxas. And not for the better. Perhaps, that is why-

It dawned on him. Realization grossed his features.

It was so like Riddle to do this. Mind games were his profession.

The entire scene of last night made sense. Riddle was trying to prove to Abraxas just how much he had changed because of the pesky girl. All of it. It was just an elaborate scheme. The doubt that Abraxas harbored, Riddle knew about it. So, Riddle gave him a taste of the other side. The side where Riddle was the opposer. It was dreadful, and Riddle wanted to show that his side was better.

It was all to get Abraxas to sway back to Riddle. Riddle pushed him on a swing, just like he had asked him to. Granted him the freedom he thought he desired. But he came back. Just as one does on a swing.

Abraxas had to applaud Riddle on the effort, but he had jumped off that swing when it reached the top.

Not that he would let Riddle know that. Not yet, at least.

And so he finished tightening the emerald and silver fabric and strutted out the door. Determination and ambition swelled in him. He finally figured out how to play Riddle.

“Hey! I’m still here and bleeding, you cunt! You can’t just leave me here!” Avery yelled as he tried patching the wounds with magic. Never again would he shave the Muggle way.

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Sunlight finally graced the castle again. Beams of light passed through the windows, dazzling the occupants. Dust bunnies could be seen hopping in the light. The staff was fully assembled at their table at the head of the hall, but many students still were on their voyage down.

“Riddle, are you okay?” Nott scratched at the beard coming in on his face.

“Yes, why would I not be?” It came out more defensive than Tom wanted.

“Intuition tells me otherwise.” Lifting his fork, Nott closed his mouth around it.

Tom stalled for a minute. Intuition was always another word for ‘I found out through a different source’, to Tom.

“No qualms here.” Tom reassured.

“So, nothing at all, not even a certain witch, is bothering you right now?”

“No, not in the slightest.”

“What happened in the potion closet? Malfoy would not shut up about it until you came back.” Nott set his food aside to focus on the interrogation.

“Malfoy needs to realize how obsessed with her he is.” Tom’s fingers drummed the surface of the table. “We’re working on two separate projects. We simply gathered ingredients together at the same time by accident.”
“What is she working on?” The question hit Tom like a stunning spell.

It was a valid question. One that he cursed himself for never asking. How could he be so dense?

“I have no idea.” The phrase was a mutter under his breath.

Nott’s eyes were wide.

How could Tom not ask her? She managed to fly over him again with information. He would teach her the repercussions.

“Hello, Tom.” Abraxas Malfoy delivered a rough pat to Tom’s spine.

“Malfoy-” Anger seethed from the words. Most know not to touch him.

“Thank you.” Abraxas whispered.

Apprehension.

“For?” Tom quirked one slim brow.

“For showing me how valuable the Knights of Walpurgis is. I must admit, my faith was drifting. But you restored it with that stunt last night. I have no desire to mingle with a wanton minx, a Dumbledore no less.” He punctuated the sentence with a chuckle.

“It’s about time you realize she isn’t worth it. I missed your dedication. Welcome back, Abraxas.” If Tom could genuinely smile, he would have in that moment.

“It’s lovely to be back, Tom.” Abraxas’s smile was wide and oddly energetic.

“Hello, boys.” Hermione sat down, her curls bouncing with.

“Hello, Hermione.” Tom said. It was a test. He needed to see how she would react throughout the rest of the day, and the first interaction always spoke volumes.

“Hello, Tom.” A flirty smile pricked her lips.

So that was how it was going to be.

Brief bewilderment flashed through his eyes before he resumed his charm.

“Good night’s sleep? You appear to be rather, happy this morning.” Tom questioned.

“Actually yes, last night I slept rather well.” She gathered food on her plate.

“Intriguing.” Tom replied curtly, “So, tell me all about your potion you’re working on, Hermione.”

Sputtering slightly, Hermione cleared her throat. It appears she had not anticipated the inquiry.

“It’s confidential for now. Perhaps you would like to share yours?”

“I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.” Tom quickly countered.

“Keep your secrets then.” Hermione bit into a biscuit.

“I shall.” They locked eyes.
“Well, this is weird so I’m just going to go-” Nott began to stand.

“All of you have committed treason!” A voice yelled. Avery stomped through the isle, robe billowing behind him.

“You,” Avery seethed as he pointed at Abraxas, “Are a foul friend. You left me in the room! Alone!”

“I’m sorry you got lonely?” Abraxas had confusion on his face.

“Good, you should be.” Avery huffed as he sat down next to Hermione.

“Congratulations on being the only not-traitor here, Hermione.” Avery said. He angrily began eating.

“Thanks?”

“What’s wrong with you, Pudding Boy?” Nott’s Irish timbre directed itself to Avery.

Setting down his fork, Avery looked at Nott. Hermione was in between them.

“Do not, ever, call me that.”

Abraxas was trying to stifle his laughter. Tom had a ghost of a smile present.

“How about we just eat so please explain what is going on.” Hermione stiffened between the two boys. Avery was sprawled on her lap, reaching for Nott who easily pushed him back.

“Knock it off, I don’t want teachers over here.” Nott muttered.

“One day, back in out first year-” Malfoy had to take a break to gain his breath, laughter suffocating him, “One day, in our first year-” He had to restart, but the words dissipated into giggles.

“We do not speak of the Great Pudding Debacle!” It came out as a harsh whisper. Avery’s hands were planted flat on the table.

Abraxas and Nott completely lost it.

Hermione sat there, awkwardly watching the interaction. Even Tom had an amused expression on.

“One time, during our first year at Hogwarts, we were having lunch.” Tom began since the others were too busy laughing or arguing, “Avery had the bowl of English pudding in his hands. Sometime before this however, Avery had,” Tom paused, thinking back but failing to remember.

“I jinxed him for ruining my chances with that Hufflepuff bird…” Avery crossed his arms at the memory.

“You were eleven and she was not interested in the slightest. She was a fourth year, mind you.” Nott clarified.

“That’s right, Avery was upset about getting rejected. So, he jinxed Nott. Later that day we had lunch and Nott being the vengeful being he is, slapped the pudding out of Avery’s hands. I remember very distinctly how the bowl raised in the air and within seconds Avery was wearing the
“The entire Hall laughed at me!” Avery ducked his head into his arms.

“And so, the entire school began calling Avery, ‘Pudding Boy’. I can’t recall the last time I heard it, though.” Tom mentioned.

“It died out around fourth year.” Muffled words from Avery sounded.

“Yes, then we vowed as a group to never speak of ‘The Great Pudding Debacle’, ever again.” Abraxas said in between giggles.

“Then why are we talking about it now!” Grumpy Avery left his arms to shout, then quickly retreated back into him. His face was a vibrant rouge.

“Because you started it. I was just politely telling you off for harassing a lady.” Nott commented.

“Is that why you two despise each other?” Hermione questioned.

“*Yes.*” Avery hissed, “Because he plagued me with the title Pudding Boy, like, great job, how original of you.”

“Like great job, how original of you.” Nott mocked back.

Avery unsheathed his wand but the bell reverberated in the Great Hall.

“Onward to Ancient Runes it seems.” Abraxas said.

“But, I was just about to-oh, forget it.” Avery let his wand fall to his side. His lips were pouty and his head was down.

Rolling her shoulders, Hermione stood and stretched. A satisfying pop relieved her of the discomfort of sitting during breakfast. Swinging her bag over her shoulder, she felt humidity form on her right ear.

“Until Arithmancy, Hermione.” Tom purred. It only lasted for a moment, but a graceful hand of his skimmed her shoulder.

“Of course, Tom.” Her honey gaze followed his svelte form as he swaggered out of the Great Hall.

If she were Hermione Granger at that moment, she would have punched him.

Runes was always an interesting class. Each ancient stroke meant something, it held power within carvings. Bushy curls in all her glory, Hermione sat on the edge of her seat as the instructor went over minute details hidden within the archaic markings.

“Now, here’s the interesting part. To the normal eye, the brush stroke appears to be going up, but it’s actually down. The direction gives it an entirely different meaning and magical property.” The teacher rambled on.

The attention of students such as Evan Rosier and Orion Black were lost instantly. Hermione was forced to sit next to Evan, her normal bench partner being Abraxas. He was avoiding her, she could tell.
Peculiar drawings littered the parchment Evan was supposed to be taking notes on. Tongue sticking out slightly in concentration, Evan worked on his magnum opus. Hermione grimaced at the crude doodles, disbelief that he could just throw his education away like that.

“Some runes, ironically, require other runes to decipher them,” the teacher wrote across the board in sprawled, messy cursive, “We call these Revealing Runes.”

Hermione’s eyes wandered to the back of Abraxas’s head. He sat in the front row, a place that he had deterred Hermione from last time. It was evident he was avoiding her and she just wanted to talk to him about it. Platinum blond silk cascaded down his neck. Hermione could not recall if she had ever witnessed Abraxas’s hair down. He was intently listening to the lesson.

“Can anyone tell me a practical reason for the creation of Revealing Runes?” The Professor faced the class, disappointed in the lack of raised hands.

“Curse-breaking, Professor.” Orion Black spoke.

“Good job, ten points to Slytherin.”

And the lesson resumed.

Hermione just wanted to know what was going on in the mind of Abraxas.

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Smoke rose in straight lines to the ceiling. Incense burned the nostrils of students, the scent overwhelming. Many gagged on the fumes, but tolerated the perfumed room. Sunlight filtered through rose tinted tapestries causing a pink glow to fall over the room.

“These cushions feel lumpier than usual.” Avery tried adjusting the pillow he sat upon.

Tom replied with nothing. His mood had turned sour after breakfast.

What was wrong with Hermione?

Tom had a hand to his chin, trying to conjure her motives of being friendly.

Malciber passed by him, giving a polite smile and wave at Tom. Malciber had recently joined the Knights of Walpurgis, a feat due to Abraxas’s communication skills. Or at least, his ability to trick a drunk man into joining their little organization.

“Tom, perhaps you would prefer to sit in the company of a lady?” The voice of Walburga Black was honey to his ears.

He preferred bitter things to sweets.

“Is that an invitation?” Perfect prefect persona.

“Always.” Her lips were lined in a deep wine color.

“Now, I'm not certain, I would hate to intrude on you and Miss Rosier. Not to mention my dear friend Avery here-” He held a hand up to motion to Avery, but was dumbstruck when he saw the boy roughly mashing his cushion to be more comfortable.
“Druella can keep him company. It will just be the two of us.” Walburga spoke.

“Only because you insist so heavily.” He so desperately wished to grimace at the interaction, but lest he be thought of as rude, he declined the temptation.

From his peripheral, Tom could see Druella begrudgingly sitting across from a suddenly flirtatious Avery. No woman was off limits in Avery’s eyes; an entitled aristocrat he be.

Walburga’s slender figure led him to a clothed table in the back. Lace adorned the wooden structure, intricate patterns woven with deliberate motion. Sitting across from her, Tom arranged his school items around himself.

“I did not ask you back here merely because I enjoy your company.” Walburga stated. A glimmer of mischief flashed in her eyes.

“Should I feel offended?” Punctuating the sentence with a laugh, Tom scrutinized Walburga.

“Not in the slightest. I simply have concern for you, Tom.”

“Now, why would that be?” He leaned in, far more interested in the exchange than previously.

“That Dumbledore girl of yours,” Tom had to fight the twitch that threatened to carve his face with a smirk at the mention of possession, “She’s peculiar.”

“I concur. A fascinating witch, is she not?” It was a test to see if Walburga would be jealous or not.

“Fascinatingly dangerous.” Rolled off Walburga’s stained lips.

“How so?” Tom asked.

Walburga was about to answer, but Professor Ornamenti trapezeed in, galavanting across the floor in a strange manner.

“Apologies for my late arrival. You would not believe the predicament I witnessed.” Professor Ornamenti shook her head at the memory, lips pursing.

“But, now I am here so class may began. I would like you all to grab a stack of tarot cards up here. We’ll be predicting with them today. Partner in twos, share a deck.”

Tom excused himself from Walburga to grab the needed materials. His voyage was not long and sat down again.

“Allow me to go first, I have quite the expertise in Divination, you know.” Walburga offered a smile fit for the Wicked Witch of the West.

Somehow, Tom doubted she was talented. Perhaps after encountering true Divination through Aion, his standards were raised.

“Be my guest.” Ever polite he was to the ladies.

“Let’s see what the future has for you, Tom.” It was a flirty smile that caused dimples to crater her cheeks.

“Yes, let’s see.” He breathed out.

Manicured hands treated the cards delicately, taking her time to shuffle the deck. Tom could see the
glimmer of the graphics the cards had with each purposeful movement. Splaying the cards in front of her, face down, she gestured Tom to point to one.

“Professor, do these actually work?” Avery scratched his head while looking at the cards.

“The cards are a reflection of the soul, the part of you that your consciousness cannot grasp. They work in the sense of a mirror. They reveal the things your mind already knows, but cannot communicate with you.” Professor Ornamenti professed.

Dexterous fingers pointed to a random card. Picking it up, Walburga’s eyes were wide.

“The Devil.” She said as she placed it face up on the table.

Fiery demons and horned creatures littered the surface of the card. The artwork depicted chains holding wild beasts back.

A vacant expression took over Tom’s face. He pointed out his next card.

“Strength.” Walburga’s tone was a bit more positive. “You are indeed quite strong, Tom.” she complimented.

“How lovely! You, Tom, also got a card that Mr. Moody got.” Professor Ornamenti was right behind Tom.

“Did you hear that, I’m strong.” Alastor gloated and flexed his muscles jokingly. Several other Gryffindors laughed with him.

“Mr. Moody, that is enough. It does not mean literal strength.” Professor Ornamenti drew in a long breath, “It represents courage and the dispersion of animal instincts. In your case, Mr. Moody, it means stop brawling with students.” Professor Ornamenti playfully scolded the boy, his friends teasing him afterwards.

“Professor, what does it mean in Tom’s case?” Walburga peered up at the tall woman.

“Let’s see.” With a melaninated finger, Professor Ornamenti gathered the two drawn cards closer to her to inspect.

The teacher’s face scrunched.

“What is it, Professor?” Tom asked.

“I do not wish to embarrass you in front of the entire class,” She got closer to Tom, only his ears were available to her words, “Have you been struggling with impure urges?”

Tom coughed suddenly at what she implied.

“No, Professor, I can assure you I have not been. Can I question how you came to that conclusion?” Tom’s brows were furrowed as he waited for an explanation.

“The Devil is interpreted as desires, mostly of the flesh. Strength is to break away from one’s primal instincts. I can only assume that a boy of your age would be facing-”

“Thank you for the concern, Professor.” He quickly shut down the conversation.

But Ornamenti persisted.
“I know that you and a certain young Dumbledore have been getting close-”

Naturally, Slughorn had the tendency to share his students’s private lives with other staff members.

“Rest assured, Professor, despite whatever Professor Slughorn says happened in the potion’s closet between me and Miss Dumbledor-” Tom began.

“You were in the what with who?” Jaw slack, Walburga’s bewildered gaze trained on Tom.

“Quite the hot topic, is it not Miss Black? I would soon if a man ever had that passion for me.” A wistful sigh fell from Professor Ornamenti, “What a blessed girl she is. No worries, Tom, fighting primal urges is rather respectful of you to do for Miss Dumbledore.” Professor Ornamenti gave a congratulatory grin.

Clenched teeth tightened the forced smile on Tom.

“Thank you, Professor. I do believe other students are in need of your help, however.”

With that, the teacher skipped to a different set of students.

“So, you two are actually a pair?” Judgement dripped from the words.

“No. It’s just the work of a meddlesome teacher’s imagination.” Tom replied.

“Pick another card.” Walburga urged.

“Pick one for me.”

With lips pursed, Walburga pinched a card between her fingers.

“-----.”

Wine lips formed the words, but none could be heard. Indifference painted on the reader’s face. Gentle ringing deafened the sound of her voice.

A shaky breath left Tom. Air caught in his throat on the inhale. Time seemed to stop for him as his eyes met with the skeleton on the card. Weapon raised, the bone frame beheaded peasants while riding a dark horse. A smile was present on the skeleton. It was taunting Tom.

Walburga was about to set down the card when she felt a corner of the card become hot.

“Ouch!” She immediately dropped the item, flames engulfing the card.

Wide, doe-like eyes reflected the natural light. A tenebrous gaze flickered for a moment, hypnotized by the way the fire wavered.

“Children, back away!” Professor Ornamenti was on the scene. Pointed wood relieved the scorched card.

“I swear I did not set it on fire, Professor-” Walburga began.

“What card was it?” Professor Ornamenti’s urgent voice rang.

“Death.” It was quiet, almost a whisper. The title gave Tom shivers that he quickly concealed. Rolling his shoulders, Tom relieved the uncomfortable feeling the word brought.
“Tom, I need to know, did you set that card on fire?” The Professor’s concerned stare irked Tom. She crouched to his level on the floor.

“No.”

He was just as baffled as they were.

“Professor, what does it mean?” Walburga’s words were shaky and her body quivered at the eerie event.

“Death is the rebirth of an individual. Normally, the card means you are to die of your old habits and temperance is to sweep in and reform you-”

“But?” Tom’s stone cold gaze looked to the Professor.

Whispers broke out amongst the class. Students shared their theories on what transpired, but mystery riddled the answer.

“This was the act of spirits. Direct interaction of the divine. A message-” The Professor rambled on.

“Saying what, exactly?” His stern voice pierced the air.

“That you cannot reform. It is futile…you will be cursed to remain in your ‘mortal’ or current form for eternity, scouring the world for the sustenance to change, but yield nothing...” Remorse showered the Professor’s face.

Still sitting, Tom bitterly thought about how much he preferred Centaur Divination over the wizard’s way.

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Students filed out of the classroom at the sound of a bell. Uneventful would be the word Hermione would choose to describe the class period. Packing her supplies away, Hermione grabbed her bag and left the classroom. She wanted to speak with Abraxas, but he already left it seemed.

“Hermione.” Cloak flowing around her, Hermione spun at the mention of her name.

“Abraxas?” Her voice came out as a surprised whisper.

“Do you still have the book?” Urgent and lacking formality. It was similar to how he usually was, but a bit more brash.

Eyebrows raised on the perch of her forehead. Rummaging through her bag, she pulled out the thin book.

“It would seem that way.” Agitation lined the words.

“Perhaps it is not blank. Maybe you could write some sort of revealing rune in it. I took notes during the lesson,” He pulled a small stack of parchment, the surface littered with elegant figures, “They should be detailed enough. Take your time with them.”

“Oh, thank you, but I took notes myself- Hey, wait!” Hermione called out to Abraxas’s fleeting
form, papers still in her hand.

Something was under his skin, Hermione just knew it. It was her mission to corner him next time and get it out of him.

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Irritation scratched at the back of Tom’s mind. Divination had been irksome. Questions without answers was one of his greatest pet peeves.

Faux leather formal shoes clacked against the stone of Hogwarts, the sound negligible in the sea of students. Arithmancy was just around the corner. Navigating the ocean of peers, Tom finally broke the threshold of his destination.

A room void of all students, except for a peculiar witch. Agitation melted off of him, stripping him until he felt relief wash over. Seated in a middle row was Hermione. She scribbled fiercely in a blank tome, one that Tom recognized to be the source of her agony. Her frustration was evident, a crooked smile coming to Tom’s lips as he watched her. He fed off of the negative energy she generated.

“What a curious thing you’re doing.” Tom said as he sat down next to Hermione.

He noticed the bunch of notes next to her; elegant scrawl that did not belong to her.

“Yes. A curious thing that is not working as intended.” She sighed.

“Foreign figures. Care to tell me what you’re writing?”

“They’re supposed to be runes that reveal any hidden runes or writing, but as you can see,” she waved the pages in front of his face, “All that’s on them is what I’ve written.”

More students filtered into the classroom as the discussion continued.

“Perhaps if you gave me the pleasure of using your quill I could be of assistanc-” Tom’s words ended early as the bell to start class rang.

“Attention up here, we are to waste no time today.” Professor Hilbert entered the classroom.

Leisurely, he strolled the length of the classroom.

“Numbers, they tell us so much.” Professor Hilbert began, “They prove so much.” He caught the eye of Hermione.

“They also hide many things. Raise your hand if you plan to be a Curse-Breaker.”

Several hands rose in the small crowd of students. The teacher continued his lecture,

“I presume those who are, also are taking Ancient Runes.” Nods of confirmation. “The Runes teacher shared with me that you discussed revealing runes. I’m here to tell you that runes are not the only thing that can help keep secrets.”

Interest swirled in the eyes of students.

“Rare, but still used. Numbers can act as a lock on an item. Arrange them in the correct way and you unlock the hidden.” The Professor went on.
“Sir, how do you configure which numbers to use?” a random voice spoke.

“That’s what we’ll be learning today.” A soft smile poked into the rosy apples of his cheeks.

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Informative. Another way to keep his privacy, was what Tom concluded after the lesson. It sparked the question though; would it be more beneficial to hide things under an arithmetic sequence or with runes? Perhaps a combination.

Ringing interrupted the boy’s thoughts.

“Our mind is in other places. Did the lecture spur you to reconsider the way you store information, Riddle?” Hermione said as she idly gathered her school wares.

Perhaps if a meddlesome witch did not stick her nose where it does not belong, I would not have to reconsider.” There was a playful bite to his reply.

“Well, I’m at a loss with this thing.” The black book laid open for Hermione’s stare of disdain.

“Could always try to leave it. Maybe this time it will be gone for good.” Capping his ink, Tom looked to Hermione to see her deciding what to do.

“Hopefully.” Hermione said dryly.

“You seem unfazed by last night.” Indifference coated the statement, yet curiosity gleamed through in an inquisitive undertone.

“Should I be bothered? Is that what you wanted?” Hermione rebutted. Concentrating on organizing her belongings into her bag, she could not help the drift of her gaze to the inky haired wizard.

“Not in the slightest. I would never want to make a woman uncomfortable.” Pseudo-gentleman behavior achieved.

“Glad we’re in the same boat.” It was a curt reply from the witch.

The steady click of her low heels was in tune with the beat of Tom’s heart. He debated pursuing her out the door, to talk with her. Strolling to the exit, he spared one last glance at the book. He would rather just observe her from afar for a bit.

“If only they would have tried numbers.” The flipping of pages followed the disappointed phrase, revealing dialogue over the course of days. Professor Hilbert’s eyes scanned the pages, reading them. Valuable knowledge.

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Having no more classes for the day was a relief. Sure, homework may be prevalent, but for just a moment, Hermione could relax. Dropping off her books in her dorm was the first task.

Carved stone paved the path. The occasional decorative statue had its place in the corridor. Naturally,
some students wandered the otherwise vacant halls.

“Hermione Dumbledore! Just the witch I was looking for!” An exuberant voice called out. The figure was fast approaching from the opposite end of the hall.

Slowly, the light engulfed the figure to reveal the protruding gut of Horace Slughorn. A skip in his waddle emphasized his gleeful disposition.

“Professor Slughorn.” Hermione greeted.

Finally, the man reached her. Slumped slightly, Slughorn tried to catch his breath.

“Pardon me for being winded, I simply had to get this to you.” An envelope waved in front of Hermione’s face.

“What’s this, Professor?” Fingers caressed the wax seal with intrigue. Silver flakes shimmered in the mossy composition.

“Open it and you’ll see.” He urged.

Gingerly, she ripped the envelope. Immediately, glitter and confetti showered her. Metallic flakes found their way into the bush of curls. Pulling the parchment from its cage, Hermione could only assume what the letter announced.

“An invitation to Slug Club.” Hermione said.

“An invitation to Slug Club!” Slughorn said with much more enthusiasm. The man was practically bouncing on his toes.

“Thank you, this is quite the news to hear.” A smile graced her features.

“Miss Dumbledore, I don’t think you truly see the nuance of your invitation. You’re the first woman to ever be directly invited. Naturally, some of the male guests bring dates, but you’re the first to have an invitation sent.” A giddy grin stretched across the man’s face.

“How polite of you to make me the first. I’m honored.” After the words departed from her lips, Slughorn swelled with pride.

“I do hope that means you accept? I feel that it is only fair that you be allowed a date as well. I do look forward to seeing whose arm you accompany.” A wink accentuated the beginnings of crow’s feet on Slughorn’s face.

“Ah, of course I accept. How could I decline such a generous offer?” Deliberately she chose not to comment on the date aspect.

“You flatter me too much, Miss Dumbledore.” A frivolous laugh chased the compliment. “I do look forward to seeing you in class. Until then, Miss Dumbledore.”

Relief washed over Hermione as Slughorn was out of view. Dealing with the wizard was troublesome at times; a prideful being that tries to subdue the hubris but fails.

Her legs carried her the last stretch to the Slytherin House entrance.
The moon crawled into position, displacing the sun. Dark blue hues as streaks in the sky. Abraxas’s silver gaze focused on the lake view. His thoughts drowned the chatter around him.

“‘Brax, what’s so interesting in the lake?’ Avery’s body turned on the couch he was on, twisting to the lake.

“It’s nothing.” Abraxas shook his head as if it would shake away his thoughts.

Back in the moment, Abraxas took note of the Slytherins that surrounded him: Lestrange, Avery, Dolohov, and Evan Rosier.

“What’s got your mind in a toss, Malfoy?” Lestrange quirked one dark, thick brow. His squared jaw clenched and unclenched during his speech, a seemingly subconscious habit.

“Simply homework.” Abraxas tried to play off.

“Nah, I bet I know what’s on your mind.” Evan Rosier’s smug expression irked Abraxas.

“Do give your best guess.”

Evan braced his elbows on his knees as he leaned in, the group mirroring the gesture,

“I think you’ve got a case of lady problems. Specifically relating to certain Muggle-lover.” Waggling his eyebrows, Evan reclined back into the leather couch that squeaked under his frame.

“As if.” Rolling his eyes, Abraxas tried to pass it off as a light tease.

“I have yet to have the pleasure of meeting her, you know.” Lestrange smacked his lips.

“Perhaps that’s for the best.” Apprehension was evident in Abraxas’s tone.

“Lestrange is great company, I have no idea what you could mean.” Evan threw one arm around Lestrange, but a knowing smile was on his face.

“Dolohov is the one we gotta watch out for.” Avery mentioned, a sly grin tweaking the corners of his mouth.

“Dolohov and Miss Dumbledore definitely would not mix.” Evan stretched his legs out to the jade coffee table that separated two couches.

Dolohov was a strange one, Abraxas had to admit. Sandy hair fell to broad shoulders, framing a narrow face. His nose was crooked, evidence of the brutish encounters he has had. Silence was his favorite thing to partake in, Abraxas noticed.

“Speaking of the witch, perhaps you’ll get to meet her now, Lestrange!” Evan Rosier perked up in his seat as Hermione walked past.

“How delightful.” Lestrange rubbed the dark stubble on his chin, basking in the slim form of Hermione.

“Knock off the desperate eyes, Lestrange. I swear, you’ll fuck anything with legs.” Avery scoffed.

“You’re right. Besides, I’d have to fight Malfoy over here for dibs.” A taunting glare was sent to Abraxas from Lestrange.
Flames of the fireplace glinted in Lestrange’s eyes.

Mouth open, Abraxas was going to retort, but was cut off by Evan,

“Actually, it seems our leader has taken an interest in her.” A click of the tongue punctuated the sentence.

“You can’t be serious, right? Tom Riddle, the Heir?” Lestrange laughed.

“You-know-who.” Evan Rosier admitted.

“Now where did you hear this from?” Avery asked, on the edge of the couch cushion.

“Well, let us think back to the Hogsmeade endeavor. Plus, Walburga mentioned a little potion closet incident in passing.” A snide smile barred Evan’s teeth.

“Walburga is a reliable source?” Malfoy shook his head, but inside he knew the truth to her words.

“Here she comes back again. Wait here, lads.” Evan Rosier stood, brushed off his sleeves and approached a Hermione on her way out the common room.

Abraxas craned his neck around Avery, peering at the interaction.

Hermione clearly looked frustrated and unwilling. But Evan had his hands on her shoulders, gently ushering her to the group.

“Miss Dumbledore, here is Mister Lestrange.” A dramatic bow and gesture of Evan’s hands showcased the rugged male.

“Charmed.” Hermione said as if something bitter pricked her taste buds.

“Absolutely beguiled, I hope.” Lestrange grabbed a hand of Hermione’s, a chaste kiss to her knuckles.

Malfoy felt bile rise in his throat as he watched the two.

“Yes, well, if that was all that was needed of me I’ll be gone.” Hermione swiveled on her heel, keen on leaving.

“Now hold on, stay. We have an empty seat for you to join.” Evan motioned to the seat between Abraxas and Avery.

Malfoy had his lip between his teeth, gnawing at the tissue. He was conflicted.

“I suppose I could stay for a bit.” Hermione qualified.

Leather protested with a squeak as Hermione sat down.

“Now is this not just lovely? What should we talk about, boys?” Evan asked.

“Did you read the notes I gave you?” Abraxas asked Hermione in a hushed tone. The boys around them started their own conversation without them.

“Yes, I tried the rune but it didn’t seem to work.” Hermione stated.

“No, clearly you haven’t read all of the notes.” Malfoy sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.
“Excuse me?” Hermione was taken aback.

“Read through all of it. Answers lie there.” Seriousness dripped from the words, but did nothing to relieve Hermione’s confusion.

“So, Hermione,” She grimaced at the lack of formality, “Have you met with Dolohov before?” Evan asked. A wolfish grin stretched along Lestrange’s face as he heard the question.

“Vaguely once, perhaps.” Hermione said with reluctance.

“Go on Dolohov, why don’t you tell her the funny story about the House-Elf?” Evan nudged Dolohov with his elbow, but Dolohov only glared.

“Fine, I’ll say it, you mute.” Evan sighed dramatically.

“You see, Dolohov is from Albania. He originally went to Durmstrang but was transferred here. He should be a sixth year, but they put him in fifth due to the way Durmstrang works.” Lestrange added.


“Are you going to tell the story or not?” Avery’s exasperated voice said. He had since changed positions on the couch. Now, Avery’s legs were hooked on the back of the couch and his head was upside down and hung over the edge.

“Yes, so, you’ll have to pardon me if I giggle throughout. But Dolohov over here loves to terrorize this ugly House-Elf. Earlier today he shot sparks at the thing’s feet, it was almost as if it was dancing as it tried to dodge!” Evan roared with laughter, the chuckles of Lestrange mixing harmoniously in a deranged choir.

“You, what?” Hermione’s brows furrowed instantly.

“This is not the first time, mind you. Dolohov has a talent for torturing the little buggers.” Evan gloated, but a harsh blow to the side of his ribs turned his chortle into a cough. The perpetrator was Dolohov.

“You just stood and watched, Rosier?” Disbelief struck Hermione like lightning, but should she really be surprised?

“Hermione, don’t start anything.” Malfoy advised.

Hermione had not even realized that she stood from her seat, fists clenched and jaw tight from anger. Dolohov had his arms crossed and Evan had a hand on his wand, itching to use it. Huffing, Hermione plopped back onto the couch.

“Such control you have over her, Malfoy.” Lestrange noted.

“How long have you been terrorizing the House-Elves?” Hermione asked. Her foot tapped against the plush, ornate carpet, leg bouncing wildly as she waited for an answer.

“Do you plan on running to your uncle? I thought you were different, Hermione.” Evan teased.

“Oh, shut up-” Hermione bit out, but a hand on her shoulder caused her to look at the source.

“Wait before you ruin your reputation further. Just relax, you can curse them after dinner or
something.” The wise words of Abraxas infiltrated Hermione’s senses, managing to calm her nerves. “Fine, but I don’t like this.” She clarified as she sunk back into the couch. Desperately she wanted to drone out the incessant squander of poor creatures that the boys spoke about.

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Complaints of classes and homework went in one ear and out the other as Tom passed by the Great Hall. Students assembled in the gigantic hall for supper, but Tom had different plans. School layers on and satchel adorned, Tom’s limber legs strode to a secluded passageway hidden by a tapestry displaying the Hogwarts emblem. One look over his shoulder told him the coast was clear.

Slipping behind the cloth revealed darkness. Masked by the shadows, the narrow corridor’s twists and turns could not be seen.

“Lumos.” Instantly, the tip of Tom’s wand glowed in a delicate blue hue.

It’s not like he truly needed the light, the route was ingrained into his brain.

Familiar worn stone passed. Unconsciously, a finger drifted to the side of the hall, the pad skimming the rough texture. Footsteps echoed. Twist after twist, step after step, closer he got to the end of the labyrinth of tunnel. Seemingly reaching a dead end, a simple knock of Yew to stone opened the world to Tom. Moonlight breached.

A sigh escaped the teenager’s lips. Cold winds lapped at the exposed skin of his neck and face, transmuting alabaster to ruby. Grass crunched under his feet, winter approaching. Extinguishing the light, Tom continued his journey under the night sky. Farther and father, his legs carried him away from Hogwarts.

Rustling branches became white noise to the boy. Onward he followed a mental path into the Forbidden Forest. Vast measures of yellowed grass proceeded. Shrubbery was sparse as he ventured deeper. Death’s influence swept over the area, dormant foliage in its wake.

Finally, a silhouette of the monolithic creature appeared, just where he promised. Pushing past barren branches, Tom entered the clearing.

“Hello, Tom.” Tone was just as indiscernible as the Centaur’s expression. Rays from the moon shined past Aion, illuminating around him but leaving his face to bask in shadows.

“Hello, Aion. I happen to have the supplies.” Tom lifted the bag from his shoulders.

“Splendid! Set them down, I’d like to have a little chat.” Tom’s ears detected a smile in the words.

“I’d rather not be caught out of the castle for long.” Extra measures were taken to hide his emotions from Aion.

“Poor Tom, perfect Prefect worried about another detention? Nonsense, the staff would never think it possible for you to break the rules. Sit.” With a plop, Aion sat down and urged Tom to do the same.

Hesitantly, Tom obeyed. Directly, he sat in the shadow of Aion.

“I hope grabbing the ingredients was not much of a hassle?”

“To an extent.” Tom replied.
"Oh? Do tell." Aion encouraged, but he already knew. He always did.

“I had an encounter with Hermione while gathering the items.”

“First name basis already? I do wonder what happened in that Potion closet.” Teasing was one of Aion’s favorite past times, Tom noted.

“You predicted her behavior quite accurately. I appreciate that.”

“Learn anything from her in the meantime?” Aion inquired.

Tom’s eyes snapped to the hand of Aion’s that drifted into the grass.

“She’s not truly the niece of Albus Dumbledore.”

Aion’s hand grabbed the grass harshly without warning, “Oh?” Aion’s voice faltered.

“She’s the daughter of a distant relative of his. I acquired this knowledge last night.”

“Oh.” Muscles relaxed in Aion’s hand, fingers stretching into the foliage again.

“I still do not understand why she knows so much about me.”

“Dumbledores are an invasive species, you know.” Aion plucked the few alive blades of grass.

“Care to explain why she knows so many things?” Crossing his ankles, Tom supported his weight with his arms and hands behind him.

“That would ruin the surprise though. I do look forward to seeing you display emotion one day.” Teeth glimmered in the dim light.

“I’m afraid I don’t care about her nearly as much as you think I do.”

“Not think, anticipate. You’ll adapt. You’ll change to fit her.” Aion spoke in absolutes. His other hand joined his plucking endeavors.

“Ironic. During Divination I was told otherwise.” Silky locks fell to the side as Tom tilted his head.

“Is that so?” Aion drawled. Accidentally, Aion ripped the stem of a wilting flower as he intertwined it with grass.

“Muggle tarot cards. I drew Death and it burned to ashes.”

“Muggle and Wizard Divination cannot be trusted. Frauds.” Aion took a moment to think, “Most of them, at least.”

Cross and uncross. Tom lounged back onto his hands. Unknowingly, Tom’s brows dug deep down in concentration.

“Something is weighing on your mind. Go on, ask, Tom.” Indifference encased Aion’s words.

“What do you get out of helping me?” Stygian eyes focused on Aion’s ministrations.

“You’ll see at a later date.”

“When?”
“When the planets align in place and all is right in the world.”

“Literally or metaphorically?”

“Tom, you know me, you should know.” The only evidence Tom had to know Aion winked was the sudden absence of a dewy gleam where Tom could only assume Aion’s eyes laid.

“Ambiguity. Frankly, I don’t appreciate that.”

“Look who’s talking, Tom.” The sing-song fluidity of the words irked Tom.

“How do I know you’re not tricking me?”

“Hermione has proven useful before, has she not?” Aion asked.

“If you consider her very existence being frustrating, then yes, I can concur.”

“Nonsense. She has been extraordinarily useful, you’ll thank me later when you realize it.”

“When will I see that?” Syllables came out more urgent than Tom intended.

“Stick to the plan. Charm her, get close to her, extract information from her. Then everything will be revealed in her wake.”

“You act like it’s so easy to tame the heart of a heated witch.” Tom’s eye caught the glint of his onyx and gold ring.

“Nonsense, it is easy.” Aion inspected his craft, bringing it to eye level, “After all, she loves to tend to poor, needy creatures.”

Tom scoffed, “And I fit that description?”

“In her eyes. That’s why she’s perfect.” The words melted to a mumble. Aion presented his craft to Tom,

“Care for a flower crown, Tom?” Crisp twigs and fleeting flowers formed a ring.

Tom’s eyes flickered to the atrocity and back to Aion several times in a silent question of ‘Are you serious?’

“So that’s a no. Fine, I’ll wear it. Couture.” Gently, Aion placed the wilting crown on top of his shiny hair.

“Anything else prodding the deepest depths of your mind?” The cheery tone flooded Tom’s ears, enough to give him the beginnings of a headache. Mood swings were another thing Aion did, perhaps a bit more than a simple past time.

Tom thought long and hard, waiting for a question to conjure in his head.

“What are the potion supplies for again?” An innocent question.

Cawing was heard in the distance, but fast approaching.

“How peculiar.” Tenebrous feathers gleamed in the moonlight. Perched on Aion’s shoulder was a crow. “Diurnal. This creature should be in bed. As should you, Tom.”
It was a clear refusal to answer Tom’s question.

Trivial topics passed from one mouth to another, idle conversation with no purpose besides existing. Malfoy, Avery, Nott, and Hermione sat at their usual spot in the Great Hall. Staring down at her food, Hermione could not help but brood.

“Where’s Tom?” Spit exited Avery’s mouth, accompanying falling crumbs from his chin.

Abraxas gave a look of utter disgust, “Please refrain from speaking while eating. Also, I have no idea.”

The discussion reverted back to frivolous subjects. Words jumped out to Hermione, none of which had coherent meaning in the lack of continuity she plucked them from.

Something about Tom. Something about Divination. Something strange, was all Hermione could gather and string together in a nonsensical thread. Something else was plaguing her mind at the moment.

“I think I’m going to ask a Ravenclaw to Slug Club this time.” Avery mused aloud.

“No Ravenclaw is dumb enough to do that.” Nott muttered, resuming his eating endeavors.

“Tom will most likely ask our dear, Miss Dumbledore here.” Abraxas wiped his lips with a napkin.

Startled from her thoughts, Hermione honed into the conversation. Particularly, the usage of her ‘surname’ struck her as odd.

“Actually, I was invited directly by Professor Slughorn.”

“That explains the little flakes of glitter in your hair.” Abraxas noted while he inspected the loose metallic petals.

Avery huffed from across the table.

“That’s outrageous. Slug Club is an all-boys organization.” Avery chomped into a biscuit, angrily chewing the treat.

“Excuse Avery, he does not understand women can be better than him.” Abraxas sent a slight glare, just enough to put Avery back in line. “So who do you plan on attending with?”

“No one.” Hermione stated simply. Her tone was anchored in her intention, yet the boy’s chuckles lifted the weight.

“Even Tom brings a date every meeting. The women tend to have a separate table after the first half of the meeting, to let the men talk. It would be unusual if you did not bring someone.” Abraxas stated.

“Reputation is extremely important. I’ve heard Sluggy’s got connections and whoever’s arm you’re on matters a great deal.” Nott assured.
“Every meeting usually features some friend of Slughorn’s. Whether they be from the Ministry or published a famous spell, they’ll be there and ready to judge,” Abraxas added.

“That’s why you need a pretty lady with you.” Avery butted in.

“Pretty lady, huh?” Tonguing her cheek, Hermione shook her head in disbelief at the blatant objectification.

“Or handsome, well-established man in your case.” Abraxas clarified.

“I know who I’ll be bringing.” Hermione remarked.

“Who?” Avery asked harshly.

“Like she would tell us.” Nott rolled his eyes.

“Should I anticipate an invite from you?” Abraxas’s silver eyes shined with hope, a pleasant smile gracing his face.

“Absolutely not.” Hermione continued her meal as if nothing she had said had been rude.

Malfoy blinked once, twice, three times until the information settled in.

“That was rather abrupt. Care to explain why?” Malfoy cautiously drawled.

Bushy curls leaned toward him, wrinkles of a frown forming on the witch.

“Care to explain why one moment you dote on me, but the next you vanish only to reappear with congeniality?”

“Perhaps if you read the notes I so kindly gave you, you wouldn’t be asking.” Indifference splayed on Abraxas’s face. Though, his lips puckered slightly, as if the words were sour.

Realizing she would not get any answers, Hermione turned back to her food.

Something tickled at the back of her mind again. Before she knew it, the tickle converted into a full fledged itch.

Subconsciously, Hermione’s neck turned to the other side of the Slytherin table. Lestrange, who she found out to be in seventh year, laughed wildly with Evan Rosier. Dolohov was next to Evan. Gloom stuck to Dolohov’s face everywhere he went, agitation or melancholy being his constant mood. Hermione’s eyes locked with Dolohov’s for a brief moment, but innate instincts whipped Hermione’s head back forwards.

Getting caught staring amplified Hermione’s pulse. Rushing blood past her ears dulled the sixth year boy’s prattle. In her peripherals, Hermione saw Dolohov cup one hand around Evan’s ear. A finger of hers found itself swirling around a Frizzy curl nervously. Stares like daggers, she could feel them focused on her.

Desperately, she forced her head to stay in place. Her ears tried to listen to the melody of Abraxas’s voice as he babbled about some pointless thing. Minute droplets of sweat began to caress her skin.

Slowly, her head turned to the other portion of the table. Lestrange had an edacious smile that barred pristine teeth. Evan and his half lidded eyes bored holes into Hermione. Dolohov, however, was busy picking at his food. Chestnut eyes snapped to a
beckoning finger Lestrange lifted.

Swallowing a nonexistent lump, Hermione stood from her seat.

“Uh, Hermione?” Malfoy’s dumbfounded voice fell behind her as she strutted to the other group.

Stares tracked her movement. Both her previous bench partners and her new ones participated in the act.

“How lovely of you to join us. You may sit here.” Lestrange cooed while patting the open space of bench beside him.

Silently, she took the offering. Directly in front of her sat Dolohov.

“To what do we owe the pleasure?” Evan swished his tumbler of pumpkin juice.

“I came to speak to Dolohov.” Hermione said slowly, deliberately. She hoped the purposeful tone hid her anxiety.

“How lucky he is.” Lestrange noted. A calloused finger of his circled the rim of his glass.

One brow of Dolohov’s raised, though Hermione could barely tell due to the boy’s choppy bangs.

“Mister Dolohov. Ever since our encounter earlier in the day, my mind has been plagued by something.” Hermione started.

The sandy haired wizard gestured with his fork for her to continue.

“How do you get away with it?”

Her eyes trained on the wizard before her.

“Ooo, not the question I anticipated from a goody-two-shoes Dumbledore.” Evan rested his rounded, boyish jaw on his hands.

“Curious to learn, darling?” Lestrange scooted closer to Hermione, but she ignored whatever advances he made.

“Who knew the bird could be so devious. Itching to cause a little mischief?” Evan asked.

“Dolohov?” Hermione urged, ignoring the other two.

No response was given.

“You’ll have to forgive the boy. Actions are his preferred over words.” Evan said.

“If you were so anxious to be a part of the action you could have just said so,” Lestrange’s lips curled, sending shivers down Hermione’s spine, “Our friend Tom Riddle helps us out.”

Heart skipping a beat, Hermione braced herself for her next response,

“Is that so?” she breathed out.

So much for Tom having any redeeming quality ever. The book he gave was probably a sham.

“Mhm. Clever boy, is he not? We’ve never been caught because of him.” Lestrange wrapped an arm around Hermione, pulling her body closer to him as he leaned down, “Perhaps if you did me a favor,
I could put in a good word for you. Then you could do anything you wanted without getting caught.” Lestrange lulled too closely to Hermione’s ear for her pleasure.

Almost immediately, Lestrange backed away, hissing in pain.

Picking his leg up to the wooden bench, Lestrange looked at the damage done.

“What was that for, you prick?” Lestrange turned to Dolohov, face furious.

“You’re good at being disloyal. I doubt Riddle would appreciate you telling her all of this.” Dolohov did not even look up once to meet Lestrange’s heated gaze.

“So he speaks.” Hermione met the empty stare of Dolohov.

“Occasionally.” Dolohov stated as he swirled something around on his plate.

“Indeed.” Caution. It was the only way to interact with Slytherins.

“What’s the real reason you came over here?” Dolohov pricked something with his utensils, elevating the food to his mouth.

“Who says that was not the real reason?” Hermione fumbled out. Her palms felt clammy suddenly.

“Me.” Dolohov said.

“Well, that was all I needed to hear.” Hermione assured, raising her nose in the air as she thought any accomplished Slytherin would do after getting what they want.

“Unlike these fools, I’ve been around the block. I know a liar when I see one.”

“You got me.” Hermione sighed dramatically, “The real question that’s been bothering me is…” She trailed off.

The boys set their eyes on her, bodies turned to her. She had their full attention.

“Do you prey on the seemingly weak because you know you’re inferior?” From the corner of her eye, Hermione saw Evan’s jaw drop in disbelief. Lestrange’s eyebrows were perched highly on his forehead, evidently surprised at the bite the words wagered.

Not waiting for a reply, Hermione stood calmly and exited the Great Hall as swarms of other students followed in the conclusion of dinner.

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Adjusting his cloak, Tom reentered the building. Head peeking out, he glanced once to the left, then to the right inconspicuously. The tapestry fell back in place behind him. Brushing his clothes with his hands, Tom freed the cloth from cobwebs and dust. His trek to the dungeons began.

A low grumble was emitted from Tom’s stomach. He could hear the Great Hall partaking in feast, but it would be suspicious to show so late. Not to mention, supper was almost over. Skipping dinner to speak with Aion seemed silly now.
Mentally, Tom debated what to do. Joining the Great Hall was out of the question. Returning to the dorm hungry would be annoying.

And so Tom strolled to the basement where a gallery of food related paintings lie.

Step after literal step, Tom burrowed deeper into the basement. Chatter from students echoed behind him, travelling closer. It seemed students were retiring to their common rooms.

Hurridley, as to not be caught lurking near the Hufflepuff common room, Tom turned a corner. Passing a statue of the famous Helga Hufflepuff reassured he was close. High ceilings and chandeliers suspended over him. Wooden beams stretched along arches, supporting the architecture. In the distance, he saw the framed foods.

“Now which one is it?” Tom mumbled to himself absentmindedly.

Rapidly, his eyes bounced from one painting to another.

Various depictions of sweet desserts, roasted meats, and fresh food lined the walls. One in particular stood out.

Walking up to the canvas displaying a bowl of fruit, Tom tickled the green brush marks that represented a pear.

This passageway was one of many that he found when hunting for the Chamber of Secrets a year ago.

The pear erupted into giggles. Slowly, it morphed into a vibrant green handle.

Tom was thankful for his prefect status; snacks were available at anytime, no questions asked. Just another perk.

House-Elves were awfully ready to help him the moment he stepped through the door. Eagerly, the creatures practically ran over one another to get to him. Fumes of leftover food wafted throughout the room.

“Riddle, sir!” One elf bounced up to him.

Each member of the staff new him as the gifted, polite Tom Riddle. House-Elves included.

“What can we do for you, Riddle, sir?” Another spoke from the crowd.

Easy to manipulate and easily malleable. House-Elves were facile to Tom. One could beat them and they’d come crawling back waiting for their next demand. Loyalty was admirable trait in Tom’s mind.

“I’m simply peckish. Could you fetch some fresh food?” The tone was polite.

Tom watched as they scampered across the glossy tiles, scurrying to their pots and pans. Magic lifted brass cooking ware from the highest hooks of the kitchen. Ingredients flowed into the pans along the way, the final destination being the roaring fire enclosed by brick.

He sat down at one of five large tables. Patiently he twiddled his thumbs in wait.

A soft tug to his robe disturbed his idle thoughts.

“Riddle, sir? Gooky wonders if you’ve been outside in the cold? Gooky would be more than happy
to stir a cup of warm cocoa for Riddle, sir.” A timid, high pitched voice asked.

Tom looked down to see the droopy-eared House-Elf. Recognition flashed in Tom’s eyes as he realized it to be Dolohov’s plaything. Gooky’s ears were so large that the House-Elf was able to hide its face with them; an action Tom had heard in many tales from Evan and Dolohov. Currently, the House-Elf tugged on the flimsy flesh as it waited nervously.

“I would love that, Gooky. You do make the best cocoa.” Flattery warmed the little creature, a blush dusting dimpled cheeks.

Waddling away, Gooky went to one of many stoves. Pitter pats accompanied each step.

“Gooky?” Tom questioned in an innocent tone.

“Yes, Riddle, sir?” Bulging, dewy eyes turned to Tom.

“Is that a limp? Are the Slytherins bothering you again?” The wizard scolded the elf lightly.

“No. no. not at all, Riddle, sir!” Gooky’s teeth chattered as she shook.

“Don’t lie. You know, I can make them stop if you ask-” He purposefully let the statement hang.

“No! It’s like you said, Riddle, sir. Gooky needs this.” The tiny creature began scolding itself, expression twisting, “Gooky needs to withstand the pain so Gooky can be strong! And Riddle, sir, knows what’s best for Gooky so Gooky will not bother Dolohov, sir, when he is mean!” Gooky did her best to stand tall and proud, but her height was towered by Tom even while he sat.

“If that’s what you wish, Gooky.” Tom merely shrugged.

Quickly, Gooky resumed her journey to the stove. Streams of cocoa powder trailed behind her in the air.

A satisfied smile stretched along chapped lips.

Easy to manipulate and easily malleable.

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Footsteps filled with purpose. Each click of Hermione’s low heels pulled her down from her adrenaline high. Paranoia gnawed at the back of her mind; she had not waited to see Dolohov’s reaction and was not sure if she wanted to.

But now, she was on her way to rectify the situation. Maybe recreating S.P.E.W. was out of the realm of possibilities, but helping one House-Elf from being bullied was still reasonable.

Down stone steps Hermione cascaded. She was the first out of the Great Hall, no Hufflepuffs behind her to her knowledge. Flashbacks from fourth year whizzed in her mind. How kind of the twins to tell her how to get into the kitchens.

Tickling the pear, Hermione waited for it to reveal the handle. A knob, covered in dried and flaking green paint slowly formed on the surface of the canvas. Turning it, the painting-door opened with a click.
“Dumbledore, Miss?” A House-Elf scrambled to the door to meet Hermione there.
“Dumbledore?” Other House-Elves squawked from various positions in the kitchen.
“Wrong Dumbledore.” One Elf called out, effectively turning the rest’s attention back to their tasks.
“Hello. What might be your name?” Hermione crouched to the creature’s level.
“Tawny, Dumbledore, Miss.” The House-Elf rubbed its joints, large eyes cast down.
“Well, Tawny, have you met with a student named Dolohov?” Hermione inquired.
“Hermione? How peculiar to see you here.” Tom Riddle now faced the door, legs crossed in a casual lounge.
Hermione slowly raised from her spot. Legs carried her to Tom without thought.
“You weren’t at dinner.”
“Did you miss me that much?” Tom teased.
“Riddle, sir? Is this a friend?” Gooky approached, hands fumbling with her floppy ears.
A nod was a sufficient answer to the Elf.
“Gooky will pour Riddle, sir, another drink for friend.” Hermione watched as the creature hobbled over to its station.
“They treat you awfully well, don’t they?” Hermione speculated as she sat across from Tom.
Originally, she intended to interrogate the House-Elves and help them. Now, she figured uprooting the source of the problem would be best.
“Creatures of kind habits.” Tom mused.
“Most enslaved species don’t take well to oppression.” Hermione stated benumbedly. Slivers of attitude stuck out of the sentence.
“Enslaved? They like doing their work. They love to toil away.” Tom admired the little workers as they scampered around the room.
Scoffing, Hermione continued, “Sounds exactly like what the oppressor would say.”
“What do you know of oppression, Miss Dumbledore?” His gaze snapped to hers, locking her in.
In that moment, a flurry of emotions flanked Hermione. Instincts to retort opened her mouth.
“Well?” Tom urged, though his face showcased his indifference.
Hermione exuded a long sigh. It would be best not to explain how she is actually a Muggle-born.
“Perhaps I have not experienced it. But sympathy allows for the connection and understanding of all creature’s troubles. It’s something you wouldn’t know about.”
“Here I thought we were on good terms.” If it had been any normal person saying it, the tone would be brimming with frustration. But Tom held a gleeful expression.
“You never cease to amaze me, Riddle. I started thinking you were a normal boy who is just misunderstood.” said Hermione. “I see my mistake now.”

“Now what could have sparked that suspicion?” Tom’s eyes glanced to the portrait door. “What could have provoked you to come down here?”

“What provoked you to be down here?” Hermione snapped back. She was not having his shenanigans.

It was one thing to instill doubt in Hermione. Gifts in the guise of growing bonds and civilized conversations that lead to the questioning of Tom’s true intentions. But, when you spread that doubt to creatures such as House-Elves; well, that was where Hermione drew the line.

“Simply peckish.” It was the same reply he had given to the House-Elf.

“Attending dinner could have solved that. What were you doing during then?” Hermione’s face scrunched in scrutiny. Palms on the table, Hermione subconsciously let her fingers run over the splintering wood.

“Prefect duties.” Tom replied. He spoke as if it were fact.

“Prefect duties include being outside?” Hermione wondered with a sadistic smile.

Tom momentarily tensed. Her eyes pierced through his own, waiting for him to slip. Little lioness was hunting a snake.

“No idea what you mean.” His eyes left hers briefly. The intensity of the stare was too much; he was worried he would buckle under it and break. But not in the way she wanted. No, it would be much more violent than that. Tom never has appreciated vindictivity.

“The bottom of your robes has twigs and leaves on it.”

“Gathered them throughout the day. Sometimes it drags. Never know what’s on these castle floors, you know.” Cooly, Tom said.

Dull disbelief echoed in Hermione’s mind. Tom was taller than most in the school. The possibility of his cloak dragging was a bit humorous.

“Your lips are chapped.” Hermione remarked.

“They’re always chapped.” said Tom.

Rolling her eyes, Hermione huffed. Fingers drummed against the walnut wood table. She was getting sick of Tom’s evasion.

“No, I know they aren’t because-” Hermione started strong, but it fell to pieces.

Tom stepped on the shards.

“Because what, Hermione?” Satisfaction came in the form of a sinister smile.

The crack of broken pieces lifted his spirits.

He watched in amusement as she sat there, fuming in her seat.

“Because of last night.” Brazen words boiled, the bubbles of silence popping at the top.
Malevolence glowed off Tom.

“I didn’t know you cared enough to notice.” Tom said.

“Difficult not to notice when all you want to do is vomit in your aggressor’s mouth.” Hermione said.

“That’s certainly not how you acted.” Tom intertwined his fingers together, elbows on the table. Gently, his head rested on the lacework of his fingers.

“We do things to protect ourselves. I’d like to add that you practically ripped hairs from my scalp, unprompted. You looked like you were going for my jugular.” Hermione recalled the seconds before the kiss, where she reached for her wand to hex him.

“Consider me ravenous.” Tom said with one quirked brow. He leaned in slightly and in hushed tones said, “And do you consider mewling into my mouth to be a defense mechanism? I think you need to reevaluate how you think you feel about me.”

The pitter-pat of feet disrupted Hermione’s incoming retort.

“Cocoa for friend of Riddle, sir.” One mug floated to Hermione. “The other, for Riddle, himself, sir.” The other mug landed on the wooden surface, liquid jostling.

“Marshmallows?” Tom asked, lips pouting as he looked at the blank chocolate fluid.

“Oh! Forgive Gooky, for Gooky forgot!” One by one, tiny marshmallows filtered into the cup.

“Thank you, Gooky.” A pleasant smile from Tom dismissed the House-Elf.

“I don’t get it.” said Hermione. A hand of hers burrowed into her curls, tugging at the roots lightly.

“Good cocoa, is it not?” Tom said before taking a sip. He relished in the heat trail in his esophagus, all thanks to the warm, sweet beverage.

“No, I mean you. The House-Elves.” Baffled was an understatement for Hermione.

How could the future Lord Voldemort, have such a seemingly innocent relationship with House-Elves?

“Kindness is often returned when given.” said Tom.

Hermione’s eyes stared idly at Tom’s mug. His hands enveloped the ceramic as if it were nothing. Hermione’s hands struggled the wrap around hers all the way.

“I know you, Riddle. You aren’t kind. Not genuinely.” War flashed through her mind. The horrid snake-esque face Harry described in such vivid detail that it showed in Hermione’s nightmares too. Suffering. No, he was not kind at all.

“Let’s reiterate your statement. You think you know me. You came here, somehow having prior knowledge of me. Assumptions at best. But you don’t know me, we aren’t close. Not yet, at least.” All teasing tones departed. His words burned through Hermione, the mental sensation causing her gaze to flicker to his own.

She did not reply. Silence overcame the two. The racket of pots and pans clanged in the background, House-Elves toiling away mindlessly.

A large hand stretched over her own. She expected coldness. But, his mug radiated warmth and he
held it dearly to him as if he’d never have the simple pleasure ever again. Heat dripped from his veins it seemed, overcoming Hermione’s own system as his hand laid over hers.

Leisurely, her eyes lifted to Tom’s.

Smokey gray wisps swirled in onyx orbs, maliciousness jutting from the pupil in silver points. His iris reminded her of blades shining in the darkness.

His face showed promise. Hospitable smile, dimpled cheeks.

Slowly, her eyes fell back down to their hands.

Inky quartz glinted, golden band shining as flames flickered. The ugly ring he always wore.

“No, thank you.” Apathy filled the tone. Retracting her hand, Hermione lifted her mug to her lips.

Outwardly, her features showed nothing. But she gulped the drink as if it would give her grace.

“Pardon me?” Tom’s inexplicably confused voice sounded.

“I know who you are. I don’t need to learn.” Hot chocolate dripped from her chin, a sleeve coming to her rescue.

“Hermione, you know nothing about me.” His brows were furrowed.

The witch could not help but admire his handsomeness.

Sculpted cheekbones, it was almost as if Davinci carved him directly from marble. Dark waves of hair, impeccably styled. Oceans would be envious of their form. Alabaster skin gave him a glow; a Greek statue animated.

But those lips. Those precious, once soft lips. Chapped with lies.

What a waste handsomeness was on him.

“I know you better than you know yourself, Riddle. Every nuance about you, I know it. I know what you crave more than anything, I know your deepest darkest fear you hide in the shadows from everyone else. I know you, I know what you want to do in life, I know all about you.”

He cackled. It was nothing like the rich baritone she was used to hearing.

“Go on then, what am I afraid of?” His grin challenged her. His eyes, however, threatened to rip her from her seat by the hair and snap her neck.

“Death.” It rolled off her tongue.

Sharp inhale. He’s sure she did not mean to, but the word flowed off her lips in harmonious melody. The tone soothed his ears, but unease overwhelmed his senses. Shivers racked his body, muscles twitching. Quickly, he regained his composure.

“Truth is, Riddle.” Hermione’s head was propped against one hand, tilted. Boredom painted her face, “I know you, but you don’t know a damn thing about me.”

Clench, unclench; Tom’s jaw was having a field day. The beginnings of hysterical laughter bubbled in his chest.
“You’re right.” He pointed a finger at her.

Melting off, his facade slowly revealed his true self.

“I know I am.” said Hermione. Stoic and calm.

“Mhm. Of course you do. Because you know every bloody thing about me, don’t you?” Rage lined the inquiry.

“Most, probably not all in truth.” Hermione commented.

“You’re a clever witch, little minx.” said Tom. Hermione cringed at the new pet-name.

“I know.”

“That’s because that’s all you know how to do. You know things. That’s it.” Tom recalled Aion’s description of her, “You’re an insufferable know-it-all.”

She winced. The title brought foul memories to mind.

“At least I know things. Better than being mentally barren.”

Vulturine. Tom’s expression was absolutely feral.

“I think I like you more than I ever have, Hermione.”

It came as a surprise to Hermione.

“Allow me to explain. I’ve been pressuring myself to be a gentleman around you. Hiding my true self, so to speak. But why? Why should I do that if you already know it’s fake? No, no.” He shook his head at himself, hysterical giggles pausing him, “I told myself I was going to charm you. Woo you with politeness. No, it’s going to be much worse.”

He stood, full towering height. He slid across the table top casually. Sitting next to Hermione, he wrapped an arm around her shoulders. Akin to a boa constrictor, Tom pulled her in, deflating her lungs. She gasped as her body stiffened.

“No, it will be worse. I’m going to make you fall in love with the real me. I’m going to exploit those twisted desires you keep locked away. And you’re going to thank me. Every. Step. Of. The. Way.”

Each word was ground out with such purpose. It was much more than a promise.

Reflexes kicked in. Hermione snatched her wand from her waistband, tip pointed into the bare flesh of Tom’s neck. The dark wood jarred into his sallow complexion.

“Oh, you won’t be needing that just yet. We’ll get to it. I’ll expand your mind in the realm of the Dark Arts. You’ll be aching for more knowledge because that’s what you do. You love,” the word was long and drawn out, “to know things. You’re going to beg me to teach you.” Eyes fluttering shut, Tom imagined the prophesied scenario.

“I would never…” Disgust saturated words. Hermione fought against the hold he had on her.

“Oh, but you will. You’ll be just like me. Teeming with knowledge and power. Don’t tell me you believe in such a thing as light and dark magic? You’re too good for that.” A large hand caressed her cheek, “So much potential…”
Slapping the hand away, Hermione stood abruptly. She stared down at the teenager. Only now did she see the ruby glint in his eyes that Harry described so many times. The silver blades of his irises were tainted with blood red. This is what he truly was. A murderer masked.

“My potential lies in defeating you. And I will do it without the Dark Arts.” said Hermione boldly.

A single chuckle emitted from Tom.

“Here I thought you knew everything.”

“I know that you’re obsessed with power. I know you’re afraid of dying. I know your name.” Hermione finished. She breathed heavily, chest heaving. Shoulders raised only to fall.

“Every knows that, Hermione.” He remarked with a smile. It was not human. It twisted his handsome features, contorting him into the monster he really is.

“I know that you want the masses to be scared of uttering a single syllable of it. You thrive off of fear. Your hubris swells with it. But just know, that I am not afraid to say it.”

His eyes narrowed at her, waiting.

“Goodnight, Lord Voldemort.”

He was the one to stand this time. He squared with Hermione, breath steady but nostrils flaring. Primal instincts told him to go for the kill.

Instead, better judgement swept his feet to the door. With a slam, the portrait swung closed behind him.

Pitter-pats of feet approached Hermione.

“Oh, no. Gooky has Riddle, sir’s food. But Gooky was not quick enough.” Gooky’s head bent in shame.

“That’s okay. Gooky, was it?” Hermione asked in a tender voice.

“Gooky indeed, ma’am. Who might you be?”

“I’m Hermione, feel free to call me by such.”

“Hermione, ma’am, is a friend of Riddle?” Gooky’s large, doe eyes wondered at Hermione.

“Sort of. It’s complicated.” said Hermione.

“Well, any friend of Riddle may venture to the kitchens. Hermione, ma’am, included.” said Gooky.

“How kind of you, Gooky. I’ll be sure to visit often.”

“Make sure Riddle is okay, Hermione, ma’am!” Gooky called out as Hermione approached the door. She contemplated if she should eventually.

What if she really was wrong about Riddle? What if she is condemning the boy to his fate?

Curse her sympathy for poor beings in need.

She’d go back to him at a later date.
But should she? He was quite rude. Calling her a know it all…

She knew things, but not all.

Fate however, knows all.

Chapter End Notes

Need any plot clarifications? Feel free to ask! I write these late at night and they can get confusing to the reader! I'm always here to help.
Chapter Summary

Not a day goes by when something uneventful happens at Hogwarts. This time, an intruder ventures into the castle. Students are unfazed, used to the dangerous climate of the school. However, Hermione remains perturbed when she discovers the identity of the intruder. And how far that intruder is willing to go to mess with her as she assembles with her Slytherin peers during the Wizard Billiards Tournament.

Chapter Notes

For starters, I apologize for the time it took to crunch this chapter out! It certainly took awhile to write and I encountered massive writer's block during it. I hope it does not affect the quality. That being said, it came out way longer than expected; I tried finding a way to cut it in half, but I felt that it messed with the continuity. Things to note are in the ending chapter notes!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Closed eyes and soft blankets did wonders to ease the mind. That is what Abraxas Malfoy concluded as he laid on his back in bed. Forearm over his forehead, Abraxas relaxed. Unconsciousness tempted him with slumber, but the words of Avery intervened.

“Anyone remember what time Wizard Billiards is?” said Avery.

Malfoy cracked one eye open. Avery’s head hung over the edge of his bed, brunet fringe exposing his forehead. With a bored expression, Avery dawdled with the chords of his cotton bathrobe. A poor Episkey hid facial abrasions on Avery; Malfoy recalls the boy’s shaving endeavors to be more harmful than helpful.

“Tomorrow, before dinner.” An Irish accent chased the syllables.

Nott sat at the foot of his mattress. Legs criss-crossed, Nott scavenged through his suitcase of belongings.

“I wasn’t asking you, git.” Avery snorted, cackling at his own ‘brilliant’ retort.

“You literally said anyone.” Shaking his head, Nott continued to rummage.

“What are you looking for Nott?” Abraxas peered, but the posts of his bed blocked the view.

“My earmuffs. I figured I could use them to tune you dolts out. No offense, mate.” Nott replied.

“Eh. None taken, chap.” Abraxas popped the ‘p’. Quiet soon took control of the conversation. Distant stomping reverberated against the male dormitory corridor. Abraxas raised the upper half of his body up, looking to the other boys with confusion.
“What’s that?” asked Nott. Befuddlement grossed his face.

Avery, too, was now up and confused. He turned to the other two with a questioning glance. Malfoy shrugged in response to Nott, bafflement never leaving his features.

“What should one of us go look?” Nott questioned. He had abandoned scouring his personal items, trunk open on his lap.

“Uh, you can. I’m going to stay right here.” Avery said.

Rolling his eyes, Nott looked to Abraxas.

“I’m certain it’s just some fellow. Should pass soon.” The calm voice of Malfoy stated. On the inside, however, Malfoy was perplexed.

Thundering footsteps approached rapidly, the sound closer. Taking advantage of the nonexistent conversation, Malfoy listened intently.

“Do you hear the duller steps? I don’t think it’s just one person…” Malfoy noted, brows closing together.

Avery took a moment to sit in the silence. Concentration opened his mouth and narrowed his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah, I think you’re onto something, ‘Brax.” Nodding, Avery agreed with Malfoy’s speculation.

And then it stopped. No steps. Complete, utter quietness. An eerie chill crept through Abraxas who shivered at the sensation.

“Uh-” Avery started, but was interrupted.

Slamming into the stone wall, the door swung wildly on its hinges. Jumping at the abrasive sound, the three boys jolted upright. The door’s creaks were enough to stir another rack of shivers, the sound haunting. Malfoy could have sworn he saw the wood of the door split slightly with the amount of force it endured.

In came a furious Riddle, followed by the frightened faces of Evan Rosier and Lestrange. The latter two were ushered into the room. Their eyes were glued to the floor, not daring to peek at anything or anyone.

With the point of his wand, Tom casted a silent ‘Muffliato’.

“Nott. Leave.” Tom ground out with gritted teeth.

He did not even have to think twice; immediately, Nott left and went down to the common room with wide eyes. Behind him, the door shut, caging the occupants in. Snakes trapped in the presence of a rabid predator.

“Who did it?” A simple question. Tom was calm and collected, voice unswerving. Strolling the length of the room, Tom set to a leisurely pace.

Confusion stretched along the faces of Avery and Abraxas. Their eyes tracked Tom’s every stride, every movement, every minor detail in his gait that might warn them of hostility.

Pure terror masked Evan’s usually snide features. Arms wrapped around his knees, Evan huddled against the foot board of Avery’s bed. Malfoy’s eyes flickered to Evan for a moment, noting how he
shook. Even Lestrange looked remarkably shaken up.

Meeting with the wall farthest from the door, Tom turned to the group, composure vanishing.


“Who did what, Tom?” Avery quivered, his voice cautious. An audible gulp passed in his throat as he met the gaze of Tom.

Malføy’s eyes widened, eyebrows reaching their peak as he watched Avery’s ankle twist by an invisible force. Bones cracked, causing the boys to cringe. The morbid cries of Avery did nothing to help his situation.

“Silencio.” Tom hissed.

Avery continued wailing, but no sound was emitted.

“Which one of you, told her?” He desperately tried to control his tone, but the vexation rendered the effort useless.

Rampant heartbeat and pulse, Abraxas took in deep breaths. He has dealt with this version of Riddle before. It was best to do it without showing fear.

“My Lord, please clarify what you mean. I’m afraid we are lost.” Abraxas choked out with as much eloquence as he could muster,

Seething, Tom continued, “I mean, who told Hermione my true name.”

Silence was the answer. Malføy’s gaze jumped from Evan, to Lestrange, to Avery. Evan remained to shake on the floor, choosing to stare at the floor with startled eyes. Lestrange held his head in his hands, eyes closed as he sat against the footboard of Tom’s bed. Avery gripped his ankle, fingers pinching the fabric of pajama pants. Biting his lip, Avery tried to keep the tears of pain from falling down his cheeks. Malføy was certain tendons must have ripped and bones broke.

“Well?” Tom’s raised voice rattled. Wincing, the boys braced themselves for the next verbal or physical attack.

“I see. You all choose to be silent. I figured you lot to be smarter than that.” His path stopped in the midst of Evan and Lestrange.

“Evan, you’re first. You tend to let things slip.” Glowering down at the fifth year, Tom waited for Evan to stand.

With a shaky exhale and wobbling legs, Evan stood. Head bent down, Evan refused to meet the gaze of the malevolent being in front of him.

“Rosier, you know what you have to do.” Tom chastised.

Hesitantly, Evan craned his neck to look Tom directly in the eye. He sweated profusely in front of the dark wizard, fevered skin radiating warmth.

Ceremoniously, Tom brandished his wand. Stark white Yew splintered to a point.

Precisely, Tom tapped the wand against Evan’s temple. Evan trembled as he waited for the word, the cursed word that stripped him of his privacy. Terror flashed in his eyes, an observation Tom relished
in momentarily.

“Legilimens.”

Intently, Tom took in the images that flashed in his vision. Nothing notable, of course, it was not like he actually thought Evan to be stupid enough to let it slip. No, Tom was wanting to make a spectacle of the boy, to make the true perpetrator confess.

Fascination lit up Tom’s face. Wonder in its purest form. It was like he was a primary schooler learning the rudimentary things of life for the first time. In his peripherals, Tom noticed the mixture of disdain and fear on Abraxas’s face. Tom adored it.

“Nothing here it seems. You’re free to go.” Apathy coated the words, syllables dripping with indifference.

Evan gasped for air. It was as if he had been suffocating under Tom’s influence. Stumbling, Evan scurried out the door.

“Either one of you wish to confess your sins?” Clicking of the door punctuated the inquiry. Tom turned to the three remaining boys. None of them responded.

“Ah, well, in that case, Lestrange. It’s Judgement Day.”

With a deep sigh, Lestrange willed his legs to lift him. He was not as open with his fear as Evan was.

“Let us take a look, shall we?” The question was supposed to be a warning, so Lestrange could adjust and prepare himself. But, Tom invaded the depths of his mind in the middle of the question, causing Lestrange to recoil.

No, nothing interesting lied in Lestrange. Several hookups and boasts of lies. But, no memory of telling Hermione of Tom’s true name.

“You may go.” Tom granted the man freedom. Rubbing his eyes, Lestrange wandered to the door.

“Malfoy. Do you understand why I might suspect you the most?” Tom drawled. Limber legs carried him to Malfoy’s bed.

“Of course, my Lord. I have shown signs of disloyalty.” Abraxas replied. His face twitched, completely betraying the confidence his words tried to convey.

“I’m not going to invade your mind, Abraxas.” Tom stated.

Confusion swept over the blond Pure-blood.

“Why not, my Lord?”

Onyx eyes met with stormy silver.

“I don’t need a spell to know that you did not do it. You’re a dunce when it comes to loyalty, but even you know that genuine betrayal would be condemning yourself.” The bed shifted under the weight of Tom, “You act tough, but I know you were the most frightened one here tonight. I don’t
need a spell to tell me that."

Without another word, Tom went to the bathroom. On the way, he revoked the silencing charm on Avery. Sobs entered the atmosphere again. With a click, the bathroom door shut behind Tom. All that remained in the room was Avery and Malfoy.

Bare feet walked across the floor to join Avery. Pointing his wand and muttering incantations, Malfoy attempted to heal the twisted limb of Avery’s. Neither of them exchanged words, but a silent understanding hung heavy in the air.

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Dressed in her pajamas, Hermione sat on her bed. Curtains shut out the world around her. Earlier, she had fished out the notes Abraxas gave her. Laying in one palm was the mass of pages and Vine wood in the other. With a mental incantation, the writing was illuminated.

Skimming the words, Hermione flipped through the pages trying to look for what Abraxas had been hinting about. It seemed like ordinary Rune notes.

Her finger stopped on the second to last page.

"I imagine you’re studious enough to flip through all of these. Even though you don’t need them—That’s besides the point though. Here lies an explanation for my behavior. You may have noticed a change in my demeanor (For which I do apologize for.), but it is necessary.

Riddle thinks I’m loyal to him and I intend to let him think that way for as long as possible. Him and I have been on the rocks so to speak as of late. He has been waiting for me to slip, and it’s technically connected to you. Riddle thinks I have too much of a soft spot for you. I believe that whole snogging stunt was to ‘make me realize that you aren’t interested.’ and I want him to think it worked. Which is why (as much as it pains me), I ask for space. Until I can best him. This will be in your best interests as well. I hope to figure a way out of his organization and to figure a way where he’ll leave you alone. I can’t help but feel I owe it to you; if it weren’t for me, you wouldn’t have been introduced to Riddle. I should have been wiser. I should have realized the doom I damned you to.

Anyways, this was just an explanation. We can still communicate, but if it’s anything concerning Riddle, we should do so in a discreet manner.

P.S. Let me know if Riddle bothers you in anyway. I’ll see what I can do from behind the scenes."

And the notes shifted to ancient scribbling again. Wrinkles of confusion folded Hermione’s face.

The kiss was just a way to prove something to Abraxas? Relief washed over Hermione. Thank Merlin soon-to-be Dark Lord was not falling head over heels for her. Though, his obsession still looms.

It was a little nice to know that Hermione had an ally in Abraxas Malfoy. A twinge of anxiety pricked her as she thought about why. Would he still support her if he found out who she was? If he knew her blood?

Putting away the notes, Hermione lounged into her comforter. Sleep was the next step for the night.
What concoction is she making with those potion ingredients?

How does she know how to open the door to the kitchens?

How does she know his name?

A plethora of questions swarmed in Tom’s mind as he lay under his covers. Every time, he gets in the moment and forgets to question about the minor things; such as how she knows the entrance to the kitchens. It’s such a minute detail. But, one that should not be known by a student of less than a week.

Kicking off the covers, Tom sat up. Sleep crusted in his eyes was rubbed away. He could feel the pounding of his heart; all because of the frizzy haired witch. The dominion she had over his mental state irked Tom. Taking a deep breath, Tom tried to keep the anger at bay.

Someone must have told her the name.

Or she could have over heard it.

Both were valid considering the dunces he controlled.

Face contorting into a scowl, he thought hard. It was not fair. She knew everything for some unholy reason that he could not pin-point. But he knew nothing. Zilch. Zero. Not even a real name.

It made sense, to an extent. No one had even heard of a Hermione Dumbledore until a week or so ago. Perhaps her last name truly was Granger. Maybe Evan was right all along. And, if what she had said was true, she’s only distantly related to Dumbledore.

Softly, Tom’s head landed back on his pillows. Frustration officially peaked. Black strands splayed across the pillow. Sweaty palms laid open to his sides. The temperature increased, almost suddenly to Tom. Unusual for the dungeons submerged in icy water.

If she had bewitched him, he would not be surprised. It was a much more logical explanation for the recurring image of her than his own subconscious summoning her.

Defensive, yet offensive.

Kind, yet vicious.

Brilliant, yet so incredibly stupid.

No one has ever challenged Tom in the manner she did. He could almost applaud her for the effort; lioness roaring at the emperor in the Colosseum.

But the lioness is trapped. And at his command, the emperor can decimate the beast. After all, the fight is just for entertainment.

Eyes fluttering shut, Tom allowed sleep to whisk him away for the night.
Even breaths. Loose curls branched away from Hermione's head as she slept. Subconsciously, her hand reached out for a mass of orange fur. Landing on a soft blanket, her hand stroked the surface. Cuddling up to the fabric, Hermione let out a serene sigh.

Blissful slumber was interrupted by beams of light passing through her eyelids.

“Hermione, out of bed.” The familiar pitch of Druella rang.

Groggily, Hermione blinked. Disappointment inhabited her exhale as she noticed the lack of Crookshanks next to her. Instead, a coiled blanket was in his usual spot.

“Hermione, seriously, there’s no time.” Druella insisted.

Wincing, Hermione looked to the source of light. Instinctively, a hand went to shield her eyes from it. Blue light poured from the tip of Druella’s ornate wand. It was still dark out, judging by the way the Great Lake refracted the moon’s beams.

“Druella? What’s going on?” Hermione’s tiredness shone through her words.

“Oh, come on!” Slippers shuffled across the floor. Walburga stood with hands on her hips, wand in hand.

Both girls wore silk night robes over their cotton pajamas; scarlet for Walburga and sapphire for Druella.

As she was about to question further, Hermione was suddenly ripped from her bed. Immediately, she fell to the floor with a thud.

“Why would you do that-!” Hermione began but was silenced by Walburga.

“You were taking too long, now come on!” Walurga let her wand fall to her side. With quick strides, she walked out of the dorm.


“Thanks.” Hermione said slowly. The world passed in blurs as she shrugged it on. Drowsiness was battling with the adrenaline rushing in her system.

“No problem, we better make it down to the common room before Professor Slughorn counts us as missing.” Drawled Druella’s monotone voice.

“What? Druella, what’s going on?” Hermione paused on their way down the steps, her head light and fuzzy. Druella grabbed her arm and dragged her along the spiral staircase.

“Security issue at Hogwarts. It’s no big deal, something similar happened last year. We have to go down and be counted by head of house.”

“Security issue?” The astonishment came out as a half yawn. Quickly, Hermione’s hand shot up to her mouth to cover the yawn.

“Rumor has it there’s a spy from Grindelwald at Hogwarts.” Evan Rosier was waiting at the bottom of the staircase. A snide smirk accompanied his features. A family crest presented itself proudly on a flap of his blue robes.

A retort, undoubtedly sarcastic, was about to leave Druella’s lips.
“Hermione Dumbledore and Druella Rosier?” Slughorn shouted from the middle of the common room. He wore a plaid robe over his night clothes, hair ruffled as if he had been woken suddenly.

It made Hermione wonder how her hair must have looked.

“Here.” Druella raised her arm in the air, along with Hermione’s. The bushy haired witch was grateful; she was not sure she had the strength to do it herself.

“Good, good.” The robust wizard mumbled to himself as he marked their names off of a list.

Hermione gazed at the plethora of students loitering around. First years were spooked, but older peers joked and paid no mind. In a secluded corner, she spotted the Slytherin sixth year boys. Though they sat together, they did not appear to be talking.

“Hermione, what a surprise to see you here.” A muscular arm slinked around her shoulders, pulling her away from Druella.

“Lestrange.” Came the curt greeting. In the dim light, Hermione could see the grease he seemed to slick his hair back with.

“The one and only.”

She was about to duck and escape his capture, but someone sandwiched her on the other side.

“As I was saying back there, rumor has it there’s a spy.” Evan Rosier walked in step with Lestrange.

“How lovely.” Candid disgust was present on Hermione’s face.

“Rumor has it that you’re connected to it.” Lestrange added.

Jolting in their grasp, Hermione combatted, “And what’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, simply stating a theory. How about we go join Tom and his group?” Lestrange did not give her a choice. The two boys led her directly to the corner she wanted to avoid.

Solemn faces were popular among the group. Not a single smile was present on Malfoy, Avery, Nott, or Riddle.

“She has been retrieved.” Evan stated. Hermione cringed at the verb; being compared to a dog toy, something to be fetched.

“Splendid.” Tom held his head up with a fist under his chin.

Abraxas perked up at the sight of Hermione. Everyone else still held their serious expressions. A quick glimpse to Avery made Hermione concerned. Worry stretched her lips into a thin line. Heavy bruising peaked out of the cuff of his pajama pants. Definitely fresh.

“Sit, Hermione.” Malfoy urged, cordial smile wavering slightly.

Eyes still on Avery’s ankle, Hermione lowered herself beside Malfoy.

Realizing the attention, Avery yanked his trouser leg down to cover the marks.

“Any perspective on the rumors, Miss Dumbledore?” asked Tom.
Her gaze snapped to him. She regretted looking at him.

Apathy, indifference, monotony. Complete detachment on the surface. It was as if the void took on a human form and its name was Tom Riddle.

“I just woke up, you can’t expect me to already have an opinion.” It was true. Hermione waited in the pregnant pause.

“Intriguing.” Tom said. But it sounded anything other than such.

Silence washed over the group. Evan and Lestrange had since booked it across the room. A hand of Avery’s went to his ankle every once in awhile, retracting it quickly when he applied pressure. Hermione focused on the intricate rug below her feet. She could feel Tom bore holes into her form; undoubtedly malice behind the orbs.

“That’s all the names! I have to run and report this to the Headmaster, for the time being…” Slughorn paused. He could not just leave the students unsupervised. A light bulb flickered on in his head, “Tom! Come here a moment, dear boy.”

The corner group turned to the Professor. Tom stood, his black, flannel night robe trailing behind him. Everyone in the group seemed to relax their clenched shoulders and let loose the breath they held. Hermione watched as Tom spoke with Professor Slughorn.

“Hermione, did you read through the notes?” Abraxas asked urgently.

Nodding, Hermione said “Yes.”

Relief visibly passed through Malfoy as he reclined back into the couch.

“Malfoy, what happened to Avery’s ankle?” Hermione spoke in hushed tones.

Silver widened for a mere moment. Adjusting himself in his spot, Abraxas answered, “Something happened earlier.”

“Real specific. More detail this time please?” Hermione could not help the sarcasm roll of her tongue.

Avery chose to ignore the conversation.

Abraxas debated mentally. His face was one of a thinker.

“Riddle mangled his ankle for speaking out of line.” Malfoy gave in and confessed in a whisper.

Shock did not register in Hermione. In fact, she was not surprised. Anger, instead settled on her features.

“Why?” she demanded.

Hesitance.

“Why?” she insisted again.

Abraxas exuded a long sigh, “I don’t know how you know, nor do I want to, but you know Tom’s, well, preferred, name. He interrogated us to see who told you.”

Guilt flooded Hermione’s system. She should have expected this, she should have known something
detrimental would happen. Sure, she was not friends with Avery, but the boy was marred because of her. Because of her gutsy retaliation.

“Avery, come here.” She said suddenly.

Brown locks whipped to her direction; it seemed he was in a trance of sorts.

“Look, Hermione, I don’t think what you’re about to do is wise.” Malfoy stated.

Waving her hand, Hermione beckoned Avery over. Chewing his lip, Avery agreed and limped over to their couch.

“Problem?” Avery tried sounding tough, but the word came out raspy. Crying. Hermione was certain that’s why his throat was so scratchy.

“Lift your pant leg up.” said Hermione.

“That is, definitely not the way to ask.” Malfoy grimaced at the poor choice of words.

Nonetheless, Avery obeyed.

“The other one.” Hermione stared at Avery. Horror and fear swirled in his eyes.

Looking to Abraxas, who only nodded, Avery lifted the proper trouser leg. Dark hues wrapped around his flesh, speckles of red sprinkling the surface.

“Sit on the table and lend me your ankle.” Hermione instructed.

“Why should I?” Avery protested.

“Because I said so, just sit.” Hermione huffed.

Unfortunate for Hermione, Avery was better at being a child than she was.

“No.”

“Avery.” She gritted out the name.

“You can’t make me.” He turned his nose in the air, arms crossed. No matter how proud he was being, he could not hide the quiver of his injured leg.

“Crying out loud.” Abraxas gestured his wand at Avery, forcibly sitting Avery with a gentle thud. Widened eyes demonstrated Avery’s surprise.

Seated on the jade coffee table, Avery waited begrudgingly. Bringing out her wand, Hermione let a warm glow encompass the bruised tissue.

“It may hurt for a second.” After the warning, Avery winced as searing hot correction filled the limb.

“What the bloody hell? Are you even trained in healing?” Avery cursed.

“Not professionally.” Hermione replied.

“Brax, get this loon off me before she cuts my leg in half!” Avery pleaded.

“Avery, just, shut up for once.” Malfoy rubbed his temples, trying to block out Avery’s incessant string of curses.
“Why are you doing this for me?” Avery questioned.

“Even though you have never once been pleasant to me, you don’t deserve this.” Hermione offered a sincere smile. Avery did not know how to react.

“You are so kind, Hermione.” Sorrow twinged Abraxas’s compliment.

Professor Slughorn cleared his throat, grabbing the attention of the room.

“Since I must leave, Tom will temporarily be in charge. Behave yourselves!” The professor beamed.

“Why doesn’t he just have Tom deliver the report?” Nott wondered aloud.

“No idea.” Abraxas commented.

Avery retracted his leg from Hermione’s lap. Everyone turned to Tom.

“It seems some of our first years are frightened and I’m sure all of you are curious as to what’s going on. Professor Slughorn has given me permission to tell you that an intruder is in the castle—” Tom’s words were deafened by the cries of first years.

Older students rolled their eyes, asking the children to quiet down.

“Oh, Tom! I have an idea on how to calm everyone down.” Walburga said, running up to Tom who stood in the middle of the room.

“Yes, Miss Black?” The formality in Tom’s tone knocked Walburga down a notch, her excitement faltering.

“We could play some games. Like, Spin the Bottle or Truth or Dare.” Flirtation evident in her tone.

“Walburga, you have a fiance.” Druella remarked with disgust.

“Your point?” Walburga retorted.

“He’s literally in this room.” Druella pointed to Orion. Everyone followed the direction; Orion offered a meek wave.

“I think Miss Black may be onto something. Any game recommendations?” Tom asked the whole room. He made sure to keep a pleasant smile on; it just never reached his eyes.

“We could play Wizard’s Heads Up 7 Up.” Evan Rosier spoke up.

Lestrange nudged his side harshly, saying something about how childish that sounded.

“Perfect. Does everyone know how to play?” asked Tom.

Confusion pinched Hermione. She leaned toward Abraxas, “Uh, what’s so wizard about this game?”

“Literally nothing. It’s the same as the Muggle version; we just call it that to make ourselves feel better.” Malfoy answered calmly.

Even more confusion infiltrated Hermione as she pondered it.

“Alright, raise your hand if you want to be it.” Tom watched as mostly first and second years rose
their hands.

He began to pick them out, one by one, until he had four.

“Walurga, Evan, and Nott. You’re up.” Tom commanded. Walurga and Evan happily obliged.

“Dumb arse is asleep.” Avery jutted a thumb behind him. Indeed, Nott was passed out on a couch, decorative pillows covering face as he snoozed.

“Avery, language. I’ll be the last chosen one then.” Tom stated.

A hand raised in the air; it belonged to Dolohov.

“Yes, Dolohov, everyone needs to participate.” Tom answered before the boy even asked. Dolohov’s hand slowly went back to his side.

“Heads down everyone!” Evan said with childish glee. Older students groaned.

Nostalgia slapped Hermione in the face as she held her head in her hands. Back in primary, her class used to play this. It felt alien to play it now.

“I am not going to put my head down.” Harsh whispers barked from Avery.

“Just put your head down.” Malfoy encouraged.

Hermione could not see the two, but she could imagine.

“No-” Avery was cut off by a thud. Hermione heard the coffee table shake.

“Ouch, that bloody hurt! You didn’t have to slam my damn head into the table!” Avery was silenced by approaching footsteps.

The pair of feet held a certain heaviness to them. Purposeful, deliberate. Accurately calculated and brimming with determination. Hermione felt her thumb touched by a mysterious person; the thumb retreated into her fist.

“Stand up if you were chosen.”

Hermione opened her eyes, seeing the rest of the population doing the same. Slowly she stood, along with seven others. The people who chose the others formed a line near the common room entrance.

Eight people stood in total.

“Lestrange, no one chose you. Sit down.” Tom sighed.

“I could have sworn-” Lestrange insisted.

Several younger students pulled Lestrange down by his sleeves, giggling at him. Crossing his arms, Lestrange muttered insults at the childish game.

Hermione, Druella, Avery, Cygnus, and three lower classmen stood.

“We should go in a line.” Walurga pointed right to left; the lower classmen would be guessing first.

The first two guessed correctly. Proudly they stood among the line of pickers. The other lower classman, however, was severely disappointed when they had been wrong.
Now, it was Avery’s turn.

“I guess... Evan.” Avery confidently announced.

“Nope.” A wide grin stretched along Evan’s face as he rocked back on his heels.

Avery’s pride fell from his face.

“What?” He said in disbelief.

“Next guesser-”

“No, no, no! I have been the Heads of Seven Up champion since second year! You can’t take that away from me!” Avery marched up to Evan, weaving through the kids sitting on the floor. His limp hindered him slightly.

“Go sit back down-” Tom began.

“He’s lying!” Avery’s finger was so close to Evan that he was practically touching the younger boy’s nose.

“Look, you’re just not the champion anymore-”

“This is an outrage! I demand we riot!” Avery tried to muster everyone’s attention, but all looked back at him with lame eyes.

Limping, he stomped back over to the corner. He rubbed his hands together; preparation for the task. And began to lift the jade coffee table to overturn it.

It did not work.

Making a spectacle of himself, everyone began to laugh at Avery. Since he could not riot by flipping tables, he chose the next best thing.

Lifting the pillow off of Nott’s face, Avery swung his arms back and smacked Nott with the pillow with full force. The beast woke and stalked his prey for vengeance.

The two boys ran around the room. Avery had much more difficulty, being much slower than the Irish fellow chasing him. So he climbed. Climbed over furniture. Climbed over people. Climber over Lestrange.

“Get the hell off of me!” A Southern English accent barked. Avery was practically climbing the back of Lestrange, hands rooted in his hair as he tried to mount him.

“You’re a wall of meat, protect me, you fool!” Avery shouted.

A girlish shriek emitted from Avery. Nott was gaining on him. The ginger boy held two pillows in hand, ready to clap Avery’s skull between them. Closer, Nott approached. And closer. And closer.

“Pillow fight!” A young student yelled as she ripped a pillow from a neighboring couch. Several students joined the fight.

Tom watched as the common room descended into chaos. Nott still chased Avery. Avery still ran away, using children to hinder Nott. Lestrange fought off the children that beat him with cushions. Hermione and Abraxas appeared to be having a lovely chat. Walburga braced a couch cushion over her head, preparing to smack Hermione. Thankfully, Druella caught the cushion before it could have
landed on the unsuspecting witch.

“heads up seven up is now forbidden in the common room.” Tom muttered to no one in particular. With a sigh, he stood off to the side lines, watching entropy envelop the scene.

After the whole fiasco and some explaining, Slughorn escorted the group to the great hall. Sleeping bags littered the floor. Tables were vanished to maximize room capacity. Enchanted, the ceiling displayed shimmering stars, revolving planets, and fiery comets. It was beautiful in Hermione’s mind, but stress itched at the back of her brain. The stars reminded her that this was not home.

“Please, choose a sleeping bag near your House. It won’t be comfortable, but until the intruder is discovered, this is the sleeping arrangement.” Armando Dippet spoke in a feeble voice.

A choir of complaints echoed. Clearly, the students were not happy.

“As for tomorrow, classes are cancelled. Classes will resume the day after-morrow.” The Headmaster announced.

Cheers broke out. Students clapped enthusiastically as they sat on their sleeping bags. A glum expression fell over Hermione. Classes were one of the things keeping her sane in this time period.

“Mind if I sleep here?” Tom pointed to the sleeping bag beside her.

The question broke her out of her disappointed trance. Tom was the last in the room; he helped corral the Slytherins to the Great Hall.

Twisting her neck upwards, Hermione took in Tom. A smile on his lips. Indifference in his eyes.

“If you must.” said Hermione.

Quiet chatter broke out among the students. Even in the wee hours of the morning, the population of Hogwarts was a bundle of energy.

Hermione watched as Tom sat down, pulling the covers over himself. She could not help but scrutinize him. From their last encounter, she was sure he was furious. But, she did not realize that he would harm his peers; who is to say he would not now?

“see something you like, Hermione?” Tom’s fingers threaded into his hair, supporting his head. He laid on his side, waiting for her reply.

“You seem awfully calm.” Hermione noted. She too, decided to lay down.

Moon beams filtered through the windows lining the walls. Mixed with that were the glimmering celestial bodies of the ceiling. The concoction lit Tom’s alabaster skin in a way Hermione did not wish to describe.

Or, at least from what she could tell from the flesh poking out of his green and white striped sleeves. Ridiculously innocent. It was no wonder why no one expected him of being mentally deranged. No one expected him to be a sociopath. No one thought him capable of murder. No one imagined him to be a Dark Lord. To the populace, he was a charming, albeit quiet, boy. Smooth as ice; secretly as cold as it too.
“Is that so? Would you prefer I not be? Prefer the passionate and outspoken type?” Tom nonchalantly inquired. Inky locks fell in front of his eyes.

Hermione refused to meet his gaze. Instead, she lay on her back, staring at the whimsical lights. She had to think for a moment. Her mind drifted to her past romances and crushes; Viktor was quiet and calm. Though, that did not really work out... There was, admittedly, a crush she harbored for Ron. Passionate and outspoken, to an extent. He could be timid. Distastefully, the image of Lavender and Ron flashed in her mind. Her face physically cringed. Ron could be timid, just not around Lavender.

“To an extent.” Was her reply. Half true, half not true.

“How curious it is that you like me then.” Tom sighed. He opted for laying on his back now. He soon lost himself in the faulty depictions of stars, utterly mesmerised. Destiny was woven, strung by the stars.

“I don’t.” Hermione rapidly retorted. Her eyebrows screwed together.

“It’s mere infatuation, I understand completely. It’s a weakness of humans. Cannot relate, however.” Tom clarified. Drowsiness dropped his voice a couple of octaves.

“Never? Not once in your life?” Hermione wondered. The question came out in one breath. She knows the answer, but cannot believe it to be true. How horrible a life without love must be.

“Never.” Tom confirmed.

“So what you said about Amortentia, what you smell, it was a lie?” Hermione looked over to Tom. Hope embodied the question.

He returned her gaze, “You know, your hair resembles that of a tumbleweed. Is it like that every morning?”

“Don’t change the subject, Riddle.”

“No, it was not a lie.” Tenebrous orbs flitted back to the night sky.

“So-”

“Don’t over complicate the potion, Hermione. Infatuation. Desire. Lust, whatever you want to label it. Nothing substantial. It’ll go eventually. You should know true love cannot be born under that potion.” Disdain scrunched his face for a moment, until the muscles snapped back into a relaxed state.

“So, you’re lustful for me?” Hermione choked out. She was not sure if that was worse or better than him being in love. What on earth had her life come to?

“You have appeared in my mind at unfortunate moments during unfortunate tasks, but that means nothing.” said Tom.

Both of Hermione’s hands pushed back the curls in her face. This was a bit much to take in. Did he really just admit to...?

“I’m, flattered?” Hermione had no idea what to say.

An ugly snort came from Tom, “That’s not usually something someone says. You are so awkward.”

Hermione’s mouth dropped at the candid insult.
“Well, you’re awkward for admitting that you, you know!” It came out as a harsh whisper.

“No, do go on, Hermione. What did I admit to doing?” Tom resumed his position on his side, enjoying the frustration she emitted.

“I am not going to say it.” Boldly, she held her ground. Obstinate expression, Hermione continued to watch the heavenly bodies at work.

“Because you’re too embarrassed.”

“I am not embarrassed!”

“Tell me what I confessed to then.”

She was fed up. Angrily, she maneuvered through her blankets to look him in the eye.

“You apparently,” she paused, mustering the courage to finish, “masturbate to me at times.”

An amused expression seized Tom. Her embarrassment was enough for him to egg her on more.

“Tell me, have you ever done it before, Hermione?”

“That is hardly a question you should ask a lady.” Hermione scoffed lightly.

“And yet, here I am. So, have you?”

“What does it matter to you? Just go to sleep.” Rouge threatened to spread onto her cheeks.

“I see those tinted ears of yours, peeking from that mess on your head. You have, haven’t you? Desire is nothing to be ashamed of, Hermione.”

She could hear the smile in his voice as she focused on the enchanted ceiling.

“Riddle, stop bothering me and go to bed.”

“If you insist. Sweet dreams, Hermione.” Sickeningly sanguine words flowed from Tom’s mouth; so sweet it could rot teeth.

She could hear the rustle of his sleeping bag as he turned away from her. She never imagined the amount of sheer bliss she would receive from the noise. Shutting her eyes, Hermione tried to force herself to sleep.

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Dazzling gleams of light shone through arched windows. Rays stretched and spread across the Great Hall, its occupants slowly waking. Yawns and babbled nonsense; the qualities of a good morning.

Hermione laid on the floor, curling her blankets around her. Warmth engulfed her. Sleep was just out of reach, her fingertips grasping the fading frays. Cursed sun beams. It was troublesome enough that the night had been interrupted, but now with morning’s itch came the need to satisfy it. Reluctantly, Hermione’s eyes fluttered open.

She would never get used to waking up in a different era.
She missed the pile of orange fur that would greet her—even if it did so by sitting on her face or pawing her cheek.

Blinking once, she let her eyes remain shut. She really should get up. Students around her, thought not many Hermione concluded, were waking. Again she blinked her eyes open.

Moments passed before she could properly focus; the morning being a blur.

She knew she should not expect ginger fur to appear (though, she desperately wish it would), what she certainly did not anticipate was for black locks to acquaint her vision.

Rapid blinks came in succession. Through squinted eyes, the image became clearer.

Lidded eyes, still body, and mouth parted in soft breaths.

Far, far closer than she remembered from last night. Shock paralyzed Hermione’s body as she stared with widened eyes. If she were any closer, she’s certain she would be able to feel the fan of his breath.

Reasoning struck her. She rolled over immediately, distancing herself from Tom’s sleeping form.

His face held no qualms. No furrowed brows, no frown, no evidence of any wrath. The image was burned into Hermione’s mind; a tranquil Tom Riddle sleeping. It was innocent, he seemed innocent.

It was far too convincing for Hermione’s tastes.

Her eyes screwed shut. A mantra began in her head, a reinforcing whisper in her mind.

*Riddle is not innocent, Riddle is not innocent.*

Footsteps approached.

*Riddle is not innocent, Riddle is not innocent.*

Closer, the sock clad footsteps came.

*Riddle is anything but innocent, the foul, loathsome evil-no, cockroach was too easy on the criminal. Vile, treacherous, revolting little tyrant-*

A soft kick to her leg startled her from her thoughts. Glancing up, she saw a certain Headgirl.

“Hermione, it’s time to wake up. I was hoping to steal you before the Slytherins do.” Minerva McGonagall stated.

“Yeah, sure, just give me a minute.” Hermione said quietly. Grabbing her wand located directly beneath her pillow, Hermione stuffed it into her waistband. She stood and faced the waiting McGonagall.

“I hope last night was not too much of a fright.” started Minerva. She guided Hermione to the Gryffindor area, sleeping bodies lined the path.

“It’s no big deal, every year at my school something crazy happened.” Mindlessly, Hermione replied.

“Where might that have been?” Minerva raised one thin, stern brow.

Stumbling, Hermione said, “Oh, just some small school in our village. So, have they caught the
intruder or…?” She was quick to change the subject.

“Ah, yes. Professor Dumbledore found the suspect lurking around. According to staff, they’re detaining and interrogating the perpetrator. Classes still won’t resume until tomorrow though.” A soft smile accented the knowledge.

“I see.” Hermione said while chewing her bottom lip.

“Studious as ever. I can sense the disappointment in your words.” Minerva noted.

“Oh, don’t tell me you’re bummed about classes being called off, Hermione.” A gruff voice from behind called.

Turning, Hermione spotted Alastor Moody. Every time she saw him or Minerva McGonagall, a surreal feeling would hit her. It was quite odd to see two adults in her life as teenagers.

“You could stand to gain such an attitude, Moody.” Minerva bit back.

“My grades are passing, Minny, I’ll be out of here and be an Auror in no time.” Alastor replied. Adorning him were loudly colored pajamas.

Frustration came in the form of pinched brows and pursed lips as Minerva chose not to reply.

“She has a point, Alastor.” Hermione concurred, a teasing smile present on her lips. “This way you can be self-sufficient in Potions.”

“You help me once and think you’re my crutch. I can brew on my own.” Proudly, Alastor crossed his arms.

Two shaggy gingers walked up to Alastor, patting Alastor’s back roughly,

“Aye, Alastor, you plannin’ on joinin’ for Wizard Billiards tonight?” They had said in unison. Twins, if Hermione had to guess. Eerily similar to-

“Bugger off, Weasleys. You know I don’t ever join.” Moody rolled his eyes.

Confusion tapped Hermione. Time travelling was certainly the sort of nonsense the twins would do, but these two were just slightly different from the pair she knew.

“Oh, boo-hoo. What if we say it’s in the name of inter-house unity?” One twin spoke.

“We could use your strong arm on the team.” The other added.

“Only the one? You do know how he strengthens it, right?” The first twin joked.

“Well, naturally!” The second twin nudged Alastor in the arm and mumbled, “Ya wanker.”

“Hermione, I regret to inform you that these two are seventh years, Artemis and Arthgallo Weasley.” Minerva stated.

“Just because you’re Headgirl now-”

“Doesn’t mean you can pretend we aren’t your friends!” The two brothers wrapped Minerva into a tight hug before releasing her.

“If that is some way to convince me to join tonight, it is not working.” Minerva spoke, pushing them
away in annoyance.

“But it’d be so nice to have Headgirl present!”

“Real inter-house unity!”

“Oh, please, all you guys want to do is make the other houses cry in defeat.” Alastor grumbled, though the twitch of a smile pricked his lips.

“You know it!” Artemis and Arthgallo said in unison.

“Which is why you should slip a certain Malfoy some of this chalk.” Arthgallo dropped a square of bright, yellow chalk into Alastor’s hand.

“He will do no such thing. If you two plan on messing with people, do it yourselves.” said Minerva.

“Minny, I can speak for myself.” Alastor cleared his throat, “I will do no such thing.”

“Well, then what shall we do, dear brother?” Artemis sighed dramatically.

“If only, someone close to the Slytherins could help us.” Arthgallo added.

Both looked at Hermione expectantly.

“No, no, no, not today, Weasleys!” Minerva pushed the two boys away, protests coming from both.

“Scary when she wants to be.” Alastor commented.

“You have no idea.” Hermione replied as she watched the scene. Her mind reeled back to the modern day and how intimidating Professor McGonagall could be at times.

Dusting her hands, Minerva came back.

“Hermione, I was going to ask if you still have the boo-” Minerva began.

“Hello. McGonagall, Moody. Hermione.” Congeniality coarsed through the air. Abraxas Malfoy stood behind them, pleasant expression plastered on his face.

“Malfoy.” Minerva replied with subtle distaste. She never did hear an apology from him after the Quidditch incident.

“I do hate to interrupt, but I was hoping to steal Hermione away. Professor Slugorn wished to take the lot back to the common room. I expect Professor Dumbledore will do the same soon for your house.” Malfoy kept the kind tone going.

“Well, Mr. Malfoy, we were actually having a conversation-” Minerva stated matter-of-factly.

“Well, Miss McGonagall, I mean no hostility, but it is the Professor’s wishes. Pleasant speaking with you two, I hope to see you tonight.” Abraxas finished quickly before the Gryffindors had the chance to intervene.

Carting her off, Abraxas took Hermione with him. They melted into the line of Slytherins being escorted out the large doors of the Great Hall.

“Be right back.” Minerva said, her timbre calm.
“Where are you going?” Alastor inquired as Minerva stomped away from him.

“Getting chalk from the Weasleys.”

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“So, do you plan on joining for Wizard Billiards tonight?” Abraxas asked in hushed tones to Hermione as the two walked in a crowd to the dungeons.

Like cattle, the Slytherins were herded by Professor Slughorn.

“Is that like Muggle Billiards? Do you always add the Wizard part?” Hermione questioned sincerely.

Judging by his chuckle, Abraxas must have thought it a jest,

“Have you never played? I’ll have to show you the ropes.” Abraxas said.

“I’ve heard quite a bit about this whole game, something about it going on tonight?” Hermione tried to gather information.

“Ah, yes. Every other week, the houses get together for a billiards tournament. Fun game, really.” Abraxas mentioned.

“Oi, talking strategy for tonight?” Avery suddenly came from behind them, short legs trying hard to keep up.

“No, just explaining the game to Hermione.” Abraxas clarified.

Lit torches crackled as the path continued. No more windows littered the corridor, the group officially in the dungeons.

“I’ve never played.” Hermione said.

Incredulous, Avery’s expression portrayed. “Blimey, never? Do you live under a rock?”

No, but she did live in a different time period.

“So, like Muggle Billiards, each ball is numbered. There are still striped and solids, and you use cue-sticks and chalk. The table is the same as before. But-”

“But! The number on the ball depicts how many times the ball bounces before it stops moving.” Avery finished for Abraxas.

Hermione thought for a bit. Her time had never had a game like this; it must require a decent amount of strategy to plan out moves.

“Certain balls do certain things. You’ll see when we play later. Different chalks can be used to enhance your tactics-”

“Brax loves to use the yellow chalk. When you hit the ball with the cue-stick, the ball curves to the right.” Avery explained. Oddly, he seemed much more chipper and helpful than he usually was.
Hermione nodded, taking in the information. It would be much better if a table were in front of her now, with them playing and demonstrating.

“There’s two other colored chalks, blue and red. Blue makes the ball go faster while red puts more force behind the cue-ball. Good for weaker people or beginners.” Abraxas noted.

“This is lovely and all, but I just woke up and this is a bit of an information dump.” Hermione said warily.

“Completely understand. I expect many students are going to go back to sleep since we have classes off. Well, I know Nott will at least.” said Abraxas, a soft chortle falling from his lips.

“I’m not entirely sure if I’ll be able to sleep…” said Hermione. Something was prodding the back of her mind. It was so minuscule she could almost ignore it. But something was missing. For the life of her, Hermione could not determine what it was.

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Obsidian orbs took in every detail. Tousled brown strands sprawled everywhere, the witch’s frizz more mountainous than usual. He wondered if it was like that every night.

Her skin was by no means pale, yet she obviously preferred her days in the library. Yes, he could imagine her in a cozy nook, title upon title stacked next to her. And she would get through all of them too, all before she got up.

What a strange witch, Hermione was. Tom continued to scrutinize her being.

Second to only him. Granted, it was a bit early to say; he has only known her for a week or so. Yet, the brilliance she displayed was so unlike another, and her magic was a force he could detect by just being in the same room-

How unfortunate she had to be so meddlesome.

The calm expression on her face did not suit her. It was the break of dawn, sunlight beginning to pour into the Great Hall. It lit her features well, adding a warm glow. Her usual spiteful demeanor was masked by unconsciousness.

He hated looking at her. It reminded him how vulnerable he was. Who knew what all she knew about him?

Well, he was going to be the one who finds out.

Finally, he let his mind ease into unconsciousness, his dreams surrounding around the pesky witch next to him.

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She was right. Hermione was right when saying she would be unable to sleep. That cursed, unnamed thing plagued her mind. Discussing the matter with Slughorn, he revealed that students were able to walk around freely; after all, no intruder was roaming the halls at the moment.

Which, is what lead her on her castle stroll. Portraits hung, covering every inch of the monolithic
hall. The muses spoke to one another, chatter animated and lively. One foot in front of the other, Hermione thought where a good location might be to think.

Let it be the library, then.

Step after step upwards, Hermione traversed the marble staircases. Her floor was right ahead. Her hand skimmed the rail, fingertips glossing over the smooth texture. Just a few more steps ahead--.

The swinging of the staircase startled Hermione, her form bracing itself against the railing. With an annoyed gaze, she watched her intended path shrink in the distance. Naturally, to Hermione’s dismay, the staircase swung to the opposite side of the high ceillinged corridor. Connecting with a new hallway, the staircase halted.

Torch lines the halls, no windows present. It was the same floor as her usual path and for that she was thankful. The arched opening just happened to be on the wrong side. All she would have to do is loop around the castle; she would then arrive at the library.

Languid strides navigated her. Ghosts filtered through the walls, disturbing the occupants of portraits. Peeves was out of sight, another thing Hermione was grateful for. The vacancy of the halls reminded Hermione of the times she would stay during holidays. The first live souls she encountered since she embarked on her journey were two Gryffindors walking from the opposite direction.

“Did you see that statue? It was so realistic, do you remember seeing one like that before...?” Hermione overheard one say.

“I’m, uh, not exactly sure. My head feels foggy.” The other had apparently said.

Both agreed to book it to the infirmary for inspection.

Hermione gave them no acknowledgement, but questions conjured mentally. She wondered if she would see what they saw.

Steadily, her Mary Janes clacked. A peaceful day in the library. The thought of it accelerated her footsteps.

The introduction of another set of steps caused her to pause. Instantly, she wavered it off. It was a free day, students were bound to amble the halls. Again, her legs began their trek.

A fork in the hall appeared. Right or left. Turning left, she could have sworn she saw rapid movement on the right. She ignored it. But, just like the thing she was forgetting, curiosity scratched the back of her brain.

Curse her curiosity.

She turned to the right, completely disregarding her previous intentions. Vaguely, she understood what Harry must experience; he did always have the habit of investigating impulsively.

This particular hall displayed more statues than it did portraits. Miscellaneous sculptures littered the area. In all of her years exploring the castle, this corridor did not radiate the familiarity like others did.

Her eyes jumped from one side to the other, statue to statue. Shining plates with text were at the foot of each structure. By no means were they short, in fact many towered over Hermione. Combining with the lack of people and ominous statues, a chill crept through Hermione. Vacant stares focused on her. Without her demand, her eyes continued to venture, statue to colorless statue.
Breathing hitched, Hermione could not prevent the gasp she emitted.

A rather life-like rendition of a centaur stood proudly in the hallway. It too, was colorless and void of life. The detail carved into it though, could fool anybody. Closer, Hermione approached the centaur statue, torch light gleaming off the golden plate at the bottom.

“Oh, hey, I know this guy!” A voice from behind Hermione caused her to jump.

Whipping around, Hermione was met with the stomach of a real centaur. Brows perched on top of her forehead. Peering up, she saw the smug face of Aion.

“You!” Hermione shouted.

“Me!” Aion had a goofy smile plastered to his face, stretching the corners of his mouth widely. Colorful flowers were laced into his braided hair. It helped mask the musky aroma that came with being a woodland creature. “I was pretending to be a statue earlier, you should have seen the fright I gave two lads in red!”

“You, you are not supposed to be here!” Once perched brows furrowed deeply. Hermione pivoted her head, making sure no one was near.

“Well, you are not wrong. Apparently, the staff was not expecting my arrival, something about an intruder-” said Aion.

A hand of the witch’s met with her face. “Do you mean to tell me, that you were the intruder?” Hermione questioned. Irritation was not hidden in her tone.

“What? Me? First of all, I’m offended, I’ll have you know that I would be an honored guest here at Hogwarts-”

“Yes, naturally. The centaur whose face is spread in ink all of the Daily Prophet for stealing a time-turner from the Ministry. An honored guest.” Sardonically, she bowed to the ‘honored guest’.

“Perhaps not honored yet.” Aion approached the statue of the centaur. “Do you think I’ll get one? What pose should I do?” Calloused fingers went to stroke his chin as he thought.

“Aion, not now. We, we should get you somewhere where no one will see us.” said Hermione frantically. Taking in deep breaths, Hermione wondered where to go.

“Oh, field trip? I do love a good adventure.” The centaur’s teeth gleamed.

“Sure, more like I’m going to imprison you, but sure.” Hermione said, taking an arm of Aion’s and dragging him toward the library.

“Well, that does not sound nearly as festive…” Disappointed mumbles came from Aion.

Hurriedly, Hermione scanned the corridor. Any door would do. Any abandoned room, any crevice large enough to fit a horse-man. That is when she spotted a lone door.

“In here.” Hermione coaxed the centaur to follow. After the swish of her wand and a mumbled ‘Alohomora’, the door opened.

Revealed was an empty classroom. Dilapidated desks and chairs scattered the floor, dust fell from the ceiling. Knocked over ink bottles and abandoned quills. Cobwebs inhabited the corners of the room; everything about the premises told a story of the old and worn. All but the pristine cloth covering
something toward the back of the room.

“How quaint.” Aion said dryly. He brushed the dust off that settled in his hair.

“I thought Professor Dumbledore caught the intruder.” Hermione said. Idly, the pads of her fingers ran across shelves. She could feel the dust accumulating on them.

“Ah, yes, we did have a chat. I told him I was here for a visit, so he informed the staff that the intruder was dealt with.” Aion explained. He leisurely wandered the room, examining the worn school supplies.

“So, what are you supposed to do now if you’re seen! All it takes is one pair of eyes to see you, then suddenly a witch-hunt begins and you’re the target.” Exasperatedly, Hermione decided to lean against the tower of outdated textbooks.

“Ironic you say that. But, don’t you worry, I have a little something that’ll take the edge off anyone who happens upon me.” Out of his pouch, he drew a vial of sparkling liquid.

Hermione’s jaw dropped, “You cannot just dowse students with Forgetfulness Potion!”

“I wasn’t dowsing them, they just happened to get a whiff of it. I’m an excellent brewer, the potion is so potent that its fumes have the same effect.” Aion concealed the vial back into his pouch.

Hands fisted into Hermione’s hair, tugging at the roots. In all her years, never had she had to deal with such a frustrating entity. And she had to deal with Harry and Ron daily; that was saying quite a bit.

“Aion,” exhaling, she continued, “You cannot, I repeat, cannot, drug my peers!”

“It’s not like you know them that well. What should it matter? Unless, you’ve made friends here?” Aion did well to hide his snide tone.

“Well-” Hermione paused. She did indeed have people she cared for in this time period.

“Ah! I see that expression. Tell me, are you falling in love with a certain boy? I’ve been watching the stars, Mars has been inching closer to Venus’s orbit.” A giddy grin poked dimples into Aion’s cheeks.


“How was your two’s kiss? Enjoyable?” Aion teased.

“What, did you see it in the stars? Is that how you know about it? Let me guess, did the constellations Virgo and Capricorn just embrace one another and that’s how you knew? I frankly don’t want to hear about your Divination dribble.” Crossing her arms, Hermione turned away from the centaur.

“How disrespectful of you, calling Divination dribble…” Awestruck, Aion slowly trotted to Hermione.

“I mean no disrespect to your craft. I have not had the best luck with the study.” Hermione apologized.

“No, no, it’s fine. By all means, belittle it further!” a hearty chuckle flew from his chest, “I, too, was a skeptic.”
Warily, Hermione glanced at Aion. His face portrayed sincerity.

“But, you’re a centaur-”

“I waited ages for the gift to dawn on me. It was not until my late adolescence that I could see. Other, more Muggle methods occupied my time. I harbored my faith in the sciences rather than the art of seeing.” Aion had grabbed a worn book, stroking the cover softly. The condition reminded him of his first book.

“I had no idea.” Hermione said.

“Yes, that’s how my human-interests were embedded into me. One of many reasons why my colony forsakes me.” Aion held a smile, yet his tone was glum.

“That’s silly. You should be able to learn what you want, without judgement.” Reinforcement wove the words together in a strong bond.

“A concept that I yearn to teach my colony. Hence, revolution.” said Aion. He walked away from Hermione, his figure moving toward the covered object in the back.

“Yes, well. About that.” Hermione fumbled.

“I know you no longer wish to help. Your heart is not with it. I urge you to reconsider.” In one swift motion, Aion ripped the cover from the large object. “That being said, I’m still willing to send you back on the winter solstice.” A gasp left his lips.

Curiosity stirred, Hermione turned to Aion. Glittering gold shined. She could see Aion’s face despite him being turned away from her, due to the fact that he was looking into a mirror.

“What’s a mirror doing in a classroom-”

“Beautiful, is it not?” Aion said in one breath, his hands scouring the surface.

“It’s pretty, a bit large for a bedroom…” Hermione trailed. Slowly, she sauntered to his location.

“Do you think it shows us what we truly desire, or what we think we desire?” Aion’s fingertips skimmed the lettering branding the top.

“Aion, I don’t know…” Hermione said as she approached him. His eyes appeared glazed over as he watched the mirror.

“Truly remarkable…” The whisper of Aion’s words provoked a shiver along Hermione’s spine.

“We should go.” Hermione grabbed Aion by the arm, tugging him along.

“Oh, where are we going now?” Dazed Aion said.

“To the seventh floor, Room of Requirement.” Hermione said. Determined, she whisked the two away and out of the room.

There were a plethora of things in the world to be desired. People, luxuries, sleep. Slumber was most definitely Nott’s most desired.
Ear muffs on, Nott laid in his bed. It was far past noon, daylight dwindling. Sandwiched between two pillows was Nott’s head; one would think it would be enough to block out the commotion of his dorm.

That person would be wrong.

“‘Brax, why are you getting so dressed up?’” Nott could hear the distinct voice of the mogrul Avery.

“I have to dress to impress for tonight.” Abraxas stated as if it were common logic.

Nott could not see the duo, his curtains encasing his bed. He was glad he spent the extra galleons for black-out curtains, for else light would pour into his domain.

“Impress who? You’re still not trying to win over Hermione, are you?” Avery inquired. From what Nott could imagine, he saw Avery inching closer to Malfoy, his face full of suspicion.

“I’ve already won her over, I’ll have you know.”

“Has she said yes to accompanying you to Slug Club?” Silence chased the question.

“No.” Abraxas confirmed.

“Bloody hell, go after a different girl! Tom’s already staked his claim on her.” Huffing, Avery fell onto his bed. Nott could hear the springs squeak under the force.

“Not in the way he should with a lady.” Abraxas commented.

“It’d be much easier for you if you just let go of her.”

“She’s far too valuable for that.” Abraxas snapped.

“Boo-bloody-hoo. There’s plenty of girls like her here. Try a Ravenclaw, they’re smart.” suggested Avery.

“No, she’s much different. Unique. She’s a Strelitza in a field of barren grass. She gives life to the land, she’s different.”

“Going to stop you right there before you jizz your pants. Hermione is different, I’ll give you that. But, how much do you really know about her?”

“I don’t need to know about her. I know enough about Riddle to want to protect her.” Nott could hear the disdain that seeped through Malfoy’s words.

“That! That’s all you had to say.” said Avery, as if realization hit him.

“What?” A clearly confused Abraxas asked.

“That’s what this is all about, sticking it to Riddle. The only reason you like Hermione, is because she’s independent. She doesn’t give two knuts about Riddle and his agenda.” Avery’s voice was light as he spilled his speculations.

“What? No. I have genuine feelings for the witch.” Malfoy assured.

“You’ve known her for a week.”

“Yet, she’s influenced us all. Our lives changed when she arrived.”
“Yeah, don’t remind me. My best friend is obsessed with the girl, a role-model of mine has decided she’s interesting too, and who knows! Maybe Nott will decide he wants to stick it up her arse too!” Avery shouted, profanity meddling the phrase.

Reflexes kicked in. Nott sat up in his bed, grabbing the pillow from his face. In one swift motion, he slid the curtain back and chucked the pillow at Avery. Quickly, he shut the curtain again. It was a normal routine.

“Fucking, ugh. Forget it.” Avery started, but soon his energy diminished.

“I think there’s a chance to save Hermione from Riddle.” Malfoy changed the subject.

“We don’t even know what he plans on doing with her. Maybe he is just lonely, needs a good shag. As much as I detest imagining that…” Avery said.

“Yes, of course, how could I forget, our benevolent friend Tom, wanting a girlfriend to frolic in a field of daisies. Shut up.” Nott heard Malfoy throw something light onto a bed, along with a mumble of ‘This jacket simply won’t do.’.

“It’s not wise to meddle with what he has planned, if it helps, the way Tom talks about her is rather full of, well, not so kind things.” Sheepishly, Avery offered.

“That does not help, the exact opposite actually!” Malfoy uttered a long groan. Nott could imagine he held his fingers to his temples, trying to soothe his growing headache.

“It’s getting late, we should probably start heading out to billiards.” Avery tried to deescalate Malfoy’s annoyance.

“I suppose. Wake up Nott, he’s joining us tonight on behalf of Riddle’s request.” Malfoy said.

“Why do I have to do it?” Avery whined like a child.

Nott did not fancy seeing Avery’s face first thing after waking up. Frustrated, Nott ripped off his earmuffs and pulled back the curtains.

“Both of you, will be the death of me.” Icy glares were sent to both boys. Nott shoved his feet into the nearest pair of shoes.

“My apologies for waking you, Nott.” The ever-cordial Malfoy said.

“A better apology would be leaving me to sleep.” Nott mumbled. Fumbling with the shoelaces, he tried to tie them quickly.

“I think this is the first time you’ll be joining us all year.” said Malfoy.

Nott paused in his tying endeavors. He gave Avery a hard look.

“Yeah, for good reason.” Nott grumbled, the Irish accent of his peeking through.

“Well, I’m certain Tom will be pleased. He wants to speak with you tonight.” Malfoy adjusted his shirt cuffs.

Pulling a jumper over his upper half, Nott said, “Does he always speak through a proxy? Just want kind of club are you guys?”

Malfoy looked like he was about to say something, but quickly rerouted his words, “A serious one
with a busy leader. We should go.”

“What room can even house students from different houses?” Nott wondered aloud. His brows seemed permanently etched into a scowl.

“It’s on the seventh floor.” Was all Malfoy replied with. Exiting their dorm, the three boys left for the Wizard Billiards tournament.

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“Here we are.” Hermione said. In front of her was a vast wall, not a door in sight.

“Uh, Hermione. Hate to pop your bubble, but there’s no room here.” said Aion. He tapped one hoof impatiently.

“Not yet.” The bushy haired witch began to pace along the wall, mumbling. “I need a place to put a centaur, I need a place to put a centaur, I need a place to put-”

A large wooden door appeared. One that Aion did not need to duck for.

“How intriguing.” Aion followed Hermione into the doorway.

“Here is where you’ll stay until I can get a hold of Professor Dumbledore and see what to do about you.” Hermione pushed the rest of the centaur in.

The room provided an expansive space. Ornate carpets lined the floor, the intricate woven patterns accenting the arched ceiling. Furniture large enough for a centaur littered the area.

“Finally, something I can comfortably relax on.” Aion dove for the lounge chair, perfect for his size.

“Is that a cauldron over there?” Hermione wondered. She did not remember mentioning that to the room.

“How convenient. Do you happen to have those potion ingredients for me? Perhaps I can brew during my stay.” A cheeky grin emphasized the freckles on Aion.

“Yes, well,” Hermione wandered the room. Brimstone fireplace, cauldrons galore, and large furniture occupied a majority of the room, “Perhaps later. I was hoping to go to the library.”

“Don’t you wish to hang out with me?” Aion questioned with a pout.

“Frankly, you’re getting on my nerves. Peace and quiet is what I need.” said Hermione.

“Well, don’t let me hold you back then. Have a safe trip, Hermione.”

Aion called out as Hermione left the room.

Immediately he stood, wandering the room. He paced and thought to himself.

He doubted Hermione would come back soon, in fact he knew it would be awhile. What exactly were the constraints of the room? Could it expand? Were there other versions of the room that existed simultaneously?

Could he travel through existing rooms? Just how particular did you have to be with the room?
After he finished that thought, a door appeared next to the fire place. Flames warmed him as he got near. Grab, twist, open.

A mischievous smile took hold of Aion. A room filled with billiard tables met his vision.

Tonight would be exciting.

Hermione stood in front of the library doors. Her stare was vindictive.

In large, red print was the word ‘closed.’ Of course it was. The time Hermione needed anything, it was out of reach. Annoyance whirled her around. Her feet began their journey to the dungeons; maybe should could sleep. Hopefully.

“How unbecoming of you. You look disappointed, library closed?” Evan inquired. He slinked an arm around her shoulders, to which she placed back at his side.

“If you must know, yes. I was hoping to get away from the lot of your kind.” Hermione retorted. She reassessed her earlier statement. Perhaps Evan Rosier was the most frustrating being she dealt with.

“How about you join us for Wizard Billiards instead, then.” It was clear that Evan did not have the same skill with words as Malfoy did. Evan was essentially a smaller version of Malfoy, but a really bad copycat of Abraxas.

“What part about getting away from you guys do you not understand?” Hermione scoffed lightly. She refused to meet Evan’s gaze as she walked down the hall. Naturally, he strolled beside her.

“Fine. Lead the way.” Admitting defeat, she began to follow the energetic Evan.

Malfoy did offer to help her out in the case of Riddle. Who knew how many things he was risking just by saying that. The least she could do is chat for a bit.

The bounce in Evan’s step caused Hermione to grimace. He wore the standard gray suit issued to the boys; his short blond hair shone as they passed windows. An orange glaze covered the corridor; the
sun sat comfortably at the horizon.

The pair went up flight after flight, step after step. The staircases did not seem to be as mischievous as they were before, deciding to stay in place. After another flight of stairs, Hermione questioned,

“Just where exactly are we going?” She squinted at the bubbly blond.

Without turning to answer, Evan replied, “Snazzy room on the seventh floor. Tom found it last year and thought it perfect for the tournament.”

Suspicion growing, Hermione kept quiet. Excerpts from *Hogwarts: a History* passed through her mind. Flipping through the mental catalog, she could not remember any mention of a billiards room.

“Your limp has gone away.” Hermione casually noted.

Stiffening, Evan did not stop walking, yet he did not turn to her either. All she saw was the gray back of his suit jacket.

“How kind of you to notice.” Carefully chosen words. Evan was hiding something.

“How again, did that happen? The details are foggy to me.” said Hermione.

“Simply tripped down one of the enchanted staircases. It started moving.” Evan explained calmly. His ebullient attitude diminished.

“I see.” Hermione began to walk beside him, peering at his face. Void of emotion. “I have some speculation that perhaps what you say is not true.”

“Speculation is not fact.” Evan quickly retorted.

“Yes, well. You are right in that sense. Tell me, does Tom often explode into fits of rage when his members displease him?” Steady was the key; steady words always lead to another’s unravel.

Blond strands whipped to her. Viscous, narrowed eyes glared at her.

“Better watch your words, Granger. I know who you are, even if Tom refuses to accept it.” Evan then faced forwards, not taking the time to relish in the shock Hermione displayed.

She stood on the same step for a moment.

How, how could he know?

She rushed ahead of him, standing directly in his path.

“What now?” Evan drawled. Boredom encompassed his features.

“What have you told him?” Hermione demanded.

The short blond tried to whiz past her, but she blocked him. Her arms stretched to the rails, caging him.

“What does it matter? It’s not like he believed me. In fact, I got that limp because I suggested that to him.”

“What?” Hermione breathed out. Another casualty indirectly caused by her.
“Don’t act so surprised. You apparently know he has a habit of it. He certainly is not going to like that you know about that…”

“He would not be surprised that I know.” replied Hermione.

“Great, I wonder how much else he’s shared with you. I’m getting kind of sick of that. He’s getting awfully close to you and forgetting about his followers.” Evan began to trek up the stairs, finally bypassing Hermione.

“Really?” Hermione jogged up to him. “How concentrated on me do you think he is?” Uneasiness quivered in her voice.

“Don’t tell me you’re like Walburga. I can assure you, whatever Tom harbors for you, it is not a crush.”

“Good.” Hermione breathed out, nodding her head in reassurance. That’s all she needed to hear.

“Ah, and now just down this hall.” Evan grabbed her by the wrist, a little harsher than what Hermione deemed necessary.

Night had since taken over the sky. Torches illuminate the path, casting shadows off of Evan and Hermione. All of it blurred as Hermione tried to keep up with the blond.

“Hello, Evan.” Several students greeted, all of different houses. They loitered outside a walnut door.

Spotted were students in casual clothing, though they adorned the color of their house in some form or another.

“The Slytherin Dumbledore!” Two voices from behind Hermione announced.

In an instant, she was met with two gingers that she had met earlier in the day.

“How’s our favorite Slytherin?” Arthgallo Weasley questioned. Red lines of paint streaked across his face. The spread of his smile cracked the paint, little flakes coming off.

“Mind giving this to Malfoy? Thanks, I knew you’d be such a dear.” Artemis Weasley dropped chalk in her hand, leaving before she could properly chuck it at him. His twin was on his toes, following him into the room.

“Ugh, hate Weasleys. Ever since Septimus and Cedrella married, the family has gone to dirt.” Evan spoke as if he consumed something bitter. “Come on in, I’ll show you around.”

Hermione was still too shocked to react. The hall was familiar. So familiar that she realized she visited it earlier in the day and came across a door in the exact same spot as the one before her.

Hesitantly, she obeyed Evan. The sooner she entered, the sooner she could leave.

The door swung open before Evan grabbed the handle. On the other side was Abraxas Malfoy, his hair tied back by a black satin ribbon. Unlike Evan, he did not wear the school uniform. Instead, a deep green, almost black, hugged his form.

“Hermione, I was just about to get you. Forgive my neglect, but I forgot I never told you where we would be.” A small smile graced his lips.

“Well, you can thank me then, Malfoy. Found her wandering all alone. And here I thought you were a gentleman.” Evan teased.
“Yes, well, thank you I suppose.” Malfoy said unconvincingly. “Here, allow me to show you the wonders of Wizard Billiards.”

Ushering her in, Hermione was confronted by a lavish room. It was by no means small. Unlike the rest of the castle, this room was wood paneled with plush, intricate carpets covering the tiles. Stone heads of a snake, lion, eagle, and badger lined the walls. On the opposite side of the room was a wall of glass doors. From Hermione’s spot, she could barely see that the doors led to a balcony. Chandeliers with dripping wax lit the pool tables that were scattered around the area.

Students wielded their cue sticks. Only when Hermione progressed into the room did she notice the phonograph in the corner. Big band swing music melded with the air, accenting the atmosphere of the room. Those who did not play pool, danced or chatted.

“I believe our group is toward the balcony.” Abraxas said.

“Do the teachers know about this?” Hermione’s question came out soft. Being in the room reminded her of the differences of her time period. The harmonious melody is what careened her thought.

“Do they know about it? Why, they bet on which house will win, Hermione.” Looking to Malfoy, Hermione saw the enormous smile on his face.

His smile was bright and full of childish glee. An exhale left Hermione’s nose in the same manner one would do when something humorous occurred.

“Oh, watch out!” Abraxas suddenly grabbed Hermione, pulling her down to the floor.

A crash followed the action. Whipping her head to the sound, Hermione saw a hole in the wall. Splinters of wood jutted from the hole.

“Sorry! Too much red chalk!” A sheepish girl called out.

“No problem at all!” Abraxas replied. He offered Hermione a hand and pulled her up.

Hermione was beginning to understand why Wizard Billiards was not in her era.

“Sorry about that. Happens occasionally.” Malfoy explained. At the elbow, he stuck out his arm for Hermione to grab.

“I’m fine on my own.” said Hermione, waving the arm off.

“I insist.”

“I suppose it would not hurt once…” Reluctantly, she hooked her arm around his. The two continued their walk.

“And here is our table, right in front of the fireplace. It’s the best spot, in my opinion.” Malfoy held his arms wide, showcasing the table he frequented. A Slytherin flag hung off the side.

“So that’s where you scampered off to, Abraxas.” Lestrange leaned on his cue stick, addressing Malfoy but watching Hermione.

“Hermione is new to this game.” Malfoy replied curtly.

“Perhaps we should have a quick match to demonstrate how it’s done then?” The rugged teenager gathered the balls scattered on the table.
“I suppose that would be the best way. Where’s Avery and Nott?” asked Malfoy as he grabbed a cue stick off of a wall rack.

“With Tom, gathering snacks from the kitchens,” Lestrange bent over, eye level with the field. Aiming his stick, Lestrange said, “I’ll break.”

With that, balls went everywhere. Even if Hermione wanted to track one, she was not sure she could. A flurry of colors bounced across the table, erratically and wildly. Thankfully, none of them departed the table.

“You see, Hermione, I’m something of a pro.” Lestrange boasted.

Malfoy tried to suppress his snicker, “More like a pro at losing to me.”

In the background, flames of the fire waltzed in tune to the music.

“We’ll see this time, Malfoy. Stripes.” Lestrange took his first turn.

“Each ball has a number. That is the amount of times the ball ricochets before stopping. Each ball has its own little quirk.” Malfoy pointed to the number nine ball as it dodged the seven ball.

“What was that all about?” Hermione questioned. One hand subconsciously drifted to her chin, her other arm bracing it.

“Seven, eight, nine. So, nine always curves around seven. Nine is afraid of seven.” An expecting countenance plastered itself onto Malfoy’s face.

Hermione was not amused by the poor joke.

The shoulder-length blond haired boy did not seem to mind.

“Seven is also capable of literally eating the nine ball.” Lestrange noted from the other side of the table. He took a square of blue chalk and rubbed it over the tip of his stick.

“What’s that in your hand, Hermione?” Malfoy limply pointed to the hand in question.

Not realizing she even had anything, she relaxed her grip. Yellow chalk.

“Oh, my favorite. You can just set it over by the rest.” Gesturing to the bracket on the side of the table, Malfoy pointed with his cue stick.

Without thinking, she did.

“You’re about to see a real pro.” said Malfoy as he leaned down to the table, perfecting his angle to make the perfect shot.

The lively music switched abruptly. A smooth jazz filtered into the room, the calm tune washing over Hermione.

“Snacks are here!” A choir of cheers chased the proclamation.

All eyes went to the door. Avery and Nott carried burlap sacks filled with miscellaneous food items. The pile extended past Avery’s head as he walked in, his body swaying side to side as he tried to balance it.

Normal tables that Hermione did not notice before lined one wall. Wrinkles formed on her face as
she wondered where they came from. Did someone conjure them?

At the crescendo of the music, her eyes met with a svelte boy. Inky locks were slicked back with just enough product for the candlelight to shine off the strands. It was not overly greasy as Lestrange’s. After squinting did Hermione realize it was Tom who stood there.

Just as the eye contact began, it ended. Tom flourished his wand, transfiguring small items into more tables. She hated to admit it, but Tom was skilled with magic. Continuing to watch, Hermione stood in silent, suppressed awe.

“Hermione?” A tap to her shoulder caused her to revolve on her heels. Malfoy stood with a gentle smile. The orange glow of flickering candles sharpened his features.

“Oh, pardon me. I missed your shot…” Gazing down, Hermione felt slightly ashamed.

“It’s alright, just watch the next one, alright? With me by your side, you’ll be a champ in no time.”

Pattering feet fled to the tables housing food. Many took breaks from their games to partake in the freshly baked goods.

“Hey, Malfoy, was there something you wanted to talk to me about? Rosier mentioned it earlier.” Hermione spoke.

Lestrange was lining up his move. Abraxas spoke as the cue ball collided with a striped ball. A mischievous look swirled in his eyes as he sauntered over to her.

“I recall that once upon a time, you beat me at Wizard’s Chess.” Malfoy clicked his tongue, “I challenge you to a game of Wizard Billiards as a rematch.”

“That’s hardly fair, I just learned about it today.” Crossing her arms, she leaned against an unoccupied side of the table.

“Good thing you’re a quick study.” Malfoy threw her a cue stick, Hermione barely catching it in time.

Protests died off her tongue. It would not kill her to enjoy the night.

Another tap to her shoulder stole her attention. Turning around, she was met face to muffin.

“Consume.” Druella’s high pitched voice demanded. A chocolate muffin wavered in front of Hermione’s face.

“Oh, hi, Druella.” Hermione greeted with uncertainty. Gently, she pushed away the muffin that obscured Druella’s face.

“I brought you a muffin before they run out. They’re a favorite amongst the students.” Druella unceremoniously unwrapped the muffin before biting it.

“You can have it, I’m no fan of sweets.” Hermione replied. Truth is, she would be if her dentist parents did not ingrain it into her that sweets were unhealthy.

“Your loss.” Shrugged Druella. She opted to sit on the plush couch next to the fire place. Hermione watched as Druella kicked off her shoes and reclined, savoring her muffin.

“Here for a few rounds?”
The voice caught Hermione off guard. She did not bother to turn.

“Only for one, Riddle. I’m afraid I don’t intend to stay for the actual tournament.”

“How unfortunate.” His reply was dry. He slid around her, walking to a wingback chair on the other side of the fire. He too, held a muffin in hand.

“Ready to start?” Malfoy questioned. Lestrange had since sat down next to Dreulla, attempting to engage her in conversation. She was too busy enjoying her muffin to care.

In her peripherals, Hermione saw Avery join the scene.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.” A sheepish grin broke out on Hermione’s face. With Wizard’s chess, she at least witnessed Ron and Harry play. This was completely different.

“I’ll break, if that’s alright.” said Malfoy. With the tap of his cue stick against the table, the balls formed a triangle.

Hermione briefly wondered if the cue sticks were made from the same trees as wands.

“By all means, do.” Hermione encouraged.

As Malfoy lined his shot, Hermione saw Nott appear. Because he did not wish to sit next to Avery, he was about to sit on the floor. A footstool appeared beneath him on his way down. A double take occurred to assure Nott was not going crazy.

“This chair just appeared from literally nowhere.” Nott announced.

The clatter of balls rolling turned Hermione’s attention back to the game.

“Stripes.” Abraxas called. After the balls settled, he played his first turn. Already, one of the balls sunk into a pocket. “Your turn.”

To say that Hermione was intimidated, would be accurate. Clearly, Malfoy was indeed good.

With a shallow gulp, Hermione tried to line her cue as Malfoy did. Her fingers were contorted oddly, all of it wrong. She had no idea where to place her hands, how much force to put into the strike, or anything.

“Allow me.” Tom said. Delicately, he placed his hand over her own, angling the stick properly. With his other, he grabbed the back of the pool stick. Hermione was stuck. Trapped between her stick and Tom, she could feel the heat of his chest on her back. Her muscles tensed at the close contact.

“Go for the two ball.” He suggested lowly.

Mindlessly, she began to aim her stick at the cue ball, directly in front of the two ball facing a pocket. With a hand to her hip, Tom corrected her stance so that the cue ball would hit the two ball off of the wall.

“Riddle, I had it right the first time.” The phrase came out more bashful than she wanted.

“Trust me on this.” The smooth tone caressed her ears.

She took control of the stick, his hands still ghosting over hers. Purposefully, she added plenty of force on the backstroke. The stick struck Tom in the gut, a hand clutching his stomach at the blow. It brought a smile to Hermione’s face.
Striking the ball, Hermione watched in wonder. The ball split into two separate ones, hitting the wall then sinking into two corner pockets on the opposite side of the table.

“A natural.” Malfoy commented, though he was masking a glare directed toward Tom.

“You’re not so bad yourself.” Hermione giggled.

“Join us for a break, Hermione.” Druella droned from the couch.

Lestrange looked frustrated beyond belief. It would appear that his advances on Druella did not faze her.

“We just started though-” Hermione began.

“It’s not a true billiards night without enjoying some snacks and talk, Hermione. Let’s sit.” Malfoy said.

Limply, her cue stick fell to the table, leaning against the ornate wood. She followed Abraxas to the couch.

“Do you guys need a place to sit?” Nott asked, elbows braced on his knees.

Noticing all the spots were taken up, Hermione nodded.

“Then think about it.” said Nott. His fingers folded together, his eyes concentrating.

“Pardon me?” Hermione asked.

“I’m serious, just think about it!” Nott spoke, his hands gesturing her to sit.

Hesitantly, she did. Her bum met the cushion of a footstool. That is when she remembered where she was; of course the Room of Requirement. It felt so foreign to her, the space trapezing as a billiards play room. It was much different than the way it looked during fifth year.

“Absolutely amazing.” Nott said. Bags hung below his eyes. “This room, I think it’s magical. Who found it again?”

Tom was the one to speak up, “I did. Last year, I came across a door. I had not bothered to look inside it then. Low and behold, this year, Avery and Malfoy mentioned hosting a billiard tournament. Word spreads quickly around here, soon all of the houses were interested. Then, when I thought to myself, where could I find a place large enough to house all of the upperclassman, I stumbled upon this treasure.” Tom’s hands gestured to the entirety of the room.

“Wow.” Nott breathed out.

“Fully equipped too. I had no idea it existed. I then asked teachers permission to use it, of course. In the name of inter-house unity, they approved. Naturally, though, prefects are encouraged to attend to supervise.”

“That’s so absurd. This room, it should be called,” Nott snapped his fingers in succession, trying to find the perfect name, “The Room of Need!”

“It’s the Room of Requirement.” Hermione corrected. Ankles crossed, she looked to Nott who agreed that her title was a bit better.

“Hermione, what a perfect name for it.” Tom held his head in his hand.
“I can’t say I came up with it. That’s it’s official name.” With great emphasis, Hermione corrected him.

“Oh? How do you know so much about it?” Malfoy intervened.

“Have none of you read *Hogwarts: a History*?” Disbelief riddled her tone. She scanned the group, not finding a single person prattle their Hogwarts knowledge.

“So, Hermione, tell us what exactly the Room of Requirement does.” encouraged Tom.

“It’s in the name. Anything you need, the room provides.”

Tom’s onyx gaze glinted with curiosity. He leaned forward in his chair, “Anything?”

“Is there only one version of the room?” Avery wondered aloud. He was upside down on the couch, taking small bites from a biscuit. Crumbs fell into his hair.

“No, there’s an infinite amount.” Hermione clarified. The smallest of satisfied smiles came to her. Her expansive knowledge was appreciated, and for that she was grateful.

“Can’t people just waltz through other versions of the room? Wouldn’t that be problematic?” Druella questioned.

“Well, you have to be thorough with the room. As long as you say that nothing can enter or leave, then you’re fine.”

Hermione’s mind reeled for a moment. No, her paranoia was wrong. There’s no way she could have forgotten to tell the room to make sure Aion did not leave.

“Hermione, I think someone is waiting for you.” Malfoy’s voice broke her anxiety stricken trance. Malfoy jutted a thumb behind her. Whirling in her chair (how thoughtful of the room to allow it to swivel.) Hermione saw Minerva McGonagall.

A single finger beckoned Hermione.

“Excuse me.” Hermione said as she left the group of Slytherins.

Passing a group of Ravenclaws strategizing, Hermione made her way to Minerva.

“I thought you said you weren’t coming.” Hermione held a happy face. Minerva, however, was stern with eyes darting left to right.

“I have a favor to ask of you.” She said as her eyes settled on Hermione.

“What is it?” Worry filled the question. Hermione was concerned by Minerva’s serious tone.

“Here, come with me.” Minerva urged Hermione to follow. With great curiosity, Hermione ventured behind, blindly letting Minerva lead.

“Are we going outside?” asked Hermione, her head peering around Minerva.

“Yes, out to the balcony.” The Scottish witch confirmed. She held the door open for Hermione.

Cold air rushed pass. Instinctively, Hermione’s hands went to her arms, rubbing for warmth. Minerva pulled her cloak closer around her. Stars lit the night sky, along with the moon’s aid. Bushes and
small, potted saplings sat outside the doors on either side.

“Malfoy still has never apologized to me.” started Minerva.

“He hasn’t?” Hermione’s brow furrowed.

“Yes, which is why, to everyone’s amusement, I think you should give him this chalk.” Holding a piece of yellow chalk, Minerva smiled.

“Oh?” Hermione recalled the piece of chalk the twins had given her earlier.

“Yes. The twins did not explain exactly what it will do,” Minerva analyze the piece, “but said that we’ll know it when it happens.”

“This is all in the name of getting your own revenge?” Hermione questioned.

“Yes, I-” A rustling in the bushes distracted Minerva. “Did you see that?”

“See what?” Hermione adjusted herself to stand beside Minerva. Searching the bush yielded nothing.

“I thought I saw something,” Minerva waved herself off, “Never mind that. Here you go.” She dropped the square in Hermione’s hand.

“Wait, where are you going?” Hermione asked as Minerva retreated back into the warmth.

“Promised Professor Dumbledore I would help him out. He’s betting on you by the way!”

Hermione stood their dumbly, in the cold. The door closed with a soft thud. Sighing, Hermione placed the chalk in a skirt pocket.

“Rough, night, huh?”

Jumping in the air, Hermione turned abruptly. No one had been outside when the two witches came out.

Aion stood there, same goofy smile on his face.

With widened eyes, Hermione exclaimed, “You again!”

“Me again!”

“You need to go, now.” Hermione pushed him to the side of the balcony where shrubbery blocked the glass door view.

“You know, you really should have been more specific with the room.” Aion chastised with the wag of his finger.

“I realize that now!” Hermione whispered harshly.

“It’s fine, I’ll just remain here, in these bushes. Who knows what sort of interesting behavior I’ll observe out here. Speaking of which-” Aion lowered himself into the bushes with no further explanation.

“Aion, what are you doin-” Hermione paused at the sound of a door opening.

“Mind telling me why you’re out in the cold alone?” Tom asked. His steps echoed along the
balcony.

“No reason.” Inwardly, Hermione was panicking. Of all people to see Aion, Tom would be the worst. More questions would arise, ones that could actually lead to the truth.

“Ah, pardon me for interrupting your conversation with the bush.” He gestured with one hand toward the bush that hid Aion.

“Is that a muffin in your hand?” Hermione quickly tried changing the subject.

He looked down at his hand, indeed there was a chocolate muffin, “Yes. I brought it out here to you. They tend to go quick and I know you haven’t had a bite yet. Consider it a treat for making your first successful move in Wizard Billiards.”

Inching away from the bush, Hermione said, “I’m not a fan of sweets.”

“Neither am I,” Tom stepped closer to her, backing her up against the railing, “This is dark chocolate. A better alternative of the sweet.”

Tom’s back was to the door. The thrum of muffled music filtered through the cracks. Just out of her peripherals, she saw Aion stand up. Appalled, her eyes widened at his hand gestures.

“Kiss him!” Aion mouthed, his fingers puckering and hands colliding repeatedly.

“Hermione?” Tom followed her gaze. Aion had ducked back under the influence of the foliage in time.

“It’s nothing. Don’t worry about. So, muffin right?” Hermione brought his attention back to her.

“Right.” Tom said nonchalantly. Delicately, he peeled the wrapping off. Dexterous fingers put themselves to work. It seemed like an eternity after he was finished. Hermione mentally scolding herself for getting distracted by such a simple thing as his fingers.

“Would you fancy the first bite?” asked Tom. The tan stone of the castle stood behind him, emphasizing his dark appearance.

“Sure.” Hermione choked out. She was willing to do anything to keep his attention away from Aion.

Expecting him to hand her the muffin, confusion painted Hermione’s face as he broke off a piece. Chocolate between two fingers, Tom said, “Open wide.”

“No, no, absolutely not.” Hermione said. Her hands planted on his shoulders as she was about to push him away; she stopped when she saw Aion appear from the shrubbery again.

“I will come out if you do not eat that muffin!” Aion mouthed to her, determination plastered on his face, a vindictive finger pointing at her.

Fuming silently, Hermione shut her eyes. Hesitantly, awkwardly, she parted her mouth.

Chocolatey warmth engulfed her taste buds. Her heart beat rapidly as she felt his finger linger on her lips for too long. The swipe of his thumb across her lower lip sent her over the moon, but not in a pleasant manner. No, she felt like she was going to crash land.

“Was it good?” Tom asked.
Opening her eyes, she looked up at him. Indifference grossed his features.


“No.” he paused, choosing to swim in her image for a moment, “Meet me in the library after dinner tomorrow.”

“You can’t just demand me to do that, Riddle.” Hermione rolled her eyes at his superior attitude.

“You’ll find that I can be very,” he lowered his head, ducking to place a chaste kiss to the corner of her lip where a crumb lay, “persuasive.”

Paralyzed, Hermione could only stand and take in the situation. Anger bubbled in her chest, threatening to lash out.

“If you do come, I’ll teach you things. Things you did not even fathom possible.”

“I don’t want to learn anything from you.” Seething, Hermione’s hands gripped the railing tightly.

“I know you have this notion about dark and light magic, but I will show you the truth. The truth that the Ministry and Hogwarts refuses to tell students. Just one lesson, Hermione.” He held up a singular finger.

One leg bounced in place. The words were sinking in and Hermione debated. Fingers clenched and unclenched several times while her mind raced.

“No.” Firm. Every ounce of her being wanted to push the boy away, to dash to Aion and slap him for putting her up to this.

“I strongly believe you should reconsider my offer.” Underlying threats lined the statement.

“I strongly believe you should stop harassing me.” Head cast down, Hermione refused to spare him a glance. Biting the inside of her cheek did little to smolder the heat of her growing rage.

“Seek reason, Miss Dumbledore.” A hand shot out to her jaw, grabbing it roughly. Tom forced her to look him in the eye.

Both hands of hers gripped the sleeve of his arm. “What do you think you’re doing?” she cursed aloud, prying the hand off her jaw.

Slipping from the space between Tom and the railing, Hermione created distance. Indignation boiled, bubbles of rage rising in her throat.

Calmly, Tom opened his mouth to speak, but was silenced by Hermione.

“No, don’t try to conjure an excuse. I don’t want to hear the lousy reasoning of your twisted mind.” She took a step forward, “Don’t think I don’t know what you’re up to, Riddle. Let us not forget I know all about you.” The nod to her seemingly omniscientience provoked Tom to flare his nostrils, “You threaten me, try to trick me, belittle me, and most importantly, underestimate me.”

“Never once have I underestimated you.” he hissed. Long strides caused Tom’s form to close in on her, “You have so much potential. Think about it. Abandon your previous beliefs and you’ll witness what magic truly has to offer for the powerful.” Further steps were hindered by the wood of Hermione’s wand jutting into his chest.

Glancing down to the wand, then back to Hermione’s heated face, Tom said, “My offer expires at
Pressing his jacket, Tom returned to the billiard’s room. Squeaking, the door swung closed.

Rustling caused Hermione to turn to the bushes.

Aion crouched there, huge smile and two thumbs up.

Finally, Hermione allowed the anger to erupt. Stomping over to the bushes, Hermione yanked Aion from his spot.

“Wicked grip you have.” Aion pouted, rubbing his wrist.

“You wretched creature.” Hermione stared at him through the tears forming. Her vision blurred, distorting the centaur.

“I beg your pardon?” Aion stepped out onto the balcony. Leaves departed their home as he emerged fully from his hiding spot. Narrowed eyes like daggers, Aion stared down at Hermione.


Warily, he continued to look at her. “What do you mean?”

“Why,” choking back a sob, Hermione continued, “am I here, Aion?”

Wobbly legs carried her to the rail. Bracing herself, she looked out to the stars.

The stars mocked her. Every twinkle was a jab, a frivolous giggle emitted for her pain. The stars knew what Aion’s reply would be, and so did she.

Gritting her teeth, she forced her gaze down to the highlands of Scotland.

“You know I can’t tell you that…”

Pain surged in her temples, the pressure too much to bare. A tear finally broke free.

“Why am I here?” she insisted.

A warm hand covered a shoulder of hers.

Whipping around, strands sticking to her wet cheeks, Hermione pointed a finger. “Do not, touch me.”

Stepping back, Aion gave her space. Hands up in a declaration of peace, Aion said, “Hermione. I promise you can return soon. You’re almost finished here. You have no idea how valuable your presence here has been.”

“You’re right, I don’t know, because some insufferable prick is hiding it from me.” She took a step toward him, “Am I here to suffer? Is that why I’m here, Aion? Because, let me tell you, that is what every hour, every minute, every second here makes me feel like. I feel so, so,” she paused, a sob interrupting, “stranded and helpless. These people, they can be lovely at times, but I know my peers hate my guts, and I’m in danger every time around Riddle.”

Aion kept silent as he watched Hermione’s rage and sorrow unfurl.
“Do you know what it’s like to stare into the eyes of a murderer? The murderer of your best friend’s parents? The tyrant that’s threatening to burn the world you know and love, only to bask in the ashes,” hysterical giggles mixed with Hermione’s cries, “the worst part, you could have been fooled if you didn’t look past his false smile. He could almost be a normal boy.”

Aion wanted to say that yes, he has looked into those frigid, detached, eyes. But what Aion saw, was the opposite of Hermione’s vision. Where she saw despair, Aion recognized ambition.

“Go back inside, Hermione. It’s getting awfully cold. I was going to tease you about the potion ingredients, but bring them another time. I see that you are distressed.”

Wiping her tears with her sleeve, she replied, “No kidding.”

“Allow me to say, that you were chosen for a reason. And it’s not because you deserve to suffer as you have implied,” Aion added a chuckle, to which a fraction of a smile appeared on Hermione, “You are the brightest witch of your age. One of the most caring and strong I’ve witnessed. In times of doubt, recall these qualities. For the record, I apologize for my behavior.” Aion finished.

Hooves clicked against the balcony. A door appeared behind the shrubbery, Aion disappearing behind it.

A shaky breath escaped Hermione. Blinking allowed the tears to vanish, droplets settling on her cheeks. Undoubtedly, her face was red and eyes puffy. She had not even noticed that she slid down to the base of the balcony, sitting.

Lifting her wand, she mumbled a spell. It was a sub-par Glamour charm to rid the rouge; a few minutes of relaxation would do the trick. After that, it would appear as if no tears had been shed.

She is a strong witch, lest anyone believe differently.

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Harsh light blinded Tom for a moment as he entered the billiard room. Elegance poured from his casual strides. Heads turned to great him. Despite his sour mood, he smiled. A nod here, a wave there; congeniality in check.

“Hello, Tom.” Walburga Black sung. A finger twisted around a curl in her hair.

“Hello, Miss Black.” A curt nod should have sent her away. But it did not.

Walburga’s form stepped in front of Tom. Lest his facade crumble, he refrained from shoving her away.

“Problem, Miss Black?”

“Since when have you taken up formalities with me?” Walburga’s face scrunched.

“Pardon me, I’m simply stressed. I would appreciate if I could walk past, I am more than willing to continue the conversation at a later date.” Tom lied.

“I do hope you keep to that promise. It’s important and about Miss Dumbledore.” Walburga spat the name.

A miniscule twitch of the brow. Tom’s interest piqued.

“Perhaps I could spare a moment.”
A wicked smile graced Walburga’s stained lips. “I thought you could.”

Beckoning him with a finger, Walburga lead him to a couch.

“So, what exactly did you wish to tell me?” asked Tom.

“Are you sure you want to hear it? The tournament among houses will be starting soon. I’d hate for you to miss it.” A pout jutted Walburga’s bottom lip out.

Tom casted a glance to his acquaintances’s pool table. Nott snoozed on the couch, Avery practiced his strike, Malfoy talked with Lestrange. Uninterested eyes addressed Walburga.

“I’m certain they can fend for their own. I insist, spill what’s on your mind.” Fiddling his thumbs, Tom waited.

“I know about your little group.”

His thumbs halted. The hands in his lap went to grip his thighs.

“I’m afraid I know not what you speak of.”

Rolling her eyes, Walburga smacked Tom playfully, “No need to hide it. I know your agenda; you want to establish a pure-blood regime.”

Her voice lowered to a whisper, “I want to join.”

Brief shock coursed through Tom. All of his members were recruited. Never did they come to him.

“Walburga, I don’t know what you’re referencing, but,” Tom encroached, an arm sliding behind the couch, “if such an organization did exist, what would you have to offer?”

Batting her lashes, she replied, “You don’t see how valuable I am? Let that clever brain of yours think. I know you’re intrigued by Miss Dumbledore and I happen to be her roommate. Say the word and I’ll ruin her.”

“Ruin her how?” asked Tom. It came out far more defensive than he anticipated.

“Scavenge through her things, dig up dirt on her. You name it, I can do it.”

Choosing to look elsewhere, Tom’s eyes left her face. Pondering. What motive could she have?

Nothing sparked his interest as he scanned the room. Hermione continued her skirmish with Abraxas. Lestrange poked Evan with a cue stick. Dolohov had since joined, but he did not engage with anyone. Nothing of interest.

Except for the freckled face of Aion peering out a door.

Sharp eyes focused on the creature.

“I’ll decide later. I forgot that I had prior engagements.” said Tom. Standing abruptly, Tom left Walburga to stare at him with her mouth agape.

Weeding through the crowd of students, Tom tried locating Aion. Spirited individuals greeted him, but he ignored. No time for false pleasantries.

The door no longer had a centaur peeking from it. But Tom knew it to be the one. Knocking, he
waited to be let in.

“What’s the password?” A voice from the other side uttered.

Grumbling, Tom said, “Aion, you know who it is.”

Squeaking on its hinges, the door opened. Only slightly ajar. Tom slipped through, shutting it behind him.

Moss covered the floor. Trees hung low, the ceiling inconceivable due to the thrush of branches. Fire flickered next to the door, brick caging the flames.

“How quaint.” Tom said as he walked. Roots roped across the floor, almost causing Tom to trip.

“Feels like home.” Aion mentioned. He stood in front of a brewing station, crushing ingredients with a mortar and pestle.

“What are you doing here?” His calm, polite attitude dissipated.

Aion waved the marble mortar in the air, “Brewing, duh.”

A sharp exhale left Tom, “Why are you here?”

“Mars is inching closer to Venus. Earth lies in between. Do you know what that means, Tom?”

Seconds passed, “No.”

“Earth is home to life. If Mars and Venus get too close, they’ll crash into the Earth. Life will be gone. Remember that during your little study-date with Miss Dumbledore tomorrow.” Casting a glare over his shoulder, Aion warned Tom.

“A little bit more clarification is needed.” Tom found himself sitting on the armrest of a large couch. It did not suit the forest-esque suite.

Aion let the brewing supplies clatter to the counter, “What I mean, Tom, is that your ambitions will die if you get too close. There’s a distance you need to preserve.”

Tom leered, “You told me to get close to her. What changed?”

“I encountered a glimmer in the stars,” Aion lied, “She’s stronger than I originally anticipated. She’s vindictive and-”

“And what?” Tom pressed.

“Her temper. I did not realize how unpredictable it may make her. I’m afraid that if you get too close to her then,” Aion’s words died, the statement hanging.

“What? Afraid she’ll kill me? Don’t make me laugh.”

“No, I’m afraid she’ll tempt you.” Aion mumbled.

Tom stood. Following the centaur, Tom planted his hands on the counter. He searched Aion’s eyes.

“If it’s about some silly thing about desire, I can assure you that I can control such human instincts-”

“It’s not.”
Gritting his teeth, Tom asked, “Then what are you on about?”

“Simply heed my warning, ask no further for I cannot reveal.” Aion picked up a blade, cutting an herb.

“Alright,” Tom’s wrath melted, “I suppose I’ll be on my way then.”

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“Impressive, Hermione.” Abraxas Malfoy congratulated.

“Granted, not as impressive as our pool-shark, Malfoy over here.” Lestrange elbowed Malfoy who rolled his eyes.

“I did better than I anticipated. Let this be a warning to you,” Hermione pointed her cue-stick to Abraxas, “If you keep challenging me to things, I will win.”

Malfoy’s chest rumbled with laughter. “I’ll be sure to keep it in mind.”

Hermione could not help but laugh with him. Her mood improved. The grin that poked into her cheeks: genuine.

“Avery, what are you doing?” Malfoy asked.

Following his gaze, Hermione turned to Avery. Cue stick in hand, Avery aimed the tip at Nott’s cheek. But, he did not force it to make contact. Tongue peeking out from his mouth, Avery concentrated on Nott.

“I’m debating if I should poke Nott awake. The tournament is about to start.” Shaking hands held the wooden stick.

“You know if you do that, he’s going to chase you around with that stick and beat you with it.” Malfoy warned.

A giggle left Hermione. Watching their shenanigans reminded her of the Gryffindor boys from her time. Her smile faltered. These boys were much different; subordinates of a Dark Lord. Cruel images flashed in her mind, headlines of these boys and their sons terrorizing the wizarding world.

Shaking her head, she chose to ignore the thought.

A new song filtered into the atmosphere. The first one with lyrics all night.

Druella sat up, “Oh, I love this song!”

The lyrics were lost on Hermione. Her attention was captivated by the centaur peeking from a door she had not previously seen.

Turning away, she groaned. The mere sight of him irked her. Pain sprouted at the temples, encompassing her head in a slow grind.

“Hermione, are you alright?” Malfoy’s brows furrowed in worry.

“I’m fine, really, it’s nothing.” Waving him off, she placed her cue stick on the wall.
“Druella, how goes it?” Walburga sashayed to the couch, passing Hermione. The glare she sent Hermione did not go unnoticed.

Sandy blonde strands fell in tune, Druella bobbing her head to the music, “Simply enjoying the song.”

Walburga sat down next to her, a wide smile stretching her thin lips, “I know, you belong, to somebody new.”

“But tonight, you belong to me.” Druella sang with Walburga. Merrily, they wrapped their arms around each other’s shoulders, swaying in tune.

Drowning the choir out, Hermione stood by the flames. Flickering, they danced with the melody. Enchanted fire. It became increasingly difficult to ignore the song.

“Although, we’re apart, you’re a part of my heart.”

Evan and Lestrange joined in, adding baritone elements to the mix. Malfoy whistled the tune as he set to strike a billiard ball. Faux leather shoes tapped, another instrument to the orchestra.

Soon, the entire room was singing along. Volume peaking, Hermione’s head pulsated. The headache covered the map of her cranium.

Creaking saved her. The introduction of a door swinging open took hold of her attention. The sound blissful, in comparison to the tumultuous singing.

Voices died down as the record scratched. The track delved into deeper timbres. Distorted music wafted through the air. Despite the change, people sang quietly.

Baffled and bewildered. Wide eyes of Hermione watched Tom slip from a door. The door she saw Aion peer from.

“Wait down, by the stream, how sweet, it will seem.”

Gazes locked across the room. Tom stared directly at Hermione.

Questions bounced to every corner of Hermione’s mind. Each curiosity pounded her head. Confusion. One of the most frustrating experiences.

“Once more, just to dream, in the moonlight-”

The shrill of the record produced a shiver down Hermione’s spine.

Tom held her sight. His emotions, difficult to discern. Subdued wrath; the best guess Hermione had.

“My honey I know.”

Shock presented itself on his face too. Wide, questioning eyes. Tenebrous brows that sunk down to meet.

“With the dawn, you’ll be gone.”

Druella and Walburga made sure to sing the last line with devotion.

“But tonight, you belong to me.”
Malfoy’s stick collided with a ball; the distinct crack snapped Hermione’s gaze away from Tom.

Swing music danced through the room again, people gathering partners.

Shaking her head, she mustered any possible excuse she could for what she witnessed.

Maybe, it lead to a different room.

Maybe, it was a bathroom.

Maybe, Tom knows Aion.

Paranoia pricked her brain. There was no way Tom could know Aion, the notion absurd.

Right?

“How are you, Hermione?” Malfoy placed a hand on her shoulder.

Dazed, Hermione replied, “Yeah, yeah, I’m...yeah, I’m fine.”

Wrinkles formed on Malfoy’s forehead, clearly not convinced.

“Pardon me, Abraxas. It appears as if Hermione could use some rest. As a prefect, it is my duty to ensure her safety as she travels to the dungeons.”

The exact voice she did not want to hear: Tom.

“Right, of course.” Congenial and believable. Malfoy let his hand fall from the perch of Hermione’s shoulder.

“Shall we, Hermione?” Tom offered an arm.

Others looked at the two expectantly. Pairs of eyes focused until Hermione broke under the peer pressure.

“I suppose. Thank you, Riddle.” Soft as a cloud, yet saturated with distaste.

The wolfish grin on his face seemed to spread further; a predator capturing his long-awaited prey.

Story upon story she has heard. Either from Harry or the brief mentions Ginny rarely shared. Bestowing his arm to her, was a monster. In time, obsidian would exchange for crimson slits. If Tom were to unhinge his jaw and devour her like the snake he is, Hermione would not be surprised. Horrid, vivid details from those stories.

But, he did not do this. Because Tom Riddle was just a normal boy.

A completely normal boy. One with a reputation to uphold.

No one seemed to find the large grin on Tom’s face to be malicious.

“Bye, Hermione, I’ll see you in the dorm later.” Druella politely waved, sluggish smile tweaking her lips.

Hermione chose not to verbally reply. Too high of a chance she would plea for Druella to join her in the dorm early.

Strolling, arm in arm, the duo passed through the room. Plenty of greetings were tossed their way.
None hindered their journey to Hermione’s dismay.

“How kind of you to accompany me to the common room.” Sarcasm dripped off Hermione’s tongue.

Walking through the threshold, Tom leaned closer to her ear, “Rest assure you, I have no intention of taking you to the common room.”

Jerking away, Hermione’s head whipped to his direction, “What do you mean by that?”

“What I mean is that we’re going on a field trip.”

Ah, yes. Field trip. The same term she told Aion before essentially imprisoning him.

Though, that did not seem to work, now did it? Hermione’s mind reeled.

Grabbing her arm, Tom led her to a miscellaneous door of the corridor.

“In here.” Tom demanded, pushing her through the opening.

Darkness shrouded the area. Straining eyes attempted to adjust, but were startled by the sudden light Tom produced.

“A little warning next time?” Hermione recoiled, her hands shielding the blinding blue hue. Stumbling backwards, the witch avoided tripping over any objects, all while creating distance between the two.

“Oh, yes, do pardon me.” Sardonic. It seemed the young wizard returned the sarcasm from earlier.

“Riddle, let me just go to the dungeons. Clearly you don’t plan on escorting me there.” Cloaked in shadows, fingertips went to the base of her wand.

“You’re right, I plan on returning to the Room of Requirement after I’m done here.”

“Then cut the middle man out, release me.” Words bought time. Drawing her wand, Hermione grasped the end tightly.

A crisp chuckle cut the air.

“This moment is far too valuable to waste. All of our peers are partying, you’re mine to interrogate. Expelliarmus.”

Leaping forward, the witch’s hand grabbed air. Wood clattered to the tile.

“Vine wood. Intriguing.” said Tom as he twisted Hermione’s wand in his hand.

“Give it back, Riddle.” Gritted teeth accented the demand.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to come over here to get it.” Tom teased.

In the cerulean lighting, Tom waved the stolen wand. Taunting.

Harsh stomps echoed in the room. Marching to Tom, Hermione held out one hand.

“Give it back.”

“I’m not so sure, I quite enjoy the feel of it,” Dexterous fingers stroked the wood, lingering on the
carvings, “It thrums with energy. Hasty and volatile magic. Dragon Heartstring core, I presume?”

Hermione’s silence provided the answer.

“Quite fitting for you. Complex spells are a breeze with this, too bad you’ve never ventured outside of your ‘light’ magic.” The clicking of his tongue punctuated the statement.

“Is this all about getting me to join you after dinner tomorrow? Really, Riddle?” Disbelief protruded from her tone.

“Not completely, no. In fact, I have a few questions. If you answer, then I’ll give you the wand back.” The wizard swaggered to a pair of dusty chairs. He gestured for Hermione to sit.

Mentally, Hermione weighed her options. With her wand hostage, not many possibilities came to mind. Trudging to the seat opposite of him, Hermione sat.

“Do you promise to give me my wand back after this?” Crossed arms and attitude. Hermione wanted nothing more than to get this over with.

“And then I’ll be on my merry way back to the Room of Requirement.” Tom confirmed. No smile present, yet amusement poured from him in waves.

“Right. That room. How did you come across it again? I do recall someone saying you were the one to find it.” Shuffling her feet across the floor, Hermione waited for an answer.

“Last year I happened across it. Nothing of significance was in it.” Tom stretched out, ankles crossing. His defensive tone betrayed his casual posture.

“Earlier you said you did not even spare a look inside. What was in it, Tom?” Hermione leaned forward, forearms planted on her thighs. Cinnamon eyes scrutinized every miniscule twitch of muscle on the teen wizard.

“I’m the one interrogating you. Not the other way around. Let us recall what I have in my hand.” Dim light revealed worn wood, twirling between his fingers.

“It wasn’t what you were looking for was it? Did you get excited when you entered? Thought you finally found it?” Hermione inquired.

“No idea what you speak of.” Tom droned. His hands fiddled with the two wands in his lap.

“I imagine you were rather upset when you realized your precious Basilisk was nowhere to be found. Did it whisper to you, ‘Hey, I’m down here, dunce.’?”

Pursing his lips, Tom bit back a nasty retort, “So you know about that, too.”

“I know a plethora of things, Tom. You wouldn’t believe me even if I told you.” Reclining back, Hermione let her spine meet with the dingy chair.

“Most were frightened when I told them of my heritage.”

“I bet you thrived under the power their fear gave you.”

“I absolutely did.” Tom confessed in a single breath. He mirrored Hermione’s stance; crossed arms and stretched out legs.

Intrusive eyes leered at her. Unsettled, Hermione shifted under their influence.
“My wand?” Sticking out an arm, she waited.

“I think not. I haven’t asked a single question.”

“Fine. On with it.” Hermione motioned for him to move along.

“How did you know it was a Basilisk?” Tom’s head titled. A boyish gesture of curiosity that did not suit him.

“You may have fooled the school into thinking it was Hagrid,” Twice, “but I reviewed the case with others. Besides, you think Salazar Slytherin would want anything other than a giant snake to give to his heirs?”

“That explains why you’re so comfortable with the half-breed.” said Tom, under his breath, “So you know that I am fully capable of summoning it at this moment? I could tell it to kill you, you know. All it takes is one-”

“Glance. I’m aware.” Hermione finished for him. “What you don’t know is that I’ve survived one before.”

Shaking his head, laughter filled the air, “Oh, really? Tell me all about it then.”

“Why tell you, when I could just show you? Bring the beast up here.” Hermione taunted.

Biting the inside of his cheek, Tom did not reply.

“All talk, I see. Professor Dumbledore has you on his radar, you know that. You won’t be able to call it while you’re here, lest you want to be expelled. So please, stick to realistic threats.”

“Every time you speak, every time you so much as utter a syllable, I am conflicted, Hermione.” said Tom.

“How so?”

“I don’t know if I want to murder you, or to kiss you.”

“Is that supposed to throw me off?”

“It was worth a try.” Tom sighed.

“Go on, Riddle. Next question.”

Tom leaned to the side, against a bookshelf. With him, the light wavered, revealing more of the room. A white sheet pooled at his feet.

“Hermione, it’s important that you be honest with me.” Tom closed in, “Because I’m not afraid to use force if necessary any more.”

A mastered Legilimens. Or, at least, one in training. Having her mind read was not on Hermione’s to-do list for the day.

“Take my word for it. Or rather my wand.” She pointed to the stick that tangled in his hand.

“Right.” A satisfied smile broke the blank canvas of a face, “Why were you staring at me after I exited that one door in the Room of Requirement?”
“Doors come and go in that room. You will need to be more specific.”

“I think you know which one. Will I have to jog your memory? A certain song was playing in the background. Couldn’t be missed, the whole room was singing with it.”

The prospect of Tom singing the haunting tune revolted her.

“I thought I saw a couple head into the room. Then, Walburga and you happen to emerge in the room at the same time. You can imagine the horror plastered on my face.” Hermione spoke as though it were true.

“Humor will get you nowhere. Tell me, what did you see?”

Mentioning Aion would be beyond idiotic. Chances are, Tom has no idea about the centaur. She would have to discuss it with the hybrid himself.

“Nothing. I had a headache and everyone’s singing agitated it. Don’t you ever space out sometimes during that?”

Appraising eyes washed over her. Anxiety shook her limbs, no matter how hard she tried to conceal it. Controlling her breathing was the worst part. Her diaphragm forcibly caused her to draw in quick breaths; straining the muscle encouraged an ache to spread along her abdomen.

“I see. Pardon me for assuming otherwise.” said Tom.

Relief swelled in Hermione.

Lies stacked on top of each other. With their towering form, it was all a matter of time for them to tumble. Hermione wished to be back in her time period before it came crashing down.

“Hermione, what are you hiding from me?” His wand pushed a curl from her face. Stygian brows furrowed in concentration.

Leaning forwards, they met in the middle. Faces close enough to feel the humidity of one another’s breath. Tom’s jaw clicked as the proximity decreased.

“So many things that you’ll never know.”

“Don’t tempt me with a challenge, Hermione.”

“It’s not challenge if I’m already crowned the victor.” Hermione stood, wandering the room.

She would leave. Only if her wand was not captive. The door surely must be locked anyways.

Roaming the darkness, Hermione reached out to feel around. Cold, flaking metal met the pads of her fingers. A piece fell between two fingers.

Before she could inspect further, Hermione was promptly met with the seat of a chair. The chair whipped itself to Tom.

“Did I say we were finished? It’s rude to leave when the conversation the other is not satisfied.”

“Riddle!” Hermione rocked the chair, her body not leaving it. Invisible constraints held her down. Her arms, however, were free to roam.

“You never gave me an answer about tomorrow.” Tom looked at the wands in his hands, not sparing
the struggling witch a glance.

“Oh, well, I wonder what my answer is now after you’ve tied me up!” Her arms flailed in the air, communicating her frustration.

“I’ll take it as a yes.” said Tom.

“No you will not. I won’t be showing up, at night, probably past curfew, to entertain your silly lessons.” Huffing, Hermione gazed into the darkness. Light seeped through the crack of the door, the only thing she could focus on.

“You won’t be showing up anywhere if I break your wand.” Bracing the fragile wood over his knee, he threatened to snap it.

Caution swam through Hermione. “You wouldn’t.”

“I can’t really summon an ancient beast up here to intimidate you, this is the next best thing, you see.” He applied force, the wood bending. Splinters formed.

“Riddle, stop it.” She said. Chestnut eyes jumped from the bending shaft of her wand to the malevolence on his face.

“I don’t really want to. I wonder if I break it, if I’ll be able to feel it unleash the magic stored in it.” A thumb caressed the length before settling at an end.

Exhaling, Hermione asked, “If I agree to go, will you give me my wand?”

“Only if you also agree to not throw any curses my way.”

Hermione winced as she saw slivers of wood jut from the pressure, “Fine.”

In that moment, he released her from her invisible constraints.

Launching for the wand, she stood. He mirrored her, two wand in hand, holding them high above her reach.

“Riddle.” She glowered.

The light of his wand lit the massive mirror beside them.

“Well, would you look at that.” Tom’s interest swayed to the reflective object.

Realization struck Hermione. The gilded mirror was the same she encountered with Aion.

“The Mirror of-”

“Erised.” Hermione finished.

A quick glance was thrown her way.

Seldom did Hermione wish to not know things. Tom’s vision of the mirror was one of them.

“Stand here.” Tom dragged Hermione to his spot. “What do you see?”

“I’m not going to tell you.”

“Let it be another mystery I solve, then.” said Tom, his gaze never leaving the mirror.
“Ahem,” Hermione cleared her throat, “My wand.”

Tom turned to her. Now, he looked at her with the same vigor as he did with the mirror.

“Hermione.”

“Riddle.”

“Why do you insist on such formalities?”

“Because you’re a deranged boy who has threatened me multiple occasions. Not exactly friendly.”

“But we kissed.”

“Against my will, mind you.” scoffed Hermione.

“Are you telling me, that if I were to snog you again,” he leaned down, caressing her cheek, “that you would not enjoy it?”

Slapping the hand away, she retorted, “No, I would not find it enjoyable. My wand, now.”

“So impatient, so hasty. I hate to inform you that I prefer things to be slow, drawn out, sensual.” Every syllable came out lower than the previous, drifting into a soft baritone.

Tipping her chin, he forced her to look to him.

“Prove to me you wouldn’t like it.”

“If I do, you will give me my wand. Unless you would appreciate a swift kick to the groin.”

“Deal.” Tom swooped down, cupping both of her cheeks.

Unlike last time, this was less heated.


No rationality could have explained why Hermione did not want to vomit. A heartless man kissed her; he confessed that morning that he holds no genuine feelings for her. A twinge of disappointment hit her. Disgust chased the fleeting emotion.

Wood brushed against her cheek. He did not relinquish his grip on the wand.

Will power held Hermione back from kissing him. Innate instincts told, no, demanded she return the favor. Fists clenched at her sides, she withstood the pressure.

Hands wandered down. Leaving the perch of her cheeks, limber digits caressed the outer layer of her jumper, following the fabric to her waist. Massaging circles through the shirt.

Subconsciously, Hermione’s arms traversed upward to his neck. Forcing them down, Hermione halted their journey. A chuckle vibrated against Hermione’s lips.

“It’s okay to enjoy something primal, Hermione. No one would blame you.”

Except for the friends she has waiting in the future. Telling them that she made out with the Dark Lord would probably not go over well. Disappointed faces flashed in her mind. Their judgemental stares held her back from giving in.
Seconds passed after Hermione decided not to react.

Backing away, Tom’s lips left hers. Cold rushed to Hermione, missing the warmth already.

“Resilient.” Tom congratulated, his voice husky. A thumb of his wiped the corner of his mouth.

Eagerly, Hermione wiped her mouth with her sleeve.

“I believe you owe me something.” urged Hermione. Her hand waited for the familiar feel of her wand.

“I believe you’ve earned it.” A dazed smile complemented his features. Lazily, he dropped the wand in her hand.

“Thank you.” She mumbled, gripping the wand tightly. Marching out the door, she made sure to slam it shut.

“See you tomorrow for our study date, Hermione.” Tom called out to her.

Unclenching his other hand, a piece of yellow chalk revealed itself. Sniffing it, it smelled of cherry rather than bananas.

Silently, he thanked Hermione for the curious trinket he discovered.

Chapter End Notes

I came up with Wizard Billiards with a few friends. I hope you guys liked the idea. Hermione's wand is made from vine wood and has a dragon heartstring core, which according to wandlore is very easy to convert to the dark arts. Hence, Tom's fascination with the wand. Hurray for minor details that work in my favor! Feel free to ask any questions concerning, well, anything! I understand my writing is not concise, there's bound to be errors and wordy explanations that make no sense. Thank you guys, once again, for commenting and leaving kudos, this fic got way more attention than I anticipated. <3

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