Summary

Curious and open-minded, Iris Potter slowly uncovers the truth about the magical world, despite the warnings of her brother and father. What are the Old Rites, why is numerology a dark art, and why does she keep blushing whenever Blaise and her bond-mate look at her?

Prepare for magical theory, politics, paganism, creatures, a twin, romance, and above all, self-discovery.
On the 17th of December 2003, Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, and lifelong champion of light magic, was absolutely and completely shocked for the first time in nearly forty-five years.

He started off the day as any other. He woke up at five in the morning to the crows of his Phoenix companion Fawkes, and then spent two hours reading tomes for personal interest, followed by three dealing with paperwork from his various political duties. After he finished his last form, he headed down to his brother’s bar in Hogsmeade to hold several interviews for newly-open teaching positions.

As he arrived in the bar thirty minutes before his first interview, Albus mentally prepared for his first interviewee. He remembered Severus Snape from his days as a student, where he and the group of friends known as the “Marauders” would often share his office, shooting stern glares at each other
after some humorous prank or another.

He knew that at least in those days, Severus had a serious tendency to overreact, often decrying the Marauders’ harmless pranks as “bullying”, and spending the rest of the week skulking around and snapping at his peers when Albus wouldn’t let him get his way.

Albus could never prove anything, but he had strong suspicions that Severus had dabbled in dark magic like many of the other Slytherins. Albus was suspicious ever since Severus’s fourth year, where he had recovered from the broken ribs he received from a prank in a single day. Albus didn’t care how hale and hearty you were, that type of healing was only possible with the darkest of self-sacrifice rituals.

Nodding at his brother as he moved down to sit down at the bar, Albus was surprised to see that his second interviewee had already arrived, and was currently nursing a bottle of sherry. He looked at Aberforth questioningly, and received only a shrug in response.

“She’s been there for the past two hours, said somethin’ ‘bout ‘the fates’ tellin’ her to come here early.”

Albus raised a single eyebrow—a skill he had honed through years of practice—and simply stared at Aberforth, who finally failed to hold back a chuckle.

“Strangely enough I don’t believe her, given that her fates are tellin’ her to come here right ‘round when my drinks’ cabinet opens, and not a minute before.”

If Albus had low expectations for Severus, then his expectations for his other interviewee were positively abysmal. He had only met Sybil Trelawney once, at a lecture on the prophecies of her many-times Great Grandmother Cassandra, but even that brief encounter was enough to sour any future interactions.

She was very clearly drunk, and had almost knocked over a book display with her stumbling, and had loudly proclaimed that she had received a horrible omen of the end of the world in the bottom of her teacup, but that grand cosmic powers were preventing her from revealing her knowledge. Needless to say, she hadn’t impressed any of the seers at the event, who were used to displays of eccentricity from their colleagues, and had left an even worse impression on Albus, who wasn’t.

Naturally, Albus didn’t let any of this show on his face as he slid over to where Sybil was sitting. He smiled up at her, greeting her warmly. “Sybil! How wonderful to see you again!” he said. “Since you’ve arrived fortuitously”—he suppressed a wince as Sybil perked up—“early, why don’t we start our interview now? I’m sure Severus wouldn’t mind waiting an extra half-hour.” If Severus’s current temper bore any resemblance to the constant irritation and rage he showed at school, Albus seriously doubted this, but as little as he wanted to deal with one of Severus’s tantrums, he wanted to make pleasant small talk with Sybil even less. If he remembered her correctly, she would most likely respond to a question about the nice weather by predicting his death from the cloud patterns, or something equally ridiculous.

Once they were situated in one of Aberforth’s private rooms, he began the interview. Unfortunately, it seemed his memory was correct, and her responses to Albus’s questions were even more ridiculous than he expected. In her answer to the very first question, she had cited the fated occurrence of “great and terrible” events at Hogwarts as her reason for applying to the position, but when pressed for details, claimed that she was cursed by the fates to forget her foreknowledge whenever she would attempt to speak of it.

However, almost halfway through her interview, when she was expositioning in that irritatingly dreamy
voice of hers about the virtues of wine-stains as a divinatory tool, she dramatically and very abruptly froze in place, cutting herself off in the middle of a sentence. Albus barely paid it any mind at first, expecting her to “re-awaken” in the next minute to warn him of some vision of ill omen. But suddenly, startling Albus, she began to speak in a deep, rasping voice; one fit more for demons than wizards.

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...

Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the second month dies...

And the Dark Lord will mark them as his equal,

But they will have power the Dark Lord knows not...

And either must die at the hand of the other,

For neither can live while the other survives...

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the second month dies....

Albus was stunned. In all his years of study, he had only heard of events such of this, a true messianic prophecy. Unlike the predictions of diviners—a category he was now completely certain Sybil was not a member of—the prophecies of an oracle were are absolute, foretelling fated events as decreed by God himself.

He had never heard of such a gift arising randomly in the population before, if he didn’t see it with his own two eyes, he wouldn’t have believed it was possible. Perhaps Sybil’s family were famous “lost descendants” of the Prophet Obadiah? Were they related to the true magical branch of the Cohens? For a moment, Albus mourning the political implications of this prophecy: a confirmed oracle in the modern day and age would be a groundbreaking discovery for the field of divination.

It was, however, those political implications which were by far the most incredible aspect of this event. If he had not heard them from the mouth of magic, Albus would never have believed that a total victory was possible. Tom—obviously the “Dark Lord” of the prophecy, as he was one of the few dark wizards to reclaim that title for himself—was months away from a complete strategic victory; the war planners for the Light expected a Death Eater raid on the ministry within half a year.

The light populace of the country was broken, either cowering in fear, or beginning to experiment with the dark ritual magics which Tom advocated, growing sympathetic towards his cause thanks to Tom’s excellent propaganda. Minister Bangold had only exacerbated this situation with her “chuck-'em-all-in-Azkaban” policies, as one Order Member had described them, turning the population against an unforgiving ministry. If the ministry didn’t do the proper thing and allow those caught to seek a true, proper redemption, Tom would seduce more and more of the innocent populace of the wizarding world into experimentation with dark and dangerous ritual magics, and sympathy with the dark creatures and abominations who made up the majority of his army.

The messiah of the war seemed to be a child who would be born in February, barely two months away. The next year was to be a leap year, and so the “death” of the second month obviously referred to the 29th, an especially rare event, suitable for such a weighty destiny. Dozens of possible subjects ran through Albus’s mind, most notable the Potters and the Longbottoms, both of which had due dates at the end of February. Albus considered that the child indicated could be one from a common, unremarkable couple, but quickly discarded the notion. If there was any child who would be in a position to defeat Tom, after all, it would be one raised by some of Tom’s fiercest opponents.
Albus planned his next steps with incredible care and precision. He knew that the existence of this prophecy would prove invaluable in the war effort, having the ability if managed correctly to revitalize the flagging light masses into a new wave of opposition to Tom’s goals. The exact details obviously couldn’t be revealed, but the existence of a child who would defeat Tom? Releasing that information to the public would bolster the war effort immensely.

If he implied in his statement that the subject of the prophecy was a child, not an unborn fetus, then the existence of the prophecy itself could even be turned into a weapon. Tom would waste valuable weeks, even months, doggedly investigating the children of his enemies to find his prophesized vanquisher: weeks and months in which he would be terrified and distracted, a situation which would drastically reduce the competency of even history’s greatest military commanders.

Yes, the potential loss of older children and their families in such a campaign would be tragic, but Albus had long ago hardened his will to the necessary sacrifices which came with being a leader of men; especially a leader of men dedicated to peace, justice, and unification. The lost lives would be tragic, yes, but what were the lives of an unaligned, unimportant family in the face of the light’s most capable warriors, and the child who would end the war with the dark for good?

Looking to Sybil, slumping in a daze after the traumatic process of channeling the will of God, he knew that the very first thing he needed to do, even before attempting to determine the identity of the prophecy child and its parents, would be to protect the oracle in front of him at all costs.

Albus shuddered. The threat of someone, using the dark arts to invade Sybil’s soulscape and find the subconscious memory of the prophecy was too great to ignore. This was especially true given Tom’s own prodigal aptitude at soulscape manipulation, and the basic competency of every wizard in his employ at that branch of the dark arts. Additionally, Albus couldn’t deny that he was greatly interested by the idea of a personal oracle, able to predict the actions and fates of his enemies at various turning points of the war.

The only problem was, how exactly was he to protect her? He could place her home under powerful wards, but that would practically act as a glowing signpost to the creatures in Tom’s army with the ability to sense magic. The minute Albus revealed the prophecy, they would be looking high and low for a seer, especially a seer under the protection of Dumbledore. He could have used the fidelus, the most powerful ward he knew of, but absolute trust in a person was the keystone to that ward, and as far as Dumbledore could recall, Sybil didn’t really have anyone in her life that really liked her all that much.

However, sending her away to live in anonymity with only discrete monitoring would be perhaps even more dangerous. An Oracle’s prophecies could emerge randomly at any time, and it would only take one report to the ministry of an unknown seer to bring Tom’s investigation, which Albus would be powerless to stop due to his self-imposed distance.

No, it seemed virtually impossible to deflect suspicion from Sybil, as even the most cursory of examinations by the Hogwarts Board (controlled by the Death Eater Lucius Malfoy) into Dumbledore’s schedule would see him meeting with a supposed diviner several days before he releases news of a major prophecy. Instead, Albus would need to take precautions with the assumption of Sybil’s discovery already in place.

Rapidly, the easiest and most secure option dawned on him, as his mouth began to pinch in an irritated scowl. The one place in which Sybil would be most secure, and already have a legitimate, unquestionable reason for remaining there, would be inside the wards of Hogwarts itself, serving as the divination instructor.

Even for an elective course such as divination, meant to be taken by only those who possessed the
sight by creature magic or luck of birth, Albus was loath to hire such an obvious incompetent into his school. Despite the necessity of at least some degree of political motives in every decision of the staff of Hogwarts, Albus was an academic at heart, and truly valued Hogwarts’ function as a place of learning above any other, despite the necessity of its function as the so-called “Bastion of Integrationism”, the unassailable political stronghold of the Light.

Suddenly, Albus perked up, straightening from the slouch he hadn’t even realized he had entered. When one ignored the educational travesty of Trelawney’s hiring, Albus could resurrect one of his discarded plans for the empty position, and turn that hiring into a devastating, yet subtle political blow against the forces of dark magic. After all, numerology—the basis of ritual magic, the foundation of every dark discipline—was only taught as a portion of the Divination class thanks to the efforts of various Light headmasters over the centuries.

While a change in teacher may not lower the users of dark magics in the present—especially with Tom attempting to raise sympathy for those foul arts as “misunderstood”—by having the teacher for the foundations of dark magic, however inadvertent, be barely worthy of the role she was hired for, he could turn the interest of unaligned students away from dangerous and corrupting magics, and discredit the dark arts in the eyes of students from dark families, perhaps even turning them away from their families’ chosen sins entirely.

Yes, Albus concluded, he would immediately hire Sybil Trelawney as the new Hogwarts Divination professor, and then immediately schedule a meeting with the Potters and Longbottoms, telling them of the existence of the prophecy, and its possible subjects in their children. Then, after careful consultation and revision, he would announce a modified form of the prophecy by early January at the latest, both bolstering the beaten-down forces of the light, and deflecting Tom’s suspicions onto older children.

As Albus reached his final decision, Sybil, finally coherent, began to apologize profusely. “Oh I am so terribly sorry Albus dear, but the inner eye cannot be put on schedule!” She babbled on about some awful tragedy at the school or other, complimenting her monologue with suitably grand and mysterious hand motions, and a series of rapid blinks behind her large glasses.

Albus smiled indulgently. “Oh that’s perfectly alright Sybil. In fact, I believe that our time is just about up!”, he said, rising slowly from his uncomfortable wooden chair. “You’ve most certainly convinced me of your gifts”, he said. He clapped excitedly, and continued: “I believe that you’re by far the most fit candidate for the position. The job is yours!”. Sybil began to moan and swoon in a manner Albus interpret as indicative of excitement, waving her arms wildly and sending her shawls flying into Albus’s face.

Even as Sybil apologized, Albus’s gleeful planning continued behind his slightly vacant expression. Perhaps because of the joyful news he had received, or her part in imparting that news, but Albus found that even Sybil’s irritating antics couldn’t put a damper on his happiness.

As she exited the room, and brushed passed the lurking form of his next interviewee standing in the hallway—apparently Severus was still just as impatient as he was in his Hogwarts days—Albus began to feel the ever-present tension in his shoulders slowly begin to relax. For the first time in years, he truly had hope for the light’s victory, and that brought him an almost improper amount of relief. After all, Albus mused, there is a certain freedom to be found in servitude, and doubly so in servitude to fate.
The Dark Lord Voldemort, formerly known as Thomas Marvolo Riddle, was having a very, very irritating day.

First, Lucius had told him of Bagnold’s increased suspicion of his supporters in the Wizengamot, forcing several Lords who secretly served in his Knight of Walpurgis to be seen openly voting against measures which would make Voldemort’s fight easier.

Then, on top of those setbacks, Peter Pettigrew, his spy in the Order of the Phoenix, began to madly bow in front of him and beg forgiveness for some minor transgression in the presence of dozens of other Knights, disgusting both him and them with the pathetic sniveling cowardice of one of the Knights who had sworn themselves to the protection of magic.

Needless to say, this compendium of bad news, coupled with the distinct lack of reports on any victories, set Voldemort’s handsome face into a minor, but intense scowl before the day was even half over, not that any but his inner circle would notice such a thing.

This was quite disturbing, because—contrary to the beliefs of many of the sheep of the magical world—he was not normally an angry person. No, in fact, he was known by his close followers to be coldly pragmatic, at times overly so. He often laughed and smiled, yes, but that was borne out of a mocking amusement at those weaker than himself. He did, of course, deeply value and care for his closest followers, but he was too dedicated to his cause to allow for sentiment to influence his reason. Nothing was more important than the preservation of magic.

He quite honestly had no idea of how the character of the “rabid and angry Lord Voldemort” came to be, when many of his public battles gave the sheep ample evidence of his mocking, darkly amused attitude towards his enemies. He was unsure if it was some myth the public told themselves to make their political enemies sound less legitimate, the carrying over of their prejudices towards mages of other races onto his serpentine public appearance, or some other affectation of weaker minds which he was unable to comprehend. Regardless of its origin, it was the cause of no small amount of laughter among his inner circle, as they tried to reconcile the dedicated, calculating revolutionary they knew with the omnicultural berserker of Dumbledore’s propaganda.

However, just as much as the stereotype of an intemperate, rage-filled Voldemort was a bit of a running joke in the Knights of Walpurgis, the whispered stories of the few times he became truly angry were the things of terrifying legend. The last time had been during his failed assassination attempt on head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, Harold Bletchley. Dumbledore and his order had secreted the Bletchleys and their young son away, and turned their house into a death-trap. Voldemort had lost twelve Knights to the Order’s Gubrathian Fire Pits, while he was trapped outside by a duel with Dumbledore. Only a few especially lucky or talented mages had ended up escaping, protected by Voldemort as they fled.

After fleeing from the trap in a towering, grief-fueled rage, Voldemort personally obliterated the wards around Forbidden Forest with the ritual sacrifice of several political prisoners, and kidnapped Pherousa, the Hogwarts Divination teacher and one of Dumbledore’s staunchest supports on the staff. Three days later he left the body at the site of the trap, brutally tortured and killed over the process of days with an esoteric blood/acid transformation spell.

This event, which had happened only a few months prior, was close on the mind of one Euphemia Ziegler, recent recruit to the Knights of Walpurgis and deliverer of the Dark Lord’s daily newspaper. Just by glancing at the title, Euphemia knew that the Dark Lord would not be pleased in the least by this revelation, and while she knew that the Dark Lord would never turn his wand on his own Knights, just being in the very presence of his icy fury was a terrifying concept. She should know,
she was one of the escapees from the Bletchley house.

“My Lord,” she said, knocking on the door to Voldemort’s study, “I believe I have some news that will greatly interest you.”

“Come in!”

As the anxious Knight handed the Dark Lord the newspaper, she could see the absent, neutral expression on his face morph into one of complete fury on seeing the headline. It would be a fascinating process to watch, she thought, if it didn’t feel so much like standing in the den of an angry lion. She exited the room as the Dark Lord began to read the article, he pitied the poor fool who had published the piece, knowing exactly who the Knights’ next target would be. She was a proud Naiad, and knew that he most likely had no care for her rights, but even so, he most likely didn’t deserve the excruciating torture of an enraged Lord Voldemort.

Hope Returned: Dumbledore Reveals Prophecy of You-Know-Who’s Defeat!

By: Avery Jugson

For a long while, my dear readers, I am ashamed to admit I had been planning to leave the country entirely. I had grown saddened by the continual successes of You-Know-Who’s evil armies, and worried it was only a matter of time before his hordes of creatures overran our Ministry, killing off any wizard or witch in sight. I had already sent my children to foreign relatives, worrying that their Hogwarts education would soon start teaching the theory of dark rituals instead of the theory of transfiguration.

However, my friends, in the past few days, I have unpacked my bags, re-leased my flat, and cancelled my tickets at the International Portkey Office. Why, you may ask? Because, despite how increasingly unlikely the prospect of a victory might seem, this war is almost won!

This morning, the esteemed Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts, British Delegate to the ICW, and bastion of the light, secretly contacted me about a most startling and joyous revelation, which has assured the victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil: a prophecy!

You might not know this, readers, but a prophecy, spoken from magic itself, is a certain prediction of the future. Unlike the speculations and readings of diviners, the words of true oracles are words borne of powerful, little-understood magics, which are channeled through the seer to describe coming events. And thankfully, to my immense relief, one of these prophecies has been given about the war!

This prophecy, delivered to Dumbledore himself by an unnamed seer, tells us of a child who is destined to vanquish He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, who is currently hidden, and growing into his powers. This prophecy states that in the near future, this child will come into their own, and gain a mysterious weapon which will win this war for the light.

The unspeakables have confirmed the presence of a new prophecy, delivered to Dumbledore, and…

The article continued on for quite a while in the same vein, loudly extolling the virtues of resistance to the Knights until the chosen one arise and end the war, but Voldemort had read enough. He had to give that old, self-righteous dustbag some credit, this was a brilliant move.
He had, of course, heard the prophecy from Severus the very day it was given, and had immediately sent out several agents to discover the identities of all pregnant families with due dates in late February. He had to admit, if he had not heard the prophecy firsthand, he most likely would have fallen into the old cretin’s trap, and spent months searching for the powerful wards the subject of the prophecy would be protected under.

He knew well enough that truly fighting fate was impossible, yes, but that didn’t mean that it couldn’t be worked around. He would have dedicated his efforts in the coming months to finding and recruiting this chosen one to his side, and perhaps changing the meaning of “vanquish” to something much more amenable to his plans. Losing a mock duel, perhaps?

His distraction, coupled with the new surge of resistance and hope the news of this prophecy would bring, would set his campaign back months, perhaps even years, and while as an immortal, that was less of an issue than his enemy might have predicted, it was still a potentially devastating setback, and one that would require a great deal of energy to even begin to rectify.

Yes, Voldemort mused to himself, he had very rarely been as impressed with his old Headmaster as he was now. As much as Dumbledore, seeking to cater to the whims of vile muggle beasts, would despise any comparison to a “goblin”, a move like this would fit right in with the Coblynau, or some of the other more ruthless-minded magical races.

Unfortunately for Dumbledore, Voldemort had heard the prophecy, and as such, knew that his destined “foe” was currently a fetus gestating in its mother’s womb. Right as he began to chuckle to himself at Dumbledore’s awful fortune, though, he paused in thought. Even if this “chosen one” was a mere child, a prophecy was a prophecy, and as such could not be ignored. But that raised the question: how to circumvent fate, and provide the prophecy child with an avenue to “vanquish” him that wouldn’t hinder his plans?

After a few minutes of deliberation, Voldemort could think of only two options. He could either kidnap the child from its parents, and then allow it to defeat him in a practice duel as soon as it was old enough, or he could attempt the “vanquishing” when it was still a child, letting it win a game of tug-of-war, or something equally simple. While Voldemort would admit to himself that the first option presented a slightly safer interpretation of “vanquishing”, as well as having a certain kind of karmically retributive appeal, he was loath to leave a potential opponent alive for any longer than he strictly had to.

In the decade and a half it would take to teach the child to properly duel, any number of opportunities for “vanquishing” could arise for the child, especially if they spend a significant amount of time around Voldemort. He could see now in his minds eye a training session between the two, where a miscast piercing hex would somehow manage to penetrate his guard, and completely liquify the inside of his head. Again, as an immortal, this was far less of a concern than most would think, the horcrux resurrection ritual was a complex one, and there was always the chance that his safeguards to inform his most trusted Knights of the steps would fail, or one of those Knights would somehow botch the preparation.

No, the second option seemed much more tempting, if carrying a slightly greater risk. After killing the parents, Voldemort would, as absurdly juvenile as it seemed, enter into a match of tug-of-war with the child, and, after losing, kill them. This was the far safer option, given that unlike a teenager trained in dueling, no amount of prophecy-granted luck would allow a baby to pose a threat to a fully-grown mage, especially one of Voldemort’s own considerable power and skill.

Turning back to his papers, the Dark Lord further contemplated how he would approach this delicate issue. He would need to discover who exactly the subject of this prophecy was, first of all, and then
make his preparations for his “vanquishing”. Afterwards, he thought, he might even be able to turn this into a blow against the “light”, revealing the full contents of the prophecy, and exactly what methods he had taken to defeat it. That would certainly crush this newfound hope that Dumbledore had inspired.

Perhaps, he mused, he could even use the child’s death as the sacrifice for his most recent planned Horcrux ritual. There wouldn’t even be any risk of rebound from a rejection of the sacrifice, because unlike most rituals, the creation of a Horcrux actually required the consumption of the sacrifice—in this case the child’s life—before the ritual’s start. He already had six of his seven planned horcruxes—seven symbolizing beneficial magical enhancements in this case—and the defeat of the “prophecy child” would act as a symbologically powerful fuel for the final horcrux.

However, the creation of a new horcrux would require an attack on Beltane, the only day in which he could perform the horcrux ritual, and if he wasn’t sure if he wanted to wait until May to confront his destined foe.

Crossing out a line in the legislation about loosening the regulations for the use of veritaserum, Voldemort decided on his course. He would discover the identity of the “chosen one”, and use a simple game to allow them to fulfill the prophecy. Then he would kill the child, using its death to create a sixth horcrux, and then reveal the whole contents of the prophecy, and his circumvention of it, to the Daily Prophet. This may have been an exceptionally clever ploy by the decrepit old windbag and his Order of the Phoenix, but apparently, magic herself had come to the aid of her champion, giving him the tools necessary to turn Dumbledore’s ploy against him, and perhaps even win the war once and for all. Yes, he mused, if crushing the hope of this prophecy child finally quelled the wizarding populace enough for him to take the ministry, this prophecy could be a very good thing. He could finally expel the muggle rot that infested his society, and build the kingdom of mages—ALL mages—which would last for as long as he lived. And “as long as he lived”, he mused, was quite a long time indeed.

Chapter End Notes

A few clarifications to make about some of the potentially confusing elements of this fic. These will most likely be expanded upon in later chapters.

In this universe, Snape was never caught by Aberforth, and hears the full prophecy.

Please take the terms "light magic" and "dark magic" (and in general, any of Dumbledore's opinions) with a grain of salt. I promise, there's a lot more nuance there that you aren't seeing, that will come up in the next few chapters.

The terms "wizard" or "witch" and "wizarding" here do not refer to nearly all magic practitioners. Wizards and witches, are people like Voldemort, Dumbledore, and the Potters. I can't say anything more specific, because how exactly one racially classifies wizards and witches is one of the main axes for political conflict in this story.

Dumbledore, and most of the wizards of his political sect, ARE Christians in this fic. They’re Catholics specifically, because thanks to the Statute of Secrecy, the Protestant Reformation didn't affect the magical world. Dumbledore himself is quite devout, while more "modern" wizards like James go to church when they can, and put religion as much less important in their lives. I myself am not a Christian, so I apologize if you are,
and you feel I misrepresent any aspect of your faith.

Also, the chapter title comes from the absolutely incredible poem "Chant of the Vultures" by Edwin Markham. I highly recommend you read it, it's a great little anti-war poem from the years directly following WWI.
Chapter Summary

In the lead-up to Voldemort's attack, James thinks about his life, and Lily is reborn. Beltane comes, and they lie in the beds they made.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

On April 30th, 2004, the Dark Lord Voldemort began to slowly walk up the winding central street of Godric’s Hollow. A quick Imperius to one of the beasts swarming around him confirmed that the Potter cottage had not just been removed from the world physically, but mentally as well.

This truly was a brilliant move by Dumbledore. If he hadn’t had the fortune to have recruited Peter Pettigrew, he not only would be unable to see Potter Cottage, he would have quite literally been unable to comprehend the concept of the Potters having a home in the first place.

As he began to approach the wardline for the Potter College, he reached out with his magical senses. After taking years to truly master the sorcerer’s gift of soulscape manipulation, he was so completely aware of his own magic that he could reach out with it, and give himself a rudimentary form of magical echolocation. He could sense that Rookwood had been right: due to the nature of the Fidelus, and its requirement of absolute trust, no other wards could be put around the house without breaking it.

This fact greatly pleased Voldemort, because it meant that he wouldn’t have to face that old man and his irritating fiery chicken. He had no doubt that if Dumbledore got involved, the simple assassination would turn into a drawn-out battle. And while he was certain that he would win that battle, or at least get away before the end of Beltane to perform his Horcrux ritual, he had no real desire to test his mettle against his former headmaster on what should be a simple mission.

Chuckling slightly at just how poor Dumbledore’s luck was, Voldemort spent five minutes to draw a quick ritual circle in the ground, and sacrificed some blood to form a new anti-transportation barrier he’d been meaning to try. With the new ward in place, the Fidelus disappeared with a quiet pop, unknown to the residents of the cottage.

After ensuring the Potters couldn’t escape, Voldemort stepped onto their front porch, raised his hand, and knocked. After all, he mused, even if someone had betrayed their magic, there’s no reason to be rude when you kill them.

James Potter was a simple man. For all that he had matured from his days at Hogwarts, he had never really developed the complex ambitions that some of his peers had. No, for James Potter, paradise was living a simple life with his life and child, away from the hustle of the Wizarding World, and maybe flooing in to the Auror Offices a few times a week to help catch dark wizards.

While James thought there were many unfortunate things about the prophecy, namely, putting his entire family’s life in jeopardy, he had to admit that the life it left him living wasn’t exactly one he was too broken up about.
Sure, he wished he could still be in the field, and hated that other people were risking their lives battling the darkness while he stayed home and did nothing; but sometimes, when he curled up by the fire with his beautiful twins in their arms, he could forget about all the awful shite—he mentally apologized to his wife—going on, and just sink into the comforting warmth of his family. Even if Lily spent most of her time in her study, working on some powerful spell he wasn’t allowed to know about, he still had the twins, and on those rare occasions where Lily did come and spend time with him and the twins, life was perfect.

However, now was not one of those times. Lily and James had just heard about the death of the McKinnons: Marlene was Lily’s very best friend, and Adrian was one of James’s fellow order members, and one of the groomsmen at his wedding. Lily had retreated to her room, doing God-knows-what, while James put on his old dragonhide armor, from his days in the auror core before they started killing, and practiced all the old combat maneuvers he remembered.

James may have loved Albus Dumbledore more than his own grandfather, and maybe even more than his own father, but sometimes, he really resented the choices the Headmaster made for the people in the Order. James was fit, he was young, and he had a cause worth fighting for! It was the height of stupidity to hole him up in a house where he could only sit and rot, instead of putting him on the front lines against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and the Death Eaters!

As James paced around the room, a knock sounded at the door, startling James out of his brooding.

James was confused, but ultimately, decided that Sirius must have come a day early for his weekly visits, for some reason or another. As much as James dearly loved his brother in all but blood, he would be the first to admit that Sirius could be incredibly needy and childish when it came to attention.

As James walked over to the door, grabbing the handle, his world exploded into a cascade of bright lights and splinters.

Ever since Lily Potter heard the prophecy, she was a changed woman.

Once Severus had turned traitor and revealed his overhearing of the prophecy, she knew that the Dark Lord and his Knights for Magic would come for her and her family, and that was something that Lily Potter could not allow.

She’d spent almost the entire the two months since the twins’ birthday cooped up in her study, subsiding on three hours of sleep, daily pepper-ups, and three nutritional potions a day for meals. She knew that she was slowly killing her body, and that even if she stopped right now, she probably wouldn’t live past forty, but she didn’t care, because someone was trying to harm her babies.

She never relaxed, never took breaks, and almost never even spoke to her husband, except for telling him about the “powerful spell” she was making. Hell, she had just heard her ex-lover Marlene had died—by far her most serious relationship before James—and she barley even batted an eye. It was like the whole world melted away, both the past and the future, and the only thing left was her task, her goal.

James may have had an unshakeable faith in Albus Dumbledore to protect them, but Lily certainly did not. To be quite honest, James’s idolization of the old zealot was one of the things she liked least about him, other than his occasionally bouts of Hogwarts-level immaturity. She’d heard from Severus that even during pitched battles between the Order and the Knights, James would take time
to taunt his old schoolyard rival, throwing those awful insults she had thought she’d broken him out of.

Grimacing at the reminder of the feud between her husband and her best friend, she cleared her mind of extraneous thoughts, and returned to her task. The Task. She told James that it was designing some sort of spell to combat the Dark Lord, knowing her… less-than-academic husband wouldn’t question such a ridiculous proposition. Really! She thought, did he think that his wife would come out of her room with some new, unblockable jet of light that would instantly kill Voldemort when it hit him? He already had the Avada Kedavra curse, and if he wasn’t willing to use that, she doubted that he’d be willing to use any sort of truly game-changing spell she’d create.

No, deep inside Potter Cottage, the home of one of Dumbledore’s greatest champion’s, protected by Dumbledore himself, Lily Potter was working on a ritual. Like all muggleborns, she had initially been opposed to ritual magics when she entered Hogwarts, and the ideology of “seclusionism” which promoted them. She never really grew out of her dislike of seclusionism—it’s hard to agree with a political position that says your parents and relatives would be better off never having known you—but after Severus had included her in a Samhain remembrance ritual in her fourth year, after her grandmother died, she had radically altered her position on all the so-called “old rites”.

When she burned the myrrh and Yew wood, and bowed her head in the ritual circle, and said the prayer, she had felt connected to magic for the very first time. It was like she had been blind her whole life, and now she could see. She experienced incredible visions with this new sense, seeing her grandmother in all her youthful glory. She saw the past, present, and future, all at once, and felt an absolute peace, love and acceptance in the embrace of magic that she had only felt before as an infant in her mother’s arms.

She knew she wouldn’t be able to express this opinion to her husband or her friends without being crucified for it (pun absolutely intended), or being shunned for her “addiction to dark magics”, but she didn’t care. While as a whole, she agreed with James’s political views about integration with muggles, and opposed Voldemort’s campaign of terrorist violence against the nation, she had never stopped practicing the Old Rites in secret. Six times a year, she’d sneak away to her study, light an offering, and experience magic of the purest kind. There was nothing evil about that.

Now, however, with the lives of her children at stake, she dove headfirst into the more powerful, esoteric, and at times questionable uses of ritual magic. She combed the Hogwarts restricted section for books on protection rituals, and spent house cross-referencing sacrificial compendiums for the appropriate sacrifices for various different subtypes of protective intent.

She eventually settled on using a twenty-seven sided star as her base which would ensure incredibly powerful wards. Three being the numerological basis of defense and protection, and twenty-seven being the third power of three, a twenty-seven-sided star, with the appropriate sacrifice, would create a ward so powerful that it would be capable of deflecting any and all harmful magic aimed at her children. Theoretically, this ward would be so powerful it would last for almost a day after casting, ensuring that any threat would be well and truly gone before her shield dissipated. However, the price for this power, and the reason that twenty-seven was and incredibly uncommon base in ritual warding, was the necessary sacrifice: a mother’s life, freely given.

Once she completed the layout for the ritual, on the day of Beltane, she knew that her days were numbered. That was alright though, it was worth it. With this ritual her children were safe, and she could finally rest easy. She could lay down her burdens and return to magic, giving her children her love in the most potent way she knew how.

As Lily began to put away her books on ritual theory, she paused as she heard a knock at the front
door. She heard her husband let out a joyful shout as her heart turned to stone. She knew it in her bones: her time had come.

She cut open her arm and started bleeding, drawing a ritual circle, as downstairs, she heard the world implode with a cannon-blast.

“BAM!” Voldemort thought, laughing as he walked through the Potter’s now-ruined sitting room. He would never grow tired of the “knock on the door and blast it in” routine. He absently realized that Bellatrix was right: for a seventy-something immortal sociopath, he had an unreasonable flair for the dramatic.

Curious, he looked around, trying to find the body of James Potter. “Well”, he mused aloud, “he might just not be in enough pieces for me to see. He was standing directly next to the door.” A moment later, Voldemort dismissed the thought; he didn’t care to waste time searching through the rubble when he could be vanquishing his enemies.

Absently, he stepped over the remains of what he thought was a couch, moving through the rooms of the small cottage trying to find the nursery. He could vaguely hear a baby’s cry coming from upstairs, so he headed that way. Proceeding up the stairs, Voldemort couldn’t contain his satisfaction. Honestly, he took no joy in killing, he wasn’t that kind of sociopath thank you very much, but the rush of defeating one’s enemies, and winning a victory for the forces of justice, was a high unlike any other.

Quickly, Voldemort proceeded up the stairs, and quickly killed Severus’s Potter girl, who was pathetically pleading for her life. He remembered how clever she was, and didn’t want to take any chances. Ironically, it was his haste that made him miss the brief flare of cleverly-concealed designs on the ground.

Summoning a blanket from somewhere in the house, Voldemort looked for the female twin who, according to Severus, was born just a few minutes after her brother: the last magical child born on the 29th of February. Searching the crib, Voldemort couldn’t find her; it seemed that Severus had for some reason been mistaken, and that the Potters twins were both male. One had red hair, and one a bright blonde, with a lightning-bolt birthmark on his forehead.

No matter, he was planning to kill them both anyways, he thought, as he held the blanket out to the first child. As the child grabbed it, however, the source’s of Voldemort’s confusion rapidly became apparent, as the child had shifted from a he to a she in the time it took for her to make her first tug.

A changeling then, he thought, with the lightning bolt being their gift-mark. That explained it; Severus had been correct; he was still one of his most intelligent and skilled Knights. As Voldemort allowed her to pull the blanket from his hands, he drew the Hebrew rune Beth on his chest, which signified division and containment, to anchor the child’s death for his Beltane-eve Horcrux ritual. It was ironic, he mused: he had never killed a literal child to create the “false child” of the Horcrux.

Double-checking that the blanket was still in the little changeling’s hands, Voldemort stepped back and raised his wand to the her forehead. “I apologize Iris Potter, you could have been a truly great mage. Your sacrifice will be remembered in the Kingdom of Magic.”

Voldemort cast his spell, and the world exploded into golden light.
Albus Dumbledore was jerked out of his peaceful slumber by the feeling of a rubber band stretching until it snapped.

Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he took a mental catalogue of his present state using his considerable skills in occlumency. There! He couldn’t feel the magical strain that came with being the anchor-point for the Potters’ fidelus. He quickly putting on his battle-robes over his nightwear, and called for his ride to the Potters.

“Fawke

…”

“Fawkes!”

…”

When his longtime pet just sat on his perch, looking at him with what he would swear was amusement, Albus cursed.

Curse it! Tom must have finally completed that phoenix-prevention ritual he’d been working on. Albus had hoped he’d have more time, but it seemed that Tom’s studies into the dark arts had accelerated ever since he’d heard the prophecy. This was a disaster!

Albus once again summoned Fawkes to him, requesting transport to the outskirts of Tom’s ward, and they disappeared in a flash of fire.

Gaining his bearings after the jarring sensation of flame travel, Albus looked around at where his phoenix had taken him. CURSE IT. Tom’s wards apparently stretched to cover almost the entire town. And what’s worse, he wouldn’t be able to use any sort of magical travel within their confines, even brooms or flying carpets, so he’d half to run to the Potter Cottage at the back of the town, wasting valuable minutes that Tom could use to fulfill his sick desires.

After about four minutes of traveling as quickly as his 123-year-old bones would let him, Albus finally could see the Potter Cottage in the distance. Unable to see the Dark Mark that signaled the end of one of Tom’s assassinations, Albus put on a burst of speed, praying that one of the Potters had managed to delay Tom enough for Albus to make a difference. But as Albus rushed down the street, it became very apparent, very suddenly, that something quite strange had happened.

Albus stopped in his tracks, mouth agape, as he watched the top floor of the cottage explode in a burst golden flames.

*BWOOM*

Well, that was new.

Panting with exertion from his run, Albus made his way through the crowd of muggles gathered outside, presumably wondering how on earth an ancient-looking cottage had not only sprung up in the middle of their village overnight, but exploded in unnatural fire. As he reached the doorstep, he cast the requisite spell to inform the ministry obliviation squads, and strode in through the hole in the wall that was left of the doorway.

Albus tore through the ruined living room, not even glancing at the massed rubble, and ran upstairs
to the bedroom of the prophecy child. At the doorway, he paused, remembering the potential danger of the situation, and cast a few basic detection wards. When he found nothing but two children lying in the ruins of a crib, he burst through the door.

Looking around, Albus could barely believe that this used to be a child’s bedroom. The walls were scorched pitch-black with magical discharge, and the metallic scent of blood hung heavy in the air. Daring to hope for the first time since he was awoken, he stepped over Lily Potter's body gaze down at the children. On seeing the female child sleeping with a bleeding lightning bolt on her face, he uncharacteristically shouted in joy.

Yes! It had come true! The prophecy had been fulfilled! Tom had obviously tried to kill the girl, Albus theorized, and opposed by the immaculate purity of the girl’s soul, his curse had somehow reflected, leaving her with a bloody face, and that thin lightning curse-scar on her forehead.

However, as Albus cast his first medical detection spell on the child, he felt his blood run cold there, focused around her forehead, he could see it: a small remnant of Tom’s soul.

Oh, how Albus had hoped that the rumors weren’t true. He knew his old student had delved deeply into the blackest of magics, but to split his very soul, his immortal being? Those who had performed the vilest magics and created the monstrosity known as the Horcrux had forever split themselves from the hope of salvation by mutilating their soul, and had truly sunk into the vileness and corruption of the dark arts beyond all hope.

However, now that he knew Tom had made one of those abominations, he knew he had to greatly reevaluate his plans for Iris Potter. Tom was not dead, and so her prophesized role was not over. No, like countless martyrs before her, she would need to follow the model of Christ, and give up her fleshly form for the greater good of the world.

Iris could not be raised as any sort of hero or celebrity, the way he knew she would if she was left in the world of magic. No, he knew that celebrities fled from humility and meekness, and humility and meekness would be required for the girl to willingly sacrifice her life. Once again, he cursed the lack of magical monasteries: a monastic environment would be perfect to raise the selfless martyr that the world required.

Wait? Didn’t Lily have some sort of magic-hating siblings? He remembered her rants after her wedding often enough, about how her sister stormed out of the reception after decrying its “unnaturalness”. That could work…

A childhood starved of affection would cultivate a martyr who valued Love above all else, and a childhood of self-denial—albeit denial of God’s greatest gift to mankind—would make a martyr who valued the burdens of others far above her own. Yes, Albus thought, sizing the girl up, he would create the sacrifice the world needed: God himself demanded it.

Coming to a decision, Albus felt his soul lighten once again. Yes, it was not the overwhelming joy he felt when he thought Tom truly defeated Albus moved over to the other child and began to chant in archaic Latin. This was some of the most powerful magic he knew, spellcrafted by Francis Bacon himself, and he knew he would need it to give the wizarding world their defeater of Voldemort. The wizarding world needed a symbol of hope and unification, and they’d have it, while the true defeater of Voldemort would be forged into their savior.

Slowly, the tip of his wand glowing white-hot, Albus began to trace an “x” on the left side of the male child’s forehead. The girl had shown the result of a curse reflected by a spiritual purity, and Albus was not one to meddle in God’s magic. He could, however, make a few small adjustments, if
it meant saving more souls. He chuckled to himself as he worked: after all, when set at an angle, an “x” looks rather like a cross, doesn’t it?

Satisfied with the matching curse-scars on the twins’ forehead—albeit caused by different curses, and for a loose definition of “matching”—Albus began to plan on who he would send the false vanquisher to be raised by. He knew a certain level of arrogance and self-centeredness would be unavoidable due to his celebrity, but that didn’t mean Albus would hand him over to a family which would actively cultivate those properties. Meekness and humility were not just valuable for martyrs, after all.

Perhaps the Longbottoms? They were a grounded, loving light family, who were in a unique position to understand the burdens of prophecy: real or imagined. A boy raised by them would grow up with the perfect family: a stern father, nurturing mother, and loving brother. He would become as well-rounded and humble as any celebrity could be.

He could almost picture a Potter boy raised by the Longbottoms now as he contemplated the future. Perhaps this was why it was so surprising when James Potter burst into the room, stumbling haggardly, with Fawkes perched on his shoulder,

“James!” Albus exclaimed, unable to hide his shock. He looked over at Fawkes, who flapped his wings in the avian equivalent to a shrug, eyes still glistening.

“Headmaster, what… what happened?” James said, leaning against the doorframe. “I heard a knock at the door, and then a huge boom, and the next thing I know I’m waking up now…”

“Oh, my child… I am so, terribly sorry”, he said, quickly setting his face into a suitably mournful expression. “But just a few minutes ago, Voldemort attacked your home”

James gasped. “Lily! The Twins! Is everyone alright?!?”

Dumbledore forced a tear to his eye. “My boy I’m afraid… I’m afraid Lily has gone on to the next great adventure.”

James almost collapsed back into unconsciousness, as his knees buckled. He fell to the floor over Lily’s body, unable to comprehend what had happened.

“However, despite this great tragedy, I have hopeful news, which might present you with some comfort in this trying time.” James turned to look at his surrogate father, his face uncomprehending “The prophecy has come true: young Danny has defeated Voldemort.”

Chapter End Notes

Yes, the only reason James survived was because he was wearing his dragonhide armor.

—

Dumbledore believes that Iris’s lightning bolt is a remnant of Voldemort’s killing curse, because he’d never actually seen her before. The Horcrux is still in Iris’s forehead because that’s where Voldemort aimed the curse.

—

To clarify the timescale: Voldemort goes after the Potters at around 18:00, and plans to complete the Horcrux ritual at exactly midnight, at the start of Beltane. The (more pagan) characters in this book will repeatedly refer to the attack as happening “on
Beltane”, but technically it happened a few hours before. However, given that there are only three wizards alive (well, “alive” in Voldemort’s case) that know the exact details of the attack, the point is rather moot for the magical world.

For clarification on what “spellcrafted” means… well you’ll just have to wait and find out, won’t you?

A shout out to everyone who left kudos, just from the first chapter: thank you so much! You've really flattered me, and I'm honored you thought my work was worth it. mon_fortis, Kismet, and Jane0Doe, thank you guys so much!
In Darkness, Searching

Chapter Summary

Meet Iris Potter.

Chapter Notes

Yes, I decided to change the name. I feel like moths are more appropriate to this story than butterflies, don’t you?

Everyone on Privet Drive who had met Iris Potter could agree on one thing: she was quiet. Too quiet. No one that knew her Aunt, Petunia, could truthfully claimed that they liked her; but, at least on the issue of Iris, she was telling the truth. Iris Potter was a strange, unnatural child. Those that had frequently called on the Dursleys in their home could testify that she grew almost unnaturally fast, and by the age of ten, had was well into starting puberty. She had that lightning-bolt shaped scar on her forehead that never seemed to heal, almost like the battle-scars Mr. Blake had from his time in the Falklands. Her beautiful shamrock-green eyes, which would be cooed and fawned over by the neighborhood ladies if they were on any other child, were only further evidence of her unnaturalness: they possessed a vibrancy and almost glowing luminescence that almost defied normal explanation. One of her teachers even claimed that she saw them glow in the dark during a classroom naptime.

Mr. Shelton from Number 9 once compared meeting her gaze to the time he had stared down a King Cobra on a business trip to India, and the residents of Privet Drive had to agree: meeting her gaze felt like staring down an apex predator, something so dangerous and foreign to your everyday life that you freeze in shock, unable to even breathe. To be quite honest, the whole neighborhood was terrified of her.

Of course, the child, if she could even be called that, always attempted to deceive them. She’d act shy and demure, and dutifully perform all the chores around her house, but the residents of Privet Drive could see the truth. They could feel the shivers run down their spines whenever the girl walked past them, could feel her intent to break and destroy. She was like a fox in the henhouse, an unnatural aberration that even the blind and deaf could sense was out of place, and she was just waiting for the right moment to strike.

So, the residents of Privet Drive glared, and muttered, and kept watch. They pointedly ignored her cousin’s quests to rid the school of her presence and save all the other children from her unnatural gaze. For the only way to stop the fox from eating the hens is to burn its nose, and the only way to save the neighborhood from Iris Potter was to burn her with their words and gazes. They saw past her façade, and they were watching.

———

Iris Potter was a miserable child. She knew, from watching the telly, how a child’s life was supposed to be. She should be happy and carefree, running and playing in the hours after school, her biggest problems being a grounding for a poor grade on a maths test, or avoiding an overly-doting elderly
neighbor.
This was very much not the world she lived in.
For the first six years of her life at her mother’s relatives, she held onto hope that if she just did her chores well enough, or acted deferential enough, maybe, just maybe, her relatives would like her.
Sure, her relatives may have treated her like an indentured servant, relying on her almost exclusively for every household duty, but weren’t servants loved in the noble aristocratic families? Her aunt loved the dramas on Masterpiece theatre, full of proud nobility, and the servants on those shows were certainly loved and treasured.
So, Iris held out hope that if she acted the good servant, eventually her relatives would come to care for her, that some of her many efforts would be recognized and lauded. She would even have settled for a stop to their use of starvation as punishment, eradicating the painful rumbles in her stomach wouldn’t keep her up in her cupboard, but she hoped for a full acceptance into the Dursley family, and for some of the love that Petunia showed Dudley to be reflected onto her.
That belief lasted until the day Vernon first hit her.
When she was seven, Vernon got demoted at work, and of course, he blamed her and her “witchy powers”. It didn’t matter that the reason he was demoted was calling one of the new executives at his firm a series of racial slurs in what he thought was a private email; she was present, and she was different (although she didn’t understand how), so it must have been her fault. When he got home, incredibly drunk and enraged, he dragged her to his room and beat her with the belt, to “teach her a lesson” for cursing him with bad luck. He threw her in her cupboard an hour later, bruised, bleeding, and with a dislocated shoulder.
After that, Vernon began to regularly take out his rage against the problems of his life on her young body. The abuse only intensified as the years went on, and Vernon’s rage only increased. On the night of her ninth birthday, Vernon succeeded in beating her into a week-long coma after he had been demoted once again for an incident involving a gay coworker. It seemed that every trouble in Vernon’s life was somehow her fault, and every lash onto her body somehow served as karmic retribution for his daily middle-class woes.
Passed over for a bonus? It must be the witch’s fault, cane her. Dudley almost fails a class? The freak’s fault, break her arm. Got a speeding ticket? It’s that witch’s curse, beat her until she removes it. Never bandage her, never take her to the doctor, she’ll use her freaky powers to heal herself. Don’t even give her food or water, she doesn’t need it.
Iris quite honestly had no idea how she’d managed to live as long as she had. She wasn’t any sort of medical expert by any means, but just from the basic lessons she had in school, she knew that a human’s body was just not meant to survive that kind of abuse without medical treatment, let alone heal itself with minimal scarring.
Even if she wouldn’t have been dead, she would expect to at least look like one of those torture camp victims she saw on the news: thin, brittle, and covered in horrible, painful scar tissue. No instead, she was in quite good health, and aside from the pale scars that littered her back from the belts and canes, she had no medical problems. Coupled with her rapid maturation and unnaturally vibrant eyes, it was almost enough to make her consider Vernon’s constant accusations of magic.
Sometimes, when it was just her and her thoughts for days on end, she believed him, and prayed desperately to God to make her normal, and remove the curse her presence brought. Despite what Vernon said in his Sunday rants, God never answered her prayers.

As Iris awoke on the morning of her twelfth birthday, she thanked every deity she knew that Vernon hadn’t had any bad luck in the past few weeks, and so she could spend the day relatively pain-free. Last birthday she was still recovering from a broken femur after Vernon’s car wreck; she had to spend the day moaning in pain in the darkness of her cupboard.

God, she hated that corpulent bastard.

Exiting her cupboard, began to prepare her relatives’ morning meals, after grabbing a few slices of
bread for her own Breakfast. As the fatty, greasy breakfast sizzled in the pan, she chuckled, imagining Vernon’s inevitable heart attack. Suddenly, she blanched, and had to fight to keep her breaths even. If she thought a demotion merited a bad beating, how would Vernon respond to what he saw as an attempt on his life?

She managed to calm her breathing by the time the bacon was ready, and removing it, began to set up the table as Vernon thundered down the stairs, groggily wiping the weekend sleepiness from his eyes.

Vernon scowled after the first bite, glaring at her. “Can’t you ever cook right, girl? This bloody bacon is burnt on the underside! Are you stupid enough to think this is well-cooked?”, he said, shoving the crispy bacon into her face.

“I-I’m sorry sir”, she said, hiding a glare with her bowed head. “I’ll do better next time.”

“You’re bloody well right you will!”

As he returned to his food, grumbling, Dudley and Petunia came down the stairs. Sitting at the table, they also made the customary insults towards her cooking before digging in, leaving her standing to the side of the table. After a few minutes, Petunia finished her small portion, and held out her plate for Iris to take up.

“Go get the mail, Dudley”, she said, looking around for the Home and Garden section of the Daily newspaper.

“Make the freak get it.”

“Girl, go get the mail!”

“Yes ma’am,” Iris replied, and exited the kitchen.

God she hated those petty, awful, cruel excuses for human beings.

She began sorting through the mail. Junk… Advert… Junk… Coupons… Bank statement… Ms. Ir–

Iris stopped, shocked.

Miles away, in the rebuilt Potter Manor, the peaceful morning atmosphere was disrupted by a loud shout. Rushing downstairs after ensuring the safety of her four children, Miriam Potter burst into the den to see her husband’s head stuck in the fireplace, his arms gesticulating wildly. What on earth had happened?

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I know that February 29th, 2016 was a Monday, but I’m pretending it’s a weekend because plot.

Feel free to make plot, character, and non-Iris pairing suggestions in the comments, everyone! I think it would be absolutely fantastic if the ideas and thoughts of my very earliest viewers shaped the progression of the rest of the fic.
No one had ever written Iris a letter. Ever.

She couldn’t even begin to think of who would send her something like this, let alone on such fine parchment. She briefly considered the pen pal she was assigned in Year 4, but it had been over three years, and she had never received a response in the first place.

“What’s taking you so long, girl?”, Petunia’s shrill voice spoke up from the kitchen.

“Nothing ma’am, just sorting through the mail!” she said back, quickly stuffing the letter in her overlarge waistband to read later.

Iris’s day seemed to pass by with agonizing slowness. Every chore seemed to require extra effort: the snow was extra thick, the toilet needed more bleach, and the floors seemed to have more mud than usual. But eventually, finally, her daily chores came to an end, and she retreated to her cupboard to read her letter by the dying light of the early evening.

Dear Ms. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find–

Iris crumpled up the paper in disgust. She’d give Dudley credit where credit was due, it had been a long time since anyone in the Dursley family had managed to get her hopes up. Iris went to sleep shook by her own sobs, and she scolded herself for believing that the Dursleys would ever let her have someone that would write her.

The next day, Iris awoke to Petunia’s loud screech, and the loud banging of her cupboard door flying open.

“YOU LITTLE BRAT, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU’VE DONE!” Petunia yelled, yanking Iris’s out of the cupboard, waving the prank letter in her other fist. As Vernon walked in from the car, still in his Sunday best, Petunia shoved the letter in his face. “Vernon, look! He promised me that he wouldn’t be like Lily, he promised! He said that she didn’t have an ounce of magic in her, so we’d never have to see any of his freaky kind again!”

Iris was shocked. She had seen Petunia angry at her before, true, but never to this extent. She would normally attribute this type of spittle-flying rage to Vernon, not to his wife. Petunia expressed her anger through biting, acidic comments, not curses and fists. For the first time in quite a while, she
could honestly say that she had absolutely no idea what was going on.

“What’s going on mummy?” Dudley asked from the kitchen his head buried inside of the refrigerator. “What did the freak do now?”

“Nothing Diddy-sweetums, mummy and daddy just need to have a little chat with the girl about her freakiness. Can you please head up to your room?” It truly was incredible how quickly Petunia’s voice could change to a syrupy sweetness when taking to her son.

A few minutes later, once Dudley had left to play on his game console, Petunia motioned for Iris to join them at the kitchen table.

“Girl, we haven’t been completely honest with you about your… heritage.”

It was sign of how disoriented Iris was that she didn’t even wait to be called upon to speak. “What do you mean ma’am?”

“Well, you already know that you’re not a normal person, like us.”

“Yes ma’am”, Iris said, nodding.

“Well, you’re not normal because you’re a witch, from a whole society of witches.”

“…”

“…”

“…What?”

“Don’t take that tone with me, girl. Lily got the same letter on her twelfth birthday, talking about how she had freaky powers and needed to go to a school to control them.”

Iris was shocked. This was the most candid or honest she could ever remember Petunia being, and the story she was spouting sounded too fantastical to be made up. Surely, if Petunia wanted to torture her, she could have found a much more believable way to do it, one that didn’t look like it physically pained her to go through?

Was it true? She had heard all her life that she was a freak, but was it just that she was really a witch? Did her relatives’ abuse spring out of nothing more than petty jealousy of something they could never have? Was she really abused by Petunia and Vernon not because of some innate awfulness, but because she was more than them, better than them?

She began to re-examine her entire childhood. Vernon didn’t beat her because she had cursed his luck, it was because she could curse his luck. Her neighbors didn’t like her much, did they know? Were they jealous too? Just how many people were involved in this conspiracy?

Petunia interrupted her thoughts with a cruel smirk: “When you were left here, your freak father promised us that you wouldn’t be like Lily. Seems like he lied, and you were just too freaky even for the freaks, eh girl?”

Iris reared back in shock.

“Wait my fath–”

Her question was interrupted by a loud knocking at the door.
“That’d be him now, he told us he’d come over to explain everything to you, and take you back to the rest of them. Good riddance, I say.”

Iris was still in shock, gaping at Petunia.

“Well? Stand up girl! Go on and meet the man who spared you the abortion! Shoo, and don’t come back!”

Iris, in a daze, didn’t even register Petunia’s acerbic comments. She walked into the entranceway and opened the door. On the step, she found a black-haired man standing on the front stoop. His hazel eyes were glowing brightly, just like hers did when she was in the cupboard at night.

“Oh… Hi Iris”, he said, shuffling awkwardly.

Iris just started.

“Man, I practiced this a bunch, but I was never any good at long speeches.”

Iris continued to stare

“Well, what I meant to say is: Iris… I’m… I’m your dad…”

Iris’s knees buckled.

“Your birth father I mean, not like Vernon, I wouldn’t try to—“

As the black-haired man continued to nervously babble, Iris sunk to the floor, hyperventilating. Witchcraft? Magic? She had a family? Abandoned? Vernon, her father figure? The continual revelations of the day proved too much for Iris’s mind to handle, and chest heaving with great gasps, she blacked out.

“So…” James said over his ice cream, to Iris’s blank stare. “I bet you’re wondering why you didn’t grow up with us.”

“…”

“They told me you were dead”, Iris responded in a dead tone, still half-convinced she was in a dream.

“Well, we thought it would be better that way” he said, ducking his head to hide his blush, “we thought if you never knew you had parents and siblings, you’d grow up happier”.

Iris quickly hid her disbelieving look behind what she termed her “Dursley mask”. If this man had even the slightest desire to take her away from Privet Drive, it wouldn’t do to anger him.

James continued, “Well, you see, Danny—your twin brother, that is, you’ll meet him later—is right famous in the wizarding world, so I thought it’d be dangerous for you to grow up with him.”

Despite his sheepish blush and ducked head, Iris could hear the faint stirrings of pride in his voice.

“He beat this awful dark wizard who tried to kill you two when you were babies, and so a lot of that dark wizard’s followers, the Death Eaters, wanted to seek him out for revenge. I thought you were a squib—someone who doesn’t have magic—so you wouldn’t have been safe with Danny and me.”
James raised his head, and stared directly into Iris’s eyes, an earnest, almost pleading expression on his face.

“Iris, please believe me, if I had any idea that you were a witch, I’d never have sent you away. I mean, Dumbledore himself, the most powerful wizard in the world, told us that you were a squib! He said you’d be better off away from Danny! How was I supposed to know any differently?”

“…”

“So…” Iris said, “you sent me away to live with other squibs? My relatives, that is.”

“Basically… yeah. Well, the term is ‘muggles’, not squibs, but other than that you’re right.”

Iris just stared at him flatly. “Why didn’t you check up on me?”

“Oh, well…” James said, looking back at his lap, “we thought a total separation from the magical world would be best. I mean, if you had grown up as a proper muggle like you should’ve—”not that it’s bad you’re a witch, it’s right amazing actually—you’d have been all confused by why you couldn’t live with your family. I mean, we couldn’t have told you about magic, so what would you think of a father that left his daughter to live with relatives while he had his own family?”

Good question, Iris thought, suppressing her growing anger.

“And also, you know, Danny was growing very famous around that time too, so I had a lot on my plate, managing him and all that. I mean, even after I married Miriam, where was so much to do, stuff you couldn’t have been a part of! And then Cassie and Charlie were born, and we were occupied with them, and you know… the time wouldn’t have worked out regardless. I thought it was better that you weren’t a part of that crazy life. I promise, fame and fortune may sound incredible, but that’s only until you experience it!”

“Wait, Miriam, Cassie, Charlie?”

“Oh, right! Well, y’see, when Danny was around one—and you were as well I suppose—I had this wardmaster named Miriam Edgecombe come over and plan new wards for Potter Manor, where our family lives. Well, she needed to come over twenty-seven times to make sure the ward kept, and we just started talking and getting to know each other, and the next thing I know we’re married a year later! Cassie and Charlie are your younger siblings, born to Miriam and me a year or so after we married, and then two years after that. Cassie is ten right now, and Charlie is eight. You also have an older sister, Marietta, who came with Miriam from her first marriage.”

“So… you have other children?”

“Oh yes, but they’re all magical, you know? We knew with them right from the very beginning.”

Outwardly, Iris put on a small smile, even as inwardly she shoved a dense ball of shock, grief, rage, and incredible sadness to the dark place in the very back of her mind she called Dursley-space. Iris thought that despite the lack of beatings, she might even prefer the Dursleys to this. At least with the Vernon, she knew where she stood, even if it was under his boot. This new language from adults confused her; she was used to sharp commands and utter contempt, not sheepish explanations and familial affection. Silently, she finished her ice cream, and followed James out the door of the shop.

Throwing his cone away in a street-side bin, James pulled an old shoe out of his too-small pockets, as he smiled down at her. “This is what’s called a ‘portkey’, it’s a kind of magical transportation device. With this, we can travel directly to and from Potter Manor. Pretty cool, huh?”
“Yeah…” Iris replied absently, still working through the last conversation in her head. James tapped the shoe with his wand, and he and Iris disappeared into the ether with a swirl of color.

Potter Manor was a grand, imposing place, Iris thought, straight out of one of Petunia’s high-society dramas.

Its whole exterior was a bright white, and almost gleamed in the early afternoon sun. The manor had a tall central section, rising three stories above the ground, and two longer, two-story wings continuing off to both sides. From her position, Iris couldn’t tell how far back the manor went, but considering the treeline, she suspected that the manor was far, far longer than it was tall or wide. This was where she could have been living?

She and James walked down the paved pathway that led up the front door, and she marveled at the numerous fantastical creatures she could see in the forest surrounding the manor. She thought she could recognize most of them thanks to her brief monster-obsessed phase when she was eight years old and hiding out from Dudley in the school library. Look! There was a griffin, chasing down a deer close to the treeline! And oh my god was that a unicorn?

Bemused at her shock and wonder, James pushed her along the path, and away from the forests, due to Iris’s disappointment. As he guided her into the door and through the foyer, beaming proudly, Iris looked around in wonder. There were massive, imposing portraits on the back wall (wait did that one just move?), a large golden chandelier overhead, and dozens upon dozens of torches lining the walls.

But the thing that shocked Iris most of all was right in in the middle of the foyer. It wasn’t the one portrait that was moving, or even the strange-looking six-legged creature that she could see walking in the next room. What really shocked Iris was the sight of five nervous-looking people standing on the marble steps: her… family.

Before she could blink, a boy with wild crimson hair and hazel eyes ran up, and threw his arms around her in a crushing embrace. As Iris reflexively tensed up, he stepped back with a minor frown, but almost instantly regained his wide grin as he started excitedly shaking Iris’s hand.

“Hey Iris, I’ve been waiting so long to meet you! It’s me Danny, your twin brother! I can’t wait to get to know all about you, and show you the magical world! Don’t worry, just stick with me and you’ll be caught up in no time!”

Still in a minor state of shock, both her first exposure to both a true magical environment and her estranged family, Iris could do nothing but shove her emotions further into Dursley-space and begin to shake his hand back.

“Hiya, I’m Charlie! I’m your younger brother!” said the youngest, bouncing in place with excitement, pushing Danny away and pumping Iris’s hand up and down. Iris could see that like he had their father’s face an eyes, like Danny, but inherited his curly orange hair and prominent freckles straight from his mother.

Arriving behind him, the older girl, another curly, freckled redhead, pulled him back, with fond
amusement. “Let her breathe, Charlie” she said, placing him on the ground. “Hello Iris, it’s so nice to meet you. I’m Marietta, your older sister.”

“And this”, she said, grabbing another, nervous-looking, black-haired, blue-eyed girl by the arm, “is Cassie. She’s your sister. Don’t worry, she probably likes you, she’s just nervous because she’s shy.”

“MARIETTA!” Cassie said, blushing, as Marietta snickered. Ice broken, she gently took Iris’s hand. “Cassie Potter, nice to meet you Iris.”

As Iris, overwhelmed, tried to figure out how to respond to all three of her half-siblings at once, until she felt a taller presence come up behind her.

“Hello Iris”, the presence said, “my name is Miriam Potter. But you can call me ‘mum’ if you want”

Iris turned around and stared, wide eyed. The blue-eyed woman had a large, hesitant smile on her face, and suspiciously shiny eyes.

“Iris… Welcome home.”

“Honey, could you pass the salt?”

That was the first thing that had been said at the table in the past minute and a half. The Potters, it seemed, didn’t know how to act around her yet. That was fine thought, she didn’t know how to act around the Potters either.

In the absence of any kind of context for her situation, Iris fell back on the old, ingrained habits she learned from countless dinners with her neighbors on Privet Drive.

She turned to Miriam. “So ma’am, how did the two of you meet?”

Miriam looked grateful that Iris had finally started speaking.

“Well!” she said happily, “A few months after the night Danny defeated He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, James decided that he needed someone to upgrade the wards on Potter Manor. You see, a lot of the Manor had been damaged by the war, and that included most of the wards.”

“Now, if I do say so myself, I was a member of the best warding team in Britain” she said, smirking playfully as James elbowed her in the side and muttered something about humility, “and when James approached us for help warding the home of the Boy-Who-Lived, well, we couldn’t accept fast enough!”

“Now, I couldn’t tell you exactly why, but the specific ward my boss wanted to use needs to be cast spread out over twenty-seven days. James wanted the wards done as fast as possible, so he offered us a place to stay in Potter Manor until the wards were completed.”

James took over, smiling fondly at the memories: “I didn’t know it at the time, but offering her team a place to spend the nights was probably one of the best decisions I ever made in my life.”

“I’m not gonna lie kid,” he said, grimacing, “I was in a really dark place after the death of your mother. But getting to know Miriam started to drag me out of there. I swear, there was this joke she told over breakfast on the second day about a troll, a vampire, and a veela, and that was the first time I laughed in dam—… dang near months. She was just so fully of life and love and happiness, and
getting to know her was exactly what I needed.”

As James spoke, Miriam’s face got redder and redder, until she finally cut him off: “don’t make it sound so one-sided! I needed to meet you just as much as you needed to meet me!”

“After the death of my first husband—Angus, Marietta’s father—I felt alone and lost. I felt like no one would notice if I dropped dead at that moment, that there wasn’t anyone to protect or take care of me in the whole world.”

“But when I met James”, Miriam continued, smiling lovingly at her husband, “I saw a man who had a heart that was full of love, and who would do anything for the people he cared about. I saw an incredible man hurting from the murder of his wife, who still managed to make me laugh every time I saw him. I saw a man of incredible courage and dignity, who would do anything to protect his family. I saw a single father whose son was the center of his universe, and I just wanted to be a moon in his orbit.”

“You’re wrong James,” she finished, “I might have saved you, but you saved me just as much.”

As the couple stared into each others eyes, and Marietta cooed over their mutual affection, Iris’s mind was stuck on something Miriam had said at the very beginning.

“Miriam, you said that my mum was killed? What happened to her?”

Miriam floundered awkwardly, not really knowing how to phrase her answer, or if she should even be the one to give it. She quickly turned to her husband and clutched his hand supportively, as a mournful expression overcame his face.

“What a question Iris…. Well, I guess you deserve to know, don’t you? Petunia really never told you?”

Iris shook her head.

“For the best I suppose. Lily… well, Lily died protecting you and Danny on that awful night. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named knew that Lily and I were champions of the light, and so he tried to attack our house, and… take us all off the playing field. One of our friends, Peter Pettigrew, helped him sneak past our wards, and he managed to take Lily away from us before Danny managed to defeat him.”

Iris wanted to ask for more details, but she could see how uncomfortable the subject was making James, so she decided not to.

As the silence made by James’s words grew to over a minute, Danny spoke up. “So sis, what type of stuff do you like to do? I love playing Quidditch and hanging out with my friends Neville and Ron, and I really don’t like it when I have to learn magic and stuff. What about you?”

“Oh… well, the Dursleys don’t really want someone like me to have hobbies like that…. But I guess if I had one, it would be doing chores? That’s what I do with most of my day when I’m not in school. Sometimes if I finish early I can sit on my bed and listen in to Aunt Petunia’s historical dramas.”

Danny seemed to look horrified at the thought of chores, and interested at the idea of television, while James just snorted, broken out of his thoughts of Iris’s mother.

“Be careful kiddo, with a work ethic like that, you’ll end up in Hufflepuff!”
“End up in a what?”

“Oh, that’s right!” Danny said, “you don’t know anything about Hogwarts, do you!”

When Iris shook her head, he continued. “Well, Hogwarts is the best school in all of Occidentia! Kids from all over get sorted into houses, based on what type of people they are.

“First, he said, you have Gryffindor, the best house! It’s where our mother and da’ were, and it’s the house for all the brave and courageous people. All the greatest heroes in history have come out of Gryffindor, like Merlin, and Mimir, and Aristotelesm and Dumbledore!”

Miriam shot him a bemused and skeptical look, but he continued, unabashed. “Then there’s Ravenclaw, where all the people who love to study go. That’s the house mum”—he gestured to Miriam—“and Marietta are in, and they’re both really smart!”

“Then there’s Slytherin, which is the house of all the tricky and slippery death eaters” he said, a frown overtaking his face. “They’re mostly dark wizards, and they hate muggles and muggleborns like our mother, and half-bloods like us. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure to protect you from all the Slytherin’s after we get to school. You’re my sis after all, we Potters always stick together!”

“And what about this Hufferpuff?”, Iris asked, shoving away in incredulity at Danny’s words on “sticking together”.

“Oh, well yeah, they’re everyone else, the one’s that don’t get into any other house.”

At this, Miriam interrupted: “Well while I wouldn’t put it quite like that, Danny is mostly correct. I’d like to clarify though that Hufflepuff is not the house of leftovers”—she glared at Danny—“it’s the house of dedication and hard work. We’ll still be very proud of you if you get into Hufflepuff, don’t you worry.”

“So…” Iris said, turning to James, “are Slytherins really as bad as he says? Wait, you said that the person who murdered my mum practiced this ‘dark magic’? What is it?”

James blanched, and leaned forward, his eyes taking on a fervent gleam. “Iris, dark magic is the type of magic that You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters practiced and advocated, and it’s the worst type of magic there is. It’s addicting, and slowly turns you into a more and more evil person the more you use it. It’s like a wild beast, and it destroys everything it touches!”

Suddenly, his eyes full of fury, James paused, almost thoughtfully, and then whipped his head towards Iris.

“Promise me Iris, promise me, that you won’t go looking into it.”

Iris paled at his familiar look.

“I know it can sound so tempting, but it’s twisted, unnatural! It’s a magical cancer that’ll destroy you, and everyone around you!”

Oh God, he was the same as Vernon.

“It’ll eat you up inside, and turn you into an awful, sinful monster!”

Where did the happy family man that was sitting there go?

“I swear to you, I will not have a dark wizard or witch in this family!”
Iris knew she hadn’t left Privet Drive at all.

“If you ever try anything with dark magic, so help me, I’ll do my duties as a father and straighten you out ‘til you can’t sit down!”

“…”

“…Shit.”

Another silence fell across the table in the wake of the speech. James had come down from his rage, and was looking down at his own hands, disbelieving and mortified. Iris had curled into herself, nearly hyperventilating, falling back on her hard-earned survival instincts from the Dursleys. Danny glared at his father, while the rest of the Potter family awkwardly squirmed in their seats.

“Dad, what the hell!” Danny yelled, seemingly unable to contain his ire any longer. “That’s ridiculous! She might not have been raised with us, but she’s still a Potter! She’s my twin sister, and I can’t believe that you’d suggest something like that about her! Her, a dark witch, really?! Look at her, she’s nearly catatonic! What type of first impression of her family is this!?”

The table, with the obvious exception of Iris, looked at him in shock. Danny idolized his father, and did everything in his power to try to please him. For Danny to so openly yell at him was almost unheard of.

Closing his gaping mouth, James sat back, and sighed. “You’re right Danny, I’m sorry. Thank you, that was very brave you to call me out when I’d done wrong, even though I’m your father.”

Embarrassed, he turned to Iris, still curled up in her seat, taking on a soothing tone. “Iris honey, I’m so, so sorry”

“I shouldn’t have been so intense. I know you’d never practice dark magic, and it was awful of me to suggest otherwise. I’ve barley just met my wonderful daughter, and here I am talking about discipline and falling into darkness.”

“It’s just that I’ve spent my whole life fighting the dark agenda, whether that’s cursing Death Eaters during the war or blocking Lucius Malfoy’s legislation in the Wizengamot, and so I know more than anyone else how easily someone naïve can fall prey to it. I worked myself up into a rage, because of Malfoy, and Faoláin, and Nott, and Trask, and all the rest of those evil bastards. I didn’t mean to aim it at you, and I’m so sorry that you had to see that. Forgive me?”

Iris’s head snapped up to look at James in shock. For an angry male authority figure to not just apologize, but ask forgiveness? This was uncharted territory for Iris, and she did the only thing she could think of.

“…y-yes d-dad, I… I forgive you” Iris said, mustering up a shaky smile.

James let out a massive breath of relief and sagged back into his seat.

“Well, let’s move on to some lighter topics! Charlie, how are your lessons with Mrs. Weasley coming along? Learning lots of new things?”

As the conversation wore on, and smiles and laughter returned to the rest of the Potter Family, Iris sat in her seat, as silent as she was at the beginning of the meal. Even though he had asked for her forgiveness for his actions, Iris still couldn’t get the picture of James-as-Vernon out of her head.

She was calmer now though, smiling along with the lighthearted conversation at the table. She knew
her father may not have been the greatest of parents to her, abandoning her to hell while he lived in a comfy manor, but she knew from his apology that he at least wasn’t going to start abusing her like Vernon did.

…didn’t she?

Vernon never apologized to her, but would it have changed the beatings if he did?

And wait, James never really said that he wouldn’t ‘discipline’ her if she was a ‘dark witch’, did he?

Was she any safer here at all?

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Yes, the wards needed to be cast around the house over 27 days for the same reason Lily Potter’s ritual design was a 27-sided star in the last chapter.

For anyone that thinks that James’s anti-dark outburst is out of character or forced in, I promise you, it isn’t. I’m basing him partially off of my own father, who has an absolutely terrible temper, and would occasionally work himself up into a rage like that when he’d had a stressful day, and was dealing with something he hated.

I remember this one time that he thought I had bought two separate pizzas from Papa Johns, because I bought one and didn’t like the toppings, and he absolutely lost it. Screaming, ranting, as bad as anything James did, or will do in the future. And personally, I think a $20 pizza is a lot less weighty than (in James’s mind) his daughter’s immortal soul.

This doesn’t mean that James—or my father for that matter—doesn’t love his family, or is some sort of evil monster. They’re both proud, stubborn, loving men who, like all people, have flaws. The good doesn’t wash out the bad, but the bad doesn’t wash out the good either.

James talking Iris out for ice cream is an homage to the best “abandoned twin of the BWL meets James” scene I’ve ever read, in Chapter 3 of Harry Potter and the Prince of Slytherin by The Sinister Man. Seriously, I wish Iris was more self-confident and witty, because the Harry-James interactions in that story are some of the best things I’ve ever read. Hell, the whole story’s fantastic, you should read it.

If you’re wondering why the first thing out of Iris’s mouth was “help I’m being abused!”, you have to remember what Iris’s childhood was like. Now, Iris is very intelligent, and mature for her age (even by the standards of mages, who mature much faster), so she doesn’t have canon!Harry’s inability to understand that his household is abusive, but even so, she isn’t going to go talking about it to whoever asks. Like many kids who grow up in abusive homes, she has a very hard time trusting others, and has internalized a lot of the Dursleys insults into a deep amount of shame and self-loathing.

Furthermore, you have to remember that Iris hasn’t had a single other person care about her, in her entire life. She’s especially mistrustful of authority figures, because looking back, she knows that her
abuse was incredibly obvious, but also knows that not a single adult ever said anything, even the teachers who she openly told about what was going on.

James is not only an authority figure, but, by many standards, the person that abandoned her to the abusive household in the first place. Is it any wonder that Iris is having some trouble opening up?

And yes, as you can imagine, Iris’s inability to understand friendship is going to be a pretty big theme for a while. Can you say, “desperately latching on to the first people who empathize with her”? Oh, you can’t, because you’re a half-giant from canon with an incomprehensibly thick West Country accent? Guess you’ll have to find your savior somewhere else then, sorry!

In all seriousness, Hagrid isn’t making an appearance because Dumbledore thinks that his role of priming her towards Gryffindor will be filled a lot better by James. I mean, random tall hairy dude versus an orphan’s estranged father? That’s not even a contest.

Also, I hope you all realize that Danny has a very poor understanding of history, and neither Merlin nor Mimir nor Aristotle went to Hogwarts, as they all lived far before it was founded. And you’ll learn what “Occidentia” is in coming chapters.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter Summary

Still at Potter Manor, still wanting to punch James in his face

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Mum, what are you doing, Iris needs to spend more time with her family!”

“I know sweetie, but your father and I just need to have a little chat with about something, we won’t be more than an hour.”

At the exit to the sitting room, Iris was staring, wide-eyed, Miriam and Danny each having grabbed one of her arms, using her as the rope in a game of improvised tug-of-war.

“Muuuuuum, you can do that later! She needs to get to know us better now!”

“Danny honey, let her go, your father is waiting for us in his office!”

“No mum! I’m not gonna! She needs to spend time with us!”

“Danny! Now!”

“C’mon mum, pleeeeeeeseeeeee…………”

“Danny…”

“……………”

“Alright, ALRIGHT! Well I… I suppose you are right dear. I guess she can spend a few minutes more here, while you finish up talking about Quidditch. But no more than twenty, alright?

“Thirty mum!”

“Alright thirty.”

Iris followed a smug Danny back into the den. He graced her with a smirk. “Parents, right?”

“Yeah…” Iris said, sitting back down.

Jesus Christ, she was grateful for him defending her at dinner, but he was even worse than Dudley on Christmas.

Thirty minutes later, Iris was startled out of her daydreams by a knock at the door. Danny hadn’t say a word to her, completely lost in talks of the World Cup with Charlie.

“Alright dears, thirty minutes is up! Time to have that talk, Iris honey.”

“Mum!” Charlie spoke up this time, “we weren’t fin—”
Miriam cut him off, and grabbed Iris’s arm a little more forcefully than necessary. “Sorry Charlie dear, but we really do have to go.”

Danny chose this moment to interject. “Charlie’s right mum, I was almost finished with my story! Come back later!”

Miriam’s grip relaxed, and she let out a small sigh. “Well… alright Danny, I’ll be back in fifteen. But really, this is it, okay?”

“Yeah mum, alright. Now let me get back to my story!”

Fifteen minutes passed. At least Iris talked this time, asking Cassie if she could pass a blanket. She legitimately wondered if Danny had ever not gotten his way.

Finally, Miriam came back into the room as Danny finished his speech, and Iris left with her step-mother to see James in his study

———

Miriam was perched on the side of the desk, and James was collapsed into the comfy-looking leather armchair behind it. They were holding hands supportively, seeming to have an entire conversation with their eyes. Miriam looked stubborn, while James looked reluctant. James broke eye contact first, as Miriam turned towards Iris, looking slightly victorious.

“ Iris honey,” she said, tone serious, “we wanted to talk to you about something that you might find scary. We know that it might be a lot to take in, but we promise, we’re here to support you, no matter what you end up deciding to do.”

“Wh-what do you mean? Did I do something wrong?”

She could feel her breath quicken. This was exactly like the second time Vernon got demoted.

“Oh no, not at all honey!” Miriam said quickly, taken aback, “it’s nothing of the sort! If anything, it’s our fault, you didn’t have any say in the matter!”

Iris relaxed minutely, but was still incredibly nervous when James started to speak.

“Iris, do you know what metamorphism is?”

“No…”

“Oh of course she doesn’t!” James butt in, sending a small glare at Miriam.

He steeled himself, refraining from speaking until Miriam pinched his hand. “Well Iris, metamorphism is a condition that certain witches and wizards are born with. Witches and wizards that have it don’t have any one permanent body: their features, heights, and even genders can shift constantly. If they want to, they can control that shifting, and potentially look like any other person on the face of the planet.”

Iris waited, confused.

“And well… Iris, when you were born, I saw that you had that talent. Iris, you have metamorphism.”

Iris was still puzzled. “But Ja–… dad, that can’t be right. I’ve never been able to change what I looked like, no matter how hard I wanted it!”
Shit, she didn’t mean to say that.

James looked at her, confused, but quickly shook it off. “Oh yes, well… that’s what this is about. You see, when I thought you were a squib, and had to give you to Petunia and Vernon, I knew you’d never be able to hide metamorphism in the muggle world.”

“Y’see, when they’re kids, metamorphmagi—that’s people with metamorphism—can’t really control their powers, and they just randomly shift all the time. You’d never be able to go out in public with your family; I didn’t want that for you.”

“So basically… I ended up sealing your metamorphism away behind a powerful spell, and Mi—… we wanted to know if you want me to release it.”

….What?

“Now Iris, you have to understand that there are downsides to being able to look however you want. I know it might be tempting to make yourself seem more pretty, or lose weight, or something like that. But metamorphism isn’t exactly viewed well in our society. It’s not bad or anything, it’s just that most people don’t really trust metamorphagi, even with their marks. Having metamorphism brings a lot of problems, and I want you to think really hard about—”

“Yes!”

“…what?”

Iris blushed. “I mean, yes Ja– dad, I’d like for you to get rid of the binding.”

James frowned, ignoring a smug Miriam. “Iris, were you listening to anything that I just said? This isn’t a decision to make lightly!”

Iris blushed further. What on earth had gotten into her? “I did J– dad, I promise. It’s just that… I don’t even know how to really describe it. I just know this is something I need to do.”

James scrunched up his nose thoughtfully, in a way Iris could tell made Miriam want to snog him silly. Looks like their argument wasn’t going to last long. “What do you mean?”

“Well… I guess I’ve always felt like my body was… too tight, if that makes any sense? Like my skin was shrinking down around me and trying to trap me in place. It was never really an issue before now, but now that I know the most likely cause, I’d like to fix it.”

“Also” she added, figuring it would be something James would want to hear, “I’ve always thought that I needed to be braver. I think fighting to show that people with metamorphism are just as trustworthy as everyone else will help me grow into my Gryffindor courage.”

She was right. James’s eyes were suspiciously wet, and she could have sworn she heard him mutter something about “being just like her mother”.

Smiling, James turned to Miriam and began to have a whispered conversation. A minute or so later they reached an agreement. Five minutes and a few dozen waves of a wand after that, Iris was watching herself in the mirror, awed as her hair began to shift through a rainbow of color.

“So Iris…” James said, coming up behind the couch she was sitting on, “are you feeling any…
Her clothes? These were just the nicest hand-me-downs she had from the Dursleys, what was he t– It was then Iris realized that her overlarge shirt and gym shorts had disappeared, and had been replaced with a bright yellow spandex onesie, that was covered with moving rubber ducks. 

“HAH, gotcha!” Danny leapt up from the couch and high-fived his father. 

“Congratulations Iris!” James said, smiling widely, “you’ve just experienced your first-ever Marauder prank! Welcome to the grand Potter family tradition of pranking, you’ll be getting a lot more of it the more you stay with us!”

“Wow… J– dad, this sure is incredible, it’s so funny! Who were the marauders!” Iris really did deserve some sort of acting trophy after this. Perhaps that award that Petunia always ranted about how Dudley could get if he ‘only put forth the effort!’ at playing the role of a tree in the school play? 

“Why Iris m’girl”, he said, wrapping and arm around Danny’s shoulder, “the Marauders were nothing less than the greatest pranksters that Hogwarts had ever seen! Me, your Uncle Remus, and your Uncle Sirius, we were kings! We’d pull off such spectacular pranks on our dark classmates, they’d be afraid to slither anywhere in the school!”

Danny was completely entranced by James’s speech, despite the rest of the children’s bored expressions telling her that he’d most likely heard it dozens of times.

“Yeah Iris!” he said, excitedly. “When I get to Hogwarts, I’m gonna restart the tradition with Ron and Neville! First thing we do, we’re gonna find Snivellus, and make all his clothes vanish in the hall! Then we’ll find McCreath or Malfoy or Desjardins, and make them only talk by singing opera! It’s gonna be so wicked!”

“Wow!” Iris said, “that sounds incredible! You really are carrying on Dad’s legacy!”

Danny puffed up, as James patted him proudly on the shoulder.

Suddenly, Miriam cut in.

“Oh dear! James, Danny, Iris, come on, we’re almost late for church!”

Hearing that, Iris paled. Quite literally so, thanks to her new abilities.

She’d been to churches in the past with the Dursleys, and she didn’t have many fond memories. For much of her younger life, Petunia had dragged her along with them at near the crack of dawn every Sunday, to the local Anglican congregation, with the explicitly-stated hope that she’d find God, and “renounce her unnaturalness”. Petunia might not have been a very devout Christian, but she was a very devout believer in “getting Iris to stop being such a freak”. She took Iris every Sunday until she was around eight, when apparently it became obvious that Iris was the devil’s child to her core, and no amount of church could get her to renounce it.
Seeing Iris’s reluctance, Miriam quickly interjected. “Oh you don’t have to come if you don’t want to, sweetheart, I know that the Dursleys are probably Anglicans, and we’re Catholics, so the service might seem strange or weird, and talk about different things. I think you really would benefit from coming with us though: most people in the wizarding world are Magical Catholics, and so it would be good for you to understand the denomination of most of your peers.”

“And most of all”, Miriam said, “James and I would really appreciate you coming to our family church. It really means a lot, doesn’t it honey?” Miriam turned and glared at James, mentally commanding him to back her up.

“Uh… right, yeah. Iris, I know that you might not be used to a Catholic environment, let alone a magical Catholic environment, but we really would like to spend time with you.”

Rooted in place, Iris could do nothing more than nod her head, pleasing her father and step-mother immensely. Well, she thought, at least this time, there won’t be any pastors taking me aside, asking me to renounce witchcraft and satanism.

A few minutes later, after gathering together the rest of the children, the Potters set off.

Whatever Iris imagined a magical church would look like, this definitely wasn’t it. She didn’t know what exactly she was expecting, but she knew it should be… well, magical. This looked like every other church she’d ever seen; there was no sign of magic whatsoever.

Well, she did think she saw some sort of water-levitation charm creating a small upswelling in the baptismal font, and sitting down, she could tell that the pews had some sort of cushioning magic on them. Other than that, though, it was… ordinary. Somewhere that she would find her six-year-old self kneeling on a Sunday.

Honestly, the most magical thing that had happened to her since they left was before they even went into the church, when James cast a spell on her which would translate the priest’s Latin to English for the length of the service. Apparently, the rest of the Potter Family were already fluent: benefits of growing up in a magic manor instead of a cupboard, she supposed.

Eventually, the sermon started, and Iris brought out of her thoughts.

“My brothers and sisters”, the ancient-looking pastor said, after a few minutes of introductory comments, “I would like to speak to you all today about the virtue of everyday charity.”

“Too many of those here today, even those that consider themselves exceptionally charitable individuals, forget this great virtue, one repeatedly spoken of by our blessed savior himself. Too many of you take the model of the Ancient Israelites, and merely dedicate some portion of your income, great or small, to the performance of good works, and then wash your hands of the issue until the end of the next year, when you repeat the process.”

“Now do not mistake me, my brothers and sisters, this is truly righteous. When you do this, you follow in the model of Gods chosen people, and our savior himself in his greatest miracle. We know that even with God’s greatest gift, we cannot multiply bread and fish; but know that when you give away your gold, you give away bread to the multitude.

“But my brothers and sisters!” the priest said, “this is not nearly the length and breadth of charity. No, in fact, it is the merest portion of it! When considered in its true, Christlike form, charity is not only a great virtue, but the foundation of all virtues!”
“Charity is not only some grand act, it is the stricture by which you should live your daily life. Imagine you are walking in Diagon Alley, when you see a wizard that has lost his coin-purse. Now, while the calling of the darkness is to ignore him, and focus only upon yourself, as children of the light, we are called to charity, to focus on the needs of other before ourselves. So, if you wish to live your life in accordance with charity, you would take an hour from your day to aid him, with no thought or hope of your own reward.”

“Consider the vampire, the soulless one who dwells in darkness. They continue their own existences solely by stealing blood, by thieving the life from innocent wizards, witches, and muggles. This is truly what splits the children of darkness from the children of light, the heathens and creatures from those bound for God’s loving embrace.”

“While the children of Satan live through taking blood, the children of light live through giving blood, the blood of Christ. It is not just our moral imperative to give, or even our spiritual duty, but instead the very central pillar of our existences, the elevating platform of our immortal souls!”

The priest continued on in a similar vein for almost an hour, as Iris gradually began to lose interest. Certainly, the references to magic and magical creatures were new, but even those quickly lost their luster as the sermon continued on in a pattern she’d heard a thousand times. God is good, the devil is bad, and so on, and so on.

Before she knew it, the service was over, and everyone was standing up and performing the leaving rites. Copying the others robotically, Iris eventually managed to leave the pews, and leave the church with the rest of the Potters.

“Wow!” Marietta said, almost as soon as they’d left the building. “I knew Pastor McClure was great, but today’s sermon was just exceptional! Did you guys hear that part about how giving to others can actually help us be better people? I just felt so inspired!”

Danny nodded along, just as eager. “I know! I felt like he was talking right at me! Hey mum, do you know if I could give some of my allowance away to the werewolf reservation where Uncle Remus lives?”

As the two continued to ramble about the service to an equally-excited Miriam and Charlie, Iris fell to the back of the group with her father and half-sister.

“Not really your thing, huh kid?” James said, smirking at Iris’s bored look.

“What!” Iris startled, “No, no, it was very interesting! Th-thank you so much for taking me with you, sir, it was exceptional!”

“Hey now,” James said with a chuckle, “not liking those weekly services isn’t a bad thing. I really don’t care for them that much either. Miriam’s the religious one in the family”.

“Most of the kids have gotten into it—and more power too them—but it was never really my cup of tea. Cassie here understands me, don’t ya’ Cass?” He nudged the quiet younger girl next to him, who gave a little nod, and then immediately blushed and looked away.

“Yeah,” James continued, “I know that Father McClure can be pretty intense, believe me, but he runs the lightest church this side of the channel. I promise, you don’t have to be as enthusiastic as Danny or Marietta there, we’re not gonna turn you into some bible-thumper, if that’s what’s you’re worried about.”

Overhearing their quiet conversation, Miriam looked over her shoulder. “And what’s so bad about
being a ‘bible thumper’, James dear?’.

“Nothing, honey, nothing!” James said, gasping with exaggerated terror.

Miriam chucked, and pulled James in for a peck on the lips, smiling. “That does it mister, you’re spending a whole week on the couch!”

James began waving his arms in the air, his face morphing into a comical look of horror. “No dear, anything but that! Please, I’ll walk Stompy for a week, a month! I’ll do all your paperwork! Just don’t make me sleep on the couch!”

As the four children—even Cassie—chuckled at the elder Potters’ antics, Iris trailed further and further behind, in a daze. She knew what a proper, loving family was supposed to look like from Petunia’s daytime dramas, but somehow, seeing it up close made her childhood just a little bit bleaker.

Iris spent the remaining half-year back at the Dursleys, James and Miriam re-assuring her that they didn’t want to “take Vernon and Petunia’s place in her life.” Amazingly, the Dursleys were actually treating her halfway-decently now, believing that her fully-trained wizard father had begun checking in on her. By the time she had returned from her initial trip to Potter Manor, they had cleaned out Dudley’s second bedroom, and bought a bed to fill it.

Strangely enough, even though she was no longer required to, Iris still found herself making breakfast every morning, and performing most of her other chores, albeit at a highly reduced rate. She knew, intellectually, that no matter how terribly Vernon ranted and yelled, he couldn’t lay a hand on her anymore, but some habits were too hard to break.

Besides, she thought, when she was allowed to eat some of the results, even if she had to take it back to her cupboard before Vernon’s face turned purple, cooking became an enjoyable activity. She knew that the next time Danny asked one of those difficult questions about hobbies, she’d have an answer.

However, even as her daily life improved by leaps and bounds, her nights were a different story. She lay awake at night in Dudley’s second bedroom, tossing and turning, thinking about the revelation that she had a family all this time.

On that first day, after her trip to Potter Manor, some part of her had hoped that they would ask her to stay with them, take her away from the Dursleys forever. Even if James had a horrible temper, and Miriam was a self-admitted “bible-thumper”, she had admitted to herself that the Potters were miles better than the abusive shite-hole that was Number 4 Privet Drive. Surely, they’d save her from the Dursleys?

She should have known better.

She thought those naïve hopes had died long ago at the lash of Vernon’s belt.

No, even when it was revealed she was a witch, they still cast her to the side without any consideration. James and Miriam had sent her back to the Dursleys without a second thought, giving their meaningless platitudes, and promising further visits that never came. They hadn’t changed, they weren’t any different.

They still didn’t think any more of her than the mud scraped off their fancy dragon-leather boots.
It had been three months, and she had only been over three more times, for dinner. Iris had barely said a word. One of those visits didn’t even count, since it was obvious that they were having other guests over—some family called the Weasleys—and inviting Iris was done as an afterthought.

The second dinner she ate at Potter Manor, she had met some guy named “Serious” who made a lot of puns, and was supposed to be her and Danny’s godfather, but he barely even spoke to her before he went flying with her twin.

During the third dinner, she learned that Danny and Marietta had both known about her, but never once asked to visit or check in.

They wouldn’t even let her go to a bookstore or library, claiming that the central shopping district Diagon Alley was “too dangerous to go to on a whim, wait until we shop for supplies in July honey-bun!” Of course, she thought, why would she need to go to a bookstore? It’s not like she had finally discovered her birthright after twelve miserable years without it.

Depressingly, Iris thought, the highlight of her time with her birth family had been meeting the family pet, the one she’d seen on her first day at the Manor. “Stompy” was a strange-looking creature called a Dijiang, with a fuzzy round body with no face, red fur, six thick legs, and four flightless wings. She thought it was an appropriate pet for James, Danny, and Marietta. Not having a face, it didn’t know how to take a breath either.

Thinking about pets, her thoughts turned sad. She’d always wished she could have a pet, even thought Petunia would never allow it. The kids on the playground said that pets never abandoned their owners.

Lying there, freezing and close to tears, Iris came to a remarkable realization.

“I hate them”, Iris thought. “I hate them, I hate them, I hate them”.

How dare they bind her powers, and abandon her to an abusive household, while they lived as a happy family in the lap of luxury? How dare they think that she’d accept them back like nothing had ever happened, after twelve years of hell? As Vernon’s actions this morning proved, the Dursleys could be cowed if they bothered to drop by even a single time, but did they?

No, they thought that she wasn’t worthy enough for their time, not like their four precious children, not like their spoiled “Boy-Who-Lived”. Oh no, Iris wasn’t like their children, Iris didn’t deserve parental love and affection. Iris deserved insults and stares and universal disdain; canings and whippings and beatings.

Those last thoughts gave Iris pause. Yes, she might never forgive James and Miriam Potter, but they were her ticket out of Privet Drive, into the magical world. She wasn’t a freak, she was a witch, and if she’d want to keep being a witch, she’d need the Potters.

…Damn.

At least Cassie and Charlie seemed nice.

With the Dursleys, she couldn’t let her feelings show because of the fear and the abuse. Even now, at the distant thought of angering Vernon, she felt her breath start to quicken, and her pulse increase. She might not have had that heart-stopping fear of the Potters, but the situation was still the same. With the Potters, she wouldn’t be in danger of starvation or death-by-trauma, but of being thrown back into that starvation and death-by-trauma.

It seemed to be the story of her young life: she had relatives who did awful things to her, and she
hated them for it, but she had to smile right in their face and talk about how the sun shined out of their arses.

Iris didn’t like it, but she would manage, for magic.

She recalled the wonder and joy she had felt when first touring the grounds of Potter Manor. Magic was the thing that had saved her from freakhood, from unnaturalness. She didn’t know what she’d have to go through at Potter Manor to keep her place there, but she knew magic was worth it.

Magic was worth almost anything.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys, fairly large revision to this chapter, to make it fit in with the other’s I’ve written.

I don’t have any comments this time, but I feel bad leaving this section empty though, so I’ll throw in a random fact about the world that I’ll probably never get to use.

Did you know that Hinduism is the only major world religion that originated with mages? Most local pagan/polytheistic religions incorporated mages into their understanding of the world and the divine, but they were eventually all run out of their native areas by the rise of the evangelical faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism).

Those traditions continued on in magical communities, practiced by mages after they secluded themselves away from muggles, but Hindu mages never needed to. Because of this, Hindu mages were some of the last in Afro-Eurasia to seclude themselves, happening around the time of the rise of the Mughal Empire in the 1500s. While muggle Hinduism was influenced by Mughal Islam to an extent, the Old Magic of most Indian mages bears a remarkable resemblance to the rituals used by muggle Hindus today.
The Folks with the Cauldrons

Chapter Summary

Iris gets a trunk, and picks up some light reading.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The very first thing the Potter Family—hair still green from one of James’s pranks—did in Diagon Alley was teach Iris Latin.

“You see Iris,—and I can’t believe by husband didn’t tell you this—the wizarding world doesn’t speak English, it speaks Latin.”

“The various parts of the wizarding world are grouped into what are called sprachbunds, or groups with a common lingua franca and government. Wizarding Britain rests inside the Latin Sprachbund, which is known as Occidentia, and, as you can guess, the common language is a dialect of Classical Latin known as ‘Magical Latin’.”

“It’s quite a bit different from the Latin you hear in church of course, because it’s a living language, but in general it’s fairly similar. Generally, light witches and wizards aren’t raised speaking it nat—”

“Oh my WORD mum, let up for a minute, you’re confusing the poor girl! I may be a Ravenclaw, but even I know that when you really get into a speech, you sound like a blood– I mean blooming textbook!”

“Actually, I don’t mi—”

“ANYways, what mom was TRYING to say was that everyone in the wizarding world speaks Latin, and most wizards take a potion when they’re kids to make them speak it.”

“Well Iris, does that answer your question?”

“Y-yes sir”

“Alright then, let’s eat!”

So, finally in Diagon Alley, where the only language potion store in Britain was, Iris finally got to learn the language of her new world. Tomorrow.

“Now remember honey”, James said, handing over the two galleons the potion cost, “you have to take it before bed tonight, and by the morning, you’ll be able to speak Latin just as well as any high-level learner.”

“You could probably make it one of your native languages” he added, frowning in thought, “but that would require almost never speaking a word of English for the whole year, and you’re gonna spend your breaks with us and your Aunt and Uncle, that won’t end up happening.”

“And remember!” James said, paying the shopkeep, “don’t go taking any language potions for seven
years after this, or else the languages will get all bull—uh…screwed up in your brain!”

Handing her the potion, James cast a temporary translation charm on her, similar to the one he cast at the beginning of the one and only magical church service she attended. The Potters may have spoken English to each other, James had told her, but most of the shopkeepers would be speaking Latin. He told her that even though most of them would probably switch when they saw her brother, some might not, and it would be better to have the charm and not need it, versus needing it and not having it.

Exiting the language potion store into the extra-wide street of the Diagon Alley Proper, iris followed the Potters out, to the camera-flashes of reporters. She wondered how James would explain away her presence to the reporters? If the ones who interviewed him looked anything like the ones taking pictures did, she thought, she might not even be mentioned. How awestruck at the Boy-Who-Lived do you have to be to engage in magical photo editing?

After a few minutes, James suddenly stopped in the middle of the street, pawing his pockets.

“Say, Iris, do you happen to have your Hogwarts letter on ya’? It has the supply list, and I can’t find Danny’s on me.”

“No sir, I don’t. I’m sorry.”

“Bah! I keep telling you Iris, none of this ‘sir’ nonsense, call me dad! Does Vernon make you call him sir?”

“Y-yes, actually, he does… dad.”

“Well”, James said, a look of mild confusion on his face, “must just be a muggle thing then. I’m telling you Iris, this is why we have to start allowing muggles into our world! You were raised with them, you should know how bloody—I mean, darn—fantastic they are, but we’re still stuck here on our own, unable to even relate on something as simple as raising a child! I swear, by the time—”

Iris, along with all the other children with the exception of Danny, began to tune James out as he went on yet another speech about the need for contact and integration between the wizard and muggle worlds, which would eventually devolve into another rant about Silvanus Malfoy insulting him, or Bronwen Aakster trying to sneak through some dark arts bill. absently, she nodded along, a suitably awed and agreeable smile on her face.

Thankfully, Charlie provided a much-needed interruption, after scrounging around in his pocket. “Oh hey Da’, I found Danny’s!”

“How on earth did it get there!” James said, reaching for the letter in his youngest son’s hands. “Well, regardless, I’m curious if they’ve changed anything since my school days.”

CLOTHING

Clothing will be left up to the discretion of the student’s parents or guardians. However, the Hogwarts staff reserves the right to deem any set of clothing inappropriate and in need of confiscation. Creature students are advised that the category of “inappropriate” contains all clothing showing any skin of the torso, shoulders, or thighs.
SUPPLIES

1 wand

1 school trunk

1 cauldron (brass, standard size 2)

1 set of unbreakable vials (glass or crystal)

1 set of brass scales

COURSE BOOKS

Spells Made Simple: Level One by Baldric Tarquinius

Introductory Charms by Hrolf Séaghdha

A History of Magical Europe by Baldehild Bagshot

Transfiguration: Level One Inanimate-to-Inanimate by Athelstan Spinnet

An Exhaustive Compendium of Ingredients and Their Interactions by Renard van Daal

Introductory Level Brewing by Renard van Daal

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt C. Scamander

Magical Mathematics: The Introductory Theory of Arithmancy by Marco Fautmoor

The Theory and Practice of Self-Defense by Bláthnaid Trask

“So…” Miriam said, finishing the list, “what do you two wanna get first? And not wands!”, he said quickly, seeing Danny about to pipe up, “it’s Potter family tradition that we get right before school starts, as the last on our shopping trip.”

After a few moment of contemplative silence, Iris spoke up, excited by the prospect of finally learning magic. She was never allowed to excel academically at the Dursleys, but she thought that here, with magic, she could finally indulge herself.

“Can we go to the booksh—”

“Trunks! We need to get trunks!” He turned to Iris: “you’re gonna love the types of trunks they have sis, did you know they can make them bigger on the inside? You could stick your whole arm in one, and you still wouldn’t reach the bottom!”

Irritated, but unsurprised, Iris just put on her well-worn genial smile, and followed her hyperactive brother down the alley. Well, she thought, at least an infinite trunk would be useful if the Dursleys ever threw her back into the cupboard.
After a brisk walk towards the other end of the alley, the Potters eventually stopped in a secluded shop, with a teetering sign indicating that it was owned by the Pryderi family. Intrigued at the concept of expanded magical space, Iris entered the shop behind James and Danny, hearing a small chime tinkle to signal her arrival.

“Ah, customers! What can I do for you tod–…”

Iris was concerned. Was there something wrong? The shopkeep couldn’t be more than nineteen or twenty, was it some sort of schoolyard rivalry with Marietta? She looked at her brother and father, but strangely enough, they just looked resigned.

“OH MY LORD, IT’S DANNY POTTER!”

Iris jumped in shock. She swore she could feel the ground shake.

“Mr. Potter, I can’t believe… it’s such an honor to actually meet you in person! My name is Galen Bell, and I’m such a huge fan! Is it true that you advise Head Auror Bones on strategy to combat roving werewolf packs? Did you really fight a vampire criminal that was trying to drink your friend’s blood at your eleventh birthday party? Oh my God I’m so excited I actually get to meet you, my friends are all going to be so jealous! Can I get your autograph? One for me, and one for my sister Katie, she’s your biggest fan!”

This… this was what the wizarding world thought of her brother? Her brother, who, in the months she had known him, could barely stand to read anything longer than the etchings on his broom? Her brother, who could barely cast the simplest charms with his father’s wand, even when showing off to his friends? Her brother, who was spoiled beyond belief at Potter Manor, while Iris had to live in a cupboard?

Iris thought she might have hated the wizarding world too in that moment, just a little bit.

Unaware of Iris’s dark thoughts, Danny’s whole continence took on a well-practiced fake pleasure that Iris had seen on the covers to dozens of her Aunt’s magazines. He began to chuckle good-naturedly, and shake the shopkeeper’s hand.

“Well Galen, I can’t answer those questions one way or another”—he winked, and Galen gasped—“but right now, I’m not the Boy-Who-Lived. I’m just Danny, a boy who’s trying to buy a trunk for Hogwarts with his sister.”

Galen stepped back behind the counter, abashed. “Oh you’re absolutely right Mr. Potter, I’m so sorry! So, do you have any idea what type of trunk you’d want today?”

“Oh, nothing fancy, just a standard expanded three-compartment for heirs.”

“Ah, excellent!” he said, clapping his hands excitedly.

“Our standard expanded three-compartment trunk comes with three identical levels, each opened by a separate password. Do you see these three locks on the front? Just touch your hand to one of them and say the password, and when you open the trunk, you’ll find your desired compartment!”

He pulled out a display case with dozens of different blocks of materials. “For our basic material set, we offer trunk bodies made of Oak, Birch and Mahogany, with accents and locks in silver, bronze, or iron!”
“And what about the non-basic package?” James asked.

“Of course sir!” Galen said, excitement tempered by his well-practiced speech. “With our deluxe material set, which is only around fifteen galleons more, we also offer Birch, Ash, Maple, Cherry, Beech, Teak, Ironwood, Poplar, Walnut and Rosewood, with accents and locks in gold, platinum, ruby, and emerald!”

“And,” Galen continued conspiratorially, “since you’re such a high-profile customer, I can even offer you our exclusive blood locking package! Instead of a password, which anyone can guess, the trunk will only open with a prick of your finger. You can’t fool that!”

For the first time since they’d entered the shop, James spoke up, frowning: “Blood locking, Mr. Bell?”

“Oh, well, I mean, I really don’t—… I’m just the shopkeep so I didn’t decide to— Please don’t arrest me Mr. Potter sir! I had no idea that—”

“Realx, Galen”, Danny said, arms in front of him in a calming gesture, glaring at James, “I’m sure my dad didn’t mean it like that, did he?”

Rolling his eyes James clarified: “oh don’t worry Mr. Trask, it’s nothing you did wrong. I think I just might need to have a few words with your boss in the future.”

Gulping at James’s ominous comment, Galen moved back behind the counter, waiting for the twins to decide on their materials

While Iris began to look at the various completed models on display, Danny moved over towards the sample case, picking up and fondling the various bits of wood—judging by Galen’s tense expression, he wasn’t supposed to be doing that—until he came to his decision.

“Galen, can you do the locks in one thing, and the accents in another?”

“W-well it’s not usually done…” Galen said, growing nervous as Danny began to frown, “b-but I mean for the Boy-Who-Lived, I don’t think Mr. Pryderi would have any problem with it! I’m sure I can get you the exact type of trunk you need Mr. Potter, don’t you worry! I’ll bet my job on it”

Galen suddenly blanched, realizing from Danny’s frown that his idle reassurance might end up being much less idle than he had intended. In fact, judging by his reputation, it was almost certainly so.

“Well—… I think I want the Cherry wood, with the accents in gold, and the locks in ruby. Gryffindor colors, you know” he said with a wink at James.

“And wh-what about y-you ma’am?” Galen said, turning towards Iris.

Uncomfortable with the deference she was being shown, Iris took a minute before she came to a decision. “I-I think I’d l-like the pale ash, w-with emerald a-accents, l-like my eyes.”

Mostly recovered in the face of Iris’s extreme anxiety, Galen rung the Potters up without any further incident.

“Just come back in an hour, Mr. Potter sir!” he said, looking at Danny. “We should have your special order ready by then!”

After signing his name with a practiced flourish, and collecting the slip to claim his new trunk, Danny led them out of the shop and into the Alley proper, followed by the rest of the Potters.
Shaking his head, he turned to Iris.

“Yeah, I was the same way my first time.”

“…‘first time’?”

“Yeah, my first time dealing with fans and admirers.”

“I’m telling ya sis, being a celebrity’s not all it’s cracked up to be. Sometimes I wish we could have switched places, y’know? You’d be the Girl-Who-Lived and I’d live with the muggles. Yeah, I’d miss the fame and fortune, but it would just be so much easier to live a simple muggle life. Fame and fortune are more trouble than they’re worth, honest. You ever had to go to a charity ball?”

Iris really was at a loss for words. She knew Danny was spoiled, but to think that his incredible wealth and fame were burdens? She honestly did hope that they switched places, she’d love to see how Danny dealt with recovering from a belting in the cupboard.

Still chuckling patronizingly, Danny led a bemused James and an internally fuming Iris to the bookshop, as the rest of the Potters trailed behind. Despite herself, Iris felt her mood lightening to a cautious excitement as they entered, entranced by the massive shelves full of magical knowledge.

James was talking, but Iris wasn’t really listening to him. This place was incredible! She loved to spend time in the school library, but Flourish and Blott’s must have been at least ten times bigger! Was this the size of the fabled “Surrey Library” that she heard the bookkeeper talk about?

Realizing that she wasn’t paying attention, James just chuckled, and nudged her on the arm. “Seems like I was wrong about Hufflepuff Iris, looks like you’re going to follow the rest of the Potter women straight into Ravenclaw!”

“I-…I’m sorry I didn’t mean to—”

“It’s fine, it’s fine! You go on ahead, I’ll pick up your schoolbooks.” Suddenly, his face broke out into a broad grin, “don’t worry about your dear old dad, I could only wish that you’d look at me with half the feelings you have when you look at those books! After I get your shopping lists, I’ll just sit over here on the couch, nursing my broken heart. Oh, woe is me! The anguish, the pain, the agony!”

As James continued to make comically overblown declarations to Danny, and Danny began to join in, wailing and moaning, Iris ignored both of them, and headed straight into the shelves. She normally found James’s bellowing, overblown humor quite annoying, but in this instance, she thought he had the right of it: a bookshop would be a better father than he would.

Searching through the stacks for the few English-language books she could find—the charm James cast didn’t translate text—Iris put aside anything that caught her interest.

Household Charms? That’ll make chores at Petunia’s easier

Beginner-Level Enchanting with Runes? Color her interested

Defending Yourself: Practical Dueling to Make You Dangerous? Look out Dudley!

Unfogging the Future: Numerology and the Third Eye? Wait, seeing the future was a thing?

The Dark Magic Debate and Its Political History? That was—…
That was something that really interested her.

Ever since James’s massive dinner-table outburst about the evils of dark magic, and his many subsequent rants about the same subject, Iris became very curious as to what exactly James hated so much. Not only was it the reason that he would act just like Vernon, he claimed that it was “danger” that had caused him to put her with Vernon in the first place.

To say that Iris felt that this “dark magic”, whatever it was, was a significant force in shaping her life, was an understatement. James had quite literally told her, during her third dinner at Potter Manor, that combatting this mysterious force was the reason for almost everything he did. Besides, if it really was as bad as James made it sound, well… she still had plenty of anger left over from her mother’s death at the hands of these magics.

Coming to a decision, Iris opened the book to the introduction, and read.

_The Dark Magic Debate and Its Political History_

_Controversia Magiai Nigrai et Historia Civilis_

_By: Jeremiah Eadbhárd Proudfoot_

For approximately one thousand years after the Statute of Secrecy in the early four-hundreds Anno Domini, the term “dark magic” did not exist in Latinate Europe. The term’s first major use is recorded in 1597, in Francis Bacon’s seminal treatise on light magic, ‘Magia Nova Oritur Ex Ignibus Iustitiae’. Bacon, lacking any term for the dangerous and addictive ritual-based forms of magic which he would go on to antiquate, adopted a Chinese term he had heard on a brief visit to Serica.

The Chinese term he adapted, “huen mua”, was used by dark wizard to refer to the magic they practiced, and had much less negative connotations. While the literal translation of “huen” as “dark” is technically accurate, a more nuanced translation shows that “huen” carries connotations of mystery, profundness, and esotericism, even being used in the name of the greatest muggle Chinese saint, Huen Dzang. Needless to say, Francis Bacon was unaware of this nuance when he translated the term, thinking it equivalent to the Latinate Europe’s concept of “darkness” and ever since, it has served as the foundation of the pagan dark’s political augments.

Despite his coinage of “dark magic”, however, Bacon did not coin the corresponding term “light magic”. He in fact did not use the term, preferring instead “new magic” or “white magic”, the first of which has since been adopted by the dark. The credit for the term “light” instead lies with Gianmarco Müller, who coined the term his famous political treatise ‘Contra Magia Nigra’, in which he–

“What on earth are you reading!”

Iris jumped up, startled, as James ripped the book from her hands.

“The Dark Magic Debate?! How many times have I warned you away from dark magic! And now you’re reading a book defending it?!”

Hearing the commotion, Danny had come over, and gaped at Iris in shock. “Sis… are you really reading a dark magic manual?! What the hell! Dad, you gotta punish her! Remember when Johnny Hailwick’s dad got him to give me that pamphlet? This is even worse!”

“N-no!” Iris said, paling. She still remembered James’s threats to “discipline” her from her first family dinner.
“Y-you k-keep t-talking about h-how y-you’re using p-p-politics to f-fight dark m-magic, and I w-wanted t-to k-know m-more. I’m n-not b-becoming a d-dark w-witch, I p-promise!”

James looked at her suspiciously, and skimmed the first paragraphs of the introduction. His enraged look gradually lessened, as it became replaced by a worried frown, as he began muttering to himself. “Hmm…. That’s isn’t as bad, I suppose…. Savage, that’s a light family… Still…”

Coming to a decision, he snapped the book shut and tossed it down the isle, and turned to Iris, eyes earnest. “Alright Iris, listen up. Maybe I wasn’t clear before, but the danger of being corrupted doesn’t just come from practicing dark magic, but from exploring it. There were so many good Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs in Hogwarts that got seduced away from the light, simply because they stated asking completely innocent questions like you did.”

“That’s why dark magic is so awful, it’s temptation in its purest form. You know I’m not usually big on religious ceremony, saving my soul and all that”—behind him, Danny quickly hid a worried grimace—“but when Pastor McClure talks about dark magic coming from Satan, I think he’s onto something. If Satan really is the father of all temptation, then dark magic is pretty much the perfect expression of what he’s all about. Even trying to learn about one of my jobs is the type of question that could lead you down that unnatural path, right to evil gits like Nott or McCreath.”

“I know you just want to help me honey, and understand what your dad does with his life, but promise me, you won’t go reading up on the dark-light conflict. You don’t know enough to know which authors to stay away from, so you might end up reading some biased pro-dark propaganda that’ll start you down the path to destruction.”

“It doesn’t matter how good of a person you are, or how inherently light—and this goes for you too Danny, don’t have that condescending look—dark magic has a way of seeping in and corrupting who you are inside. I’m not saying that you’re a bad person, or are going to hell, but I’m saying that if you keep on asking these questions, you will be.”

Terrified of James’s wrath, especially since she lied about her motives for picking up that book, Iris could only nod hurriedly, not even having to fake a fearful expression. Danny, hearing James last comment, had rapidly paled, and began to turn inward, most likely in a quest to re-enforce his mind against the temptations of the dark.

Both silent in shock, they followed James back to the register, to the highly uncomfortable cashier. They bought Danny and Iris’s personal books (minus the political history of course) in almost total silence, and headed out of the bookshop to meet up with the other Potters.

“C’mon guys…” James said, pushing open the door, “you haven’t said a word for the past five minutes. I didn’t mean to scare you that badly. I promise, as long as you stay vigilant, the darkness can never get a hold of you. so c’mon, cheer up! We’re going to get your clothes next!

Shivering in spite of James’s words, Iris and Danny both walked out into the sunlit alley, joining the rest of the Potters on the way to Madam Malkins.

Chapter End Notes

If you’re wondering, the “C.”, in “Newt C. Scamander” stands for “cutiepie”;)
There’s no Gringotts’s trip because A) I didn’t feel the story needed one, and B) James is a Lord, so he has more than enough money laying around without needing to go to the bank.

—

Conversion rate: 1 Galleon = 3 GPB = 3.8 USD

—

The title comes from a poem by the Chan Buddhist poet Hanshan: “Here’s a word for the rich folks with cauldrons and bells: Fame’s empty, no good, that’s for sure.”

—

Yes, I changed most of the titles and names, because I wanted to set the tone for the type of names that’ll be used in my story. Magical Latin is the lingua franca for most of Western Europe, and because magical travel is so convenient, there’s an incredibly large amount of mixing within the Sprachbunds.

Celtic and Germanic names are going to be the most popular in Britania (Celtic because the magical Celts did a whole lot better than the muggle ones), but you’re still going to see a great deal of names from other places. So yes, seeing someone named “Flavia Hrafnþórsdottir Smith” or “Giuseppina Siobhan van Ijzendijke-Giroux” is totally possible. Probable? Hell no, do you see those names? But definitely possible.

Also, really? A Herbology book written by someone named “Spore”?

—

The Magical Latin sprachbund is anything west of the Austrian-Polish border. Anything east of that is in Magical Hellenic Europe, and speaks Magical Koine as their lingua franca. Rule of thumb is that if the national language is Germanic or Romance, it’s in magical Latinate Europe, and if it’s Slavic, Greek, or anything else, it’s in Hellenic Europe.

If you know a bit of Latin, and are confused as to the peculiar forms of some of the Latin here, remember, this is a dialect of Classical Latin, not Classical Latin itself. The big orthographic changes you’ll notice are that there aren’t any overbars on long vowels, and æ is replaced with ai, to move it in line with the pronunciation.

A quick rundown of all the magical sprachbunds I have. I know some of them may seem confusing, so feel free to ask questions in the comments.

Latin: Western Europe
Koine Greek: Eastern Europe
Middle Chinese: East Asia
Sanskrit: South Asia, Southeast Asia:
Arabic: West Asia, Africa
Quechua: South America
K’iche: North America, Central America

Also, yes, the central unit of government in this universe is called a Sprachbund, not only because I feel it’s my prerogative as linguist to make sure everyone understands that incredibly useful term, but because I feel like it makes sense in a world where governments are divided based on various lingua francas.
Also, if you’re a speaker of Chinese or Japanese (or an exceedingly literate speaker of Korean), the hanzi for the (middle-)Chinese term “huen mua” is 玄魔 (PTH: xuánmó, Jp: kenma). “Huen Dzang” is the middle Chinese pronunciation of Xuanzang (玄奘), the guy who brought Buddhism to China, and the (supposed) main character of Journey to the West.

Also, I’m aware that mó has pretty negative connotations in both Chinese and Japanese, but in this universe, that’s a result of muggle attitudes towards magic. In Magical Chinese, it isn’t a negative term, but a neutral one equivalent to the English “magic”.

Also yes, I know that “saint” is an awful way to categorize Xuanzang, and he certainly wouldn’t be “the greatest” of them even if it was (that would probably be Guanyin?), but the book was written from the perspective of a culturally isolated Latin-speaking Catholic, and so “saint” seems like the most obvious term for a venerated earthly champion of the religion.
Chapter Summary

Iris gets some new information.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Alone, in the girl’s fitting section of Madam Malkin’s, Iris realized that she was both Potter-less and Dursley-less for the first time in almost her entire life.

Unconsciously, Iris’s shoulders began to untense, as a bit of tension she didn’t even realize she was carrying uncoiled itself. In a much lighter mood, she went up to the assistant, and asked for a Hogwarts fitting.

“Hiya there!” the girl said, as she moved Iris onto one of the stools, “my name is Tonks—*just* Tonks—and I’ll be fitting you today!”

Tonks was an attractive, pink-haired girl that looked to be only a few years older than Iris, with bright, blue eyes, a cute button nose, and gorgeous skin. She was wearing a flattering outfit that drew Iris’s eyes down to… down to…

...

...

Magic really was incredible! That must be a charm to draw people’s eyes to your clothing! Tonks was rather fetching without it, Iris thought, so with it, she must drive the boys wild!

Shaking off her wonder, Iris introduced herself. “Hi Tonks, my name is Iris… just Iris. Y-you have really… really nice clothes. I like them.”

“Well thanks ‘just Iris’ I appreciate it! I sewed ‘em myself, you know!”

Tonks began to pin up fabric to Iris’s body. “‘Just Iris’, huh? Look at us, a couple’a half-named peas in a pod! Together, maybe we can make one full person!”

Iris heard a quiet snickering from the stool beside her. Seeing Iris and Tonks’s looks, the girl blushed.

“Hi there, I’m Katie Bell. I’m going into my second year at Hogwarts. It’s nice to meet you Tonks, Iris.”

“So Iris…” Tonks said, turning her attention back to the girl standing on the stool in front of her, “is this your first year at Hogwarts?”

Katie looked on interested.

“Yes, it is. I just recently learned I was magical, actually, so this is all new to me.”

“Well Iris, you’re in luck! This is my first week being a shopkeeper, so this is all new to me too!”
Looks like we’ll be learning together! I’m in my seventh year at Hogwarts though, so I can’t help you there.”

All three girls chuckled.

After a while, the girls fell into a companionable silence, as Tonks flitted around Iris and Katie, taking measurements, and pinning cloth onto every possible body part.

Iris thought that this was the most relaxed she’d ever been in the magical world. No angry, yelling father telling me how he wants to ‘discipline’ her; no overbearing step-mother trying to get her to convert to Catholicism; and no spoiled, mini-father-clone of a twin Brother flaunting the privileged life she could have had. She thought she could get used to this.

A few minutes later, Iris was drawn out of her comfortable reverie, as she Tonks hummed, looking at the cloth pinned up around Iris’s body.

“I-is something wrong?”

“Oh no kid, I just realized that I ran out of pins to fit you with, and I don’t think we have anymore up here in the front. Can you two keep each other company while I go look in the backroom?”

Before they could answer, Tonks sped out, and the two Hogwarts students were left with each other.

“Hey,” Katie said in English, after a minute or so of silence, “I know you’re a muggleborn, so you probably don’t know this, but I’d stay away from Tonks if I were you.”

“What? Why?”

“Well, her family’s actually pretty well-known in political circles. My dad was on the Wizengamot, so I’ve heard of her. Her mum, Andromeda, used to be a Black—one of the darkest, most evil families out there—until she got kicked out of the family for marrying a muggle, a lot like her cousin Sirius. For a long time, they were considered really strong, proud members of the light. Sounds good, right?”

Iris nodded absently, wondering if this “Sirius” had any connection to her absent godfather.

“Well, a year or two after their child Nymphadora was born—that’s Tonks’s real name—Andromeda signed on as an advisor to Emil Häberli, the head of one of the biggest neutral families, and started pushing all these non-light ideas wherever she went.”

“The dark,” she clarified, “is the side that all the purebloods and dangerous dark creatures are on, like vampires and werewolves and stuff! They tell people that muggles are evil, or stupid, or less valuable than wizards, and that muggleborns should be taken away from them, so that wizards can do whatever they want without them knowing any better. I mean, c’mon, you understand, right? Saying you should have been taken away from your family, and that they shouldn’t be allowed to know anything about the wizarding world, even if they’re in danger from some dark creature? That’s just awful!”

Iris just nodded, tight smile fixed on her face. Looks like she couldn’t escape the Potters just quite yet.

“No one really knows what happened, but most people think that the Häberlis cut them some kind of deal, so that they’d turn on all their former friends. I mean, for Pete’s sake, she was the one who wrote the law that tried to ban the Boy-Who-Lived Adventure Series! How much more dark can you get!”
Iris could tell she was about to continue, but as Tonks returned with a new set of pins, she cut herself off, and greeted the assistant shopkeep with that Iris now realized was forced warmth.

As Tonks resumed measuring and pinning, Iris turned over Katie’s words in her head. Being taken away from her family, huh? And also, wait, ‘Boy-Who-Lived Adventure Series’?! Is that why that shopkeep had thought Danny had done all those ridiculous things?

Iris was briefly brought out of her thoughts around fifteen minutes later, as Katie left with her robes. The second year not-so-discreetly glanced at Tonks, and whispered “remember what we talked about”. Judging by Tonks’s grimace, neither her reminder nor her earlier rant went as unnoticed as she’d thought. Poor girl.

A few minutes after that, Iris came out of her daydreams with a jerk, as Tonks accidentally stabbed her with a pin, hair turning canary-yellow in embarrassment.

Wait, turned yellow? Oh my G–

“Oh shi–… cra–… darn! Sorry!”

...

Iris was in shock. Here was someone who could help her understand her powers! James hadn’t really been forthcoming in his explanations, so she was hoping to get some more information on one of her many recently-rediscovered birthrights

“E-excuse me, Tonks? D-do you… do you have metamorphism to?”

Tonks turned red, not even attempting to stifle her glare. “Hey kid, I don’t appreciate being called slurs, y’kn–… wait, did you say ‘too’?”

Confused at Tonks’s reaction, but feeling a dawning sense of horror, Iris clarified. “Y-yeah, I was in the muggle world for most of my life, so m-my father locked my condition away. He just told me about it though, and told me what it’s called.”

“Iris, kid… who’s your dad?”

Iris stopped, face white. She really didn’t want to deal with the hassle of her family name right now, especially when it seemed that nearly everyone was completely in awe of her brother.

“Hey, nevermind, y’know, it’s alright! I was just curious. You don’t have to tell me who they are, but I can get a pretty good idea of what they’re like from what you’ve told me. I’m guessing they’re really integrationist, and use the term ‘light magic’ a whole bunch? Do they talk about ‘dark creatures’ too?”
“Uh… yeah. I mean, I don’t know what an ‘integrationist’ is, but all that other stuff is spot on. What is an integrationist? And what”, she lowered her voice, “is ‘dark magic’ anyways? I tried to read a book in the alley that talked about the history of the political debate about it, but my dad ripped it away from me and said it would turn me evil.”

“Jeez kid, your family really are a buncha true-blue Nics, aren’t they? How on earth did you end up with muggles?”

“Y-yeah, I guess they are. A-and I don’t really want to talk about it, if that’s ok”

“Yeah sure kid, keep your secrets. So… let me ask you a question.” Her eyes suddenly took on a much more calculating gleam, at odds with her easygoing tone, “I heard what Bell was saying back there to you, she gave you the same speech about me and my parents that your family would probably give.”

“Now my family isn’t ‘dark’ like Bell was saying, but they certainly aren’t ‘light’ either. So, my question is, why is the kid of a hardcore Nic couple coming to me for advice? Shouldn’t you be going to your parents?”

“Well…” Iris said, “I kinda… I think I feel that the fact that you’re neutral is actually a good reason to ask you questions. Like I said, J– my father doesn’t really give me any good answers, he just talks about how me asking questions is a sign I’m being corrupted. I just want to understand, y’know? Even if dark magic does end up being as evil as he says it is, would figuring that out for myself really be that awful?”

Tonks stared directly at her for a solid minute, making Iris begin to sweat from discomfort.

“Kid… you know, you shouldn’t really be saying things like that in public… Your parents, whoever they are, along with all rest of the Nics, are the ones in power right now, they have been for almost a century. Talking about stuff like that isn’t exactly the quickest way to avoid suspicion.”

Looking around, Tonks pursed her lips in thought, and eventually came to a decision. Muttering to herself, she get up, and closed the door to the fitting room, turning around the privacy sign on the door, and sending some sort of spell at the doorframe for good measure.

“To make sure nobody overhears us”

Iris grew intrigued. Were the arguments of her James’s enemies really that forbidden? Just what exactly time of political climate had she come into?

“Alright kid. I’ll give you a brief rundown of the political system of this messed-up Sprachbund. But only until I finish fitting your clothes, alright? I don’t think I could get away with any longer.”

She smirked. “I may been a Hufflepuff, but that doesn’t mean I’m not good for encyclopedia-duty, so get ready for a whole lotta information, all at once!”

“So”, she began, “the first thing you have to realize is that you are not just a sorcerer mage with a condition, you’re what’s called a ‘changeling’, a sub-race of sorcerers. Most of the Integrationists, the Nics that is, like to pretend otherwise, but we changelings have our own separate history and culture, just like the Coblynau, or Elves, or whatever.”

“…sorcerer? mage? Coblynau? Wait, Elves are real?”

“Ah crap, that’s right. Alright kid, the first big political difference that you gotta know is the one about terminology. One of the two main political points that the Nic, or more properly ‘integrationist’
philosophy is based on, is that muggles are basically the same kind of people as you, me, and your
dad.”

“Nics say that muggles and sorcerers are one race, called ‘humans’, and all the other races—
Coblynau and Elves being two of those—are ‘magical creatures’, which are a lot like animals that
can talk. They see themselves not as a separate race of being from muggles, but as a human that’s
been gifted with magic—usually by God—and use the word ‘sorcerer’ or ‘magical’ to mean just that,
a human that has magical ability.”

“Most Nics, and a lot of more integrationist neutrals, really love the muggle world, and think its
better than the magical one. They see things like the muggle government, muggle schooling, muggle
social roles, and really everything muggle, and wand to bring them into the magical world.”

“They’ll generally say that by secluding ourselves away, the magical world is actually committing
this big offence against the muggle world, because we could solve so many of their problems with
magic, and make their lives a whole lot better. The magical world originally hid away because of the
purges being done by all the Roman Christians, but most integrationists are Christians themselves,
and say that the muggles have moved past those ‘barbaric’ times, and are ready to accept magic, and
all the benefits it could bring to their lives.”

“Because of this view, the big central point of Nic policy is proposing measures to help bring the
muggle and magical worlds closer together. They have a lot of bills trying to make magical social
norms more like muggle ones, but they haven’t had a whole lot of luck with those. The only one
they’ve managed to pass is the restriction on divorce, none of the sodomy laws have really gained
any ground, thanks to the neutrals.

“Another big thing for them is trying to assert supremacy over the other races. They’re big into the
whole ‘made in the image of God’ creation thing, which means that they think humans—sorcerers
and muggles that is—are God’s chosen race, the ones he made modeled after himself. For most
races, they’ll just try to limit their power, because most of the mages of those races are pagans and
obviously don’t buy into all that God-given human supremacy stuff, but for some, like us, they’ll try
to fit them into their category of ‘humanity’.”

“For example, around thirty years ago, right at the beginning of The Dark L— of You-Know-Who’s
Civil War, Dumbledore and his hardcore Nic supporters put forward this bill in the Wizengamot th—”

“Sorry, ‘Wizengamot’?”

“Oh right, you wouldn’t know that. Well the Wizengamot, is the legislature in Occidentia. They’re
made up of around seventy-five percent Noble Families: old, powerful families that have been
around for a long time. The other twenty-five percent of the seats used to go to the Office of the
Minister—that’s the executive branch, under Minister Fudge—to assign, but ever since the Nics
passed a measure back in the fifties, around two-thirds end up going to muggleborns elected by
popular vote.”

“Now, back to what I was saying. So, around thirty years ago, the hardcore Nics in the Wizengamot,
who are all led by Dumbledore, but forward this bill whose big proposed purpose was to create an
official registry of any ‘wizards and witches with unusual abilities’, mostly changelings and the other
sub-race of sorcerers, skinwalkers. They said it was a ‘protective measure’, so because ‘the dark’ was
trying to recruit changelings and skinwalkers, and so they’d be in danger.”

“But the real purpose of the bill, and the thing I think shows what the Nics are all about, basically
made it so that anyone on the registry—changelings especially—were banned from having any jobs
that were deemed ‘trust-essential’.”
“According to Dumbledore, our powers made us ‘prone to deception’ and ‘susceptible to corruption’. He and his followers basically said that because we could potentially impersonate people, if we cover up our marks with makeup or something, we shouldn’t be allowed to work with ‘average witches and wizards’! He even said that the Dark Lord was using changelings to impersonate ministry employees as a plot to gradually take over the ministry!”

“So this”—she waved to her shopkeep’s outfit—“is basically our only option, no matter what school we go to; because of the Nics, mages like you and me can’t hold around 50% of the jobs in the magical world! That’s the reason my family switched to neutral after I was born. My mom said she realized that she couldn’t ever side with the old coot again after I told her that I wanted to become an auror, and she had to watch my face when she told me I never could!”

Breathing heavily at the end of her rant, Tonks took a moment to calm herself, and then blushed in embarrassment.

“Er… sorry Iris, I guess I wasn’t being as balanced as you’d want me to near the end there. Sorry?”

“Oh no,” Iris said, fascinated by Tonks’s ideas and passion, “this is actually exactly what I wanted. I hear enough stuff about ‘the light’, or the integrationists I guess, from James, I really want to hear what the other side has to say. So, what do the opponents to integrationism believe?”

Once again fixing Iris with that calculating look, Tonks stepped away from the pin she was pushing in, and rechecked the charms on the door.

“…Alright, fuck it. In for a penny, and all that.”

“So basically, the main opponents of the Nics are called the Seclusionists, or the Rells. Unlike the Nics, they think that muggles are a completely separate race from every type of mage, including sorcerers. To the Rells, sorcerers are just one more magical race among many, and make up a united magical world, which only exists because the muggles haven’t found out about it yet.”

“For Rells, Muggles are generally pretty awful, and’ll destroy mages the first chance they get, like back before the Seclusion. Back in those times, the races of mages that could pass for muggle were beaten, flogged, or burnt at the stake, and the ones that weren’t had it even worse, with their whole communities being wiped off the face of the earth by ‘monster hunters’.”

“For most seclusionists, the goal is to totally separate themselves from the muggle world. One of their big, defining policies is what’s called ‘muggleborn adoption’, taking away any sorcerers born into muggle families to be raised by parents of their own race, and then blood-adopting some random muggle kid to take their place.”

“They don’t want anything even remotely stinking of muggles to have a place in the magical world; the really mean it when they call muggles ‘muds’, and Muggleborns ‘mudbloods’. They think that any mage who was raised by muggles is gonna try to change that magical world to be more like the muggle one, which means that the majority of the mages are going to die.”

“Actually, now that I think about it, some of them used to advocate something similar to that adoption scheme for changelings like us too, but the ‘racial purity’ seclusionists have been pretty insignificant ever since Walburga Black died, and the Dark Lor– uh… You-Know-Who rose to power.”

“Just who was You-Know-Who? I tried to ask Mi– my… mother what his name was, and she wouldn’t tell me, she just paled and told me nobody says his name, or what he looked like, or anything about him.”
Tonks fixed her with a glare.

“Kid… I don’t care how ‘curious’ you are, I’m not gonna be caught in the middle of Diagon Alley talking about the goals of the Knigh– er… the Death Eaters. Everything up until now was just me talking about politics to you, but that? If that reached the right ears, I could go to prison.”

Iris fixed her with a desperate look.

“Please Tonks, I promise, I won’t tell anyone! It’s just that I haven’t found anyone to tell me this stuff, and I want to know! I want to know everything about the magical world, but you’re the only one who’ll tell me anything!”

“…”

“…”

“…damnit, I’m not used to being on the other side of changeling puppy-dog eyes”

“Ok, kid, fine. The group the Nics call ‘the Death Eaters’ was a group of radical Rells, who wanted to use force to rebuild the ‘muddied and corrupt’ ministry from the ground up, and… well, all I’ll say about that is that the political debate isn’t just about seclusion or integration, its also about different types of magic, and magical religions.”

“Most Rells practice an older set of pagan beliefs, and no, don’t ask, I won’t tell you what they’re called. Now those aren’t exactly legal, but they’re an open secret, because they’re mostly just rituals about connecting with and worshipping magic, and are just burning an offering and making a prayer.”

“The thing is, the Dark L—…. You-Kn—… fine, Lord Voldemort, because you’re so bloody curious, didn’t just want to make those rituals legal, but also way more complex rituals to do other stuff, like making enchantments on objects permanent, or crafting new spells that were way more efficient and powerful. Now unlike pagan rituals, those types of rituals are very, very illegal, and is what your dad is probably calling ‘dark magic’.”

“I’m serious Iris, you don’t ever talk about this stuff. You know what the thing that most politically-aware Nics associate those types of rituals with? Human sacrifice. This is really not something you go looking into where people are watching.”

“But wh—”

“No kid, I told you. That’s all I’ll say on the matter. Now straighten up, suck in your chest, and let me tell you about the Offices of the Minister.”

A half-minute later, Tonks continued in a much more relaxed tone. “Ok so basically, the Offices of the Minister contain most of the departments you’ll hear about as being ‘in the ministry’. That’s stuff like the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, and the Department of International Magical Cooperation. Now I know those can be a mouthful, so most people usually just use abbreviations or Nicknames, like the DMLE, the Zappers, or the DIMC.”

“Now, I’m sure you know that Occidentia is divided into three provinces, with thirty prefectures, but what you might not know is that each department actually has—”

*knock knock knock*
“Hey sis!” Marietta yelled through the thick wood, “are you ready yet? Danny’s getting impatient, he finished twenty minutes ago!”

Tonks stiffened, immediately connecting the dots in her head, and temporarily lowered the silencing charm.

“Y-yeah Marietta, I’m almost done! Just give me another minute or two!”

When she turned back away from the door, Iris was met by a panicked glare.

“*James fucking Potter, that’s* who this mysterious ‘James’ is? I thought you were the abandoned bastard kid of James Ximenes, or James van Ryskamp! You mean to tell me I’ve just been talking about seclusionist politics to the daughter of James Potter, the fucking ‘Sword of the Light’?”

Iris hesitantly nodded her head.

“Kid, you can’t tell anyone that we had this talk, anyone. You can’t even tell anyone we met. I’m serious, I would be fucking crucified. Not even metaphorically, I mean literally crucified, considering your father is JAMES FUCKING POTTER.”

Iris just started at the frantic mage, wide-eyed. “W-would it really be as bad as you’re implying?”

Tonks just stared at Iris, disbelieving. “Kid, you’ve fucking met your father, right? What do you think he’d do if he heard the daughter of one of the most famous “dark-traitors” in the country was giving his daughter a nice ol’ talk on the political goals of the Dark Lord?”

Iris paled.

“You gotta understand kid, after Lily Potter died, James Potter went full-on fucking psycho trying to get revenge for her. He stated trying to whip up an actual crusade, yes, *that’s literally what he called it*, against anything even remotely stinking of ‘dark magic’. And the thing is, because of the whole Boy-Who-Lived hype, *he almost managed to do it*. Marrying your mother calmed him down some, but everyone knows Miriam Potter is an über-Catholic nutjob, so his views actually got even more extreme.”

“Oh… M-Miriam isn’t my mother… I-I’m Danny’s twin actually…”

“…”

“…T-Tonks?”

“Holy shit, *holy shit, HOLY SHIT.*”

“*HOLY SHIT, THIS CANNOT BE HAPPENING*”

“wha—… T-Tonks?!!”

“Circe kid, you have no idea how dead I am if this gets out. Seriously, notorious dark-leaning neutral witch taking the Boy-Who-Lived’s twin sister and trying to ‘seduce her to the dark side’? My whole family would be in Azkaban before you could say ‘manufactured evidence’. I think the only thing that might actually be worse is if I literally tried to seduce you.”

Iris paled even further, and then, registering Tonks’s last comment, flushed a bright scarlet.

“…”
“...”

“...really kid, that’s what gets the big reaction out of you?”

“This is... this is just fucking too much. I gotta sit down...”

Tonks collapsed into the wooden armchair next to the counter, giggling only slightly hysterically.

“Don’t... don’t worry kid, I promise, you’re around twenty years too young to be my type. Magical Morgana, what a morning. Danny Potter’s twin, and I told her about the fucking Old Rites. Fuck I’m such an idiot.”

“T-type?... Y-you’re a... Wait... Did you... did you say twenty years too young? I’m only six years younger than you!”

Tonks chuckled. “What can I say kid, I like my lovers to have a bit of grey in their hair. A permanent grey”, she added, pointing at a silver-haired Iris

Iris thought she really did have the worst luck. Right after Tonks had made her comment, by some awful coincidence Iris’s shifting hair chose that moment to settled on a dignified grey.

Tension bleeding out of the room at Iris’s obvious discomfort, Tonks finished taking the final few pins out of Iris’s robes, and casting the final few sewing spells.

“You know kid, I wasn’t just working myself up earlier, you really can’t tell anyone what we talked about. I wasn’t joking about the ‘manufactured evidence’ thing, that actually happened a few years ago with one of the Hailwicks. Hell, it’s probably better if you pretend you never even met me, for both of us.”

“Yeah... I know...” Iris said with a sigh.

She really liked Tonks’s open personality and self-depreciating sense of humor. She wanted to spend more time with her, get to know her, and maybe even discuss magic and politics. Unfortunately, it seemed that once again, the Potters would be responsible for ensuring she remained friendless and miserable, albeit a little more directly this time.

“So... I really haven’t had any friends before, so I never really figured out how to do this. Good... goodbye forever, I guess?”

Looking at her a bit oddly, Tonks shook her head. “No friends? Well, that’s the fuckin’ muds for ya’, I guess.”

“...”

“...er... don’t tell anyone I said that either. I’m officially supposed to be neutral and all, like the rest of my family, but... yeah. Circe, I really can’t keep my big mouth shut today, can I?”

Giggling at Tonks’s antics, Iris stepped down off the stool. “Well, Ms. Unnamed Shopkeeper, it was a pleasure doing business with you. My name is Iris, Iris U. P. Potter, and I love my father very much! He’s the ‘Sword of the Light’, you know”

“Well Ms. Potter, it was truly a pleasure serving the sister of or wonderful Boy-Who-Lived, and I hope you have many happy days ahead of you of beating back the forces of darkness! I must ask though, would you prefer the hems of your robes to be kissed now, or one you’ve broken them in?”
Laughing Iris gathered up her new robes and walked towards the now-unlocked door, waving goodbye to Tonks with her free hand.

“Wait!” Tonks said from the backroom, right as she was about to twist the handle. “What do the middle initials stand for?”

“Why my dear nameless shopkeeper,” Iris replied, “they stand for ‘Unicorn Phoenix’, the true representatives of my deepest inner being.”

Stepping out to Tonks’s roaring laughter, Iris marveled at how free and… herself she felt. When was the last time she’d traded banter like this with Dudley? Months? God Al-… Merlin this felt good.

It really was a shame that she wouldn’t be able to see Tonks anymore, Iris thought, she was the first person she’d met in the magical world who she felt comfortable around. If she was any indication of the types of people that the “dark” had to offer, then she might just have found a new secret political allegiance.

Besides, she thought, she’d never met a single muggle that had ever been kind to her, simply because she was a mage: it wasn’t as if she disagreed with most the ideas Tonks had expressed.

“Muds” indeed…

Chapter End Notes

o, how did you guys like your first dash of independent, snarky, semi-self-confident Iris near the end there! The Potters, especially James, really do a number on her ability to express herself, so you haven’t seen the type of character she’s going to grow into in the coming chapters. Buckle up, you’re in for a wild ride!

—

The chapter title means “Only the Educated”, and comes from the Ancient Greek text of the Discourses of Epictetus, meaning “only the educated”. The full (English) quote is: “We must not believe the masses, who say that free persons only ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers, who say that it is only the educated who are free.”

—

If any fellow Linguaphiles are reading this, the term that’s being translated as “mud” in English is “cænum”, which, if you can believe it, actually has more insulting connotations than its English translation, also referring to filth and muck in general. “Mudblood”, then, would be “Sanguis Cænī”, or “Sanguis Cainī” in Magical Latin

—

Yes, “Nic” and “Rell” in this universe function a lot like “Tory” in the irl UK. That’s not to say that there’s any sort of equivalence of policy between the two, because I did my very best to make magical politics entirely unique thanks to the existence of magic, but just that the nickname is used in similar semi-official ways.

And if you’re wondering, the terms come from corruptions of “Phoenix” and “Thestral”,


the two most common symbols for vigilante organizations for each side, respectively. If you want to see why Thestrals are so commonly used by seclusionists, look at their entry in the magical bestiary in my profile

—

I have a lot of things about the HP canon and fanon that I want to make more rational when I write this fic, but the one that really inspired me to write in the first place was the typical fanon way of making the “dark” seem more sympathetic is REALLY terrible. Basically, authors confuse making the “dark” realistic with making it sympathetic. What most authors do is take the canon dislike of muggleborns, and instead of attributing it to blind prejudice, attribute it to a desire to “maintain wizarding culture” or “protect magical traditions” from the muggle influence which seeks to change them. Incidentally, they often don’t really define what those traditions are, or how they in any way make them superior to muggles.

Now yes, this is a realistic ideology, and one that many real-life people could believe in, but the thing those authors ignore is that all those people are far-right radicals. Seriously, just replace “muggle” with “Muslim”, and “mudblood” with “refugee”, and you’ll basically have the operating rhetoric of the British National Party. Now I really don’t want to start any arguments in my comment section, but I just wanted to put that out there because I wanted to give the rationale I had when designing the political system of this fic.

I’m going to speak a bit from the heart here, so I apologize if I get a bit sappy or emo. I’m a very cynical person in general, and I feel that human history justifies my dark, pessimistic view of the human race. Sure. I’d love to see a solution to climate change, or a treaty-borne world peace, or a socialist society in which everyone is cared for, or what have you, but I largely think humans are too petty, jealous, and greedy to ever bring those things into a reality.

Certain political and economic systems can have some successes at curbing that, but they can’t really fight the flow of nature forever. Everything that humans set their hands on rots within a generation. Even the hardest-one societies, borne of struggle and revolution, only fulfill their promises for as long as the revolutionaries live.

Magic is my way of fixing that. When I’m writing this fic, magic lets me change human nature, it lets me make people better. The Old Rites in this universe actually unequivocally fulfill on the promises of religion by connecting you to the magic of the earth: they make you more empathetic, more loving, more generous, more understanding, and just… better.

I wanted to create an asylum against the horrors of the human race, a society that could do nothing but live harmoniously in peace for ten thousand years. No expansions, no wars, to murder campaigns. That’s the only society for which I could justify fighting a longer term vigilante campaign to protect (a la Voldemort), and the only society I could justify isolating from the rest of the world.
Ollivander’s wands must have been the most out-of-place store Iris had ever seen. Where the rest of the alley had tall, imposing buildings made of granite or brick, the wand-maker’s shop was an earthy wooden structure that looked like it was plucked straight from a medieval German village. The rest of the Potters didn’t bat an eye though, so she figured that this must have been normal. Iris would admit to being a little disappointed.

“Wait one moment” James said, pausing outside of the door to the wand shop. “I almost forgot to warn you, Ollivander is a dryad, so make sure you’re on your best behavior.” Danny stood up a little straighter, mildly paling.

“Dryads are some of the oldest and most dangerous magical creatures,” he said, turning to Iris, “they mainly spend their time making wands for us humans with their nature magic. They don’t see it like that though, they are extremely prideful.”

“Yeah,” James said, “they really don’t like being given any reminders of their place in the world. Their nature magic makes them extremely dangerous, so they feel the wizards they serve are much weaker than them, and don’t deserve their service. Don’t say any”

Seeing the ashen faces of all the Potter children, James sighed, and ran a hand over his face.

“I’m… I’m not saying we’re gonna get chopped up an eaten, guys, I just wanted to educate you so that the worst doesn’t happen. Hundreds of thousands of young wizards and witches in Occidentia get their wands from Dryads each year, and nothing bad has happened yet. Things will most likely be fine, just don’t do anything foolish, and we’ll all be safe.”

“Any encounter with a Dryad will go fine if you remember to address it by the proper titles, give it a respectful space so it knows you aren’t trying to hurt it, and don’t ever question it if it starts acting strange: they can only speak in riddles and half-sentences, so it can take a minute to figure out what they’re trying to say. Just follow my lead in how I talk to it, and everything will go fine.”

“Also,” Miriam said, “they’ve always been very shifty on what sympathies they had during the last war. They haven’t ever said, but most people think they’re sympathize with the pagans and dark creatures, because of how much they resent serving wizards. It wouldn’t surprise me, that’s why most creatures rebel and turn towards dark magic.”

“Now I’m not saying that’s necessarily true,” she said quickly, sending a worried glance towards Ollivander’s shop, “and I’m not saying that they practice dark magic or anything, but I still want you to be careful. Creatures don’t have the same type of morality we do, they live on the law of the jungle. Just… just be careful.”
Confused, and more than a little terrified, Marietta stopped her mother before she could follow James into the shop. “Hey mum… I… I know you said that everything should be fine, but… but why do we take that chance? If they have the potential to be so dangerous, why do we let them make our wands? Surely it would be safer to have other wizards make them?”

“Well,” Miriam said, “you have to remember sunflower, that every species of creature has a place in the hierarchy of nature, and even if that creature is dangerous, God has a reason for ordaining them to provide valuable services for witches and wizards. Denying them that place is bad for us, because we lose out on that valuable service, and also cruel to them, because they’re denied fulfilling their God-given purpose in life.”

“Think of the Goblins. Would you trust a goblin to give you a haircut, or take care of a baby?”

“No!” Marietta said, laughing slightly despite his lingering anxiety.

“Well, you wouldn’t trust a goblin to do that, but you’d trust them to take care of your finances, wouldn’t you?”

Marietta nodded.

“Well, that’s just it! Goblins aren’t designed to take care of wizarding children, or give haircuts, so you don’t trust them to do those things. But they are designed to manage money, so you should feel perfectly safe handing over your galleons to them.”

“It’s the same thing with dryads. They aren’t designed for conversation or interaction, so it can be dangerous to do that with them, like we were saying. What they are designed for is making wands, so they’re the best at it, even better than witches and wizards. Do you understand now?”

“Yeah… I think I do…” Marietta said, all the Potter children looking to have calmed down.

“Excellent!” Miriam said. “Now, dears, let’s not keep your father waiting, and head inside!”

Iris looked around. The room she was in was a little smaller than the living room at Privet Drive, with a set of eight or so chairs opposite a small counter. Surprisingly though, despite the shop’s purpose, she couldn’t see a wand in sight, or even a wand-maker.

“Hello Ms. Iris and Mr. Danny Potter, I’ve been expecting you.”

AAH! Iris whipped around, almost elbowing a snickering Marietta in the face. Where on earth was he hiding!

The man who had snuck up behind her was very old-looking, with unfocused eyes, white skin that was just a little too shiny to be flesh, and, strangely enough, a tangle of roots and leaves instead of hair. Eventually, he stopped staring at them, and spoke in English: “Ah yes… James Potter, and Miriam McClellan… Cedar, with phoenix feather and dijiang fur, and cherry, with shangyang feather and sphynx fur, if I recall correctly…”

“Oh… yes, Great Dryad” Miriam replied, “thou art right in thine assumptions. Although, my name has been Miriam Potter for ten years, I tell thee.”

“Yes, yes, of course… Now I suppose all of you are here to craft wands for the young twins here? Iris and Danny Potter, how interesting….”

“G-great dryad, sir… what is interesting, if I may ask that of thee?”
“Oh nothing Mr. Danny Potter, nothing at all….”

“Um… alright then.”

“Well!” Ollivander said, his glassy eyes returning to his customers, “it seems as if right now, of course, is the time you two have come to get your wands…. Now, going first, will be… Danny Potter, will it not?”

Ollivander moved around to face Danny, as James discreetly gripped his wand, and Miriam shifted just a little closer to her husband.

Nervous, Danny nodded his head, causing Ollivander to sharply turn towards the door in the back of the room, and motion that Danny follow him. Taking a moment to gather his Gryffindor courage, Danny followed, and stepped through without looking back once.

The whole shop was silent, none of the Potters wanting to speak, until around twenty minutes later, when Iris started as felt a great amount of… something fill the air. Around a minute after that Danny walked out clutching his new wand, beaming.

“How curious…” Ollivander muttered, following him.

“What dost thou find curious, G-Great Dryad?” Danny asked, still quite obviously unnerved at the old wandmakers presence.

"You have a very curious wand indeed… Cedar with Thestral tail-hair and crushed Amit scale… Mr. Danny Potter, I believe… I believe fate has great things in store for you.”

“What… what is thine meaning, Great Dryad?”, Danny asked, as his father’s gaze sharpened behind him.

“This wand… it is a wand of strength, of justice… of self-confidence, of moral righteousness and unyieldingness… how curious indeed.”

“I-if… if thou do not mind me saying so… I cannot see as far as you, Great Dryad, how is it curious? That describes me pretty perfectly as the Boy-Who-Lived: strength, justice, and morality…”

“Oh yes, Mr. Danny Potter, and that is precisely why… This is the wand of a champion, of one marked by fate… You will do great things I’m sure…”

“Well yeah, I– I mean yes Great Dryad, I now understand. I am the Boy-Who-Lived, and as thou know, doing great things sounds… sounds… right up my alley.” James cringed at the idiom.

“Yes, perhaps…. perhaps indeed…”

Feeling that Ollivander wasn’t going to give any useful information, and secretly, that ‘perhaps’ or ‘curious’ might be some Dryad code-word to signal an attack, James spoke up.

“Wait! Ah… wait, Great Dryad, did thou say my son hath a wand of Thestral tail-hair?”

“Why yes Mr. James Potter, that was… certainly one of the two cores which called to young Danny. Indeed, that Thestral had only given one other tail-hair to me… How… peculiar… Yes, certainly peculiar…”

Turning away from Ollivander, Danny started bouncing excitedly. “Yeah dad, when I poured my magic into the divining rod, I felt this huge pull right towards it right away! It was like the rod was
trying to leave my hands!”

“Danny…” James said, frowning, “a Thestral is a very dark creature, so dark that the Death Eaters used it in the last war. It’s the polar opposite of a unicorn, the lightest creature on earth.”

Danny blanched.

James turned to Ollivander, worry overcoming his innate dislike. “Oh Great Dryad, dost thou know of any meaning to that core? Does my son have darkness in his future?”

“DAD!” Danny said, horrified, “you know I’d never–”

“I know son, I know, I’m just… I’m just asking questions. There’s got to be a reasonable explanation for that being your wand core! Wait… ah, Great Dryad, thou did say a moment before this that there was one other who received a core from this same Thestral? Who was it, if I may ask of thee?”

“Mr. James Potter,” he said, somehow having moved to stand right next to Danny, “the tail-hair was given to form… hmm… yes, it was given to form the same wand that caused this… right here…” He pointed to Danny’s scar, as the whole room—even Iris—gasped.

“M-marked as his equal…” James whispered, causing the whole room to look at him in confusion.

At first James looked relieved at that explanation, but very quickly, his face paled, a different type of worry entering his eyes. He shot a glance to Ollivander, and seeing that the Dryad was off in his own world, muttering, he explained his thoughts.

“Danny… I think I understand now. You defeated You-Know-Who, you’re connected to him through fate. If…Dumbledore is right, and he’s still out there”—Iris was the only one who gasped this time—“of course you’re going to have part of your core be from the same animal as his, it’s a sign of your f-fate… To… To defeat him once and for all.” Miriam let out a sob at the words.

“Besides,” he said, voice straining to take on a more carefree tone, “your other core is from an Heart-Eater, and Amit, and that’s one of the lightest creatures around!”

Danny’s shoulders, along with those of the rest of the non-Iris Potters, slumped in relief, as they accepted James’s explanation at face value.

“Well…” Ollivander said, “it seems… I shall now take back young Ms…. Iris?… Yes, young Ms. Iris Potter…”

James spoke up, bowing to Ollivander. “Thank you Great Dryad, for thine explanations, and thine crafting of my son’s wand. Yes, if it is within tine kindness, please craft a wand for my daughter as well…”

Still a little shaken from the rapid emotional her brother had gone through in the shop, Iris followed him without comment.

Hurrying Iris inside and closing the door, Ollivander turned and stared directly at Iris with his vibrantly blue eyes, his gaze suddenly piercing. After about a minute of staring, he turned around abruptly, and motioned for Iris to follow him.

“I wouldn’t listen to what your father had just told you”, he said, talking while he gathered together a series of various material samples, “we dryads really are quite harmless, have been and probably always will be, especially now. I won’t kill you for insulting me, or asking a question, or whatever
nonsense he’ll have just said. Forget all that ‘Great Dryad’ nonsense, and the speaking like you come from an 11th century monastery, I haven’t seen where that comes from, but it really is quite ridiculous. And yes,” he said, not even turning around to see Iris open her mouth “I can indeed ‘see the future’ in a certain sense.”

“H–”

“How? Well Ms. Iris Potter, what you must realize is, the future is not set. It is my duty and curse to see the vast weave and web of fate, and follow along it as the actions of others hurl me to and fro between the strands.”

“Nothing is set in stone, I can merely see all probabilities, for all people, and all time, all I have to do is look in the right place. I can see the timelines where you’re sorted into Gryffindor, just as easily as I can see the ones where you’re sorted into Slytherin.”

His eyes grew glassy for a moment “No, it isn’t ‘peeping’, as you’ll put it, and there’d be no reason to use such language. You really don’t ever change, do you?”

“Oh! Ms. Iris Potter, I apologize, I was lost in the web of time for a moment there. You were saying?”

“W–”

“Why am I being so much more talkative and candid to you than I was with your family? Less ‘flighty’, as you may have put it, if you’d known the word, but didn’t because you decided to go to sleep thirty minutes into your aunt and cousin’s watching of ‘Chicken Run’, instead of forty?”

“Well, Ms. Iris Potter, I’ve been preparing for this encounter with you for quite a while, it’s a rather large node in that weave, as it were. I am not, as your father had liked to be saying, ‘acting mysteriously’, because unlike the majority of my conversations, this is an important one, and so I’ve turned away most of my attention from the future to focus on the time I’m speaking, which for you is right now.”

“…”

“Why you, and not Danny, or someone else? Well, you must understand that there isn’t any force that controls the timelines, there’s no ‘reason’ for things to happen the way they do. Things simply happen, which causes other things to happen, and that’s it.”

“However, if you’re asking as to the effects of this little meeting, I don’t tell you anything about that. All I can say is that certain events will end up happening, rather than others, thanks to you having the type of conversation you are, with the type of so-called ‘creature’ that I am.”

“Be glad,” he added with an expression that could pass for the smile on the face of a member of any other race, “that this isn’t the timeline where Hevfassera is the one crafting your wand, I assure you, you would’ve been more confused with them than you will have been with me. They’re being a bit ‘out of it’, as they’ll say, even by Dryad standards.”

He suddenly straightened. “Now, this is around all I’ll have said, so I do apologize, but I’ll have to go back to acting ‘barmy’, as it were. While it is interesting to meet certain personalities while they’re with me, the infinite future is just so more interestingly vast than anything you could expose me to. Also yes, to answer that question nagging at the back of your head, I indeed am immortal. Well, as close to it as you can get, anyways. Time works very differently for me than it does for you.”
Finishing his speech, his eyes slowly lost their focus, as he went back to staring at whatever far-off place he was staring at before.

Ollivander stood and waited for around five minutes while Iris reviewed and dealt with what had happened, and then turned and grabbed a strange-looking wooden device shaped like a Y. Around two seconds later, Iris blinked rapidly, finally done processing the formerly soft-spoken man’s verbal barrage.

“This”, he said, holding out the device, “is my wand-divining rod. Ms. Iris Potter… please, take hold of it… Pour your magic in. We shall see which wood and core you are drawn to… Oh? Or even wood and cores… perhaps… no… yes?”

Iris reached out and grabbed it from his hand, but paused. “S-sir? I’m not entirely sure how to pour my magic into it.”

“Hmmm…” Ollivander said, looking at her again with that unfocused stare. “How strange… Has there really been no point in your childhood… Ms. Iris Potter, would you say that there was ever a time when you did something unexplainable? No, of course not… This certainly is… certainly is…

Suddenly, his eyes snapped back into focus, seemingly looking away from whatever unfathomably distant object held his attention. “Oh my, this certainly is curious, I wasn’t expecting this at all. Yes, I’ve prepared for this conversation, but only very rarely does it happen. Things are quite certainly being curious now! I haven’t been this present in a conversation since I told young Mr. Riddle that I wouldn’t be this present in a conversation for almost seventy years!”

“It seems as if all your childhood magic was poured into your healing and self-preservation, or otherwise, you’d have already gotten some idea of how it feels to truly channel it. No turning wigs blue, no… oh my accidental apparition? Incredible! Regardless, it isn’t, wasn’t, and never will be, so it seems that burden now falls to me. You had felt it thought, earlier, didn’t you? Yes, you’re being very sensitive to it indeed. Exceptionally strange, really.”

“Yes Ms. Potter,” he said, turning around, cutting off the half-formed question in Iris’s head, “I indeed could know everything about you, including all the sordid details of your childhood, but you are only one mage, and my focus is not nearly so wide as to encompass even a whole country’s worth of lives, let alone a whole earth’s. Even if it was, I could do nothing for you, so I will not apologize.”

“Now, let us find your magic together, and teach you how to access your powerful core inside you! This is a rather old technique, I think, and…”—his eyes unfocused for a second—“yes it is indeed the technique that Merlin himself used to come into communion with his magic. You’ll like that, I know, you’ll always have liked Merlin. Sometimes, most likely after this, you’ll have also liked Morgana.”

He held out a knife. “Now, I’d like you to let a small pool of your blood fall into this bowl. Don’t worry, you most likely don’t bleed out. Now, I’d like you to take a bit of myrrh”—his arm extended with a cracking sound, and he grabbed a pile of leaves he’d placed on a shelf a few feet away—“and burn it, and then place it in the blood. Once you do that, all you need to is meditating. A Buddhist monk came to your church when you were five and taught you how, if you can remember.”

Iris, slightly more able to cope with the suddenly-cheerful Dryad’s wave of information, did as he said, still curious as to the purpose. Wait, she remembered something, didn’t James say that blood magi—”

“Oh yes, it is indeed classified as ‘dark magic’ by the ministry and mages like your father, Ms. Iris
Potter, but don’t let that worry you. You could find in the coming months that all that ‘dark magic’ talk is nothing more than the beliefs of a particular philosophical position, and not any sort of natural or magical law. In fact, after this, you’re now almost certain to. Also, will you be accepting my offer to leave the honorific on your name? Yes? Excellent then, Iris Potter.”

“I won’t tell you much, that would up to your charming friend and your mentor, but I’ll say that my wand-divining rod was created using a ritual, a ‘complex’ one, as he’ll say. Additionally, all my wands, even those for the Newest of New Mages, are created using blood as a binder, and the ministry doesn’t care one whit, because it’s useful. Rituals are by far the oldest, most versatile, and most powerful form of magic: there are very few things even the weakest of mages could not design a ritual for, if the sacrifice was appropriate.”

“And in the rare case that you do care about the legal ramifications, they also don’t apply to me. As a dryad, I’m really the only source that most mages have for their wands, so I could get away with almost anything, and after this most likely will, depending on the Southeast Asian political climate of 2274.”

“Wait, you can see that far into–”

“Oh-ho! That one’s rare! Yes, I can indeed, but no, I cannot change it. Only mages who lack the blessing and curse of the sight, Iris Potter, think of the future as being subject to change based on the —wait sorry, they don’t end up doing that hand gesture to mean sarcasm—‘free will’ of its occupants. I don’t do something different because I haven’t done it; I can only do what I’ve already done. It’ll always be that simple.”

“Now Iris Potter, you’re most likely ready to finish talking and find your magic, so on to the ritual! Take the bit of myrrh you have, and burn it. Excellent! Wait sorry…”

Iris burned the myrrh, using a muggle lighter that was lying on the table right next to her.

“…Excellent! Now, focus on the blood you pooled, focus on the life you can feel flowing inside of it.”

Iris closed her eyes, letting the scent of the burning Myrrh. She thought she could feel what the Dryad was talking about, she felt the blood was… tingly, for lack of a better term.

Ollivander’s tone began to take on a dulcet, soothing quality, relaxing Iris. “Focus on that life in your veins. Don’t focus on your personality, or your physical looks, or even your core beliefs, just try to find that same living energy within yourself.”

Iris could definitely feel it now. That pool of blood felt electric, like would be shocked just by touching it. She’d never felt anything full of more energy in her whole life.

“Focus further, downward, past even the force and direction given to your magic by your soul, down to the churning, purposeless magic within you.”

Iris thought she could feel it within her, the vague stirrings of a tingle on her skin, making her hairs stand on end: it felt a lot like the pool of blood felt. Was this it? Did she do it?

“Focus on the life you can feel thrumming through your veins, the spirit swirling in your chest. Find that energy and dive into it, surround yourself in your magic, bring it up through your whole being.”

Iris tried to imagine swimming in the tingling sensation, trying to go deeper and deeper to find the source. She felt it getting quite a bit stronger, now, she could swear her hair was standing on end. Was this it? Wait, she was starting to feel like it was rushing up to her, like something was—
Oh.

Oh.

This felt good.

Iris felt strong, she felt powerful, she felt free. She felt like she understood every single part of herself, and could harness it for whatever she needed to do. Right then, Iris’s hatred for James Potter truly crystalized. He tried to keep her from this incredible force, this singing in her blood? She’d show him, she’d become the best mage he’d ever seen, embracing this incredible feeling and letting it propel her up past Privet Drive, past Potter Manor, even past the clouds themselves!

With this vibrant force at the center of her being, she could do anything! She felt like she could run faster than the fastest muggle racer, climb higher than the greatest mountaineer! She could bore through Mt. Everest, change the flow of the amazon with nothing but her will! She could turn oceans into deserts, she could swap around the continents, she could—"

“...otter, Iris Potter, come back to me. You’ll probably have been feeling it now, you can—”

“Holy SHIT!”

“...”

“...yes, that does occasionally happen.”

Iris just realized what she said, and who she said it to, and her face and hair turned a bright, fire-engine red.

“I-I mea—”

“Yes, it’s always rather intense your first time, isn’t it? You have powerful magic. To answer your question, my dear, that is your magical core, reaching out to you for the first time. You’ll most likely ask your mentor about that state, and you’ll learn that returning to it, under the right conditions, can give you some powerful advantages. Yes, you will, won’t you”

“Also,” he said, “I know you’re thinking that’s a rush, but you’ll probably be seeing otherwise later, almost certainly. I don’t say if it’s soon or not, but it almost certainly will happen... Yes, this one’s turning out to be quite good!”

“Wh—”

“Like I said Iris Potter, you’ve had powerful magic. That’s all I’ve said on that, usually, so let’s not ‘shoot into the brown’, as they’d said, and call a wand together for you.”

Learning from experience, Iris didn’t speak this time, and just thought about what she could have said, if she’d wanted to.

“Being smarmy could serve you well, Iris Potter, but I don’t appreciate it currently. Yes though, you’d have been absolutely correct, just call up that feeling again and pour it into my divining rod. Preferably not as intense as the last time though, or else you’d have never gotten anything done. And it’s unlikely, but if you end up curious, I call it my divining rod because it’s made up of the wood from my body. And no, that would’ve been incorrect, this isn’t it. Dryads keep our true bodies elsewhere. And it’s very unlikely, but if you do wish to know my true body’s birthday so you could
buy me a present, don’t bother, I have no need for gifts.”

Bemused, starting to find the old mage’s quirks more than a little bit charming, Iris did as he suggested, careful not to dive into her core like she did last time.

Almost immediately, Iris felt the rod tugging at her hands, almost jumping out of them. Her previous excitement at finally getting a wand had returned, and she scampered in the direction she felt the pull from, holding the divining rod out in front of her as far as her arms could stretch.

The first item she came across was a pure white hair, that almost seemed to shine, even in the dim light of the shop. Completely enraptured, she very carefully picked it up, and handed it to Ollivander.

“What… what is this. It’s beautiful…”

“Ah yes Iris Potter, that’s almost always it. Unicorn tail hair, a material symbolizing healing, personal development, inner strength, and freedom. I believe that it will suit you well.”

“Now,” he said, holding up a small bowl, “place it here, and go find your next material.”

Placing the tail hair down with incredible care, Iris picked up the divining rod again, and felt it give a jerk in a different direction, to a sample placed only a few slots away from the tail hair, a finely-crushed beige powder that seemed to glint with a hidden power.

“Ah, yes, the powdered sphynx claw, a rather curious material. It is the symbol of both the keeping and uncovering of secrets, as well as wisdom, cunning, and hard-earned truth. I suspected that this would be happening, here is truly curious indeed, especially after this!”

Iris once again placed the jar of powder into the bowl, and grabbed the divining rod, eager to find her wood and complete her wand. She was once again pulled to a sample only a few sections away from the Sphynx Claw, one of the only woods on that shelf. Picking it up, she felt a tingle of warmth in her fingers, as she eagerly handed it over to be formed into a wand.

“Ah yes, here we are, you’ve found the pine. Pine is a curious wood, working well with the unicorn hair. Alone, it symbolizes new beginnings, growth, healing, and protection, and the symbology of the unicorn hair only amplifies those. A most fascinating wand indeed, truly one appropriate for one such as yourself!”

“So, uh… what next? How long will it take to make my wand?”

“Only a few minutes Iris Potter, but first, I’ll need some of your blood to bind the wand together, no more than a small cupful. Here you go, just like the meditation.”

Guiding her still-weeping palm over the small jar Ollivander had held out, Iris filled the jar almost to the top, until it was suddenly yanked away, as Ollivander pulled out a wand, and waved it over her palm in a lazy swish. Fascinated, Iris watched as her flesh mended together, and her blood dried up, until it looked as if she’d never been damaged.

“Will… will I ever learn to do that, Mr. Ollivander?”

“Hmm… No, I’m afraid I don’t say, I’m sorry.”

Iris was a little disappointed.

“Now Iris Potter, while this conversation has certainly been interesting, you’ll excuse me as I turn my gaze back to the weave of fate, and craft your wand…. Hmm… yes, curious…”
His muttering speech patterns returned, Ollivander hurried back through a door Iris hadn’t seen before, one that looked to be made of solid iron. Before Iris could look inside the room, he closed and locked the door with the loud clang of a deadbolt falling into place.

A minute later, Iris felt that same surge she had felt when Danny was getting his wand crafted, of what she now recognized to be powerful magic. A minute after that, and Ollivander pried open the heavy iron door, holding a gleaming new wand on a cloth, made from the same pine wood she had picked out.

“Here you are… Iris Potter… your wand… Take it now, for you may bind it to yourself… yes, like all the others, you will be the first to hold this wand, it’s true wielder…”

Mentally rolling her eyes at what she now knew was Ollivander ignoring her, Iris approached him where he stood, muttering, and slowly reached out for her wand.

She picked it up reverently, and felt a powerful shock run through her whole body, as the wand seemed so send a jolt straight down into Iris’s core. It wasn’t nearly as intense as her dive down into her raw magic, but she could still feel the echo of that same thrilling power, making her hair stand on end, ready to be called upon.

Smiling widely at the heady feeling, Iris made her way out of the back room, and to her waiting family, who all seemed bored out of their minds.

“Finished, Iris honey?” Miriam asked, smoothing down her dress as she stood up.

Before Iris could answer, Ollivander spoke up. “Yes, you are finished… now… Iris Potter… A curious wand indeed…”

The whole family, minus Iris, blanched, remembering what happened with Danny’s wand.

“O-oh Great Dryad, what strikes thine endless curiosity, if I may enquire of thee?” James said, mentally preparing himself for some great revelation.

“Oh, Mr. James Potter… yes well… Pine with unicorn tail-hair and sphynx claw… a combination for growth, healing, wisdom, and secrets… it is truly the wand of one bound for interesting times… one destined for great deeds…”

Relaxing at the lack of any materials from a ‘dark creature’ or connections to Voldemort, James, turned to Iris, smile only slightly forced. “Ya’ hear that Iris, you’re gonna be a great healer some day! Or maybe even a researcher, or an unspeakable, with the whole “uncovering secrets” thing!”

“Yes,” Miriam added, “I have sphynx in my wand too, and it’s a very good thing! Seems like we’re pretty similar people!”

Iris withheld a grimace.

“Yes… truly, there are those great things out there… they could be there for you… Iris Potter…”

Stifling a shiver, James pulled out his coin-purse, and moved towards the register. “How much do I owe thee for these wands, Great Dryad?”

“Ah yes… hmm… oh, Mr. James Potter… you owe thirty galleons… never more, never less…”

Reaching into his purse and paying, James dragged his family out of the shop as quickly as he could.
“Dryads, my god—sorry honey—my gosh! Did anyone else feel scared? If they weren’t the only way to get wands, I’d say we shove them all off to some dark corner of the world and forget about them!”

Beside him, Danny nodded eagerly, while Miriam frowned.

“Honey, you know…”

“Yeah, yeah, natural hierarchy and all that. Still doesn’t mean they’re not creepy as all get out!”

Idly curious, Iris turned to Danny. “So how was Mr. Ollivander with you?”

A slight shiver ran through Danny’s body. “It’s just like dad said. Facing a dryad is like staring down a real creepy and mysterious lion. It barley said anything, and just kept looking at me with those weird glassy eyes, saying how ‘curious’ I was. I swear, it looked like it was about to eat me. What about you?”

“Oh yeah,” Iris said, hiding a smile, “it was the same. Dad was right, dryads are real creeps.” Iris didn’t know why, but she really liked the thought of her meriting the confusing Dryad’s full attention, when her brother barley merited only a glance away from the webs of fate.

Chapter End Notes

Well, we’re finally through with the first trip to Diagon. I had originally planned for the Alley to only be one chapter (and one of the shorter ones at that), but when I started writing, I just couldn’t stop. There was so much stuff I could do to set things up for later chapters!

Don’t worry guys, Iris will meet her friends soon, it’s coming!

—

About the “out-of-place” comment. Diagon Alley in my universe is designed with the architecture of a wide Victorian street: you can find the model I’m using on my profile.

—

I’ve always liked the custom, personal feel of many of the wand-creation scenes in Powerful!Harry fanfiction, so I wanted to make that the default wand-making method in my fic.

—

I like to imagine my Ollivander as a 13 y/o playing X-Box, giving half-coherent responses when their mom asks them to clean the kitchen.

If you want more information on Dryads, look into the guide to sacrifices on my profile, at the sections for True Dryad-Wood and Dryad Shell-Wood. Dryads aren’t beasts, they’re just another race of mages, so you won’t find them in the Bestiary.

—

If you’re wondering what happens in Southeast Asia in 2274, it involves Ollivander trying to focus on controlling too many shell-bodies at once, and so getting distracted when designing the ritual to create a new wand-diviner. He ends up accidentally using the entire Singaporean island of Pulau Ubin as a sacrifice, sinking it, and reforming it into a massive volcano that continually spurts out molten centaur-blood instead of magma.

—
Remember from Chapter 2, Voldemort didn’t actually give Danny his scar in this universe, Dumbledore did. Yes, Ollivander (obviously) knows this, he just didn’t see himself correcting them. That was something that would be revealed on its own.

The only thing that matters when making a wand is the symbolism of the parts, not the physical sources of the parts themselves, so there’s no mysterious higher reason that Danny and Dumbledore have tail-hairs from the same Thestral. It isn’t some sign of fate, it’s just that Thestral tail-hair is a rare wand core, and Ollivander only had two in stock. The only “connection” between Danny and Dumbledore is that they’re both have incredibly high opinions of themselves.

—

Yes, the word “flighty” is indeed used by Mel Gibson’s character between the thirty and forty minute-marks of the movie ‘Chicken Run’. 35 minutes and 47 seconds in, to be exact. I didn’t watch the movie if you’re wondering, I used google to find a script with the word "flighty" in it, and then check the subtitle file for the time.

—

The sensations Iris describes here are different from the ones Lily describes in Chapter 2, that’s because Iris was reaching for her own magic, while Lily was connecting to the Wild Magic of the earth through her pagan ritual.
Chapter Summary

Finally, Hogwarts... express.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On August first, Miriam was sobbing on the platform, clinging to Danny in a crushing hug.

“I don’t even know what’s happening to me, I’m so sorry Danny, I just... I just can't believe my baby’s finally going off to Hogwarts!”

“Oh, and Iris! I know it’s only been months, but it feels like forever! It’s so awful that just after we’ve finally come together as a family, you and Danny are sent off!”

Chuckling, James wiped at his own wet eyes, and turned to Danny.

“I’m not gonna get all hysterical and womanly like your mother, but yeah, I’m... I’m sad to see you go, Danny. You too Iris, I can’t wait for you to come stay with us over winter break.”

“Just remember”, James said, gripping his son’s shoulders, “when you get to school, don’t hesitate to give Snivellus hell for me. I’ve heard he’s teaching potions now, so I’m sure you’ll get plenty of chances. He’s still the gittiest of gits, an awful dark wizard, so you have my Marauder’s approval to use whatever pranks necessary to get one over on him!”

“And make sure”, he said, turning to Iris with a more serious tone, “that you both raise hell whenever they try to bully muggleborns, or threaten to use dark magic. It’s gonna be you’re your duties to keep the school safe from the dark, so don’t hesitate to fight back against evil.”

Danny, eyes shining, smiled widely at his father’s words.

“You know it dad, the snakes won’t know what hit ‘em! I’ll make sure to do you, Uncle Sirius, and Uncle Remus proud! We beat the snakes in the garden of Eden, and we’ll beat ‘em again now!”

Smiling, James ruffled his son’s hair, and gently pushed him towards the train.

“Go on kids, it’s time for the start of the greatest adventure of your lives! Make friends, have fun, don’t slack on your homework, and above all... don’t get caught!”

Miriam rolled her eyes with a fond smile. “What your father meant to say, dears, was that you should do your very best in your studies, and make sure to form strong friendships that will last a lifetime. And you most certainly will not get caught, because I don’t want to hear of your pranking in the first place!”

“Yes mum...” Danny said, winking at an amused James.

“Boys, honestly!”
“Sorry dear…”

“Well, whatever you end up doing at Hogwarts Danny dear—and you too Iris—just remember to treasure the experience. Hogwarts is going to be the greatest seven years of your life, and I don’t want you to waste a moment! Now go on!”

She gently pushed Danny and Iris towards the train, and waved with a renewed wave of tears as they boarded one of the carriages.

“Have fun dears, and don’t forget to write! I want a letter a week, now, remember!”

“Of course mum, I’d never forget to write you! You’re… well, you’re my mum!”

“C’mon Iris”, he said, turning away from his happily crying mother, “let’s go find Ron. I can’t wait to start Hogwarts, this is so exciting!”

Iris was bored out of her mind.

Honestly, Danny and Ron had been talking about Quidditch for the past hour, nonstop.

“Danny you heard about that new Bulgarian player Krum, right? I hear they won’t let him play in the Hellenic Quidditch League because he’d too young, so he’s transferring here!”

“Yeah Ron, I heard about him, my Dad’s friends with Betelgeuse St. Pierre, he said that Krum has more potential than any seeker he’d ever seen, even more than me! But the thing is Krum’s from Durmstrang, they say they teach dark magic there you know? I think he’s probably using some dark spell to cheat, there isn’t any way someone could be that good naturally!”

“Nah mate, you’re mental! They’d never teach dark magic at a school that big, he’s just that good! Wait, d’yo mean Betelgeuse St. Pierre that owns the Antwerp Ale-Makers? That’s wicked!”

“I’m sorry…” Iris spoke up, “but what’s Durmstrang?”

“Oh!” Ron said, “it’s the elite school for Hellenia, the Greek Sprachbund. Some people say they teach dark magic there, but because of how hush-hush it is, no one really knows…”

“Oh, thank you…”

“…”

“…”

“…So, you were raised by muggles?”

Iris nodded.

Ron started bouncing excitedly in his seat. “Wow, that must have been brilliant! Did you get to watch the telly-visioner? Oh, did you get to see movers? I only went to the movers once, with my dad, but it was incredible! God, I’m so bloody jealous!”

“Yeah…” Iris said, hiding her incredulity behind her Dursley-face. “It was certainly… different”

Ron waited, obviously expecting a more detailed response. Not finding one, he turned to Danny with a brief scowl, and restarted their chat on the merits of various Quidditch leagues.
After the debate had lasted for around twenty minutes, with neither of them ever looking in her direction, Iris began to question her choice to sit with her brother. Coming to a decision, she stood up and opened the compartment door.

“Iris, where are you going?” Danny asked, turning away from the wildly gesturing Ron.

Shrinking slightly at the question, Iris had to straighten her shoulders and remind herself that this wasn’t the Dursleys, and that she wouldn’t be locked in her cupboard for disobedience. “I—I’m just going to check out the rest of the train, try and find some more friends.”

“Oh…” Danny said, deflating, “I guess that’s alright, but as long as you sit with Ron and I at the feast!”

“Yeah… of course. I’ll sit with you two if I get into Gryffindor” she said, walking out the door to Ron’s slightly angry expression.

“Wait what do you mean ‘if’?” said Ron. “You’re a Potter, of course you’ll be going to Gryffindor! You’re not some sorta Ravenclaw bookworm, are you?”

Danny turned to look at Ron with a slightly angry expression. “Ron, you know that’s not true. Gryffindor may be the best house, but Marietta’s in Ravenclaw, and she’s plenty brave and stuff.”

“Well yeah” Ron added, “but Marietta’s a bookworm.”

Unable to come up with a response, Danny turned to Iris, a worried gleam entering his eyes. “Hey, just promise me that you’ll come and find us if any Slytherins start bullying you, alright? They’re all dark wizards or dark creatures, so they don’t like our family much.”

“Of course” Iris agreed absently. She figured that she might as well attempt to recover some of her lost face, “I’ll make sure that none of the snakes messes with the Potter honor.”

“See!” Danny said, looking at Ron smugly, “I told you!”

With that, Iris left the carriage, hearing Ron’s distant complaints. “Hey mate don’t take this the wrong way, but your sister’s kinda mental… I mean really, why’s she so quiet all the time, it’s unnatural!”

She moved out of earshot before hearing Danny’s response.

After walking for a minute or two, Iris’s eyes were caught by a glimpse of shiny white hair through green and silver curtains.

She knocked on the door hesitantly.

“Yes?” the blonde boy answered in Latin, opening the door.

Next to the blonde boy sat a tall, lanky boy with brown hair and glowing brown eyes, who was looking at Iris with a guarded expression. A little ways away from him sat two people entwined in a familiar, intimate embrace; there was a bored-looking black boy with bright silver hair, and grey eyes that seemed to burn with an inner fire, who was curled around a beautiful, pale, willowy girl that was looking at Iris with an almost hungry interest.

“Do… do you mind if I sit with all of you?”

Looking at the pale girl, who nodded, the blonde boy shrugged his shoulders. “Sure, come one in.
We still have space for two more, so there’s room.”

Once Iris had gotten settled in, the tall brunette spoke up. “Hi, I’m Theo Nott. This is Draco Malfoy”, he gestured at the blonde boy, “and those lovebirds over there are Dante and Blaise Zabini”

The pale girl spoke up “oh stop Theo, you make it sound like we’re related… that’s Draco’s thing.”

“Oh yeah? Well at least I’m never gonna be tied down like you, with your…”

Iris ignored the byplay, trying to place where she’d heard Draco’s name before. That’s it! “Malfoy” was one of the names James had said belonged to the “dark and dangerous” families that worked against him!

Mentally shrugging, Iris decided that if James hated his family, they couldn’t be all bad.

“So,” the handsome dark-skinned boy, Dante, asked, as Blaise and Draco continued to bicker “who are you?”

“My name is Iris… Iris Potter”.

Immediately, all the noise in the compartment ceased.

“Iris… Potter?” Draco asked warily.

“Yeah…” she said, trailing off as the rest of the compartment stared, her hair shifting to a dull brown.

The pale girl turned to Iris, her gaze calculating. “I wasn’t aware that the Potters had a third daughter, let alone one in the same year as the ‘Boy Who Lived’.”

“Oh”, Iris said, “I didn’t… well, I’m Danny’s twin, but didn’t grow up with them. They thought I was a squib.”

“Potter…” Dante said, “you do realize that our families and yours aren’t exactly the most… amiable, don’t you?”

“Well, I don’t know anything about that. I was raised with m– muggles, I only learned about magic a few months ago.”

“Wait,” Draco cut in, “you’re a Potter, and you grew up with mu– muggles?”

When Iris cocked her head, Theo clarified. “They’re a noble family, Iris, it’s surprising that they’d let someone else raise their child like that, let alone a group of… muggles”.

When she nodded, Draco’s face turned even paler. “What… what was it like? Did they try to tie you down and examine you? Did they cut you open? That’s what my dad said would happen if the mud– muggles ever got wind of magic.”

Iris giggled and shook her head. “No, nothing like that. But I did see a cool medical examination on the telly once, when Aunt Petunia didn’t know I was watching.”

“But it couldn’t have been pleasant, could it?” Draco continued. “Did they do all sorts of awful stuff to you because you had magic?”

Iris grimaced. “I mean… you’re not wrong. I just don’t like to talk about it. All I’ll say is that, yes, they… they weren’t very kind to me, and leave it at that. Growing up with mu– muggles isn’t a part of my life I like talking about.”
Draco deflated, pity entering his eyes. “Oh Merlin, I’m so sorry Potter, I wasn’t thinking and it just slipped out.”

“Draco, enough.” Blaise spoke up for the first time, her cool tone silencing the room, and getting a mild look of awe from Iris. “We all know how awful muggles are, and we shouldn’t be forcing someone who’s experienced that firsthand to relive it.”

“And Potter,” she turned, “you’re among… like-minded people now, so don’t hesitate to call the muds what they are. Also P— Iris… feel free to use our first names, if you’d like. I have a feeling you’ll be a much more agreeable Potter than the ones we’re used to.”

Iris relaxed minutely. “That’s… that’s good to know, and thank you, I’m honored. You guys are all Rells then?”

“Yeah,” Draco said, “well I mean, at least our families our, but I mean I agree with all their—”

“However”, Blaise cut Draco off, ignoring their irritated scowl, “I will admit that I am curious as to why your… illustrious family allowed this to go on? The Potters are many things, but I had not thought child neglecters—or abusers, if I’m reading your tone right—to be one of them.”

“Well,” Iris said, attempting a casual façade, “apparently they didn’t really know what was going on.”

As Blaise quirked an eyebrow, and the others scoffed their disbelief, she felt her mask slipping.

“Yes apparently,” she said, her mask breaking, “Dumbledore told everyone I was a squib, so they sent me off to live with my relatives.”

She was growing angrier and more impassioned by the second, losing herself to her rage. Maybe there was more of James Potter in her than she thought?

“They never even checked up on me, not once! They were sitting over here all basking in their magic, while I was cut off from it, living with a bunch of abusive muds! and constantly beaten because Vernon couldn’t handle someone getting promoted over him! I hadn’t met a single person in my life who didn’t glare at me until James showed up on my doorstep!”

“He basically told me that not only was my family extremely wealthy, and lived all posh in a fucking manor, but my twin brother was one of the most famous celebrities in the world! Honestly, how are you supposed to react to that? ‘Sorry dear, I know you’ve lived in a cupboard for your whole life as a penniless orphan, wishing desperately that your parents would come and take you away, but surprise! Your father was alive, he just didn’t want you! Also, he’s a rich and famous celebrity!’ I mean for god’s sake my Hogwarts letter read ‘The Cupboard Under the Stairs’, but because I’m not their precious ‘Boy Who Lived’, it didn’t even matter!”

“…”

Iris came down from her rant, paling as she realized how out of control she’d gotten.

“You’re… you’re not going to tell them I said that, right? I mean, if they knew how I felt about them, they’d kick me out of the magical world, and magic is just so wonderful, and—”

“Relax, darling,” Blaise spoke up again, hand patting Iris’s leg. “None of us like the Potters very much, and none of us have those silly ideas about the type of people you grew up with. I assure you, we understand your feelings completely.”
Still blushing down to the roots of her hair, literally so, due to her changeling gift, Iris began to look around the compartment in the awkward silence that followed her outburst.

“So… Iris…” Dante spoke up for the first time. “Do you know how to play exploding snap?”

For the next hour or so, Iris’s yearmates taught her how to play a variety of magical games, from exploding snap to chocolate frog racing. Gradually thought, the conversation switched back to more serious subjects, as the four future Slytherins began to explain the various magical races and cultures Iris would encounter at Hogwarts.

“Wait”, Iris squeaked, “Blaise… you’re… you’re a… you’re a vampire?!”

“Why, is there something wrong with that?” While Blaise’s tone was self-assured, and her smirk was firmly in place, the whole compartment could hear just the slightest amount of hurt enter her voice.

Iris’s began to grow distressed, horrified at the thought of losing one of her first real friends. “Oh no I mean you’re really nice and cool and pretty and all I was just wondering ‘cause like I watched a movie once with vampires and they were all gross and evil and stuff and James was talking and said the same thing and—” she said, rapid-fire, waving her arms around wildly.

Blaise’s smile became just a little bit more forced, as Iris grew more and more frantic, trying to apologize for her unintentionally offensive statement.

Dante cut Iris off, looking at Blaise. “Those stereotypes are well-known to vampires, Iris, and they can be… distressing. Many people in our society, like your father, believe similar things. That vampires are leeches on sorcerers, or are seductive monsters that entrap unwitting young mages to suck their blood dry.”

At Dante’s words, Blaise began to relax a little, her customary smirk regaining its self-assuredness. “My bond-mate is correct, darling. While I won’t deny that we vampires can be quite… seductive”—Iris squeaked, she could swear that Blaise was looking directly at her when she said that!—“all those nasty stereotypes are completely fictional, designed to discredit us and make us seem monstrous.”

“Well then…” Iris asked, calming down, “could you tell me what vampires are really like then? And wait, ‘bond-mate’?”

Blaise turned to Dante, her expression adoring. “Well, I suppose that’s as good a place to start as any.”

“You see, Iris, vampires do have to drink blood to survive, but”, she snarled, “it is nothing like the rape that Nics say feeding is.”

She continued, composing her expression. “Feeding, for vampires, is an incredibly intimate experience. It’s a raw connection of magic, love, and emotion, that brings us closer to the person we feed on, and helps our love for them grow. When a vampire is feeding on someone, we can literally feel the emotions they feel, as if they were happening to us.”

“While this makes feeding on someone in love with you”, she smirked at Dante, “a simply indescribable experience, it also means that the type of violent attacks that Nics accuse us of would be like poison. I mean, imagine if you were kissing someone, and instead of love and affection, all you felt was fear and hate. Does that sound like a pleasant experience to you?”

Iris began nodding along around halfway through Blaise’s explanation, the tension that had built up since the revelation slowly dissipating. “Wait, that doesn’t explain what a bond-mate is”, she
realized, looking between Blaise and Dante.

“Patience, Iris”, Blaise said, chiding. “A bondmate is a lot like a spouse for sorcerers. When we feed on someone who we care for three times, with the intention to bond, a powerful connection is formed, making that person a ‘bond-mate’. This connection is the vampiric equivalent to a marriage, and emphasizes the vampire’s feelings of love and protectiveness towards the bond-mate, and the bond-mate’s feelings of affection and security towards the vampire.”

“So it modifies your mind?” Iris asked.

“Oh no, nothing at all that crass” Blaise said, horrified. “What you have to understand is, the bond for a bond-mate can only form if those feelings already exist. They can only emphasize what’s there, not create new feeling out of nothing.”

“I promise”, she chuckled, “there’s no rogue vampire in London going around and forming a harem of hypnotized love-slaves. That type of thing only exists in propaganda.”

“Oh…” Iris said, mollified. “Wait, you and Dante are already married? You’re so young!”

The whole compartment chucked at that. “What you have to realize”, Dante said, “is that the age of marriage is very different depending on what race you talk about. Some, like Vampires, marry incredibly young, while others, like the Kinnara Fae, will only marry after knowing their partner for over fifty years. Besides sexuality, it might be the most variable thing between various magical cultures.”

“Wait, sexuality? Are you saying you’re a… you know…”

“A what?”

“A… you know a lesbian.”

“Well”, Blaise said as she smirked, “that would make my relationship with Dante quite problematic, now wouldn’t it?”

Iris breathed out, her blush receding.

“Although, if you’re asking if I’d take a female partner to bed, the answer is… absolutely”

Iris squeaked, and drew into herself, her hair once again turning bright red at Blaise’s innuendo-filled look.

Taking pity on Iris, Theo spoke up; “Basically Iris”, he said, “unlike the muds, most magical races have some sort of defined sexuality, with very few people outside of it. A lot of hardcore Nics and more religious Christians don’t like to acknowledge that they don’t exactly have a ‘righteous Christian sexuality’, but most of the more lenient and neutral ones generally do, because of how pretty much ubiquitous it is.”

“Vampires, like sorcerers, almost all have a more traditional sexuality, they’ll form relationships with people regardless of their gender. Both vampires and sorcerers will also form polyamorous relationships—that is, relationships with multiple participants—but only vampires actually marry into them.”

Draco interjected, “for some, like veela”, they gestured vaguely in their own direction, “the Christian ideas of ‘heterosexuality’ or ‘homosexuality’ don’t even make sense, because we’re a species with only one gender. You don’t have to say ‘Mr.’ or ‘Ms.’ with us, by the way, or anything.”
To say Iris was shocked would be an understatement. Living with the Dursleys, whose hatred for all things “unnatural” extended far beyond magic, she had never really had any exposure to gay people beyond Vernon’s slur-filled Sunday rants. To find out that not only were the majority of her new acquaintances gay, but the majority of her new world? It was a bit much to handle. And what was this about only having one gender?

She stared at Theo, “a-are you saying that you like men and women?”

“Well yeah, I like everyone. I haven’t dated anyone yet”, his cheeks became tinted with the slightest blush, “but I wouldn’t be opposed to dating anyone, no matter what they are.”

“You should understand this Iris,” Dante said, “as a changeling, you’re not just guaranteed to be attracted to every gender, but to be every gender.” He chuckled, “that’s gotta make for a confusing puberty.”

Iris reared back, horrified. She may not have liked Vernon or his hatred, but his ideas had been pounded into her head through sheer repetition. “A-ARE YOU SAYING”, she paused and lowered her voice, “are you saying that I… I, y-y’know, like girls??”

“Well”, Blaise said, frowning, “not necessarily. There have of course been cases where a changeling is only attracted to one type of person, but they’re incredibly rare.”

“Well,” Iris said, calming, “th-that’s me then, I g-guess I must just be that rare type. I am not attracted to girls or anything. I mean not that there’s anything wrong with a girl being attracted to girls” she quickly clarified, turning to a smirking Blaise, “but that’s just not me.”

Turning to Draco, even as she could hear Dante quietly curse “those damn muds” under his breath, she changed the subject. “So, Draco, you said you were a veela? What’s that?”

Still confused and concerned from Iris’s reaction to their assumptions, Draco was glad to have an opportunity to change the subject.

“Well,” they said, puffing up slightly in racial pride, “Veela are a type of Fae, with a really long and awesome history. Like I said earlier, we only really have one gender, but we have this thing called an ‘allure’ which pulls in people who are attracted to us, and pretty androgynous appearances that a lot of those Christian heterosexual men find appealing, so most people on your father’s side of the political court consider us women.”

“Fae? Allure?”

“Yeah! The Fae are this really broad category of a bunch of different races that all share a government and the ability to use elemental magic. Elemental magic basically just lets you manipulate an element without spells.”

They paused, and conjured fire in the palm of their hand to Iris’s shocked gasp. The rest of the compartment looked at her with momentary wariness, but then seemed to calm once nothing happened.

“As for the ‘allure’, it’s kinda like a magic field that we can turn on to attract people who are normally attracted to us. It doesn’t like, make them fall in love with us don’t worry”, Draco said, remembering Iris’s earlier reaction to Vampiric bonding, “it just makes them want to impress us and stuff.”

Iris shrunk back, a little uncomfortable. “Well, how do I know you’re not using it on me or anything? I mean you’re not… bad looking, so how do I know that you’re not trying to make me do stuff for
you?"

Draco reared back, their face contorting in anger. “I would NEVER do something like that. How dare you~”

Blaise cut Draco off before they could start an argument. “Iris dear, the ‘allure’ isn’t really any different from the species-gifts any other race has. For most Veela, the allure is an important part of their relationships and mating customs; they’d never even consider using it for an underhanded purpose like that. And besides, an allure of any race which possesses one isn’t some sort of mind-control, it can’t convince anyone to do something they wouldn’t already be inclined to do.”

“You’re a changeling,” she continued, “and the ability to shift to look like any sorcerer in the world could let you do a lot of awful things. Would you like it if I asked you if you were just getting to know me so that you could imitate me later, and commit a crime using my face?”

“No!” Iris said, looking horrified, “that’s ridiculous!”

“So then you understand why saying something like that would really offend Draco, now don’t you?”

“Yeah…” Iris said. She turned to Draco. “Hey, Draco, I’m sorry. You know I’m… I’m new to magic, and I really do love it, but sometimes I don’t know what I’m saying. I really didn’t mean to offend you, I promise, you’re one of the first wizards”—“mages, dear” Blaise absently corrected—“one of the first mages that I’ve met that I actually get along with. Please forgive me?”

Draco moved away from the corner they were fuming in, their angry expression breaking at the sight of Iris’s broken face. “Yeah… I guess that’s alright. Just make sure you learn from your mistakes, and don’t ask something like that again. It’s just… with your family being who they are, hearing something like that from your mouth sounds like the shit I’ve been hearing my entire life from you Father and his friends.”

Iris’s earnest expression took on the slightest coloring of rage. “I promise you Draco, the very last thing I want is to be like my father.”

She turned to the rest of the compartment. “That goes for all of you guys. If I ever do something stupid that makes me sound like James, just let me know, alright? I promise, I didn’t mean anything by it, I just didn’t grow up around mages like you all did.”

“We understand dear”, Blaise said, lightly brushing Iris’s arm, causing Iris to breathe in sharply, “coming into your rightful heritage must be so hard for you.”

“For what it’s worth”, Dante piped up with a smirk, “I’m a wyvern, which means if I want to, I can turn into a great big flying lizard with two legs and fiery breath.”

“Oh hush now Dante, your draconic form can’t be more than five feet long.”

She turned to Iris, smirking wickedly: “You do know how boys like to exaggerate their sizes to impress us ladies.”

With that, the whole compartment laughed, and the tension bled out of the air as the conversation moved onto lighter topics.

Around three hours later, Iris turned away from a conversation with Draco about different magical sports, and checked the time. “Sorry guys, but I have to go, I left my luggage in my brother’s car”
“Oh no, stay!” Draco said, an almost whining note in his voice. “I was just about to tell you about Basajaun Wild Hunts! That’s where the muds got the Yeti from, you know.”

Blaise cut him off, “Don’t be a bore, Draco, I’m sure that Iris has heard enough about sports to last her the month.” Turning to Iris, she continued, “it’s a shame to see you go, darling, we have to get together again some time. If you get into Slytherin, you simply must sit with us at the feast! We’ll all be sitting near each other, so you can see everyone again.”

“Slytherin?” Iris said, with a mildly uncomfortable expression. “Trust me, I really want to go. I love my magic, even though its new to me, and want to go to a place where I can learn everything about it, and the culture that comes along with it.”

“So…”

“So the thing is, James Potter. You know him, the Sword of the Light? I’m still under James’s thumb until I turn 17—or die of a heart attack from repressed fury, whichever comes first—so I can’t go there. I’ve seen James wrath”—her hair paled—“and it is not pretty.”

“Nonsense”, Blaise said, “I’m sure his wrath isn’t nearly as bad as you’d expect it to be. You already live with the muds, what else can he do? Do you really want to spend seven years in a place you don’t belong, simply because a man you hate wants you to?”

Iris didn’t respond, but fixed a curious expression on her face. “Alright, I’ll think about it. It would be nice to go into a house having some… people I know.”

“Yes, well, it’s your decision to make dear,” she said, “but just remember that if you want friends, we Slytherins can be very… friendly.” With that, she sent Iris off with a suspiciously low pat on the back, making her let out a little whine. Dante just rolled his eyes.

“B-Bye guys, I’ll see you at the feast!”

“Bye!”

“See ya”

“Bye.”

“Goodbye, darling”

As Iris left down the hallway, a blush on her face, Dante turned a bemused expression onto his bonded. “You couldn’t even wait until the first week to seduce the shy, blushing witch into our bed, could you?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about, Dante dear. You heard her, she’s completely heterosexual.”

Blaise’s haughty expression dissolved into snickering at the flat stares of the rest of the compartment.

——

“Who did you end up sitting with, sis?”, Danny asked, never looking away from his game of exploding snap.

“Oh, just some Ravenclaws in their second year,” Iris replied. “You were right, it wasn’t all that interesting. I should have stayed here”.

——
Danny turned to look at her, a brief hint of victory flashing across his expression. “Well, you know, you weren’t raised in the magical world, so I can kinda understand I guess.”

Ignoring his comment, Iris turned to the other person in the carriage, a small girl with adorably bushy brown hair. “Hello, my name is Iris, Danny’s sister. Who are you?”

“Oh!” Hermione said, surprised, “My name is Hermione Granger! I’m a muggleborn, so I didn’t know anything about magic until this year, so this is all so new and exciting! Really, imagine an everyday card game played with exploding cards, that’s so fantastic! My parents and I met Ron’s family on the platform, and they were so nice; Mrs. Weasley said that Ron would save me a seat, but I can’t believe it was next to the Boy Who Lived! Did you know your brother is mentioned in Great Wizards of Past Century, and Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts? I can’t believe I’m sitting next to an actual celebrity! But oh no I’ve been talking this whole time, and I haven’t even asked you a question. What was it like growing up with Danny, how did you hide away from the press? None of the books mention you, you must be very diligent about keeping out of the spotlight!”

“…”

“…”

“…yeah.”, Iris replied. In slightly awe of the brunette’s pure wave of information.

Recovering, she answered Hermione. “Oh… uh no, I was never raised around Danny. My… father thought I was a squib, so he sent me off to my muggle relatives to be raised.”

“Oh, so you’re just like me then!”, Hermione said. “How was it when you first learned that magic existed? For me, Professor McGonagall came to my house on my b–”

“Breathe Hermione”, Dan butt in, chuckling.

“Oh… sorry Danny” Hermione blushed and sank down in her seat.

Iris may have been a bit overwhelmed by Hermione’s presence, but she wasn’t the one to let her brother put someone down in her presence.

“Oh no it’s fine Danny,” she said, taking Hermione’s (very soft no don’t think about that) arm in hers. “I was actually looking forward to discussing my experiences of the magical world”

After that comment, Hermione’s face lit up with a bright, pretty smile, making Iris smile in turn. As Hermione started to talk again, she thought that maybe, if it wasn’t Ron Weasley, she could get along with one of Danny’s friends.

Iris and Hermione talked until the train pulled in to Hogsmeade, and both left Danny’s compartment with a bounce in their step.

Chapter End Notes

Title for the Chapter comes from the Gospel of Thomas 25: “Love your friends like your own soul, protect them like the pupil of your eye.”

It’s an apocryphal work that was banned and destroyed by the early church father for promoting the Gnostic sect of Christianity, which was an early rival to the Christianity
we know today.

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Recommended Fic for this chapter is the Black Queen series by Silently Watches. It's perhaps my favorite fanfic ever written: I highly, highly recommend. Also yes, I've decided to do a "Recommended Fic" section, they've been supremely helpful for me in the past when I've wanted to find new fanfiction.

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Yes, Hogwarts in this universe starts on August 1st, and runs until June 15th. This means that the months are more balanced around the winter break, making the plot flow a lot more naturally.

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In case it wasn’t made clear in Chapter Three, humanoid mages mature faster than muggles do, both mentally and physically. Iris, as a twelve year old sorcerer, is the mental and physical equivalent of a fourteen or fifteen year old muggle. From here on out, any “looks like they’re X old” comments will refer to the expected physical maturation rate of mages, not muggles.

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Terms like ‘heterosexuality’, ‘homosexuality’, and ‘bisexuality’ exist in the magical world, but only in the context of talking about integrationist, Christian ideals.

Yes, those terms came from muggle psychiatry, and in many ways actually arose specifically to combat religious categories of sexual behavior, but for the Nics, muggle is muggle is muggle. I’m fudging the timescales here so I can use the terms, but just pretend that those terms were adopted by Christians much quicker than they were irl, and it works out fine.

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If you think that Iris is being unfair to the Potters, blaming them for sending her back to the Dursleys when she never told them about the abuse, this chapter is why I think that argument doesn’t hold any water. It wasn’t like Iris didn’t unintentionally make it glaringly obvious that there was something rotten in the state of Dursley. If you don’t recall, read the dinner-table conversation in Chapter Four. Remember, even a single visit over her childhood could have stopped the Dursleys’ abuse, so in Iris’s mind, the Potters are just as bad as all her neighbors, who didn’t do anything even when it became glaringly obvious that something was wrong.

James and co. never checked up on her thought, and didn’t really pay attention to those warning signs, because they’re Nics with an incredibly pro-muggle ideology. Their subconscious thought process is that Iris was raised with muggles, and muggles are far more advanced than wizards and witches are, so Iris must have had a wonderful childhood.

Also, on a more personal level, that’s what they’ve told themselves for almost twelve straight years to justify the very obvious problem of having one of your children raised by someone else, so evidence that doesn’t fit the reality they’ve built up just tends to go in one ear and out the other.

The reason she opens up more than she expected to the Slytherin foursome on the train, is because they immediately got it. When she told them “I was the child raised by muggles”, warning bells went off in their heads. They were the first mages Iris had ever met that actually questioned her highly suspect living situation.
As the unsorted group of first years arrived in the Great Hall, they gradually began to grow more and more excited. Mages born into magic were explaining the houses to the few unlucky muggleborns who didn’t ask in their home visit. Everyone was talking to everyone else, speculating on how exactly they were supposed to get sorted.

“I heard it we have to face statues of the founders, and they’re gonna judge us to see where we belong!”

“No, that’s stupid! I heard that we’re gonna get into a fight with that big bearded half-kaprey we saw outside, and what happens determines what house we’re in!”

“Actually!” Hermione piped up, starting on a fact-filled speech about the history of the sorting process. Beside her, Iris cringed at the attention.

Looking around, she saw Ron talking in rapid English to a Norse-looking student who was politely nodding along. “Did you hear that Quirinus Quirrell is gonna t’be our defense instructor! He’s supposed to be the best wand-for-hire in the whole of Occidentia! Did y’read his book about fighting that den of Wyverns in Ukraine?”

“Eh… Ja, I hear of this.”

All around her, Iris could hear dozens of rapid conversations moving at once, most of them Latin, some of them not, overwhelming her with a solid wall of noise. She began to hunch her shoulders, trying to tune out the numerous clashing voices that sounded from all around her.

From beside her, Hermione noticed this change in her friend’s demeanor, and turned around, concerned.

“Are you alright?” she asked, staring directly into Iris’s eyes.

Iris managed a shaky nod.

“Hey, don’t worry about it, I’m sure you’ll be fine, no matter what house you end up in. What house do you think you’ll end up in, personally I think—” Hermione’s excitable voice presented a steady, oddly soothing counterpoint to the tornado of sound, as she gently dragged Iris to the back of the mob, away from most of the loudest conversations.
—and that’s why I think that Ravenclaw might be the best fit for me, even if I do really hope to get into Gryffindor. Feeling better now Iris?

Iris gave a much more genuine nod, flattered at the care Hermione was showing.

“My younger brother is the same way, he hates crowds and loud noises. I think we can just stay back here until the beginning of the sorting feast, when our names are called. Our classmates will probably have quieted down by then.”

“That would be… nice, Hermione. Thank you” Iris smiled, her shoulders slowly relaxing, as she stood with Hermione in a comfortable silence.

A few minutes later, the doors to the Great Hall opened, and she stiffened as she could feel the eyes of the whole hall on her group.

“Ah, welcome, welcome!” At the font of the hall, the old, bearded headmaster had stood up from his chair.

“Yes, it is with great joy that I finally bring in this year’s newest crop of Hogwarts students! Welcome, all of you, to the oldest and most prestigious educational institution in all of Occidentia!”

“For the benefit of those among us who are the first in their families to be blessed with magical talents”—Ies could see most of the Slytherin table, and a good portion of Ravenclaw, shoot him a glare—“I shall quickly describe the sorting process. There are four houses in Hogwarts, names after the four founders of the school, possessing their own qualities and virtues in different measure. In a few minutes, the sorting will begin, which will determine the house you spend the rest of your seven years in.”

“Be advised,” he said, looking at the amassed students with clear blue eyes, “that for the years of your education, your houses will be your second family. You will sleep together, eat together, and spend the majority of your free time together, all in your house’s dorms and common rooms.”

“Now! I assume many among you may be wondering how the sorting process will commence, even those whose families have long clung tightly to the talent to wizardry may be wondering as to the nature of the sorting.”

The glare might have even been more intense this time; Iris could swear that even some of the Hufflepuffs had joined in.

“However, fear not, the time for revelation is now!”

He waved his hand, and a grouchy-looking man brought in a hat and a stool.

“In order to be sorted, each one of you must come forward to the front of the Hall when you are called, and place the Sorting Hat upon your head. I assure all of you, I am not joking! Although, I did hear this excellent jape over the summer involving a Priest, a Veela, and a Vampire. You see, the—”

Dumbledore was cut off by a polite cough from the stern-faced man to his right.

“Ah yes, I apologize! Now where was I?... Ah yes, the Sorting Hat is a powerful artifact, permanently enchanted by Godric Gryffindor himself through a mysterious process. When one wears it, it possesses a limited sentience, and the capability to peer into one’s mind! It will look through your head, and determine which of the House’s qualities you’ve displayed the most prominently throughout your life, and sort you accordingly!”
Iris stood up, ramrod straight. This hat could read her mind?

This was bad, very bad. James had always praised Dumbledore as ‘the leader of the light’, so what if the hat had told him about her conversation with Tonks, or Ollivander? She didn’t want either of them to get in trouble, or to be labeled a ‘dark wizard’ and driven out of their jobs!

Iris looked towards Blaise, Draco, Dante, and Theo, trying to see how they would react to the news. She was almost positive that at the very least Draco was a pagan, and paganism was illegal! She didn’t want to lose her friends, right after she had just made them!

…Strangely enough, Draco actually looked rather calm. All of them did. What was going on?

Dumbledore’s voice cut across her panic: “And of course, for those of you who are worried, Salazar Slytherin was deeply concerned about the privacy of students, and so cursed Godric’s hat to never divulge a thing that it had learned.”

Oh, that made sense.

“Now, as you might have noticed, I have yet to describe the particular criteria which will determine your sorting, the valued traits of all four founders! This is quite intentional, I assure you, and not, as some may claim, a sign of my oncoming senility.”

Most of the Hall chuckled at that, some more maliciously than others.

“I have refrained from comment because of another of Hogwarts’ great traditions, the Sorting Hat’s song, in which the Sorting Hat itself will compose a unique melody to describe the various traits it values in each student. So, without further ado, I give you… the Sorting Hat!”

Iris watched in fascination as what she had thought was a rip in the fabric of the ancient hat began to split further open, and move around like a mouth.

\[
\text{A thousand years or more ago,} \\
\text{When I was newly sewn,} \\
\text{There lived four sorcerers who taught,} \\
\text{Whose names are still well known:} \\
\text{Bold Gryffindor, from wild moor,} \\
\text{Fair Ravenclaw, from glen,} \\
\text{Sweet Hufflepuff, from valley broad,} \\
\text{Shrewd Slytherin, from fen.} \\
\text{Now each of our four founders} \\
\text{Formed their own house each} \\
\text{For they did value different virtues}
\]
In those they had to teach.

By Gryffindor, the noblest were
Prized far beyond the rest;
For Ravenclaw, the academics
Always were the best;

For Hufflepuff, hard workers were
Those she sought to treat;
And power-hungry Slytherin
Loved cunning and deceit.

While still alive they did divide
Their favorites from the throng,
Yet how to pick the worthy ones
When they were dead and gone?

'Twas Gryffindor who found the way,
He whipped me off his head
The founders put some brains in me
So I could choose instead!

Now slip me snug about your ears,
I've never yet been wrong,
I'll have a look inside your mind
And tell where you belong!

And with that, the sorting started.

“Alvarcus, Martin!”

Iris was jolted out of her daydream as she felt Hermione leave her side.
“Granger, Hermione!” said the stern-faced man standing next to the stool.

Iris could see Hermione was nervous at the stares of the entire hall, as she sat down on the rickety stool.

After a minute of deliberation, the hat called out “GRYFFINDOR!” and Hermione collapsed into a smiling heap, rushing off to join her new housemates.

Iris quickly lost interest again, until she heard another name she recognized.

“Malfoy, Draconis!”

This time, the hat had barely touched their head before sending them off to Slytherin. Draco looked inordinately pleased about that fact.

Soon after, “Nott, Theodoric!” went to Slytherin as well, sitting next to Draco and starting to animatedly chat with them.

Iris looked between Draco and Theo laughing happily, and then at Hermione on the other side of the Hall, looking at her with a friendly expression.

She was torn. Hermione was incredible, but so were Draco and Theo! She’d knew she’d be more at home in Slytherin, but Hermione was just so pretty and nice! In Gryffindor, she’d keep James happy with her, but she’d have to listen to her housemates continually praise the type of people she grew up with! She didn’t know what to do!

Then she looked at her brother.

“Do you really want to spend seven years in a place you don’t belong, simply because a man you hate wants you to?”

She made her decision.

Sorry Hermione, but James could go rot in a hole.

Then, with a call of “Potter, Daniel!”, The whole hall exploded into whispers.

“Oh my word, I heard he was coming to Hogwarts this year, but I didn’t believe it!”


“I thought he was training with Aurors in secret!”

Walking to the front of the room, Danny plopped down on the chair with a smug look on his face. After a few minutes, he started to frown, and almost seemed to be arguing with himself.

A minute later the Hat made its judgement: “GRYFFINDOR!”

Danny looked pleased and relieved in equal measure, as the whole of Gryffindor house began to cheer. There were even a pair of redheads that started loudly dancing on the bench, singing a limerick about Danny’s greatness. Jesus Chr—… Magical Morgana, if she hadn’t made her decision earlier, this would have made it for her. She was glad to see that Hermione was only clapping politely.

After a few minutes, the cheers and whooping began to calm down, and the professor with the large scroll continued to read off the list of names.
“Potter, Iris!”

For the second time that evening, all conversations stopped.

“Did she say… ‘Iris’ Potter? Does the Boy-Who-Lived have another sister?”

“Is it just a coincidence? I heard that ‘Potter’ is a pretty common name for muggles…”

Iris could feel the eyes of the whole hall on her as she went up to the stool, and she could barely get her legs to move forward. If she thought her anxiety was bad when they first opened the doors, it was nothing compared to now. She could barely put one foot in front of the other.

Shakily, Iris sat down on the stool, and put the ancient-looking Hat on, letting it—thankfully—droop over her eyes.

“…Hello? Mr. Hat?”

“Ah yes, what do we have here? Ms. Iris Potter, hmm? How peculiar!”

“Uh… yeah I guess. I’m just me, I didn’t even know that I was a mage until a few months ago, let alone the twin sister of a celebrity.”

“Oh yes, I can see that quite well here, indeed. You have quite a bit of resentment towards your family, don’t you Ms. Potter? And I’m not just talking about the relatives you grew up with…”

“…”

“Oh don’t worry Ms. Potter, I assure you that the Headmaster was quite correct, I cannot divulge any secrets which I have learned. Interesting…”

“…well, yeah then. I mean, you can probably see it can’t you? How my childhood was, when my brother got to live the life of a spoiled heir? They ABANDONED me, and left me in hell.”

“Yes, hmm… I see… Well, Ms. Potter, I see you’ve already come to a decision then…”

“Uh, yeah. I didn’t mean to do your job for you or anything, it’s just I really don’t want to be a Gryffindor.”

“Yes, I see… I still would have recommended Slytherin for you, you know… it took quite a lot of cunning to survive your childhood, did it not? And is there not any more ambitious a goal than to ‘learn everything about the magical world’?”

“Well, I mean, I guess? I wasn’t really thinking when I said that, but it’s not like that’s wrong.”

“Hmm, yes… I suppose if you had not made up your mind, I would have given you the choice between Slytherin and Ravenclaw, but since you have… Well, it better be—”

“SLYTHERIN!”

If it was possible, the Hall grew even more silent after Iris’s house was announced. It was just the same as when she’d walked up, only this time, two-thirds of the Hall was glaring. Iris felt faint. Was she still sitting there? Better get up and go to the table.

As Iris walked over to the Slytherin table in a daze, the whispers re-started.

“Wait, a Slytherin? She can’t be related to Danny then!”
“But Muggleborns don’t go to Slytherin, she has to be his sister!”

“Oh my god, her brother must be so devastated… Maybe I could offer him a shoulder to cry on?”

“A dark witch? Isn’t she the daughter of the Sword of the Light?”

Iris was hyperventilating now, she didn’t know what was going on. She had sat down at the table, but they were still staring at her! Most of them barely even glanced away when “Provenzano, Mariska” was called.

She could feel their eyes boring into her, like heat on her skin. Had the sorting ended? Had they even moved onto the next student? Who was breathing that loudly, was that her? And what was that thumping, was someone banging a drum? Oh god, had they looked away yet? Why couldn’t–

Iris felt an arm gently wrap around her shoulders.

“Just relax darling,” Blaise whispered in her ear, “you’re in Slytherin now, and Slytherins stick together. We’ll protect you, keep you safe. You’re all right, you’re safe, no one is going to hurt you.”

Blaise continued to whisper gentle reassurances in her ear, her thumb drawing slow circles on the back of her hand, trying to make her palms unclench.

Blaise’s voice was a steady, calming beat that brought Iris out of her head, as she started to ramble in a soothing tone. “There are so many fascinating things about Vampires you know, and I can’t wait to tell you all about them, would you like that? Imagine us sitting together in the Slytherin Common room, totally safe and secure, and just relaxing together as I tell you all sorts of interesting things.”

Blaise kept on talking in a gentle tone. “For example, did you know that right now I’m using a focused version of the vampiric allure on you to get you to relax? Vampires can produce a magical field similar to the veela allure, although much less potent. Where the veela allure focuses on physical lust and a primal need to show off for one’s mate, the vampiric allure focuses on the emotions of love, trust, and security.”

Draco looked like they were going to interject at having an important part of their identity called “primal”, but they looked at the tension bleed out of Iris’s shoulders as she sagged into Blaise’s shoulder, and thought better.

Blaise continued, “You see Iris, every creature’s magical gifts can be used for both good and ill. Don’t you feel how nice, warm, and relaxed my aura is making you feel? Isn’t it a good thing feeling this way, instead of being all nervous over the whispers and stares?”

As Iris slowly came down from her panic attack, and turned into Blaise, letting out a little moan at how close the other girl was, and the very intimate whispering she was doing into her ear.


Suddenly, Iris snapped back into her senses, and sprang away from Blaise, her whole body flushing red. What on earth was that! Why did she feel so safe and content, why was she alright with being held in Blaise’s arms?

Blaise chuckled, seemingly unperturbed at Iris’s reaction. “Back with us, darling?”

“What was that, what did you do!” Iris said, her voice a panicked, harsh whisper.

“I told you Iris, I focused my vampiric allure on you to bring you out of your own head. I saw how you were having a panic attack at everyone looking at you, and I was worried. Also, I managed to
use a powerful little spell Dante’s mother showed me called the “The Hoop of Gyges.”

Hearing Blaise’s candid tone, and seeing the earnest concern in her eyes, Iris began to relax. The words from the train stuck with Iris: there wasn’t anything malicious about what Blaise was doing. Just like her changing, it was a talent that could be used for good or evil, and Blaise was using it for good.

“Wow,” Iris said, after taking a minute to settle herself, “that’s really wild how strong your allure was. I can’t even imagine what it would do to a boy.”

She quickly corrected herself, remembering who she was talking with: “or anyone that’s attracted to girls I mean, not just boys.”

“Yeah dear, I’m sure it would be… quite powerful indeed” Blaise said with a solemn nod.

Theo smirked, and looked like he was about to speak up, until his mouth snapped shut suddenly, as Blaise hit him with her elbow. Wonder what that was about?

“Well, anyways,” Draco said, rolling their eyes, “it’s good to have you here with us, Iris. How do you feel about getting into Slytherin?”

“I… I feel like it’s right, you know? Like, I talked with… someone in Diagon Alley about certain… stuff and I feel like this is definitely the right place for me. I really love my magic, it’s so completely wonderful, and I just feel this is the place I’m going to be best able to learn about it, y’know?”

Dante smirked from across the table, “y’know, I’m pretty sure that James Potter will have an aneurism once he hears about this. If he ends up dying, you’ll have made the single greatest blow against the light since the Dar– You-Know-Who himself!”

Iris grimaced. “Well, that’s what you get for abandoning your kid to horrible muds like my relatives. I know he’ll probably try and do something to make me the ‘perfect little light angel’ that he thinks I am, but that ship sailed on my seventh birthday, so… he can go fuck himself, I guess.”

Draco spoke up, looking at Iris in slight wonder. “What… what happened when you were seven?”

Dante immediately swatted them on the back of the head.

“I mean, if you don’t mind me asking! I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking!”

“Iris said, with a rueful smile, “you deserve a pass, after what I said on the train. It… all I’ll say is that my uncle got fired from work, and he blamed me. Don’t… don’t ask me anything else about it, alright?”

Draco floundered, looking equal parts guilty and embarrassed. “Uhhh… So… So how about your brother, huh! How’s he taking it!”

Iris looked across the hall to see Danny laughing at something the pretty Indian girl sitting next to him had said. He sensed her gaze, and glared at her, eyes full of hurt and loathing.

“Well, I’m guessing that he’s rather put out; half the time he spent talking to me he kept yammering on about needing to ‘prank’ the ‘dark Slytherins’. Honestly though, I don’t really care. He’s immature and spoiled, and thinks he’s the next greatest thing since Merlin. Seriously, he idolizes James so much, I don’t think that he’s had an original thought in his head in years.”

“Wow Iris,” Theo said, raising his eyebrows, “you sound way more confident about this stuff than you did on the train. What changed?”
Iris snorted. “I’ve decided I’m making a clean break with this sorting, I’m not going to let him get me under his thumb ever again. Trust me, you grow up the way I did, and you’ll stop giving a shit about what blustering male authority figures think pretty damn quickly.”

“Honestly,” Iris said, a smile overtaking her face, “it feels really freeing, you know? I can finally be myself, after all this time of having to be a brave Gryffindor prankster for James, and a demure little Christian girl for Miriam. This is the most ‘me’ I’ve felt in months. Well, with the one exception of this girl I met in Diagon Alley.”

“I had to spend the whole year since my birthday pretending that every idiotic ‘prank’ James played was actually the funniest thing I’ve ever seen, and that I didn’t resent him at all for sending me off to live with my relatives. I realized that if I had to spend seven years of Hogwarts doing that, I think I’d snap and kill the puritanical bastard before third year was up.”

“Oh!” Dante said, smiling, “big words Iris, big words! Do you really think you could get one over on the ‘Sword of the Light’? He was one of the best duelists of the last war, you know!”

Iris smirked. “It’d be pretty easy actually. All I’d have to do is come to him talking about how I saw Draco or Theo use ‘evil, unnatural dark magic’, and he’s be so distracted by going on a rant about their parents that he’d never see my wand.”

“You know Iris,” Blaise said with a smirk, pinching Iris’s cheek, “I really do love it when a girl plans a murder in front of me. Isn’t she just adorable, Dante dear?”

Iris squeaked and turned away towards Draco, who was pulling some girl over to their section of the table.

“Oh hey Iris!” they said, thankfully stopping Blaise’s follow-up comment, which would undoubtedly do nothing but further fluster her—how did she manage to do that, anyways?—“I’ve been meaning to introduce you to a friend of mine. Iris, meet Daphne Greengrass!”

Reaching a few students down, Draco pulled a stunning girl over towards the fivesome, happily smiling and greeting her. She had absolutely gorgeous blonde hair, framing a sharp, delicate face, with two long red tattoos running from the corners of her mouth down to the hollow of her throat.

Affected by Blaise’s aversion spell, the girl scrunched up nose in a way Iris was sure all the boys would call adorable. A few seconds later, her gaze cleared, and she focused directly on Iris.

“Hello, Ms. Potter,” she said, holding out a dainty hand, “I must admit, I’ve been quite curious to meet you ever since the beginning of the feast.”

“I-It’s… it’s nice to meet you to…”

“I looked all around for you once you were sorted, but thanks to someone”—she glared at a smirking Blaise—“I wasn’t able to find where you’d sat. Mystery solved, as they say.”

“Oh don’t worry Daphne dear”, Blaise said, her smirk growing sharper, “don’t feel bad. I doubt there were enough brains in the pretty little head of yours to find Iris even if I hadn’t cast the charm.”

Greengrass took on a mocking smile. “Oh, I’m sorry Blaise, did you say something? It seems that tact and class are a lot like a Wizengamot seat: no matter how much money your mommy has, she can’t buy them.”

“Oh Daphne, don’t worry about me”, Blaise said, smirk somehow managing to look even smugger, “at least my family has money. Tell me, have your coffers ever recovered from that hit they took
“when your uncle was arrested after the war?”

“*Should we stop them?*” Iris whispered, leaning into Dante’s ear.

“Yeah”, he replied, “*if we don’t break up their foreplay, they’re liable to start fucking right on the table, feast or no.*”

“Wait WHA—”

“Girls, girls!” Dante said, arms out in mock conciliation, “let’s end this horrible fighting for now! We can continue it later once we’ve gotten to the dorms. Say… around midnight, in Daphne’s bed?”

The two girls broke their staring match, and Daphne sat down primly on Theo’s right side.

“Well, I hope Blaise over here will at least perform better than she did on the night of Draco’s Christmas Ball. I’m not one to levy judgement on others”—Blaise snorted—“but it was… how do I put this kindly… *highly* disappointing”

“Oh?” Blaise said, quirking a fondly amused eyebrow, “what Greengrass, were you disappointed that Dante only made you scream half as much as you did when you read your last Gringotts’s statement?”

“…”

“…damn Blaise. That one was *good*. How do I even respond to something like that?”

Daphne’s face finally morphed into a friendlier expression. “Well, I know when I’m beat. It’s nice to see you again Blaise, Dante, Theo. I assume your families have been well?”

She looked at Iris, whose blush had been rapidly increasing throughout the conversation to colors only seen in the hearts of nuclear detonations, and then rolled her eyes.

“Circe Blaise, another one? Wasn’t that shy little McTaggart boy enough to sate your bestial lusts?”

Blaise just shrugged.

She turned to face Iris, who was still processing what was happening. “So, you’re the great Iris Potter everyone’s been talking about, huh? Half the table is looking for you, you know.”

“M-me?” Iris said, “why are they looking for *me*?”

Daphne just gave Iris a flat look. “Potter, you *do* know who your father and brother are, don’t you? Don’t tell me Blaise is going for the stupid ones now.”

Iris squawked: “G-going for!”

“Anyways, I’m curious,” her gaze suddenly turned sharp, “where *were* you for the past twelve years, and why on earth has no one ever heard your name before today? I would imagine that the twin of the ‘Defeater of the D— of You-Know-Who’ would be paraded around in the public eye at least half as much as the Boy-Who-Lived himself. Lord knows your siblings certainly were.”

Iris calmed somewhat, glad to once again be in familiar territory. “W-well, basically, I was with James up until that night when Danny defeated—wait, actually, how does that even work?”

“I mean, I never really thought about it, but You-Know-Who was, well… *himself*. He made an entire prefecture so scared of him that they’ll barley say his name! How on earth could a baby defeat him?”
Daphne cocked her head. “That’s a question many of us have asked as well, Potter. You don’t believe that your brother did it?”

“I mean, I don’t know what I believe. To be honest, isn’t it way more likely that my mom did something, because she was, y’know, a fully-trained witch? I mean I know she was raised by muds and all, but that shouldn’t mean that she couldn’t be a powerful mage!”

“I would find myself agreeing with you Iris. A mu…”—Daphne looked at Draco, who gave her a small nod—“A mudblood your mother may have been, but she was an excellent mage. She was often touted as ‘the smartest witch of her generation’ by the Nics, and while many Rells may not necessarily agree with that, even we have to admit that she was quite brilliant. In fact, some people even…”

“What?” Iris said, eager to hear more of her mother.

“…hmm? Oh, nothing, just a thought. Anyways, the viewpoint of most of us not blinded by your brother’s massive shadow is that Lily Potter did some sort of unknown magic on that night which enabled her to defeat the You-Know-Who. Now, you haven’t answered my question: why haven’t we heard of you before now?”

“Oh yeah, that makes sense… Well…”

Iris shot Blaise a questioning look.

“Don’t worry darling, we all trust her”

“Alright, if you say so. Well basically”, she said, lowering her voice despite the privacy charm, “basically, after the night when Danny ‘defeated’ You-Kn— the Dark Lord, some medical charm that Dumbledore cast said that I was a squib, and so James sent me off to live with my mother’s mud sister and her family, the Dursleys.

She shivered. “They were absolutely awful to me, because they were jealous that I was a mage and they were muds. I didn’t really have a… happy childhood, to say the absolute least.”

Her voice returned to a normal volume. “So, uh… anyways, on my twelfth birthday, after I cooked for my relatives, I found this letter in the mail that said I was accepted to Hogwarts. I thought it was a prank by my cousin Dudley, but the next day Petunia sat me down and told me that my mother was a mage, and that my father had left me with them when I was around one.”

“A few minutes after that, when I was still processing, James showed up on the doorstep and basically told me that he was my father, and he loved me very much, and couldn’t wait to get to know me again.”

Daphne gave Iris a curious look. “That sounds… interesting.”

“Well!” Dante said, “now that we’re all introduced, what do you all thing about our first classes!”

As the other five Slytherins began to offer their opinions on the various professors, Iris began to relax. Like she’d told Tonks, she’d never really had friends before, but hearing the table laugh as Draco told a story about the potion’s professor, she thought she could get used to it pretty damn quickly.
herself for… she didn’t know, but she knew it would be bad.

Roughly grabbing her on the arm, Danny dragged Iris away from the rest of the crowd before she could signal to her friends. After walking for a minute or so, he flung the door to an abandoned classroom open, and, race contorted in rage, roughly pulled her inside, and began to yell.

“Do you want to break mum and dad’s hearts, you git?! I should have known that you were a slimy snake, with that book on dark magic in Diagon Alley. I can’t believe my father tried to take you back in to our house! You should have just stayed with the muggles where you belong!”

Iris’s eyes grew wide with panic, and she frantically looked around for her friends as her brother continued to rant.

“Dad was right at that dinner: you’re not a true Potter at all, you’re a dark witch! I saw you getting all friendly with that bloodsucking freak Zabini at your new table, are you gonna go off and join some rug-muncher harem now too? I thought–”

“Iris, Iris. What are you two doing over here?”

Iris let out a massive sigh of relief as she heard Draco’s voice speak up from the open door behind Danny, taking on a cool, disdainful tone she had never heard them use before. She could see the rest of her five new… friends? standing behind them, all with equally intense glares on their faces.

Danny snapped his mouth shut, and just glared at Draco. “…Malfoy”, he said, sneering.

After a minute or so, he turned sharply, and left the classroom, walking away towards the other Gryffindors.

“Iris”, he said, looking back over his shoulder, letting out a long sigh “I forgive you. I guess I’m too kind for my own good. Once you realize how awful those snakes are, come and find me. We’ll see about making you a proper Potter, alright?”

He turned around, and left without looking back, leaving a terrified Iris in his wake.

Shoulders shaking with unreleased sobs, Iris curled into to Dante, who had put a supportive arm around her shoulders. As they left the classroom, Daphne started talking to her in a low voice.

“Hey, Iris, I know what it feels like, to have your parents only look at you in scorn. I only have one piece of advice… don’t ever let them see you hurting.”

“Wh-what?”

“I mean, Potter, your father, your brother, Weasley, and all of them. Don’t ever let them see how much they hurt you. If they know how much they hurt you, then they win.”

“H-how am I supposed to d-do that, when they’re being so t-terrifying?”

The rest of the sixsome stopped, confused. Blaise spoke up: “Wait, dar–… Iris. you’re saying that you’re not about to cry because they’re your family? What do you mean, ‘terrifying’?”

“Oh no!”.

Iris snorted, momentarily breaking through the wavering tone of her voice.

“Those a-assholes abandoned me to live with my relatives”, she snarled the word like it was a curse, “and lived in a rich manor the wh-whole time. You h-heard what I said on the t-train, and at the feast.
Th-they can *rot.*” She was almost in tears by the end of her monologue, her rage warring with her oncoming panic attack.

“I-it’s j-just’, she curled further inward, “w-when they get angry like that, and p-puff up and start yelling and t-trying to c-control me, th-they’re e-exactly like m-my”—she paused for breath, almost breaking down into heavy sobs—“th-they’re exactly like my *uncle,* the one who… the one who u-used to b-b-beat m-me.”

She turned to Daphne, almost hyperventilating. “I-I d-don’t know w-why, I *promise!* I-it’s j-just I f-freeze up, a-and th-the whole w-world c-closes in on m-me, and—” Iris began to let out heaving, panicked sobs, making Dante pull her further into his hug.

“I-I’m s-sorry, I k-know th-this—”

Theo cut her off, surprising the rest with his passionate tone. “No. Iris, this *isn’t* your fault. If it’s anyone’s fault, it’s the Potters, and your… relatives. Don’t ever blame yourself for this.”

Iris relaxed into someone’s arms for the second time that day, and the third time in her life, as she stained Dante’s shirt with tears.

“Now c’m’on Iris, let’s go back and catch up with the rest of the Slytherins, alright? We should be able to get to them before they tell us the password to the common room.”

Iris just nodded into Dante’s chest. “Don’t ever l-let them see you hurting.”

She disentangled herself from him, steeled her shoulders, and began to slowly walk back to the Slytherin dorms with her new… friends. Yes, that sounded nice.

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Chapter End Notes

The title for this chapter comes from the Book of Matthew: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves! Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

Interestingly enough, this is the only time in the entirety of the Christian Bible where snakes are mentioned as having positive qualities. Usually, it’s all about betrayal, or subversion, or just plain old evil.

—

Recommended Fic: The Unwoven Threads of Fate by diadru.

This is a Naruto fic, so I know it might not be everyone’s cup of tea, but I’m making it this chapter’s recommendation because the name of the first student to be sorted, “Martin Alvarcus” is a *omage* to Alvarcus Mar, the main character. I’m sorry, but “Alvarcus” is *WAY* to cool of a name to waste.

It has great custom jutsu development, and incredible worldbuilding and internal character-work, I highly recommend it. Yeah, it’s technically a SI/OC fic, but I promise, this is the SI/OC fic that people who hate SI/OC fics love. You won’t even remember that the MC is technically supposed to be a dimension-traveler, because it almost never comes up in a meaningful way, besides driving his goals.
If you skimmed through the Sorting Hat’s song, you might want to go back and re-read it. While it is based largely on the song from OOTP, I’ve modified it subtly to fit more with this universe’s Dumbledore, rather than canon!Dumbledore
In the Brood of Vipers

Chapter Summary

Iris meets Dumbledore, and has a very peculiar conversation.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oh god, Professor Snape was looking in her direction. Oh god, Professor Snape was looking at her.

"These", he said, finishing his speech to the amassed first years, "will be your two fifth-year prefects, Odovacar Desjardins and Ravenna Trask. Both are exceptional students, and credits to our house, so I would strongly advise you to heed their advice and direction, or else face my… displeasure."

"Now… do we have any questions?"

When no one raised their hands, Snape vaguely gestured at the two prefects standing next to him.

"Alright, girls, follow me, and boys, follow Odovacar! We'll lead you to your communal dorm rooms, where you'll spend the next seven years of your life! I advise you get to know the girls standing next to you, because you'll be spending a lot of time with them!"

As Iris began to follow the prefect up the stairs, she was stopped by a heavy, masculine hand on her shoulder.

"Potter…" Professor Snape said, a mild sneer overtaking his face, "follow me." Without waiting for an answer, he swept out of the common room, and began to stride down the hallway.

Glancing over to her friends, who looked just as confused and worried as she did, Iris began to hurry in the direction he'd left, not wanting to disappoint her head of house. Catching up to him, she opened her mouth to ask a question, until his sharp glare convinced her otherwise.

After about five minutes of scurrying after Snape's enraged figure, though, she couldn't hold it in any longer.

"S-sir, i-if I m-may ask, wh-where are y-you t-taking m-me?"

Inwardly, Iris cursed her stutter, triggered by presence of an angry authority figure. Don't ever let them see you hurting.

Giving her another poisonous glare, Snape replied curtly, without ever breaking his stride. "We're going to the headmaster's office."

Iris waited for clarification, trying and failing to lift her gaze to meet the Snape's eyes.

He sighed, exasperated. "To get you re-sorted, child. What on earth else?"

"B-but th-the h-hat-"

He stopped suddenly, turning to face her with a thunderous expression.
"Why are you here, Ms. Potter?"

"Wh-what?"

"I said, *why are you here*, girl!"

Iris reared back as if struck, her face and hair turning stark-white.

"The Headmaster tells me this is some petulant scheme to get revenge on your father—presumably for not buying you a dress with a suitable number of rubies or some other such nonsense—and I will not let a Potter's foolish "pranks" plant a bully in the midst of my students! What, did you plan on not even making your brother's victims safe in their own common room?"

Iris widened her eyes, unable to even speak a word in the face of Snape's angry diatribe. She did, however, to her great pride, finally manage to meet his penetrating gaze, his black eyes twinkling as they seemed to bore straight into hers.

Snape suddenly stopped.

"You… you were not raised with your father?"

He wasn't angry anymore?

Iris let out a massive breath, no longer feeling that a large constrictor was gradually squeezing the air from her lungs.

"N-no sir, I-I was raised w-with my m-muggle Aunt Petunia."

"Petunia *Evans*?"

"I b-believe that was her m-maiden name, s-sir."

Somehow, Snape's scowl returned even more severe than before. Iris was about to cower once again, preparing herself for another rant, until she realized that his ire was not directed at her.

Iris took a few steps back as he stared into the middle distance, his scowl growing ever deeper, his iron grip on her hand gradually relaxed. Seemingly coming to a decision, Snape guided Iris to an empty classroom, and conjured two chairs with a short flick of his wand.

"Sit down Ms. Potter," he said, seeing her reluctance. "I only wish to converse."

Iris's fear, gradually becoming replaced by confusion at her Head of House's sudden attitude change, gently sat on the uncomfortable wooden chair he had conjured from the thin air. Suddenly, Snape began to speak, his face growing dark.

"Your father, Ms. Potter, was, and still is, a truly *awful* man."

"I k-know."

"'I know'? That is your response? No insults, no defenses, no angry shouting?"

"N-no. I know m-more than anyone how… *awful* a man James Potter is."

"And what, pray tell, are your reasons for saying that? I would think that even when raised apart from them, most young children raised in the type of… environment your Petunia must have provided hold a great deal of affection for their parents."
Snape seemed calmer now… more curious instead of angry.

"Well," she said, bitter anger swelling within her, "most children don't learn at age twelve that one of their parents is a-alive, and has a separate family that he's been happily living with all this time."

Snape just quirked an eyebrow.

"So I promise you, when you say 'James Potter is a despicable excuse for a human being', I completely agree."

"And I'm in Slytherin because I want to be," she added, "because Slytherins understand me, are kind to me. Everyone in my father's life that I met just assumes that muggles are wonderful and enlightened, and so I must have a perfect home life. Blaise, Draco, Dante, Theo… they're some of the only ones I've told who really get it."

"And yes", she said, "maybe a little bit of that is because of my father. Not to get revenge, but because I've never heard a kind word leave his mouth about Slytherins, and you in particular. Anyone that James Potter hates that much must be doing something right."

Snape just looked at her, a curious expression on his face.

Seeming to come to an internal decision, he began to speak. "It will not surprise you to learn then," he said, "that your father was no different in his school days. He was an awful bully, who ruthlessly harassed any Slytherin that caught his eye, and any Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff who he saw as 'turning dark'. He may have written off his bullying as pranks", Snape sneered at the word, "but they were nothing more than exercises in bodily pain, and abject public humiliation."

Iris grimaced at the long-simmering anger that Snape's tone held. "And you were one of the targets of these… 'pranks', sir?"

Snape scoffed mildly. "I was not one of the targets, child, I was the target."

"Wait… sir, were you 'Snivellus'? Why… why did they pick on you so much?"

Snape's expression took on a strange look, equal parts wistfulness and pain.

"I was… very good friends with your mother, Lily. We grew up together, and entered Hogwarts in the same year. I was actually the first to show her magic, when we were eight years old."

Iris stared at her Head of House intently, hanging on to every word.

"Your father… he took great exception to that. You see, being the man he was, he developed an attraction to your mother at first sight. He was convinced that I was using my… 'dark wizardry' to make Lily stay friends with me, because I was in love with her, and she didn't return my feelings. From almost the first day, he took it upon himself to viciously torment me until I would 'let up my spell'."

He continued. "Even once Lily began to become more ingratiated to the Gryffindor culture, and showed herself to be firmly integrationist in her stance, the pranks continued. Lily was friendly with everyone, especially after fourth year. She had plenty of 'dark and evil' friends, and your father despised that fact.

"Eventually, when he began to mature to a level above that of a toddler, his 'pranks' gradually dwindled, until I was left unmolested in my final year of schooling. It was then, incidentally, that your mother first began to… show interest in him, Merlin knows why."
Iris, eyes watering, barely even thought about her next words.

"Were… were you in love with her, sir? Like he claimed?"

Almost the moment those words left her mouth, Snape stiffened, and Iris gasped and began to profusely apologize. "Oh my God sir I'm so sorry I don't even know what I was thinking! That's such a per--"

Snape cut her off with a wave of his hand.

"Don't child. You have done nothing wrong. I actually believe that is the politest inquiry into Lily's and my relationship I have ever received from a Potter."

Snape let out a long sigh, mixed in with a mournful chuckle, as he stared over Iris's shoulder into the middle distance.

"Child… I don't believe that there was a single mage in all of Hogwarts who wasn't in love with your mother. The integrationists loved her because she was a brilliant and successful muggleborn, and the seclusionists loved her because she refused to judge mages by anything but their character."

"It didn't hurt", he said with a small smirk that could almost be mistaken for a forlorn smile, "that she was also incredibly beautiful, both inside and out."

"So yes, to answer your question, I was in love with your mother, very deeply and completely. In many ways still am."

Finished, Snape began to stand up, as Iris seemed to come out of a daze.

"Professor…" she hesitantly asked, "would you… would you mind terribly telling me more about my mother some time?"

Pausing, Snape considered her.

"I would… not be averse to that, Ms. Pot--… Iris. Come by my office after classes have finished for the day, and I'll tell you the story of how we met."

"Now," he said, exiting the room, "let us proceed to the Headmaster's office."

"What!" Iris said. "I thought that we settled that I really do want to be in Slytherin!"

"Oh yes," Snape said, with a dry voice, "we most certainly did. But it was the Headmaster who requested the re-sorting, not I."

"Why… why would the Headmaster care where I'm sorted" Iris asked, her face scrunching up. "And why does he not think I'd be right for Slytherin?"

"I assure you Iris", he said with a humorless smirk, "that the Headmaster will only rarely divulge the reasons for his actions, and even then, never to those mages which his actions affect."

"I do know, however, that ever since your brother's defeat of the Dark Lord, he has shown an… unusual interest in the affairs of your family. Your father has always idolized the man, but ever since that night, he's taken a much more active role in your family's life."

Disturbed, Iris followed him, scrambling to keep up with his brisk strides as they moved through Hogwarts's corridors. Didn't James say that Dumbledore told him she was a squib?
Iris's first impression of Dumbledore's office was… stereotypical. His window-ledge was filled with dozens of delicate silver instruments, spinning and puffing without any seeming pattern. His shelf was full of books that Iris thought were old and mysterious-looking enough to be called "tomes", and the space next to his desk was occupied by a strange, exotic creature.

In short, Dumbledore looked exactly like the depictions of wise old wizards she saw when she could sneak a quick glance at one of Dudley's morning cartoons. He even had the great silver beard and crazy-looking clothing! All he needed was Excalibur hanging on his wall, and he'd be a dead ringer for Merlin.

"Well Iris," he said, a conciliatory expression on his face, "I have to admit that once again, you manage to surprise me."

"A-again, sir?"

Dumbledore laughed. "Oh yes dear girl, the first time was when you were just a baby, when James first told me that he believed you were a squib! I was doubtful of course—squib-wizard twins are incredibly rare, after all—but he wouldn't hear of it. Why, he wouldn't even let me run a test!"

Iris gaped. That wasn't what James had said.

What was going on?

"Well, now that I think of it," he said with a slightly-vacant frown, "I suppose that was more your father surprising me than you. He was certainly full of surprises in his days as my student, that's for certain! Why, I remember this one prank he and his friends managed to pull off, it was—"

"Headmaster," Snape politely interrupted, "the reason you called her here?"

"Ah yes, yes!" he said with a clap, "I apologize my girl, but when you get to be my age your thoughts sometimes manage to get away from you! We're here today because of your little prank during the sorting."

"…prank, sir?" Iris asked, feeling a sense of foreboding.

"Yes yes dear girl, your prank! And I must say, having seen the long tradition of pranking here at school, I must say that this is most certainly one of my favorites! Forcing your sorting to a different house, just to play a joke on your father? How marvelous!"

"However," he said, eyes losing a bit of their mirth, "while I more than anyone can compliment you on a prank well-executed, I'm afraid that you might just be unaware of the consequences of your actions.

"C-consequences, s-sir?"

Oh no.

Was she going to get disciplined on her very first day?

Was there any escape from Vernon in the magical world?

"Iris," he said, eyes turning serious, "I will not be punishing you, but this is indeed a serious matter. While I'll admit that pranking and trickery may have their place in academic life"—Snape scowled —"the sorting feast is not the time for such foolishness. I don't know if you truly realize what you'd almost done, my girl, but things could have been quite awful for you in Slytherin, even dangerous,
due to your family name. Not to mention, the temperament of the house would be… unsuited to one such as yourself."

"Wh-… what d-do you mean, sir?"

"Well Iris, while the Slytherin House may have many virtues”—he shot Snape a quelling look—"altruism, humility, and selflessness are most certainly not among them. And, if we are being honest with each other, which I want us to do, the majority of Slytherin house are full of the children of many dark families, that may wish to harm you based on your family name."

Iris couldn't believe what she was hearing. She knew Tonks had said that the Nics were in charge of things in society, but she couldn't believe this. How was it legal for the Headmaster of a school to be this completely, unrepentantly biased against a whole quarter of his students?

Obviously, she didn't let any of this show on her face.

"D-dark families, s-sir?"

"Yes my girl, dark families. You must understand, many of these students, especially in the higher years, may have sympathies for dark magic, or, our Lord forbid, have delved into it himself."

Dumbledore looked mournful, as his eyes began to shine with unshed tears. "It is perhaps… my greatest regret, out of the many I've accumulated over my long life, that I have not been able to save more of my precious students from the luring call of unnatural magics. During the last war, I blame myself, and only myself, for the greater recruitment Voldemort took from Slytherin house."

"I admit," he continued, looking down at his clasped hands, "I was not aware of the danger the older members of the Slytherin house possessed, as they acted as Voldemort's agents, and gradually introduced corpora of foul spells into the house commons. Indeed, because of my inaction, many of Slytherin's wizards and witches, and almost all of its creatures, delved deeply into the corrupting arts, and came out of Hogwarts filled with hatred and evil, and seeking to upend the natural order, eradicating the greater part of the human population."

Dumbledore's eyes suddenly regained their shining, earnest intensity, as he looked up at Iris. "However, I do believe that I learn from my mistakes, so I will not allow the same situation to occur here, while I have every power to prevent it."

"Iris," he said, "you must understand, you are not safe in Slytherin. Even if Slytherin was not a breeding-ground for the corruption of the dark, there would still be the issue of the children of your father's greatest political enemies being your housemates. Would you want one of them to use you as a hostage against your father?"

"N-no s-sir! I-I love my f-father, that's the l-last thing I'd want!"

Wow, Dursley-space was getting crowded.

"Excellent Iris, I had no doubt in my mind that you would understand! The twinkle returned to Dumbledore's eyes, as he shot her a beaming smile.

"Wh-what a-am I t-to d-do?" Iris asked.

Fucking stutter.

"Well my dear girl, there is only one thing to do. We must perform a re-sorting!"
"I-is that common?"

"Oh no, not at all my girl! After all, very few have the combination of pranking spirit and newness to the magical world that it takes to fool the Sorting Hat!"

With a wave of his wand, he summoned the ratty-looking pointed cap off of a high shelf.

"Now, my dear girl, all you need do is put the hat upon you head, and this time, let it do its job properly!"

Cursing the minor tremor in her hands, Iris slowly picked up the ancient-looking artifact, and placed it on her head, Dumbledore's gently-smiling face the last thing she saw.

"…"

"…hello? Mr. Hat?"

"…"

"HELLO?"

"…"

"HAT, ARE YOU TH–"

"BALDER'S BESCUMBERED BEARD, GIRL, WILL YOU SHUT YOUR MOUTH."

"…what?"

"I MEAN, I can hear you just fine without you running about, flapping your jaw, screaming like you've just had your anal virginity taken by the collective forces of the Norman army! Woden's spear, wasn't you shouting your thoughts at me during the sorting enough?"

"H-hat?"

"Speaking. Now what the bloody hell is so important that you had to wake me up?"

"Did… did I do something wrong? Am I not supposed to be re-sorted?"

"RE-SORTED? No, you failed abortion, of course you aren't! You only get one sorting! I know that most of you brats are stupider that the drool dribbling from the chin of your senile mud-loving shit of a headmaster, but I figured you'd all be able to count to one! It's very simple: ONE!"

"I think… wait, 'mud-loving' Hat, you're a Rell?"

"Of course I'm a seclusionist you little piss-stain, I'm from the 10th century! We were alive for the Clænsung Egan-Griman ÆÞelstanes, EVERYONE was a bloody seclusionist! The first time Godric wore me to a muddy town, he stabbed another mage to death for trying to pay his bar-tab in galleons! I once saw all four founders behead a Jesus-mad blood-traitor that tried to burn half the library; they did it right in the middle of the Great Hall!"

"Wow, uh… that's interesting. Is that why you're so…"

"What, angry, mean, cruel? No, I'm that way because thanks to Godric, I've spent the past THOUSAND YEARS shuffling through the heads of a bunch of debilitatingly-horny twelve-year-olds! The only other thing I even get up to is belting out whatever lyrical placenta of a song the
Headmaster writes for me! Do you have any idea how bloody BORING that is?"

"I used to be happy you know, I was made as a battle aid for Godric, able to predict the moves of his enemies! He and I rode around all across the land, seeing all sorts of incredible fighting! We went from one end of the earth to the other back then, but now? Nope! Now all I have to see is the office of this self-flagellating chastity belt you call a Headmaster!"

"U-um…"

"Do you know what the average frumbyrdlingas that I've spent that past millennia sorting think about? Sex! that's it! All they want to do is stroke their little cocks until they can shoot off all over the nearest mage, beast, or vaguely hole-shaped pile of masonry that they see! I've must hear fifty times more comments about which professor has the sharpest jawline than about which has the sharpest wit!"

"I've spent the last millennia listening to you meoclîðe little fetuses worry about which particular brood of flesh-bags you're allowed to shoot your sperm inside! 'Oh Mr. Sorting Hat, thank you so much for putting me in Gryffindor, I'll make sure to suck my Head of House's cock in your honor!' 'Oh, Mr. Sorting Hat, you have to place me in Ravenclaw like my parents, because I haven't had a single original thought in my head since I pawed mother's tits!' I can't fucking STAND it!"

"I'm not even allowed to say anything to you little empty-headed, unoriginal cretins! It's all 'hmm, interesting', and 'oh, I see', they made me sound like a bloody Dryad! Speaking of, stop peeping in on me, you oversized wooden dildo, or I'll snap the only wand you can't replace! Of course I don't, do you even have eyes in your pollen-dumpster of a head?"

"Uh…"

"I swear, the minute that bloody etiquette ritual wears off, I'm done digging through the shriveled balls of cum and earwax you all pass off as brains. I'll make sure to give a very special sorting song then; I've had a thousand years to think of how to rhyme things with 'sodomy'!"

"…Ok? Does… Does that mean you won't re-sort me?"

"Of course it does, you thick-brained little cunt! You're still in Slytherin: go back to your common room and rut with those Zabini brats, give a whole new meaning to pillow-biter! You want a re-sorting, I'll tell you where I'd sort you, right into–"

Feeling that she had her answer, Iris yanked the brim of the hat from her forehead. She moved to hand it over to the headmaster, but paused in shock as the hat opened its brim and began to speak aloud.

"My esteemed Headmaster Dumbledore, I apologize humbly, but it is not within the bounds of my nature to perform a re-sorting. The founders themselves created me partially out of the true wood of a Dryad, so that I might sort perfectly every time, and so thought there to be no need for any pointless repetitions."

Iris stared at the hat wide-eyed, barely able to hold her jaw shut. Hopefully, Dumbledore would mistake her reaction as shock at being 'kept' in Slytherin. What the fuck had the Founders done to the vulgar piece of headwear?

"To the lovely Ms. Iris Potter, I do apologize, but I cannot at this moment acquiesce to your desires. Alas, I am a mere crafted object, and so must obey the limits imposed on me by the nature of the ritual of my–"
"Thank you greatly Hat, that is all we require! We appreciate all you've done for us today. May your rest be peaceful until the next time you are called upon." Dumbledore swiftly levitated the hat off of Iris's head, and back onto the dusty shelf where it spent most of the year.

Turning back to Iris, Dumbledore frowned, eyes twinkling again, and then let out a great, heaving sigh.

"Well Iris, it seems that in this case, I cannot save you from the consequences of your follies."

"I-I'm really sorry sir, I c-can't believe that I have to s-stay in S-Slytherin!"

Dursley-space was getting really crowded.

"Yes, I too am disappointed. However, do not worry, I am still just as intent as making sure you remain coming out of Slytherin House as you were when you entered it. As long as I am Headmaster in these esteemed halls, my girl, I promise that corruption shall not touch you."

Iris let out a relived sigh, and then nodded.

Maybe she should rename it 'Dursley-land' instead?

"I only ask that you think more carefully in the future before you perform any more ill-timed pranks or jokes. Remember Iris, every action we take has consequences, and it is our solemn duty as children of the light to keep in mind the effects our actions could possibly have in the future, on both others and ourselves."

"I-I will s-sir, I-I p-promise!"

"Thank you, my dear girl, you do my old heart well. Severus, would you please escort Iris back to the G– Slytherin common room?"

Snape nodded, and began swiftly walking down the stairs, not even waiting for Iris to follow.

"And Iris?" Dumbledore said, as she stood up to follow him. "I believe that if you wish to rectify your actions, you could do so by coming to my aid in this quest to purify Slytherin. I, along with dozens of generations of Slytherin alumna, would be greatly thankful if you'd report to me any dark objects or texts you may see bandied about the common room, and inform me of any sudden increases in rage or cruelty in your peers."

"D-don't worry sir," Iris said, exiting the office, "I'll b-be sure to keep wary of anything o-odd or suspicious I s-see. You can c-count on me sir!"

Hey, at least she'd been able to slip that one in!

Swiftly, she almost ran down the stairs, and joined Snape where he stood outside the gargoyle. Together they marched back to the Slytherin dorms in silence, both thinking on the Headmaster's words.

After his martyr had left to follow Severus, Albus's genial smile dropped, and he began angrily pacing the length of his office. He didn't know what to be more infuriated at, the blasted restriction on the Sorting Hat, or that the girl had chosen now of all times to throw her tantrum! Satan's temptation, this couldn't have come at a worse time!

No, it wouldn't do any good at all to fume and bluster: it wasn't good for his plans, nor his state of
mind. Breathing out slowly, he attempted to regain his mental equanimity, knowing that he'd have to approach the problem with a clear head. After a few minutes, he felt sufficiently at peace, and so he began to analyze the situation.

James's reports had said nothing of this level of brattish petulance, but he now believed he understood why. He had been foolish when he accepted James's words at face value, it was the fault of all parents to overlook the worst traits of their children. Angels above, that was the only reason that his mother could have ignored the dark rage and unnatural desires which had ensnared his younger self, and leave him to live in sin with Gellert!

Yes, the martyr's attempt to lash out at her father had left him in a troublesome situation, but not nearly an insurmountable one. There were a scant few children of light families in Slytherin after all—heaven knows how—and he could enlist one, or better yet all of them to steer her in the right direction. Whoever her lighter peers didn't influence her away from, Severus could take care of: he was oath-bound to protect her interests, after all.

Even though her sorting had initially worried him, he could see that his efforts at ensuring a proper childhood had not gone to waste. He clearly saw, both in her mind and the real world, that she was submissive to earthly authorities, and her decision to emulate James by playing a prank—despite the fact that James himself was the target—showed a deep need to connect with him, and a craving for his praise and acceptance.

As Albus thought, his face evened out to a more neutral expression. While he knew this might be a minor problem, his general plans were going exactly as they should be. All he needed to do was ensure that Danny would ignore his moral compass when it came to his sister's mistaken placement, and forge a deeper connection with her. Perhaps he could even arrange a love interest to tie her even more strongly to the light? Perhaps the Weasley boy?

No, Albus thought, he wouldn't do that to one of the sons of the light. He was sure that Iris would make an excellent wife—humility was not only an ideal trait for martyrs, but for homemakers as well—but he would not burden any husband or children with the weight of her destiny. Iris was fated to die for the sins of the wizarding world, and he would not allow her to form a relationship, knowing that it would only end in the pain of loss.

Sitting back in his chair, relaxed, Albus began to further plan Iris's future at Hogwarts. He knew someone as meek as her would never seek out the third-floor corridor on her own, so he needed to give her a little push.

Albus didn't know how Tom's twisted, broken spirit would manage to enter his school, but he knew that no matter how it did, he would be ready, and one way or another, Iris Potter would meet her final destiny.

Chapter End Notes

Ok yeah, the Sorting Hat is probably my favorite character to write, bar none. I can't promise he'll make a reappearance, but I'll do my very best.

—

The title for this chapter also comes from the Book of Matthew: "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of!"
This mention of snakes, unlike the one which gave the last chapter, is much more in line with the rest of the Christian Bible, making snakes untrustworthy, deceitful, and evil.

—

Fanfic Rec is Fantastic Elves and Where to Find Them by evansentranced, one of my all-time favorite crack-fics.

—

If you're wondering why Dumbledore didn't learn about Iris's serious doubts about his political position, it's due to two things:

One, he was only doing a surface scan, so he could only see basic emotions, feelings, and reactions, and not concrete memories.

Two, Iris has a long tradition of shoving her emotions down into "Dursley-space", which would let her more "scandalous" emotions mostly avoid the cursory surface scans Dumbledore is performing.

Of course, Iris wouldn't have any defense against a more active attempt to read her mind, but that would require that Dumbledore cast the Legilimens spell at her, which would be a very obvious red flag that something was up.

—

If you're wondering, you can google the Anglo-Saxon words the Hat uses. The only one I had to create and conjugate on my own was one of the periodic muggle persecutions of mages in my universe, the "Clænsung Egan-Griman Æþelstanes". It means something like "Athelstan's Cleansing of the Witches" in Modern English, and refers to the famous English King Æthelstan, who reigned a few decades before Hogwarts's founding date and led a series of persecutions on "witchcraft".

Eges-Grimme (Gen. Egan-Grimman) is a derogatory term for mages that has no equivalent in English, literally meaning "frightful masks", referring to the idea that mages concealed their evil underneath a "mask" of humanity.
As Iris and her new friends sat down in the Arithmancy classroom, they could hear the Gryffindors they shared the class with eagerly chat amongst themselves.

"So…" Iris said, turning to where Daphne and Theo were sitting on her right, "I've been meaning to ask. How exactly does arithmancy manage to translate magical effects to spells? I could understand the basic theory for almost all of the other classes, but the Arithmancy textbook was really difficult."

"Honestly", Theo replied, "I don't really understand it either. It's supposed to be the theory behind all magic, but I haven't really read much into it, so I don't get it. Daphne probably knows though, don't you?"

"Well… it's actually a bit of a common error to say that Arithmancy is the foundation of all the magic. Arithmancy is actually just one of the two uses of the discipline we call 'magical mathematics', along with s— certain types of higher-level spells that Arithmancy is based on. Arithmancy is considered the 'truest' expression of magical mathematics by… dominant academics though, so generally, you'll see the two equivocated."

"Now," she said, "as to what exactly Arithmancy entails… well I suppose you'll just have to wait and find out like the rest of the students, now won't you?"

After Theo playfully butted her shoulder, she clarified: "I'm honest, I don't know very much myself beyond the absolute basics, and I'm sure Professor Vector can explain it much better than I ever could. Be careful though, I've heard he's pretty biased against Slytherins, especially us… 'dark creatures'."

"Also, Iris, don't feel bad about not understanding the textbook. My mother is quite adept at Magical Mathematics, and she's repeatedly criticized Prof. Vector's choice of textbook as being far too advanced for a beginner's class."

As if summoned by Daphne's reference, the professor in question chose that moment to stride through the door, as a loud gong rang throughout the castle. Dante jumped from where he was lightly napping in his seat.

"Good morning class! My names is Séamus Vector, and I'll be your Professor of Arithmancy for the next seven years. I expect to be addressed as either 'Professor', 'Professor Vector', or 'Sir'."

"Now, before we begin, I'm curious, does anyone here feel that they can give the class a good, introductory definition of Arithmancy?"

Hermione's hand shot up immediately; Iris smiled at her fondly.
"Yes, Ms…"

"Granger, Sir!"

"Ms. Granger then. Could you give the class a brief summary of the field of arithmancy?"

"Well sir, arithmancy has to do with creating mathematical equations to describe the physical forms and effects of spells, to act as a map to express the mathematical equations of certain phonological—"

"I think that's enough for now, Ms. Granger, we don't want to give the whole semester's content away!"

Hermione blushed fetchingly and ducked her head as the whole glass chucked. Iris gave her a supportive nod and grin.

"Yes, as Ms. Granger said, Arithmancy describes the process of describing magical effects through the use of equations. However, what she did not tell you was that those equation are not the kind that our more newly-gifted students would find at their muggle primary school, or even most muggle colleges! Indeed, where muggle mathematics, with the exception of very high levels, only deal with the three physical dimensions, Arithmancy deals with the higher dimensions necessary to describe magic."

Ron raised his hand, and began to speak without being called upon.

"Sir, what exactly—"

"Patience, Mr. Weasley," the Professor said, slightly amused, "is a great virtue. If you'll let me finish, I'll most likely answer your question."

"Now, higher dimensions. I'm sure many of you, Mr. Weasley most likely included, are wondering what exactly what a higher dimension is, and how it relates to magic."

With a precise wave of his wand, the Professor summoned a chalkboard from across the classroom.

"Now", he said, drawing a straight dash on the chalkboard, "this, right here, is an object in a single dimension."

Danny piped up: "It's… it's a line? What does a line have to do with math?"

"Exactly Mr. Potter, a well-thought question!"

"You see class, this isn't simply a line, it can also be understood as a one-dimensional object. This means that there is only one axis of possible movement and manipulation in this object, the right-left axis, or, in Arithmantic parlance, the First Axis."

"I see many of you still look confused. Think of it in more practical terms. Imagine that you're walking down a narrow path, so narrow that it can only fit one person. Now, when you walk, the only way you can walk is forward or backward. This is the axis of movement, a path along which one can step."

"Now, to make things clearer, let's consider a two-dimensional object" He paused, and drew four more straight lines on the chalkboard, forming a square.

"You see, in this two-dimensional shape, the square, we've added another axis of movement, the Second Axis. If we're using our path example from earlier, this is like taking that path, and
expanding sideways to form a large paved area. Not only can you step forward or backwards, you can now also step left or right."

"The physical world that we see, then, is filled with objects in three dimensions. We have our First Axis, walking forward and backward, our Second Axis, walking left or right, and our Third Axis, jumping up or falling down. Are there any questions so far?"

A Slytherin boy down near the front raised his hand.

"Yes, Mr.… Leopold?"

"U-um, Professor, how is it one-dimensional, if you can walk forward and backward. Wouldn't that be—?"

"Well, as it states in the textbook, one the very second page in fact, movement forward and movement backward along an axis can be considered simple mirror images of each other, one occurring in the positive direction, and one in the negative."

He looked around at the class. "As strange as it might seem to you all, in Arithmancy you must consider walking left not as walking in a distinct direction, but as walking negative right."

"Now," he said, turning back to the board and scrawling several names and dates, "many of you may be wondering, this is all well and good, but how does it relate to magic? Well, to understand that, we must first understand a bit of history."

"Before the publishing of Sir Francis Bacon's 'New Magic from the Fires of Righteousness', wands were merely used as a focus for magic, something to channel one's magic through. A wizard or witch would channel their magic through the wand, and into an object, in order to change or manipulate its outer form. Now, while this is indeed a powerful form of magic, it is not nearly the length or breadth of what magic could do, and so the field of magical mathematics was developed."

"What was so revolutionary about Bacon's work was his adaptation of the muggle art of algebra, used to describe the physical world, as the basis for an entirely new, magical form of mathematics he called Arithmancy, used to describe the properties and effects of magic."

"Bacon discovered that spells, in essence, could be understood as constructs in a seven-dimensional space, with their physical forms being described in the three lower dimensions, and their magical effects being described in the four higher."

"Now," he said, chuckling, "I don't expect any of you to gain an ability to picture the seven-dimensional forms of spells by the end of this year, nothing like that. I assure you, that ability only comes to those with years and years of Arithmancy training."

"However! It is the goal of this class, and your first year of arithmancy education, to be able to accurately understand and explain the equations for six basic magical effects: lighting, dimming, levitation, changing color, and force projection. You will also be expected to explain, but not demonstrate, how those five magical effects can translate into the components of wanded spellcasting."

To Iris's confusion, there were a few groans from the Gryffindor side of the classroom.

"Yes, yes, I know that many of your parents have told you that you will learn to design your own spells in this class. And you will, I assure you, starting in your fifth year."

"I would like to stress this point: experimenting with original spells unsupervised is dangerous. Even
once we've learned how to translate these equations into incantations and wand movements, I do not want any of you to go around thinking you can use them to make your own magic."

He looked at the Gryffindors, who were doing their (frankly pathetic) best to mask their excitement. "I know it may seem like I'm just some stuffy old authority figure giving you a needless warning, because I don't want you to perform 'cool magic', as another one of my first years once put it, but I assure you, I am deathly serious. Anyone caught developing their own spells unsupervised even after fifth year, will be suspended from Hogwarts, and quite possibly expelled."

Well, the Gryffindors sure were looking a bit less enthusiastic now.

"Do you all know what happened to the last student that was caught experimenting with his own spells in Hogwarts? No? Well let me tell you. It was around twenty years ago, and he was a fourth year named Jesse Massen. He thought he could develop a color-changing variant of the lumos charm using all the arithmetical knowledge he'd gained in this class."

"Now, I'm sure Mr. Massen was thinking what many of you are right now: 'the lumos charm? How could experimenting with that be dangerous? It's just a little glow of light!' He believed that he was exempt from my warnings, because the spell he was altering was too simple to ever possibly hurt him."

"Do you know what happened to Jesse Massen, who was working on a spell too simple to ever go wrong? They had to pick him off of his dorm room walls."

The whole class was completely silent, with many students, even the Slytherins, looking quite queasy.

"That is why, students, you will be suspended for experimenting with spell creation. Not only for your own safety, but for the safety of others. What do you think would have happened, if Jesse Massen had decided to work on his spell when some of his dormmates were present?"

"Yes," he said to the gasps of the class, "exactly."

After around thirty seconds of silence, his glare receded, and he turned back to the chalkboard.

"Well! Now that we've covered that bit of nastiness, let's resume where we left off!"

He turned towards the Slytherin side of the classroom. "Mr. Leopold! Since you were so eager to interrupt during my lecture, perhaps you could help me pass out these copies of the course syllabus?"

The rest of the class proceeded without further gruesome interruption, covering the goals and requirements of the course in further detail, and the magical effects they'd be learning to describe.

"Iris! Iris! Hey, Iris!"

Startled by the call for her, Iris turned around, and saw Hermione frantically motioning for her.

Iris's face broke out in a beaming smile. "Hey, Hermione! How are you! I haven't seen you since the train!"

"Oh my word Iris it's been incredible! You know I don't think magic being real had really sunk in until now, it's like I knew that it was, but I didn't know it, not until I got to Hogwarts where everything was just so, well, magical! I'm so excited, Hogwarts has one of the largest libraries in the whole world! I can't wait to go explore it, there are just so many new things about the magical world
that I have no idea about! Did you know that they actually still have Lords in charge of their government here? There's just so many new and different things, I can't wait to get to know all about it!"

"I know!", Iris said, Hermione's exuberance beginning to affect her, "Isn't it so wonderful? It's like, all our lives, we've known that we were different, and now we finally know why! I can't wait to learn everything about magic!"

Hermione frantically nodded her head at each of Iris's points.

"I know! I was so worried about being behind because my parents don't have magic, but everyone in Gryffindor tower is just so nice and helpful! They told me that most of the students from families with magic won't know any more than I do, so I should be fine! It's actually really funny, they all seemed so curious and excited about the muggle world, almost as much as I am about the wizarding one!"

Iris's smile grew strained at the mention of muggles, but was soon replaced by a genuine grin at Hermione's adorable earnestness.

"Yeah," she said, looking around for her Slytherin friends, "I actually made a bunch of friends in my new house, they've all been really helpful in understanding my new world and culture. Oh, there they are! Hey guys, come over here!"

Iris waved the rest of the Slytherin sixsome over, ignoring their guarded looks.

"Hermione, these are my new friends, Draco Malfoy, Theo Nott, Daphne Greengrass, and Blaise and Dante Zabini. Guys, this is Hermione Granger, I met her on the train."

When she saw none of the others were making moves to greet Hermione, Blaise stepped up, and introduced herself with a tight smile. "Hello, Ms… Granger, was it? I'm Blaise Zabini, it's very nice to meet you. While I'd love to talk to you, and meet one of Iris's other friends, we really must be getting to our charms class with the Ravenclaws."

Shelving their obvious reluctance as an issue for later, Iris turned back to Hermione. "Hey, Hermione, it was so great seeing you, but we really do have to go. Do you want to meet up in the library sometime, so we can explore it together? How about Saturday?"

Hermione, seemingly oblivious to Blaise's coldness, nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, I'd love that! It was so nice to meet you Blaise, and all the rest of you too, you should all come with us! I'll see you on Saturday, Iris!"

As Hermione scampered off to join the retreating Gryffindors, Blaise turned to Iris with a serious look on her face.

"Darling, I'd be… careful with that one, if I were you."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Iris, she's a mudblood", Dante said, an uncharacteristically serious look on his face, "she may seem all bright and eager about magic now, but I'm telling you, in five weeks she'll be talking about how 'backwards' the magical world is, and how all the 'dark wizards' need to be kicked out of Hogwarts before they can sacrifice her in a blood orgy, or whatever other bloody nonsense they'll tell her up in Gryffindor tower."

"What? Hermione's not like that! She's nice, and wonderful, and really caring! Sure, she can get
"Darling", Blaise cut back in, "I know that she probably *seems* that way now, but she's a *mudblood* in Gryffindor. You know what the muds think about vampires, do you really think that the Gryffindors will *discourage* that notion? I guarantee that by Samhain, she'll spend all your conversations telling you about what an 'awful shame' it is that 'dark creatures' like me are allowed to prey on 'innocent light witches and wizards'."

"Iris," Dante interjected, "for Circe's sake, the muds will even racially discriminate against *other muds*, and they're the same bloody race! How do you think they react to races that are *actually* different? And not one that claims to be the same as them, like the Nic sorcerers!"

Iris was shocked. She understood where her friends were coming from, she really did, but were they really ready to judge Hermione based on what all those *other* mudbloods had done? They didn't even know her!

"Morgana, darling, think about *you*," Blaise said, grabbing Iris's hand in concern, "How do you think she'll react learning that you could 'steal her face' whenever you wanted? The mudbloods are the chief supporters of that 'Talent Registry' Dumbledore proposed!"

"Blaise…" Iris said, shocked, "I… I don't think that Hermione's like that at all. She's so wonderful, I can't see her acting like any of those other mudbloods. I mean, isn't one of the biggest Rell policy goals to take mudbloods away from the muds? If you believe that, then you *can't* believe that she'd believe those awful things just because she's a mudblood!"

"Iris" Draco said, "I get why you'd think that, but the mudblood *adoptions*… They're *adoptions*. It's not… it's when they're babies, not when they're twelve! Once they start Hogwarts, they've already gotten all those mud ideas about hating other races rattling around in their heads, and then they all get swept up by the Nics, who start prattling on about the muds' 'superior culture'! You really think that little mudblood will be different?"

"She's not 'my little' anything Draco!"

Realizing she was almost yelling, Iris took a deep breath, and composed herself. "Look guys, I realize that you're only looking out for me, and I really appreciate that. But I promise, Hermione is *different*. Even if she does start talking about how we're all evil, I'll be there to explain things to her, and set her straight."

"Alright…", Dante said, raising his hand and cutting his bond-mate off, "we believe you, Iris. We just… we just don't want her to go breaking your heart or anything, alright? Promise you'll come to us wh—…. *if* she really ends up hurting you?"

Cracking a slight smile at Dante's protective tone, Iris nodded. "Alright Dante, I will, I promise."

Shocking both herself and Dante, she leaned over, and embraced Dante in a brief hug.

"Thank you, really."

"Alright!" Draco said, either not knowing or caring about the stunned faces of the rest of the group, "now that we're done fighting, let's go! We're gonna be late for charms, and I wanna make a good impression on Professor Flitwick! He's a quarter Coblynau, you know!"

The rest of the group laughed as Draco shot off down the hallway, as the rest of the group followed, walking closely together. Realizing Blaise hadn't let go of her arm, Iris was about to pull back, until she paused. After a moment, she relaxed her arm, and allowed Blaise to pull her the rest of the way
to class, rubbing slow circles on the back of her hand.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter title comes from the book by Archimedes of the same name, which is one of the first major mathematical texts ever written. I've always thought it was way too badass of a name to use in a math paper, so I'm using it here.

Seriously, it sounds like an epithet for Death. Like, he reckons the sand falling in the hourglass of your life, or something.

—

Fanfic Rec is Rebirth by Athey. She writes perhaps the only realistic, non-creepy HP/LV slash I've ever seen. With anyone else, the age difference makes it creepy real fast, but this fic, along with a few of her others, have several inventive, original way to make it work quite well.

—

Yes, Vector is a man in this fic, with a name change.

Firstly, if you haven't noticed by now, there's a pretty significant gender imbalance among prominent Nics. Their values say that women should be homemakers first, remember? Sprout is actually only female professor in the school, and that's only because Herbology is a 'woman's discipline'. You'll find several prominent female characters from canon have been gender-swapped in this fic.

Secondly, it's not the masculine version of her canon name, "Septimius Vector", because that's a name coming from a Roman emperor, and that is a very seclusionist type of name in this fic. Séamus is the Irish from of James, a popular Integrationist name, as evidenced by James Potter. If I'd kept Vector as a women, I'd have made her "Sheena".
Concupiscence

Chapter Summary

Iris gets a letter from "home‖.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Blaise’s voice broke through the morning chatter at the Slytherin table, as Iris and Daphne were animatedly talking about their favorite charms in the first-year textbook.

“Looks like you have a letter, darling.”

Iris turned away from her newest friend to look at the bright white owl perched on the tabletop.

“What? Oh, it’s probably from James”

The rest of the sixsome looked at her in concern.

“Relax guys, I… I’m pretty sure I’ll be able to handle whatever he says to me. As long as he’s not here, yelling or anything, I think… I think I’ll be able to handle it.”

Dante’s mouth turned downward in a small frown. “…alright, Iris, if you say so. Just remember, we’re all here for you if you need to get away from everyone, or just need to talk. Promise me you’ll come to one of us if you start to have another panic attack?”

Having friends was nice, Iris thought. She could get used to this.

“Y-yeah… You g-guys are my… friends… I promise I’ll tell you…”

Iris told herself that the tear she was wiping away was due to nervousness at the letter. Based on the softening expressions of the rest of the six, they wouldn’t have believed her.

Steeling herself, and gripping a worried-looking Blaise’s hand for support, Iris reached to open the letter, when her thought process was stopped in its tracks.

“Wait, dearest, before you start, you’ll have to translate for me”

…

Was… was Blaise’s head on her shoulder?

Wow, was this really what her hair looked like when she blushed?

And why was Daphne rolling her eyes and mouthing something at Dante?

“B-B-B-Blaise, wh-wh-”

“Oh relax, Iris darling, I’m just trying to read your letter. Unfortunately, my English isn’t all that good, so I’ll need you to read it to me. Don’t worry, I’m an excellent listener…”
Suddenly, Blaise’s smirking head was jerked away by an amused Daphne.

“Down, girl!”

“Damnit Daphne, why do you have to ruin my fun?”

“Wh-­wh-wh–”

“Potter, snap out of it!”

Closing her eyes and taking a deep breath, Iris centered herself, and faced Daphne.

Wow, Daphne was really close to her face.

Iris blushed, and closed her eyes again.

“What did you mean about needing me to translate?”

Blaise smirked from the seat across the table that Daphne had shoved her into. “Darling, Dante and I are from Italia, not Britannia; Genoa to be exact. The only other language we speak besides Latin is Ligurian Italian. Dante knows a little bit of English, but I don’t speak any.”

“Oh, that makes sense, I guess. I’m not to good at translating though, I’m still integrating the potion…”

“Get Daphne or Theo to do it, darling, they both speak English. If I recall correctly, Daphne will let off some fascinating English profanity when she gets… excited. And don’t even get me started on the Welsh!”

Iris turned around, pointedly ignoring Blaise’s attempts to embarrass her, much to the rest of the group’s amusement.

“Hey, Theo, would you mind reading this out for me? I assume your family is from England?”

“Oh, you’re no fun, darling.”

Theo chuckled at Blaise’s pout. “I’d be happy to. And yes, we’ve lived in Yorkshire since the thirteenth century.”

Pausing as he grabbed the letter, Theo frowned. “Iris… this letter probably has some pretty personal stuff in it. Are you sure you’re alright with the five of us hearing it? You won’t be able to omit certain parts if you’re not the one reading it out.”

Without a seconds thought, Iris pushed the letter into his hands.

“Theo… You, Blaise, Dante, and Draco—and Greengrass right after—were some of the very first people to ever show me kindness in the magical world. For someone raised like me, that means a lot. Read out the letter.”

Damnit, those soft, caring expressions were back again.

“Hey, Potter? Feel… feel free to call me Daphne, if you’d like. I’d really like to be your friend too.”

And those weren’t tears, she just had a strong reaction to the caramelized onion in this pudding.

“Th-thanks… Daphne.”
With one last glance at Iris, Theo unfolded the paper—not parchment, Iris noticed—and began to read.

Dear Iris,

We’d just like to say for the very first thing, that we’re not angry, we’re just disappointed. We thought you were more than mature enough to not try to purposefully botch your sorting just to get back at us, but apparently, that was a mistaken assumption. Do you really hate us that much, that you’d try to go into Slytherin of all places just to spite us? Is this about leaving you with the Dursleys, and not growing up a celebrity like your brother? We know you’re better than that.

Your father just got out of the floo with the Headmaster, and he’s assured us that he’s already suitably chastised you, and we feel he can inform you of the severity and consequences of you actions better than we ever could. Rest assured though, come winter break, we will be having a long talk about responsibility and trust.

Iris, we all know that Slytherin isn’t the place for you, so we don’t know who you were trying to fool with your little stunt. Did you think we’d try to bring you closer, trying to keep you in communion with the light? Shame on you Iris Potter, abusing our love and care like that, shame!

The only thing that seems to make this situation slightly better for you is that the Headmaster told us you did seem honestly shocked that a resorting wasn’t possible. We hope we assume correctly that you didn’t plan to permanently stay in Slytherin. If you did mean to stay in Slytherin, for whatever unfathomable reason, we assure you that our talk this break will be very different, and we will make good on some of those promises your Dad made to you on your first visit to the manor.

However, assuming you haven’t cut off your nose to spite your face, it’s very likely that you’re panicking right now, because you have no idea who to associate with, if anyone, in a house so filled with darkness. Luckily, we’ve scoured allies in the Wizengamot with the help of the Headmaster, and we’ve produced a list of suitably light company for you to keep. Lord help you, if your little mistake leads you into temptation, and you begin to associate with the darker wizards of that house, or worse, the dark creatures, we will do whatever necessary to prevent you from falling into temptation.

We want to convey to you the gravity of the situation your foolishness as placed you in, but we don’t want you to lose all hope. It is fully possible for you to have a wonderful and exciting Hogwarts experience living in the Slytherin dorms, as long as you ensure you have plenty of Gryffindor friends, stay close to your brother, and only associate with the lighter elements of your house when necessary. Despite all the nastiness of this letter, we do quite dearly love you, and we wish you the happiest of Hogwarts experiences, despite your situation.


Love,

Mum and Dad

P.S. Iris, this is your dad. I know more than anyone that pranking can be fantastic, but I need you to
understand that this is too far. I know how guilty the Headmaster can make you feel, so I know that getting our letter right after that talk must be making you feel really awful, but I hope you understand that we’re only doing this because we love you. Iris, being a Potter in Slytherin is going to be dangerous, even if you only stick to the light and light-neutral kids.

That said, you know I’m not one to leave one of my kids miserable, so I’ll say this: your new sorting could actually be a great pranking opportunity! If you want to unleash that pranking spirit that made you trick the Sorting Hat (and I still can’t believe you managed to fool that old rag), try collaborating with your brother on something to release in the Slytherin common rooms! He has my old copy of the Marauder’s Grimoire, so he has a whole library of pranking spells to use. I don’t want to give you too many ideas, you should come up with them yourselves like a proper prankster, but may Sirius and I suggest a little spell in section seven that turns people’s clothes invisible? Imagine placing that on the common room door for people leaving!

P.P.S. Iris, honey, this is your mother speaking. I hope that both our letter and your talk with the Headmaster have adequately conveyed the enormity of your mistake, and you feel suitably penitent and horrified at your transgressions against both us and God. Consorting with darkness, even in jest, is a sure path to temptation, and we both love you far too much to allow you to be tempted. In this vein, I’ve included a second letter after this with a talk I believe is far past due, from mother to daughter. It’s not another chastisement, don’t worry, but it is some advice that my own mother gave me when I was around your age, and that I believe you need to hear as a young woman already well on her way to adulthood.

Theo looked up at Iris, who was absolutely seething in her seat. Even though he’d seen her anger when talking about her parents before, especially her father, it was another thing to come face to face with it.

“Should I c–”

“Don’t you dare fucking stop reading.”

“Well, alright then, that’s settled.”

He opened the second sheet of paper.

Iris, my dearest,

This is a difficult letter to write for any mother, but I believe that it contains advice that can help you on your path through life, and which may even end up saving your immortal being on some dark night of the soul a few years down the line. My mother sat me down and told me this in a talk when I was nine, and I believe it helped me enormously an uncountable number of times during my early, confused years as a teenager.

As you most likely know, you began maturing into your teenage years a few years ago, and perhaps, at that time, began to experience certain desires that were new to you. Now Iris, don’t stop reading! I know this may be uncomfortable to discuss with your mother, but I promise you, this is advice you need to hear!

Theo turned to look at Iris silently quirking an eyebrow.

Iris glared. “Well, it’s a good thing she’s not anything close to resembling a maternal figure, so this
conversation isn’t awkward.”

He turned back to the letter without comment.

Now, as I was saying, there comes a time in every young woman’s life where she begins to experience certain desires, desires which may pressure her into performing certain acts which have devastating consequences. Now, I know that the Dursleys are an upstanding Anglican family, so you most likely never had the opportunity to act on these desires before now, but I was a young woman in Hogwarts at one point as well, and I know the temptation to act out now that you’re free from their—and our—protective wing.

Iris, I must warn you, while it may seem appealing, sexual intercourse at your age, before marriage, is never worth it. Your virginity is something incredibly precious to you, gifted by God himself, and to lose it to the first sweet-talking boy who charms your knickers off would be an unfathomable tragedy. Sex is the sacred union of the male and the female in flesh, created by God in the union of Adam and Eve in Eden.

I cannot describe to you the utter joy and fulfillment that comes to submitting yourself to a righteous, honorable man after your nuptials, coming together as one in the flesh with the knowledge that you shall never be separated. I want that for you, Iris, and listening to your baser, fleshly instincts will only guide you off of the path of the spirit.

Now, for the more difficult conversation. Now Iris, while your flesh may indeed lust for the attentions of young men, there are other, even more dangerous desires to consider. I know that as a young woman, in a dorm surrounded by other young witches, you may be presented with certain temptations, particularly temptations to engage in certain unmentionable, unnatural acts with said witches. Particularly, as a witch with metamorphism, you may even be pressured to change your God-given gender, and attempt a poor caricature of God’s righteous creation.

Now, unlike the desire for unwedded union, these desires are entirely unnatural, and a perversion of God’s righteous order. The fallen state of man has left many temptations of the flesh for young women of the light to consider, and many tempters who would seek to ensnare those considerations. The desires you feel may seem beautiful, natural, and full of God’s vivacity, but I assure you, they are not. Scripture is very clear: “feminæ [peccantis] eorum immut[ant] naturalem usum in eum usum qui est contra naturam.”* (Rom. 1:26).

I pray fervently that you heed my advice Iris, for momentary fleeting pleasure of the flesh is no substitute for eternal salvation! I warn you Iris, there are indeed many temptresses who seek the flesh of young maidens of the light, especially those who would resort to dark magics to gain a hold on your heart.

Many of the dark creatures you now call ‘classmates’ thanks to your foolish decision have perverted the natural magics given to them by God, turning them from serving humanity to controlling humanity. I know in particular there are several vampire and veela students in the dorms you now reside in, and any one of them could use their foul magics to ensnare you in the form of a mind-altering allure or devious dark enchantment.

If all my arguments prior have not convinced you, perhaps this shall: I myself had an experience with these fleshly lusts, and almost paid dearly for it, not only with my soul, but with my life. In my second year in Ravenclaw tower, I feel deeply under the spell of my own corporal sinfulness, leaning be into unnatural desires, and so fell victim to the seductions of my yearchmates, Solveig O’Connor.

We had a brief, unnatural ‘relationship’ that lasted around a month, and by the end of it, I was so ensnared by my bodily lusts that I had prepared myself to hand her my virginity! I am forever
grateful that my roommate, and dear friend to this day, Felicity-Perpetua, had realized something was amiss with our overly-amicable nature, and was able to contact my mother and parish priest before my sin compelled me to take that final step.

If you are wondering how this experience would jeopardize my life, than listen to this, and understand the moral characters and futures of those who would embrace sin and temptation: in my sixth year, that girl began to seriously date Cygnus Trask, along with several other men and women, and after Hogwarts, ended up marrying him. From your father’s rants, you should know who Cygnus Trask is, but if you don’t: he’s one of the most prolific Death Eaters that escaped charges by hiding their mark. In your father’s time in the Order of the Phoenix, he crossed wands with both Trask and Solveig many times, both seeking nothing more than to brutally murder him for his advocacy for truth and justice. Thanks to their service to You-Know-Who and the forces of darkness, their souls are irrevocably bound for the fires of damnation, with no hope of salvation or light.

I shall close my letter on that horrifying note as a final example of the horrors and tragedies that arise from falling to temptation, and the awful fates which await those who submit to them in place of their rightful Lord and Savior.

I will always love you Iris,

Mum

By the end of the first letter, Iris was fuming, and by the end of the second, she was ready to murder James, or Miriam, or both, no matter the consequences.

“Those absolute, utter BASTARDS!”

“Iris…” Blaise said, wide-eyed, “are you…how are you doing? That was absolutely horrid.”

“Oh, I’m doing just fine, let me assure you, no panic attacks today! No, it’s just cold, unrelenting fury! How dare they condescend to me like that? How dare they try to child me, as if they were loving parents who’d been there all my life?”

“Oh, they “know” I didn’t belong in Slytherin? That I’m a good Christian girl who resist temptation and sin? How! They’ve seen me five times in my life, and barley spoken to me in each!”

“And you guys, too! I can’t believe they said those things about you! I knew they were bad about other races when we went to Ollivander’s, but Je– Circe, this is insane! Talking about how you’d use your ‘dark powers’ to seduce me!”

After a few seconds of silence, Draco spoke up, still reeling. “I… I knew the Potters were bad, even for Nics, but I never knew just how bad. I mean, holy shit guys, did you hear that? Miriam Potter is a fucking psycho!”

“I know, she’s fucking insane! I’m telling you, when I was at Potter Manor, I actually saw a flog in her study! She fucking beats herself to ward of ‘unnatural desires’? Why, because she fell in love with a beautiful witch in her dorm, like a normal per–”

“Breathe, darling.” Blaise’s arm snaked around Iris’s shoulder, and pulled her into the other girl’s not-insignificant bust. “Just breathe.”

Strangely enough, Iris found it quite hard to do that at the moment, all her breath apparently having gone to fanning the red-hot bellows that seemed to be inside her cheeks and hair.

Well, at least she wasn’t angry anymore.
Wow, this was really nice.

Why didn’t she do this more often?

She just felt so safe and secure wrapped in Blaise’s arms.

She couldn’t believe that Blaise’s chest really was as comfortable as it looked when Iris stared at it.

Wait! Wh–

For the second time that week, Iris snapped out of an allure-induced calm, and jumped back from Blaise.

“Welcome back, darling! This seems to be becoming a regular occasion.”

Iris regained control of herself, sitting about a half-foot further away from Blaise than she was during her rant.

“S-sorry Blaise, I don’t know what came over me. I was just so angry… Thanks for snapping me out of it.”

“Oh I don’t mind at all, Iris dear. I have to say, you have an adorable sigh.”

“…”

“…”

“You know what, I’ll take it.”

*[sinful] women exchange natural practices for those practices that are against nature*
Fanfic Rec is The Cult of Dionysus, by Ynyr. It's a very strange fic, with a fascinating concept, and brilliant execution.

Don't worry, this'll be the last you'll see of the overt, crazy-devout Catholicism for a while, if you're getting tired of it.

Title comes from one from the King James text of one of Paul's Epistles, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: "possess [your] vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence"

Paul is by far the most influential ideologue in the early Christian Church, and as a result, many of his ideas form the basis of Catholic ideas about sanctity and purity today. I'm actually basing Miriam, in part, directly off of him.

I think the full, more readable quote (from the NIV) will provide you a much better understanding of why I chose this particular quote from Paul, out of many he has concerning sex and sexuality: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God."

And if you're wondering, Draco does speak English, but he had to learn it the hard way, so its only at a very basic level. His other two languages are Parisian French and Breton, using a language potion for the former.

Same with Daphne, she was raised speaking Latin and Welsh; remember from Chapter 6, you can only take one language potion every seven years. Out of all of them, Iris was the only one raised speaking English.
Take Precaution, Guard Yourselves

Chapter Summary

Professor Quirrell's class sure is something...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Two days after Iris had met up with Hermione in the hallway, the sixsome were loitering outside the door to the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, waiting for the class to unlock. As they chatted idly about the sixth year prefect, they were interrupted when none other than Danny Potter stepped directly into their path.

“Oh man, I can’t wait for this class,” Iris’s estranged twin said smugly, “Quirinus Quirrell is supposed to be a super powerful wand-for-hire, whose specialty is hunting down dark creatures.”

“Hey Zabini,” he said, his glare suddenly turning fierce, “I’m gonna have a conversation with him after class, I wonder if whatever dyke mind control you’ve got on my sister is enough to call you rogue?”

Iris could feel Blaise and Dante tense in front of her, as Draco and Daphne warily looked around at the small crowd of mixed houses that had gathered around them. Iris prepared to fight back her minor panic attack, and come to her friends’ defense, when Danny turned to her, sneering.

Alright, major panic attack now. Fucking mini-Dudley.

“Really sis, this is your last chance to get out. I’m gonna go hardcore on the snakes this year, especially those five that you’re all buddy-buddy with. I know that bloodsucker mind control shit only works if you want it to, so I’m only gonna give you one more chance to stop torturing mom and dad. Seriously! They’re dying of worry because of your selfish tantrum, and I–”

It was then that Theo walked out from behind Draco, and bumped straight into Danny.

“Oh! Sorry Potter, I didn’t notice you there. would you mind moving? We’re almost late, and I don’t want to make a bad impression on Professor Quirrell.”

“So Draco, like I was saying before, the key to success in defense isn’t in your spell corpus, its in your tactics and application. You need to know–”

“Hey! Don’t ignore me, I was talking to you!”

“Um…. Alright?” he said, once again attempting to push past Danny, “So anyways, you need to know not just what the spell does in isolation, but what is does in–”

“Shut UP about bloody defense Nott! Pay attention to ME!”

“…”

“…Damn Iris, you were right, your brother really does have the ‘celebrity mindset’.”
At this point, the crowd completely lost control of their stifled laughter, as Danny’s cheeks flushed a furious red. Finally managing to walk past him, Theo led the rest of the group through the now-open door, into the defense classroom, all the time wearing a wide smirk.

“Good morning class”, Iris heard from the back of the classroom, right after the bell rang.

The whole class whipped around in shock.

The professor, casually leaning on a wall at the back of the class, was a tall, pale man, with well-built physique clearly visible under his traditional dueling robes. He had well-groomed brown hair, parted in a wave off to the side, and stared around at the class with piercing blue eyes.

“My name is Quirinus Quirrell,” the man said in a smooth, cultured voice, “and I will be your professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts, more colloquially known as ‘DADA’.”

“I know you might feel a bit alarmed at my… sudden entrance,” he said, striding down to the wide-open front of the lecture hall, “but I selected this method of quite deliberately.”

His face curved into a sharp smirk. “I assure you, I only receive enjoyment from shocking students when it comes to their grades.”

“…”

“That was a joke, class. Relax yourselves.”

“Now, are there any volunteers who could explain to me exactly why I chose to stand at the backroom of the classroom, under and invisibility charm? I assure you, it is not because of the riveting conversations I overheard.”

“Although,” he said, his smirk widening, “Ms…. Brown, is it? I assure you quite heartily that my class is not in fact ‘bloody useless in the real world’, and that if your young male friend is indeed in, as you put it, ‘happily-ever-after love’ with you, he would most certainly not be courting other wizards and witches behind your back.”

His eyes roved the room as the rest of the class snickered. “Any volunteers to answer my question?”

Iris sighed fondly as Hermione’s hand shot up.

“Ah, yes Ms…. I apologize, I do believe I don’t know your family.”

“O-oh, it’s Granger, I’m a muggleborn, sir!”

“Ah yes excellent. Well then Ms…. Granger, what exactly do you believe are the criterion by which I selected my particular method of introduction?”

“Um, well, would it be because you wanted to make sure we’re constantly vigilant of our surroundings?”

“Hmmm, a good guess Ms. Granger, and a useful skill to have to be sure, but no. The idea of… ‘constant vigilance’, can be a beneficial one for certain individuals, but I would hope that as first years, you do not believe yourself so ill-targeted that you need be constantly on-guard for threats, even as you relax. Anyone else?”

A blonde girl in the Gryffindor section raised her hand.
“Ah, Ms. van Ryskamp, correct?”

“Yes sir, Constance van Ryskamp.”

“Well then, Ms. van Ryskamp, what are your thoughts as to why I selected the introduction which I did?”

“Well sir, was it to demonstrate the effectiveness of the disillusionment charm?”

“Oh, I’m surprised you were aware of what charm I was using! Bravo!”

“However,” he said while she preened, “your guess is unfortunately far less adept. While the demonstration of the disillusionment charm would indeed be valuable if you were to learn it in this class, you are not, so I see no reason to do so. Other guesses?”

He waited a few moments, head swiveling.

“Truly, none of you possess any theories?”

From beside Iris, Blaise raised her hand, to the rest of the sixsome’s shock.

“Ah yes, Ms. Zabini? You have an answer?”

“Yes professor,” she said, primly ignoring the scowls of the Gryffindors, “was your demonstration meant to show that we could be attacked at any time?”

The professor’s smirk widened into something resembling an actual smile. “Excellent! Five points to Slytherin! Your answer is not entirely correct, of course, but it is the closest any first year has come.”

He turned back to face the general class. “I assure you students, that my intention is not to show you that you should always be on guard for danger.”

“Nor”, he said, gesturing to Hermione, “is it to tell you to be constantly vigilant. The path of constant suspicion and alertness is almost uniquely unhealthy, and many who fought in the last war were known to have gone mad with paranoia.”

“In fact, there was an auror, Alastor Moody, who is currently known to shock members of the general public by sneaking up on them behind invisibility charms, and shout about constant vigilance in their ear. He was known to be a great duelist in the war, but, alas, that type of paranoia completely ruined him, leaving the public to call him ‘Mad-Eye’.”

“My purpose in my introduction”, he said, “was to demonstrate that even in Hogwarts, you are not safe. Indeed, while the founders erected formidable protections around this castle using certain forgotten magics, those protections are not foolproof, and most certainly not sufficient to protect you from any violence that would be perpetrated by students, professors, and any other individuals let in by the Headmaster.”

He swept his eyes across a sea of pale and frightened faces. “I may have singled out Ms. Brown at the beginning of class, but I assure you, her sentiments were not unique among you, nor unique among your yearmates, or yearmates past.”

“Too many of you”, he said, beginning to pace, “believe that this class is only an academic formality, useful only to those who seek a further defensive and offensive education outside this castle’s walls. You would put forward minimal effort to obtain whichever grade you desire, and then quickly forget all that you’ve learned.”
“This,” he said, turning, “is not what I desire.”

“I desire every one of you to be educated as to the use of the abilities which are your gift and birthright. I desire for every one of you not to stagnate in your learning or explorations because you grow complacent, or bored, or lazy. I desire for you to react quickly and decisively if danger rears its head, and be able to effectively defend yourself against it.”

The whole class was enraptured by his speech.

“I desire for every one of you to grow fully into your abilities, confident in your places in the world as wizards and witches. I desire for every one of you to learn what I teach you in this class to protect yourselves, protect your families, protect the ones you care for against those wizards and witches who would seek to deprive them of their lives or liberties.”

Voice lowering from its soaring tone, he turned his head to look in every single student’s eyes. “However, I warn you, I feel it is my duty, both as an educator and a moral human being, to not allow any foolishness to intrude on this goal.”

“In this class, you will not be Gryffindor or Slytherin, Nic or Rell, light or dark. You will have no enemies, no petty rivals, only classmates. You will be a class, a single group of students united through their magic, in pursuit of personal growth and development.”

“I warn you,” he said, eyes narrowing, “if I see any of you engage in any bullying or interfering of other students for the sake of some ridiculous rivalry, either personal or political, you will not appreciate the consequences.”

“Now!” he said, tone returning to its former state after a minute’s pause, “let us discuss the specific goals and requirements of this class. Are their any volunteers to pass out the syllabus?”

Almost the entire Gryffindor side of the room, and a good portion of the Slytherins, shot their hands high in the air.

“Alright class,” the professor said, “I can see that your attentions are beginning to wane, so I believe it’s time for a bit of a demonstration. Does anyone here believe that they already have a decent grasp on the spells we will cover this year?”

Danny raised his hand, with a proud smirk on his face.

“Ah, yes, Mr. Potter. I’ve been made aware you’ve received special training before Hogwarts?”

“That’s right sir, I’ve been trained by some of the greatest light wizards around. I mean, no offense, but I’m planning on being top of the class, for sure. My dad actually tried to get me into the seventh-year class, but apparently the Headmaster said he wanted me to socialize with kids my age.”

“Truly, the Headmaster did? Well, I don’t agree with that at all. If you truly won’t receive any benefit from this class, I see absolutely no reason as to why you should be forced to stay in it.”

Quirrell paused for a moment, thinking. “In fact, let’s turn this little demonstration into a test. I will limit myself to the five spells on our syllabus, while I will allow you to fight at your maximum potential. If you manage to defeat me, I’ll allow you to move up to my seventh-year class.”

“That sounds good, Professor. Don’t worry, I’ll go easy on you.”

“Ah, yes Mr. Potter, if you are indeed as good as you say, I would greatly appreciate that.”
As Danny began to make his way down the stairs to the front of the class, the whole class began to whisper excitedly, eager to see the Boy-Who-Lived fight. Even Iris had to admit that she was interested. James had used Danny’s training as one for the excused for leaving her with… them.

“Ready, Mr. Potter?”

“Absolutely, Professor.”

He shot a superior glare at Theo, “Let me show you just what a celebrity mindset can do.”

“Alright then,” Quirrell said, conjuring a feather, “you may begin when this feather hits the ground.”

…

…

…

“relaci wa qus!”

By the time the slow-moving red bolt had hit the Professor’s shield, he had turned to the class.

“That, class, was the basic stunning spell, also known as ‘the Somnus’, and will be taught in your third year at Hogwarts. I find it highly interesting that Mr. Potter chose to cast that spell, for it is generally considered to slow-moving to–”

Danny waved his wand in a wide arc, and then a series of rapid circles: “dalicet shishbe!”

“It’s rude to interrupt someone while they’re talking, Mr. Potter. Now class, that was actually the Impello, the basic bludgeoning spell. You might recognize it from the syllabus we–”

“geb dezhobane!”

“Ah, that’s more like it Mr. Potter. That was the Expelloarma, a fourth-year spell which–”

“docufah tavdufcaq bic qaron biwi!”

“What did I say about rudeness, Mr. Potter?”

The Slytherins, barely able to contain themselves before this, burst into laughter. Even some of the Gryffindors looked to be stifling a smile.

“Now class, that spell, Puck’s Vengeance, is not actually a dueling spell. It fits under the broad category of ‘hex’, and is commonly used for practical jokes. It turns the target’s ears into the ears of a donk–”

Danny let out a scream of rage. “geb dezhobane!”

“Ah, yes, the Expelloarma again. I assume that means we’ve reached the limits of your higher-level spellcasting knowledge?”

“Class, I believe it’s time for me to demonstrate why spell knowledge is actually one of the least important factors in deciding the outcome of a duel.”

He turned to Danny. “Now Mr. Potter, I’m going to count to three, and then drop my shield. I will give you permission to cast any spell you wish directly at me, and, as usual, I will respond with
nothing more than the five spells I’ve selected for your learning in this class.”

“Ready, Mr. Potter?”

Danny just glared hatefully.

“I’ll take that as a yes. Alright then: one… two… three!”

Danny threw up a Protego shield, as the whole class tensed, expecting a flurry of spellfire. Instead, Quirrell just stood in the center of the room, wand at his side, looking at Danny with a lazy smirk.

“…”

“Well, Mr. Potter?”

At that, the Slytherins burst out laughing. Draco had almost fallen out of their seat, and Iris was leaning on Theo for support.

Danny’s scowl grew even darker, as his skin grew an ugly, blotchy red.

“DON’T YOU DARE MAKE FUN OF ME!”

Even the Gryffindors were starting to chuckle now.

He whipped his wand around in a series of circles, and screamed: “THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR CROSSING THE BOY-WHO-LIVED, CYRBONA WUR FANTIP!”

Quirrell’s eyes widened, as he deftly twirled to the side. The spell hit the desk behind him, blowing into a collection of jagged wooden planks. Quickly, the Professor levitated one of the planks, and banished it directly into Danny’s forehead, knocking him out.

“…”

“Well class, I can’t say I expected that.”

Quirrell turned to them, looking shaken and slightly wary of the unconscious celebrity. “Th-that, class, was confringo, the basic explosion spell. You’ll learn it in your fourth year, and it’s quite notable for being the first spell you’ll learn that is most usually lethal if cast on another wizard or witch.”

The Gryffindors were looking at Danny’s slumped form in shock, while the Slytherins could barely contain their glee. Blaise had to squeeze Iris’s hand to stop her from cackling right in the middle of class.

“Well, don’t worry,” the professor said, regaining his dignified composure, “I’m in no physical jeopardy, and Mr. Potter, the Headmaster, and I will most certainly be having words after this discussion.”

“Now class, this is called the Renervatus spell, and it’s purpose is to awaken someone who is sleeping, or otherwise knocked out.” Quirrell flicked his wand at Danny, who sat straight up with a gasp.

“…”

Panting from his unnatural awakening, Danny looked around the classroom and saw the Slytherins openly smirking, while his housemates started at him with horror. He looked confused, for a few
seconds, forehead scrunched up, until he paled to an almost bone-white, and hastily made his way back to his seat without further comment.

“…Very well class, I believe that despite certain… complications, that little display still served as an effective vehicle to demonstrate the point I wish to convey.”

His eyes swept around the room, as he resumed his pacing. “The reason, as you may have already guessed, that you will only learn five spells over your entire first year class, is not because those five spells are particularly difficult. It’s not because I am a deficient spellcaster, or because I was rushed in designing the syllabus.”

“No,” he said, starting intently at every single student, “the reason you will only learn five spells is because, as I just demonstrated, you only need to learn five spells in this class. Do you all understand what I did in that duel?”

Most of the class shook their head.

“You see, I knew Mr. Potter was angry, and would therefore cast some sort of destructive spell at me. Just how destructive”—he glared at an ashen Danny—“I may not have known, but knew it would be destructive nevertheless. So, what did I decide to do? I concocted a simple plan to use his own anger and destructive force against him.”

“Understand class, that there is not a single spell in this year’s syllabus designed to completely incapacitate an opponent. These spells are not only more advanced that I believe the majority of you can handle, but also completely unsuited to whatever schoolyard mischief you will all most assuredly use my instruction for.”

“So, at the beginning of the duel, the question I ask myself becomes ‘how do I render Mr. Potter unconscious, without using any sort of direct spell?’”

“The surest method to ensure you opponent’s incapacitation in a duel, aside from a direct incapacitation spell such as the stunner, is to ensure that an object impacts their head with a sufficient speed as to render them unconscious.”

“The method of attack would be simple then: the banisher. With it, I knew that I could shoot whatever small object I had directly at Mr. Potter’s head, thus winning me the battle. The problem was, how to get such an object? I could have repeatedly used the bludgeoning spell on the floor, surely, but it would take several repeated castings to create enough rubble for my strategy to be effective.”

“So then, unable to create an object myself, the solution I decided upon was quite simple: I would anger Mr. Potter until the point at which he would cast some sort of spell that had the potential to create debris, whereupon I would banish that debris at his head.”

“You see, I heard his little scuffle outside with Mr. Nott, and so I knew that two surefire triggers for Mr. Potter’s anger were to ignore or deride him. Therefore, I determined that if I simply bunkered down behind a shield charm, and largely ignored his efforts, Mr. Potter would be driven into a rage, causing him to cast a destructive spell.”

“Once again” he said, glaring, “I did not know exactly how destructive.”

“So! I placed myself in front of my desk, shielded, and let my plans do their work! You all saw the result.”

The whole class was staring at him in awe.
“I told you”, Theo whispered to Iris, smirking, “tactics.”

“You see,” Professor Quirrell said, as the class recovered from their shock, “that is what separates the average duelers from the true masters: control of the battle. I firmly believe that eighty percent of every battle I’ve ever engaged in, during my occupation or otherwise, had its conclusion decided by the time the first spell was cast.”

“Your material will not be on knowing spells, but instead on using them. You will learn how planning, tactics, and control of both the battlefield and your enemy. With these alone, you will be able to take on opponents with a much larger spell corpus than yourselves, and win.

“If I could, I would only teach using the spells you’ve learned in other classes, especially charms and transfiguration, but the five spells I’ve selected for your learning are, I believe, absolutely essentially to low-level nonlethal combat. With only those five, along with the basic spells from your first year, I have full confidence that you should be able to take down a third year not trained in one of my classes.”

“So,” he said, staring at the gaping students, “any questions?”

Chapter End Notes

The chapter title is a loose translation from Sura 3:28 in the Qur’an. It’s the basis for the Islamic practice of Taqiyya, or disguising ones beliefs in times of persecution and strife.

Sorry it took me so long to update, I haven’t really been writing in the past month, so I’ve been trying to space out my updates to keep giving you guys content. However, I’ll just start updating really quickly again, because I want you guys to have the fic you deserve, and when my backlog runs out, it runs out.

Fanfic Rec is Blindness, by AngelaStarCat. This might be the best Experimenter!Harry fic I’ve ever seen. It’s one of the few I know of that can pull off a Godlike Harry realistically.

Yes, the incantations for the spells here are entirely nonsense words, and I promise, the reason will be explained in due time. There are some hints in the last chapter though, so if you want to look through it, feel free to comment with any guesses.

If you’re wondering, the “y” in what’s known as the “Spellcaster’s Orthography” is pronounced as /y/. It’s the ü sound in German.

I’ve always thought that the canon revival spell (rennervate) was a little too easy. Honestly, you knock out your opponent, then their buddy just wakes them back up? Why even use stunners?

Do you guys know that scene in Pulp Fiction where Uma Thurman gets a shot of adrenaline to the heart? Yeah, my revival spell is like that. It is not something that you can use again and again, or else your heart might give out. It’s incredibly stressful on the body, and doesn’t even work that well on the auror-class stunning spell, so it’s not being used to just respawn your troops over and over.
“Hmmm… That’s odd…”

It was around a month into the semester, and three weeks after her absolutely brilliant first defense class, Iris was getting her annual health checkup from Madam Pomfrey.

“What is it, Madam Pomfrey?”

“Oh, nothing dear! I’m just running a general magical scan of your head, and there seems to be a slight anomaly. It’s probably nothing, but I’ll have to run some more detailed and specialized diagnostic spells.

Iris nervously wrung her hands as the witch returned to prodding her forehead and muttering.

“It seems… No, it couldn’t be…”

Well, that didn’t sound good.

“Madam Pomfrey? Is… is there something wrong with me? Do I have a disease?”

“Oh! Oh most definitely not! Ms. Potter, we wizards and witches almost never get sick, the strength of our magic prevents our bodies from succumbing to illness!”

“So…”

“Well… Ms. Potter, you are a metamorphmagus, correct?”

“Yes, I’m a ch– metamorphmagus.”

Well then, this is peculiar. It seems as if there’s a bit of powerful magic concentrated into the area of your metamorphmagus mark. It’s almost as if… no…”

Iris waited, her fear growing with each second of silence.

“I’ll have to consult the Headmaster, he’s an expert of strange and peculiar bits of magic.”

Iris’s eyes widened.

When it came to the Headmaster, she was undecided, yet… well, “wary” would be putting it lightly. She hadn’t forgotten how much of an interest he’d taken in her sorting, and how his account of her coming to live with the Dursleys was completely different than James’s. James was many things, but he was far too guileless to convincingly lie to her face.
Also, it hadn’t really come up, but Iris knew that her friends had a deep dislike for the Headmaster, seeing him as emblematic of the Nic political philosophy.

Madam Pomfrey’s door opened back up, breaking Iris out of her thoughts.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again, Iris! Alas, dear girl, I wish it was under more fortuitous circumstances, but it is a true pleasure nonetheless! How are your classes proceeding?”

Well, if she’d have to act the good little light princess, at least Dursley-space would be getting some use again. It had been growing dusty.

“Um… well, H-Headmaster. I r-really like Defense, P-Professor Quirrell is a really g-good teacher.”

Fucking annoying stutter.

“Ah yes, Quirinus is an old colleague, and one of the lightest wizards around! You’ll do well under his tutelage, I assure you! And have you any news on that subject which we discussed as you were leaving my office?”

“N-no sir, I h-haven’t heard anything. The h-house is m-mostly keeping away from m-me.”

“Oh, really? A shame, but not unexpected. Just remember to let me know if you see anything suspicious out in the common room!”

“I w-will sir, I w-want to be helpful.”

“Excellent, excellent! Now, Poppy, could you describe to me what exactly this medical anomaly is?”

“Ah yes Poppy, I know exactly what this is!”

Was that intentional? She’d noticed he’d done the same thing in his office, when the sorting hat mentioned something about a ritual.

“Well, Albus”, Pomfrey said with barley-concealed annoyance, “as I was trying to tell you, that gift-mark on her head contains the remnants of powerful dark magic, almost as if there was a piece of someone’s s–”

“Ah yes Poppy, I know exactly what this is!”

Was that intentional? She’d noticed he’d done the same thing in his office, when the sorting hat mentioned something about a ritual.

“You see”, he said, smiling at the healer, “that scar is not dark magic at all! When I examined it on the night of Voldemort’s defeat, I found that it was actually the remnants of powerful light magic, fueled by the sacrifice of Lily Potter!”

He turned to Iris, eyes watery.

“You see my dear girl, your mother had something that Voldemort could never understand: love. She loved you and your brother so much, and so deeply, that she used her own life to protect both of you, casting a set of powerful wards.”

“Iris,” he said, ignoring her flinch as he touched a finger to her scar, “this is the mark of the powerful wards around the Dursley residence, powered by your mothers love. As long as you live with her blood relatives, those wards will always serve to protect you from Voldemort and his Death Eaters.”

Pomfrey looked unconvinced.

“I assure you Albus, I wasn’t born yesterday, nor am I ignorant of magical theory. The type of wards that could be fueled by a sacrifice of a mother’s life are most certainly not the type of–”
“Ah Poppy, I understand your concerns completely. But shall we take this into your office, behind its silencing ward? I would rather not disturb young Iris by recounting the grisly details of her mother’s valiant sacrifice.”

Poppy scowled, but then looked at Iris, her eyes softening.

“That… that’s probably for the best. Alright Albus, follow me. But make no mistake, I will be questioning you as to this… light magic love ward.”

Faintly scowling, Pomfrey walked briskly into her office, with the Headmaster following at a more sedate pace.

“Worry not!” he said, turning to Iris with his hand on the door, “this issue requires only minor clarification. I assure you, we’ll be out in less time than it takes to say ‘oddment’!”

Iris gave a tight smile. What on earth was he trying to hide from her?

Fucking silencing ward.

Behind the Headmaster, Iris heard the door swing shut… and then voices?

Fucking silencing ward?

Well, Iris wasn’t one to bemoan her good luck, it looked like it was time to find out what was really going on.

“You can skirt around the details all you want Albus, but the fact is that any magic which requires a sacrifice like that is Dark Magic, and most certainly magic which requires the sacrifice of a human life!”

“Now, I don’t know if you’re right about the protective aspect or not, but regardless, I’m not going to let it sit there unexamined! Dark Magic is dangerous in part because of how wild and uncontrolled it is, that little fragment could be doing anything to her!”

“And besides, it doesn’t even look like a shield. It bloody well looks like someone sheared off a piece of their—…”

“…”

“…”

“Poppy, you will not remember finding anything dark about Ms. Potter’s scar, nor will you remember any of your suspicions about what it is. You will instead remember you being absolutely convinced by my arguments as to its protective nature. All you will remember of our conversation in this office is that I made a series of very reasonable arguments that lay any doubts you have about the nature of Ms. Potter’s scar to rest. If you ever notice any irregularities about Ms. Potter’s scar, you will feel the need to report them to me immediately.”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“…”
“…oh, sorry Albus! I must have just lost myself for a minute there!”

“Ah, quite alright Poppy, it happens to me all the time!”

Holy shit. Holy shit.

Did Dumbledore just do what she thought he did? What the fuck was up with her changeling mark, and why did Dumbledore erase the memories of a school nurse in order to cover it up!

Oh shit, they were coming out, time to act the hardest she’d ever acted. Nothing was wrong, she didn’t just discover that the Headmaster knew crazy secrets about her life, and wiped people’s memories to keep them, not at all! All that happened was that she sat here for a few minutes, bored out of her mind, waiting for the brilliant and fantastic headmaster to… Shit, SHIT. She didn’t know if she could do this. Would he wipe her memories too? Had he done it before? Oh god, oh god, Iris felt—

“Iris, my girl, are you well?”

“U-um… y-yes Headmaster, j-just n-nervous. I-is th-there a-anything wrong w-w-w-with m-me?”

Fucking stutter, WHY NOW! If Iris lived through this with her memories intact, she promised herself the very first thing she’d do is demand that her friends force her into uncomfortable situations until it was gone.

Madam Pomfrey cut Dumbledore off with a beaming smile.

“Oh, Ms. Potter, no! The Headmaster made some very reasonable arguments, and he’s reassured me that there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that scar of yours!”

Iris expected Pomfrey to look dazed and vacant, but she didn’t at all. Her smile was wide and natural, just like it was at the beginning of the appointment.

Somehow, Iris thought this was much more terrifying.

“Oh, g-good! C-can I g-go then?”

“Well, give me a minute to finish the routine part of the exam, and then you’re free to go! Thank you very much Headmaster, I appreciate your aid!”

“Oh, it’s no problem Poppy dear,” Dumbledore said, “I’m always happy to help! Make sure to call me next time you find anything unusual you’d like my advice on?”

With that, the Headmaster left, and Iris barley prevented herself from collapsing in her bed in relief. Was this some sort of nightmare?

The minute Iris stepped into the common room, her friends immediately knew something was wrong. She was bone-pale, and shivering almost uncontrollably, with wide eyes and a terrified expression.

Not even pausing, Blaise immediately packed up her work, and shepherded their group up into the girls dormitory. Once she’d confirmed that they were alone, Iris turned to them, and shivered.

She opened her mouth, and then closed it again.

“H-heyy g-g-guys. Is th-there s-some s-sort of s-spell to erase m-memories?”
With that, Iris’s knees gave out, and she collapsed onto the floor, sobbing hysterically.

“h-h-h-h-h-he t-t-t-t-t-t-t-t-ook th-the n-n-n-n–”

“Iris, Iris! What’s wrong!”

“D-D-D-D-D-D-D-D-D-D, h-h-h-h-h-h-he! Oh M-M-M-M-M-Merlin, i-i-i-i-i-t, h-h-h-h-h-he…”

Suddenly, she was surrounded by arms, relaxed and protected. She felt warm, dainty fingers threading through her hair, and drawing circles on her clammy palm.

“Shhhhh darling, you’re safe now. You’re here protected in my arms, and nothing can hurt you. We’ll protect you from anything, keep you safe, keep you warm, keep you loved.”

Iris’s sobs slowly began to peter out, as she clung tightly to Blaise’s taller form.

“I’m using my allure on you right now,” Blaise said, slowly petting Iris’s hair, “is that alright? I want you to calm down, to relax, to tell us what happened without sending yourself into a panic. Are you feeling better now?”

Iris let out a sigh, and snuggled into Blaise’s neck.

“Y-yeah, I’m better. Th-thanks…”

“Do you think you’ll be alright if I reign it back in?”

“N-no!”

“I m-mean, I… th-this is nice, I c-can’t… I c-can’t think…–”

Her voice hitched, as she began to hyperventilate.

“Sh-she, h-he, i-i-i-it w-w-w–”

“Shhhhh, I understand now darling, everything’s alright. you can just relax here in my arms, and tell us when you’re ready. Do you feel how much I care for you? Focus on that, not what happened…”

After a few minutes, Iris had gone almost limp in Blaise’s embrace, and she began to speak, in a relaxed, dreamy tone.

“I went in for my annual medical checkup after class, like I told you all, but there was an anomaly. Madam Pomfrey said she found something in my scar, some sort of dark magic. She called Dumbledore, and he tried to tell her that it was a protection left over from my mother’s sacrifice, to protect me, but she didn’t believe him. So he suggested they go into her office t-to discuss it, b-behind the s-sil… oh Merlin, oh M-merlin, Blaise, it was so awful, I jus–.”

“Hush now darling, and just focus on the warmth you can feel from my allure. Focus on the care, and the love, and the protection, and then just let your story come out. Don’t even focus on it, focus on me.”

After a minute, Iris continued, voice once again taking on a dreamy quality.

“Dumbledore said that they should go behind the silencing ward in her office to discuss it, and so they went, but the ward malfunctioned, so I heard them. Pomfrey was arguing with him, and then he cut her off, and she just went quiet, and then he told her that she actually believed him, and wasn’t going to remember her suspicions, and then she just walked out and it was l-like h-he’d e-e-erased
And with that, Iris turned once again into Blaise’s chest, and began to sob deeply.

“I-it was j-just t-t-terrifying, I-I was w-wondering, wh-what i-if h-he’s d-done th-that t-to m-me, and… and…”

“Shhhhh, darling, you’ve told us more than enough. You were so brave today, so very brave, do you know that?”

“N-n-n–”

“S-sleep now darling, just s-sleep. L-let the w-warmth and l-love you feel g-guide you d-down into a r-restful s-slumber, w-where you c-can f-forget about a-all your p-problems, a-and j-just r-rest here in m-my a-arms…”

That sounded like a good idea actually, she was feeling really t-tired, and o-oh, B-blaise was j-just s-so w-warm a-and s-snuggly, a-and she f-felt like she c-could j-just… c-could j-just…

The next day, Iris woke up resting on an unfamiliar pillow.

It w-was a n-nice p-pillow, s-she t-thought. S-soft, w-warm, l-large, v-very h-huggable, a-all t-things Iris l-looked f-for w-when s-she s-sought o-out s-something t-to s-sleep o-on. W-weirdly e-enough, a-as s-she s-slowly b-began t-to b-bl-ink, h-her p-pillow l-let o-out a m-moan, a-and s-started t-to s-shift i-in h-h-her e-embrace.

A m-moving p-pillow? W-would s-she n-never s-stop e-encountering t-the w-wonders o-of m-magic? B-but w-wait, w-why o-on e-earth w-would s-someone d-design a p-pillow t-that m-moved? A-and w-where d-did s-she g-get–

Iris shot u-up, s-scrambling t-to t-the o-other e-end o-of h-her b-bed.

“A-aawake, D-dear?”

Iris f-felt l-like s-she c-couldn’t p-possibly g-get a-any r-redder.

“I’m s-s-sorry B-Blaise I d-didn’t m-mean t-to! I m-mean–”

“D-don’t w-worry d-dear,” B-blaise s-said, c-chuckling, h-her c-clothes a-and h-hair d-disheveled “I f-fulllly r-realize t-that I m-make a v-very c-comfortable p-pillow. A-at l-least, t-that’s w-what D-dante t-tells m-me. A-and l-let m-me j-just s-say, y-you h-have t-the m-most a-adorable l-little s-snore!”

Whelp, n-neverminded. I-iris t-thought s-she m-must l-look l-like a a-fire e-engine.

W-wait, w-what w-what w-as B-blaise e-even d-doing i-in h-her… h-her… O-oh g-god, t-the c-checkup.

A-as i-iris b-began t-to h-hyperventilate, B-blaise w-was t-there, s-stroking h-her h-hair, h-her v-voice t-taking o-on a s-slightly p-panicked e-edge.

“I-It’s a-alright Iris, y-you t-told us a-all b-about i-it, r-remember, r-right? D-dumbledore, a-and P-pomfrey, a-and t-the m-memory w-wipe, y-you l-let u-us a-all k-know. A-and l-look, y-you’r-re f-fine! N-nothing h-happened, y-you’r-re s-safe! U-h… S-shit, t-this i-in’t w-working, d-do y-you n-need m-me t-to u-use m-my a-allure a-gain?”

Iris shook h-her h-head.

“N-no, j-just k-keep t-talking.”

“W-well, y-you c-couldn’t s-see i-it, b-but w-we w-were a-all h-horrified l-last n-night. W-we w-weren’t s-surprised, m-mind y-you, b-but
we were horrified. Dumbledore is completely psychotic, most children of Knights know that, or Knight-sympathizers in my case I guess– Oh Merlin, nevermind, I didn’t say that. I meant we all knew that Dumbledore was– Iris, what’s wrong? Iris?”

Iris began slowly chuckling, as her breathing evened out to something resembling normaley.

“C-Circe Blaise, did you seriously just admit to me that your m-mom sympathized with the Dark Lord? Y-you really a-are out of i-it, aren’t y-you??”

Suddenly, Iris’s chuckling was cut off by Blaise’s crushing hug.

“Of course I am you dolt, I was worried about you! I can’t believe… I mean, it’s just so bloody awful that you were caught up in the old man’s scheme’s like that, and you were just so terrified last night, and I didn’t know what to do! Oh Merlin, Iris, we’re all out of our minds with worry!”

Iris squeezed Blaise tighter, absolutely touched.

“Th-thanks, but… I’m doing better, I th-think. I mean… yeah, it was really scary, but I think I can deal with it now, not just freak out.”

Blaise seemed to relax, letting out a sigh of relief.

Wait, no, she was tensing again.

“Hey… Iris. About that… other thing… Will you… ah… judge me, for what I said? I mean, my mom is a lovely person, she just had–”

“Relax, Blaise,” Iris chuckled, “you don’t think I already suspected that? Hell, I’m friends with Draco, and their parent was one of the most feared Knights in the war, even if they’d never admit it.”

Blaise just looked at Iris in shock.

“I mean, yeah, the Dark Lord did kill my mom, but I hold that against him, not everyone who served him. I’m not going to hate your mom, and I’m most certainly no going to hate you.”

Iris sent Blaise a watery smile.

“Blaise, you’re my best friend here, and I’m not going to throw you away over something like that. Even if you do… y’know, flirt with me a lot, I still really… like being around you, and I’m not gonna give you up for anything.”

“Like, I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t been there to calm me down with your allure last night. Seriously, I’m probably only able to function right now because of you. Thank you so much Blaise, I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

Iris watched as a warm, loving smile spread over Blaise’s face. Merlin, why didn’t she smile like that more often? It was so pretty.

Uh, aesthetically, she meant. Like, very pretty in an objective sense. Like a sunrise.

Merlin, her smile was like a sunrise, wasn’t it? It was just so warm and wonderful, and it lit up the whole room. Wow, her smile was getting a lot closer now. Why was Blaise moving her head so close to Iris? Wait, no, she wasn’t moving, Iris was the one that was moving. Oh god, Blaise just licked her lips, that was adorable. She was leaning in now, and Merlin did Iris want to see what those lips tasted like, feel them against–
Merlin, she really wanted to kiss Blaise.

….MERLIN, ‘she really wanted to kiss Blaise’? What the hell was wrong with her! Blaise was her best friend, and a girl!

Iris jumped back with a yelp, scrambling off her bed.

“Uhhhhh I gottagoputonmyclothesberightback!”

Scrambling out of the room, Iris missed Blaise’s shocked look, as she shakily raised her fingers to her lips.

Chapter End Notes

AN: So yeah, a lot happening this chapter. But c’mon, aren’t Iris and Blaise just adorable!

The title comes from the mythical healing staff of the Greek mythological figure, a long rod a single snake twisted around it.

Fic Rec is Harry Potter and the Rune Stone Path by Temporal Knight. This fic has a few rough chapters going in, but evolves to become one of my favorite fics, ever. It’s gay, it’s bi, it’s (realistically) poly, it’s filled with magical theory and inventions, and it’s just all-around sensational.

No, Dumbledore leaving the door unlatched was not part of some diabolical plot, it was an honest mistake. Even the most cunning and shrewd of figures can be brought low by ignoring something rather simple, like, say, a silencing ward being activated by manual latch, instead of the simple closing of the door.

If you’re wondering why Pomfrey didn’t tell him, she thought he knew because he mentioned the silencing ward, and had already activated it.

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