Snitch's Nest

by lindajenner

Summary

How Harry Potter came to be Hadrien Potter, his own cousin.
How Ron Weasley became Hadrien's brother.
How Hogwarts got rid of a thousand year's worth of junk.

Oh and defeat Voldemort and save the wizarding world, too, I suppose.
Chapter 1

Hadrien Potter sat opposite Sirius Black, the man that was once his godfather, but in this new world, was his friend and godfather to a very young Harry Potter. A Harry Potter who was sound asleep in Hadrien’s arms.

“Alright, Hadrien, explain.” Remus Lupin sat beside Sirius on an old but sturdy settee.

Hadrien took a deep breath.

“You need to let me finish, once I start. Please?” He asked.

“Why do I not like the sounds of that?” Sirius grimaced.

“Because you won’t.” Ronson, Hadrien's younger brother warned.

“I really don’t like the sounds of this.” Sirius looked at Remus and screwed his face up.

“Hush, Siri. Let Hadrien speak.” Remus turned from Sirius to Hadrien. “We didn’t know about you two. James never said anything.”

“Yeah… there’s a reason for that.” Hadrien winced. “Let me tell the entire story and then we’ll talk. Please?”

Remus and Sirius shared a long complicated wordless conversation, before Sirius sighed.

“Begin.” He waved a hand.
First thing I’ll say is this… I was Harry James Potter, son of James Fleamont Potter and Lillian Jessica Potter nee Evans. And this is how I became Hadrien Blaire Potter, son of Webster Henry Potter and Rachel Anne Potter nee Browning and how Ronald Bilius Weasley became my younger brother Ronson Maitland Potter.

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It started with my best mate Ron and I in a dungeon.

We’d been captured by Death-Eaters and thrown into a dungeon to wait for the head Snake himself, while our friend Mione had been taken by Bellatrix Lestrange and was being tortured. We could hear her screams. We were wandless and weapon-less but we were determined not to leave her. We tricked the useless wizard that was the guard, into opening the gate into dungeons and an elf-ally stunned him from behind, then we stormed into the ballroom, there was duelling for a bit, but Bellatrix had our friend with a wand at her throat, we surrendered knowing that the head snake about to be called. But just as a Death-Eater had his hand over his Mark to call old Snakey, there was a squeaking noise. We all looked up, every one of us in that room, looked up to see an elf undoing the clasp that held a chandelier in place.

When the chandelier and the chain parted, the light fell and Mione went one way, Bellatrix another. It was enough for us, Ron and I darted to the closest pair of DE’s and pulled their wands, and ours, from them and disarmed the rest of the DE’s. We gathered around the elf, I knew we couldn’t apparate out, due to the wards, but elves don’t apparate, they pop and the only wards that can keep out an elf are Azkaban. The elf popped us out, just as Bellatrix threw a knife at us.

Apparating by elf is very different to wizard apparating, it doesn’t feel like you’re being twisted and pulled through a straw, like wizard apparition does. Elf popping twists everything around you, in a spiral, everything you can see twists in that spiral and when the twisting ends, you’re not always in the same position, relative to the earth or a floor, that you started out as.

I hit the sand almost horizontal. From about four feet in the air. When I caught my breath and looked around, I saw a beach, flat and empty, it looked like an early morning low tide, too. I called for my friends but no one answered, not knowing where I was and who could see me, I figured that casting a patronus was not a good idea. I had no idea where the others had apparated to and I knew that they would have little idea where I was. So, I decided that my best course of action was to apparate to somewhere we’d discussed going.

There was a cottage on the beach near Tinworth, being used as a safe-house. But I was nervous, and
a bit scared, so I decided I had better be a little cautious. I did apparate to the cottage, but not before I covered myself with my invisibility cloak and a few minutes worth of disillusionment and notice-me-not charms.

It was a good thing I did. The cottage was occupied and not by the people I expected to be there. I watched them for a few minutes, before I figured out who one of them was.

And let me tell you... that just the possibility... that she was who I thought she was? That scared me worse than the thought of having to face Snake-face. Alone and unarmed.

I quickly apparated to our next contact point, but that too was occupied. I saw Ron and his brothers, but not the Ron I knew, this was a younger Ron. We’d only just scraped together enough food to celebrate Ron’s eighteenth birthday and now here I was, looking at a not-yet five year old Ron. It scared me… I’m not afraid to admit it, I was scared spitless.

My next stop was the house I’d lived in with my Aunt, Uncle and cousin. I’m sure you’re familiar with number four Privet Drive, just like I am. There’s a park a few minutes walk from Privet Drive, on Magnolia Road, it has an underpass from the park that goes under Magnolia Road to Wisteria Walk and Privet Drive and that’s where I was headed. Still under notice-me-nots, I apparaleted there and made for Privet Drive, I’d just reached Wisteria Walk when I saw Petunia, Dudley and... me, walking towards me.

I couldn’t handle that and apparaleted away, blindly, Hermione’s words echoing in my head. 'Bad things happen to wizards that meddle with time, Harry.'

Either I’d time travelled or I was going nuts. Neither option was all that welcome, I buried my heads in my arms and cried, I sobbed my eyes out! I was alone, I was tired, I was hungry, all I have with me was a pair of wands I snatched off of some DE’s and a mokeskin pouch, that was it. When I got over my crying bout I looked to see where I’d ended up.

The shrieking shack. The places our subconscious takes us, huh?

I tipped out the contents of the pouch, I guess I felt I should do a stock-take of my supplies. A map, a piece of a broken mirror, a broken locket, a snitch, part of a letter, a torn photograph and a broken wand. Add to that my invisibility cloak and the pair of DE wands, one that felt okay and one that burnt my hands whenever I touched it. Plus the clothes I was wearing.

That was the total sum of my possessions. Not even a single, solitary knut to my name.

I needed money, clothes, food, accommodation, just to start with. But if I’d time travelled? If I had... I’d need a new identity and a way to keep myself hidden. Can’t have a five year old Harry Potter and an, almost, eighteen year old Harry Potter both floating around, now can we? Plus I figured that maybe I could take advantage of time travelling and destroy the last Horcruxes, we were only missing two, something of Ravenclaw’s and something of Hufflepuff’s. Unfortunately we didn’t know what they were or where to find them, Mione suspected that Bellatrix, might have one in her vault, but that was my only lead.

I knew I couldn’t change anything else that I remembered as happening, so that meant I had to hide myself, somehow, for the next thirteen, or so, years.

I needed money.

I needed an untraceable wand.
I needed clothes.

I needed an identity.

I lifted my head and grinned, I knew where to get almost all of that in one go. Yeah, identity was iffly, but it was still worth a shot.

No, not Gringotts. Hogwarts.

Yes, I said Hogwarts.

I needed the Room of Requirements. That was the answer to all my problems or at least, most of them. I left the shack and headed for the secret passage that came out under the Whomping Willow. It took me almost an hour to get to the seventh floor of the castle. You’d be proud of me, I pranked the entire school, Dumbledore and McGonagall, included. It was midday and I was starving, it’d been two, no… three days, since we’d eaten last.

The Great Hall’s doors were open and it was just too much temptation. I levitated a tray of sandwiches to the staff table and floated one to each Professor’s plate, then a jug of pumpkin juice to top up their goblets. While everyone’s attention was on the staff table, I tossed a notice-me-not on a second tray of sandwiches and floated it to me. Not even Dumbledore saw me, I made sure of it, I stayed hidden behind a statue outside the hall, I couldn’t see all the house tables, but I could see the staff one. Then, while they were all ranting over Peeves latest prank, I headed for the stairs and the seventh floor.

I got as far as the third floor before I had to dodge a group of students. I tossed a notice-me-not at a door and ducked into the room behind it. There were shelves, lots and lots of shelves, they were only a few inches in height and covered all the walls. It took me almost a minute to realise that the shelves held wands. Hundreds, maybe thousands of wands were lined up, handgrips pointing out.

I was using a wand that had chosen someone else, someone that I didn’t like or trust. So… I ran my hands over the wands, touching each one in turn, hoping that one would chose me, like Ollivander said, ‘the wand chooses the wizard’. There was one that liked me, not nearly as much as my broken wand had, but still more than the one I’d taken from the DE. I put the DE’s wand in my pouch, I wasn’t going to risk it being found before Ollivander had even sold it.

After that it was just a case of having to wait until classes resumed and I could start moving again, while I waited, I ate a couple of sandwiches and poked around in a barrel that was beside the door. I found a forearm wand holster that fit and strapped it on, I put my new-ish wand in it and practiced for a few minutes. I’d never had a holster before and I wanted to make sure that I knew how to use it, how to get at my wand, how to hide it, that sort of thing.

With students back in class, I got to the Room of Requirement without any further problems. I summoned the Room of Lost Things and opened the door. To be met by what was probably a thousand years worth of junk.

My first thought was to summon all the Galleons, sickles and knuts. But then I though a bit more and I wondered… would there even be any there, wouldn’t the house-elves have added them to the Hogwarts funds?

I slumped back against the wall and dropped my head in my hands, I was back to crying, again.

A scratching noise made me lift my head. Where there’d been a pile of chairs and a birdcage a moment before, now there was a freestanding chalkboard between me and the piles of discarded
A chalkboard that writing was starting to appear on.

Who are you?

I looked at it, I remembered Ron’s sister writing in a cursed book, so there was no way in hell, I was writing on a cursed chalkboard. And apparently, I said that out loud.

I do not require you to write you answers, wizard. I ask again who are you?

Huh, how about that?

“Give me your name, chalkboard and I might give you mine.” I said, repeating one of Hermione’s favourite lines from a book we’d found in Godric’s Hollow, at Christmas.

I was Gwendolyn Hogwarts when I lived. Now, I am the heart and soul of this school.

“Hogwarts? Holy hell, Hogwarts had been a real person?”

I was. I was the adopted daughter of Salazar Slytherin and the reason he loathed muggles and muggleborns so much.

“Why?” It might not be relevant, but it was interesting and maybe I could use it against Voldemort when I faced him, next.

In my sixteenth year, Salazar and Godric signed a betrothal contract between myself and Godric’s son Andemon. Less than a week before we were to wed, a pair of muggle-born wizards kidnapped me, they took me to a muggle village, I was beaten, raped and tortured before Sal and ‘Dric rescued me. I died from my injuries.

“Oh gods above, you… I’m sorry.” Oh god, the poor girl, my stomach twisted in sympathy.

As was I, wizard. Now you know who I am. Who are you?

“My name is Harry Potter and something happened and… I think I’ve time travelled.” I answered this time, I was in the Room of Requirements and I figured that if I ‘required’ the chalkboard to tell the truth, the Room would see that it did. In that case, I had nothing to hide and a hell of a lot to gain.

Why do you think that, Master Potter?

“This morning… this morning for me, anyway… was some time in April 1998… Just after Easter, I think… But in the last few hours, I’ve seen a mate, one that went through all of my Hogwarts years with me, now he’s little more than a toddler. He was eighteen a few weeks ago, we scraped together enough food for a proper dinner for him. And the Dumbledore from my time, he’s been dead for over a year, but right now, he’s down stairs in the Great Hall.” I wriggled my shoulder against the wall and slid down it, to sit on the floor. “I don’t know what to do. Dumbledore gave me a job, I have to destroy Voldemort’s Horcruxes, but he didn’t tell me what they were or where to find them all, or even how to destroy them.” I turned sideways to the wall, let my head fall forward and kept talking. It was cathartic, just telling something or someone what had happened, knowing that because I ‘required’ that only the truth be told here, the board couldn’t lie and neither could I. Who knows, maybe not being able to lie would help me work out where the missing Horcruxes were and how to destroy them. “I destroyed one in the chamber of secrets with a basilisk fang.” I recited.

“Dumbledore destroyed another in his office, but I don’t know how. We used a sword to destroy the
Horcruxes are dangerous, young Master, Hogwarts wrote.

“Don’t you think I know that? One almost killed my best mate’s sister, bloody thing set a basilisk on me, almost got me killed, too. If is weren’t for Fawkes crying on me, I’d be dead.” My response was sharp and more than a little annoyed, this was not the help I needed.

Then you know that having them in the same place at the same time can allow the soul within them to unit, if each piece is not destroyed separately?

“Yeah. Hermione said something like that.” I kind of wished I’d paid more attention.

Good. You do realise that you are in the room of requirement and that I… and the gift that founders bestowed upon me… can give you what you require?

“Yeah. I spent a huge part of my fifth year in here, teaching an underground DADA class.”

Do you understand that items you require me to produce cannot leave this space?

“Yeah, it’s a bummer, but yeah.”

Do you know that if you require an item and alter it once I have produced it, it is not longer the exact same item as the item I provided?

“Uh…?” Say what, now?

And once it is no longer the same item, it can leave this room?”

“No…” No, I didn’t know that, I was sure that would come in handy, soon enough.

And you know that there is one of those abominations here, in this very space?

“No, yes, I…? There is?” We’d suspected there was at Hogwarts, but I’d though it would be more likely to be in the Chamber of Secrets than anywhere else.

There is.

“Brilliant.” Now, I only had to search through a thousand years worth of stuff and then keep it hidden for another thirteen years.

Then I would suggest master potter, that you require that Horcruxe and a way to destroy it.

“But… I can’t! I time travelled, I can’t change anything! We’ve already destroyed three. I can’t change anything.” I objected, I still very clearly remembered Hermione’s lecture on ‘bad things happen to those that meddle with time, Harry’. It was fast becoming a motto that I knew I was going to have to live by.

Tell me everything… everything that happened to you in the last 12 hours, leave nothing out, no matter how small, insignificant or unimportant you may think it to be.

For the next hour I talked, I told Hogwarts everything. Destroying the locket, being captured, escaping from the snatchers at Malfoy manor, the knife flying towards us. I told her about seeing Ron, seeing myself and of apparating blind and realising I was in the shack. Of using the tunnel
under Whomping Willow and pranking the staff, to cover stealing a tray of sandwiches. Of finding the lost wand room and taking a wand and holster. Of my very rough idea of having to hide for the next thirteen years, just to keep the timeline intact. And how badly I needed help to do that.

I see. Hogwarts wrote. I understand more now. The combined magic of wizards, elves and goblins. An injured elf, an injured goblin, an injured witch and/or wizard. A very powerful combination, that is. Allow me to seek confirmation.

Confirmation from who? I wondered to myself, as a humming sound filled the air. It was a little like the engine noise that you might hear in a bus or a car, a muted rumble, but still there. I ate another sandwich and summoned a goblet, a quick but useless cleaning charm and I put it back down again, it was still filthy and needed to be washed by hand. Instead I conjured a goblet and used Aguamenti to fill it, I had to do that three times before I felt like I’d drank enough.

The humming fell silent and the scratching sound began again. Hogwarts was writing.

I’ve conferred with the few other magical buildings and the Ministry Building was most helpful.

“That’s a first.” I snorted.

Not the Ministry, but the Building itself. The section of that building that houses the Department of Mysteries states that there has been a major disturbance in the local time-stream. From what myself, the Tower of London, the Ministry building and particularly, the Department of Mysteries, can decipher… the distorted magic of injured elves, goblin and wizards combined to create a time-stream split.

“A split?” I asked.

Yes. Think of like a… I was going to say a fork in the road, but that’s not right. Think of a path alongside a river, you’re walking upstream along this path and suddenly the path collapses under your feet, you fall into the river and are washed back downstream. Now with a time turner, when you climb from the river you are back where you started from, you can’t change anything you did that leads up to where you fell into the river, the path collapse is still there, all you can do is plan for a way around it. Understand?

“Yes. I get it.”

Good. But what has happened to you is different. You have entered a second stream. One that goes in a different direction, the land is the same, the path is the same, but the collapse hasn’t happened, there. Your original time-stream, according to the Department of Mysteries… it’s shattered.

“Shattered?!”

Yes. This is not your native time-stream.

“But what will happen to everyone there? Then?” Oh, god, Luna, Neville, Ginny… the list went on.

Nothing. That time stream has ceased to exist.

“They’re dead?”
No. They no longer exist, that time-stream is gone, dissolved, only those who were actually involved in the disruption will remember anything from that time-stream. To anyone else this is all they know or will ever know, unless you tell them.

“But what about the others? Ron? Hermione? Griphook? Dobby? Where are they right now?” I wondered if I should be looking for them. How would I even find them?

Not here, yet.

“What do you mean… not here, yet? Didn’t they have arrived when I did?”

No. Allow me to explain a little more. When that other time-stream was shattered, each of you were thrown back into the past, but also sideways into a separate time-stream, this time-stream. Starting at a point where the most powerful of you, experienced their first accidental magic.

“But… how? I saw a little me.”

Yes, all of you will have a counterpart here… perhaps not the goblin or the elf, their magic is different, they may have merged with their local counterpart, I do not know and it cannot been known until they arrive. Your counterparts were here in this time-stream, before you were thrust into it, they are the originals. Each of you were slotted into this time-stream, at points where the most powerful of you rattled the local time-stream’s stability, causing tiny fractures, just barely large enough for Lady Magic to insert you, one of you at a time, into this time-stream. Otherwise, like the rest of your time-stream, you would have been lost.

“How do I find out… if the others are here yet?” I demanded.

They’re not.

“How do you know?”

Because… the names you have given me… of their local counterparts, yours is the most powerful. Which makes you the most powerful of you travellers. Which in turn, means that you would have to be the first to arrive.

“Oh.”

Yes, oh. You have been thrown the furthest back in time…

“Who’s likely to be next after me? And how do I find them? And when?”

Next would be… the other male.

Ron. His name is Ron.

Ron. He will be next to arrive, but there is no way of knowing when, it will depend on the local Potter’s next accidental magic outburst. You wouldn’t happen to remember what they were and when they occurred, do you?

“No… I remember my hair regrowing after Aunt Petunia cut it all off, shrinking a jumper, apparating onto the school roof and turning my teacher’s hair blue, but I think… it’s too early for those. I’m not sure.” I squinted as I thought about it.
Not to worry. Hogwarts wrote. We can keep an ear out. After Ron, the female is next, power-wise, she is not much weaker than he is, but still weaker. An accidental outburst, something that affects other people, may well be all that's needed, to see each of them inserted into this time-stream.

“Like I said, I turned my teacher’s hair blue. Would that be large enough? I think that happened about late ’86. Oh and her name is Hermione.” I replied.

It is currently Tuesday the 20th of March 1984, so you may have up to two and a half years to wait, before then or even more.

“Damn.” I swore under my breath for a few minutes.

I feel your best path is to destroy the abominations and establish an identity and history, for yourself mostly, but getting ready for your friends would be a sound move.

“Later, after Mione gets here. She and Ron can work that out.” I didn’t need to worry about that. “Ron and Mione sort out the details and the strategies, I just see that they happen.” I added.

Not this time, Master Potter. This time... you need to get a background in place before your allies arrive, you may have to wait a considerable time before they get here.

“Bugger.” I huffed. “Right… the Horcruxes first. Let’s get snake-face dealt with, so I never have to think on him again.”

Very well. Call for basilisk venom, enough to destroy a dozen Horcruxes, in individual containers and a pedestal with basin that is impervious to that venom.

I took a deep breath before doing just that, a basin very similar to Dumbledore’s pensieve appeared and beside that a delicate table with a phial stand, holding the dozen phials I’d asked for. The shimmering of the venom inside the phials turned my stomach slightly, or maybe that was just the memory of being bitten by the basilisk itself? I didn’t want to think about it.

Good now call for the Horcruxes currently in this room, then after it is destroyed, each of the others, one at a time.

The first of the Horcruxes appeared and I levitated the tiara-like thing into the basin and poured the venom over it, waiting for the wailing scream to burst out and then die down before moving. Moments later, I realised that I hadn’t planned enough. What was I supposed to do with a venom-coated Horcruxe-less container?

“Ah, a little help, please?” I asked. “What would you suggest happens to the Horcruxes now? I don’t want them and I’m not sure you do either. I mean they’re coated in basilisk venom, do you really want that in your halls?” I explained.

No, I do not. I would suggest a second basin of Purifying potion. And a series of specimen jars of the same potion to store the Horcruxes in. Then once the Horcruxe has been removed and it’s empty container moved to the second basin, banish the contents of the first basin, that way you start with fresh venom for each Horcruxe.

“Yeah.” I agreed, nodding. “Then each jar can be dealt with, as its to need be.”

Exactly.
A few seconds and a second table appeared, this one larger and heavier. A solid stone basin at one end, filled with a slightly glowing blue/silver liquid, that for some reason reminded me of a patronus, and a series of heavy crystal jars at the other. I nodded and after a deep breath, I flicked my new wand and lifted the tiara free of the venom and gave it a little bounce up and down, just to get the excess venom off it. A twitch of my hand and the thing swung over and into the Purifying potion, a few seconds and a swirl, to ensure that the potion reached all of the tiara and I floated it free and into a jar, carefully sealing the jar afterwards.

Well done, Master Potter. Next closest is… the ring. You are a descendant of the Peverells, will you be keeping the ring and it’s stone?

“I hadn’t known that. Um? Do you think I should?” Here I was asking a stone castle about keeping a stone ring. Gods, magic was weird. Amazing, but weird.

Were I in your place? I would. Simply keep it from hands that may abuse it. The Headmaster seeks the stone, desperately. He wishes redemption for the death of his sister, not knowing whether it was his wand or his lover’s that cast the Killing Curse.

“Dumbledore cast an Unforgivable?” I gasped.

He did. As a young man Albus Dumbledore was as vulnerable to darkness and coercion as any other. Sweet kisses and honeyed words can tempt the best of men and Gellert Grindelwald was, above all, a beautiful man. Seductive, alluring, challenging. An innocent and naïve Albus Dumbledore stood no chance against a worldly Gellert.

“The Headmaster knew Grindelwald?” I could barely get the words out.

Yes, for a time, the two were lovers.

“Holy shit!” I mouthed the words, but nothing came out. Dumbledore and Grindelwald? Lovers? I felt like my broom had done Wronski feint, without me. I’m not sure I’d have been more surprised if I’d been told that I was Snake-face’s grandson. Maybe, but not likely.

Master Potter? The ring?

I huffed and puffed and shook my head, trying to get over the shock.

“The ring? No. I think… I think I should keep it, in that case. Leaving it for mini-me means that it will end up in my-his vault and Dumbledore has m-his key.”

Agreed.

And I watched as the ring appeared and settled into the venom filled basin. A screech and a cloud of darkness bubbled up from the ring, but dissolved before it cleared the venom.

I flicked my wand and the ring danced it’s way into the Purifying potion and then into a crystal jar.

Then a familiar locket appeared.

“I have that.” I said. “It’s already been destroyed.” My hand went to my mokeskin pouch.

No, you have your time-stream’s version, not the local version. Hogwarts reminded me.

“Oops, forgot that, sorry.”
Not at all, master Potter. There are not many that would not struggle with you current situation, you are coping quite well.

“Thanks.” I tried to smile as the locket and chain were submerged.

Another scream and cloud and the locket was moved to the second basin and then to a jar and sealed. Then it was the turn of a cup, we hadn’t known anything about the cup or the tiara, we’d known there were two items, but not what they were, I wasn’t even certain they were the same in both time-streams. After the cup came a familiar book, it’s pages fluttered in the venom and it sat in the purifying potion the longest, before being moved to the largest of the crystal jars.

“Is that it?” I asked.

No, unfortunately not. The next requires a little explanation and preparation.

“I don’t like the sound of that.” I grumbled.

No. The night that your parents were killed, your mother cast a very old, very powerful charm and Voldemort, or Tom Riddle was he was born, inadvertently played into her magical net, when he tried to get her to step aside. That reinforced her charm and meant that when he killed her, he locked the charm with his own magic, making him your magical guardian. When he then fired a Killing Curse at you, his own magic rebelled. No wizard can kill those under their own protection, not without it having violent ramifications. His own magic separated his soul, such as was left of it, from his body, causing it to split even further.

I shuddered at what Hogwarts was telling me, but so far it made more sense than any other explanation I’d been given.

When the two parts of his soul exploded from his body, one part was blown close enough to sense the magical contract between your mother and Riddle, it sought to uphold the contract. It connected to you and is what the Dumbledore in your time-stream, actually told you was your mother’s magic. It was not. It was the fractured part of Riddle’s own soul that was trying to fulfil a magical contract, it was the protection, not your mother. Do not misunderstand me, your mother… Lily Potter was a brilliant witch and she did what she had to, to see that you lived.

“In a way Dumbledore was right, though. Mum did the magic that protected me, it was just that used snake-face’s own soul to do it.” I tried to put in prospective, but it was hard. Dumbledore had always said it was my mother’s love that protected me and in a way he was right… but merlin was he wrong too!

In a way, but...

“Yeah, but…” I sighed. “So, that means that I’m the last Horcruxe. How do we get it out? I don’t fancy taking a swim in basilisk venom.”

Ah, but you’re not thinking of where you are, Master Potter.

“The Room of Requirement? I don’t know what to ask for.”

No, not what I meant. I was meaning the differing time-streams. The Horcruxe you bore was a tiny fragment, a little over 1.5% of his original soul-mass. It was not strong enough to survive
the displacement from your native time-stream and the integration into this time-stream. Hogwarts produced a full-length mirror in front of me, a spotlight on my forehead and scar, or... on where my scar wasn’t.

“Oh thank you!” I swayed in relief. No scar would make it so much easier for me to blend in.

Don’t thank me, you still have to deal with your local counterpart.

“Mini-me?” I whispered, horrified.

Yes. Please remember that I can provide what you require. My suggestions include, in no set order...

- A calming draught, you’re going to need to be calm and have a steady hand
- A crystal scalpel, you will have to literally cut open your local counterpart’s scar to expose the Horcruxe’s capsule.
- A crystal pipette, you will need it to place the venom directly onto the Horcruxe’s capsule
- Phoenix tears, they will be needed to neutralise the venom after the Horcruxe has been released from your counterpart
- Dressings and cloths to clean the wound and remove any excess blood. It wouldn’t do to return ‘mini-you’, as you call him, covered in blood.
- Mini-you, as you can’t do anything without him

“No, I can’t.” I huffed a laugh, who knew Hogwarts had a sense of humour?

However, I would wait for a bit, right now the child is in public.

“Yeah, let’s not cause a Statute incident.” I agreed. “So, um…? What about the bit that got away? Can Mini-me expect to have to deal with it, in first year, like I did?”

No. Without anchors 1.5% is not enough soul-mass to sustain a connection to the living world, it will take a few days and maybe a storm or two, but the wraith will dissipate.

“Good to know.” I sighed. Once done with the Horcruxe in mini-me, it was all over. I tilted my head, trying to remember where I’d got the phrase ‘mini-me’ from. I was shaking my head, then it dawned on me. The spy-spoof movie, that Mione had dragged me to, after Ron left us. Austin… something.

Master Potter?

“Ma’am?” I responded.

What do you want to do?

“For what?”

For the rest of your life? Riddle will no longer be an issue. So given the choice, what will you do with your life?

“You know? It’s odd, maybe, that I’m standing here. In this room, I mean. I used this Room to train the DA, but the last time I was here, it was like this, full of all this forgotten stuff and all I wanted to do, was to get in and sort through it. Mrs Weasley used a charm that told her how the owners of an
item used it and when I asked her, she taught me a number of charms that I could use on old clothes, on furniture, on pictures and the like. Not to identify the owner, but to identify how an item was used and for restoration.”

**Identify, in what way?**

“Take these brooms?” I pointed at a pair of nearby brooms and whispered the chant Mrs Weasley had spend an entire weekend teaching me. *“Quaestas et practicar usus, visus.”* An image appeared of one broom, gently swirling in the air, but the second one, twisted and turned sharply, diving down and rising quickly. “See the first broom was lightly used, for fun or by someone that wasn’t confident, but the second was a quidditch broom and pushed hard.”

I see, but what does that have to do with what you want to do with your life?

“Given the chance to do anything I wanted, anything at all?” I paused, I’d never told anyone this, not even Ron or Mione. “I’d like to run a second-hand shop, like Dervish and Banges, but a little more family-friendly.” I finished on a whisper.

Really?

“Yes, ma’am.”

Then I just might be able to help you. But before we get into that… who are you going to be?

“I don’t know. I’ve never been anyone but me.”

Who are you? The boy in the cupboard under the stairs? The Boy-Who-Lived? The youngest quidditch player in a century? The Boy-Who-Lied? The Ministry’s Undesirable Number 1? Or someone else?

“Put like that? I’d much rather be someone else, but that would mean giving up who I am, giving up my parents. I’m not sure I can do that.”

What if… if you didn’t have to give them up, only change how you are related to them?

“I don’t understand.”

James Potter has a brother, he’s older than James by quite a few years, but he’s a squib. He was identified as a squib after not receiving his Hogwarts letter. Your grandfather, Fleamont, was a good man, but the Potter name had taken a massive hit, when his grandfather, Henry, had married a muggleborn, it lost them their seat in the Wizengamot and their ranking as a member of the Sacred Twenty-Eight. So, your grandfather sent his squib son to the muggle world, he fostered the boy with one of his muggle cousins. The day your father was born, your grandfather had him tested, the Potter name had to survive. Thankfully, your father tested as quite powerful, magically, otherwise, he may also have joined his brother in the muggle world.

“I have an Uncle, a blood related Uncle?”

You do.

“Then why didn’t Dumbledore send me to live with him?” I demanded.

Two reasons. Firstly, Dumbledore quite likely thought, that as it was your mother’s sacrifice,
that her blood was needed to anchor the wards. Second, it’s unlikely that he even knew about Webster.

“Webster? His name is Webster?” I had an Uncle. I couldn’t get my head around it, it was more surreal than everything I’d been through, today. I had an Uncle.

It is. If you wish to retain the family you have already, just alter your apparent connection to them, perhaps asking Webster and his wife to adopt you, would work?

“Adopt me? How? How am I even supposed to contact him? How do I…? What do I tell him? Why would he help me?” I was the son of the person that lost him, his family.

As I have stated a number of times, this is the Room of Requirement. I swear I could read the exasperation that Hogwarts felt. If you require it, I will provide it. Whether that is a table, a basin of basilisk venom, Riddle’s Horcruxes, ‘mini-you’, a permanent adoption potion or a door that connects to Webster’s location.


And so it went on.

Master Potter? Your ‘mini-you’ is in his cupboard, asleep.

“Great. Can you bring him here, but keep him asleep, please? And I think I should have a table that’s just for him.” A table appeared, a miniature version of me curled up on it, sound asleep, it sat parallel to the table holding the Purifying potion and adjacent to the venom basin, the three forming a U-shape. “Good, now, over here? A table with all the things that I’m going to need, to do this.” The idea of cutting into mini-me’s head was already turning my stomach, what was I going to be like when I actually had to do it?

“Can you make sure he stays asleep, when I cut into his head?” The only way I was going to be able to do this, was if I thought of him as a separate person to me.

I can and will. A smaller phial appeared on the table nearest me. Drink that, it will calm you.

“How can you provide that? I didn’t ask for it.” But I drank it, anyway. It only took seconds to start working, for my mind to settle and my hands to still.

But you did ask for a table with everything I considered you would need. I considered that potion was needed. Was I wrong?

“No, you weren’t. Thank you.” I smiled and for the first time that day, my smile was genuine.

Are you ready?

“As ready as I’m ever going to be.” I responded.

I rolled Mini-me onto his back, doing my best to ignore the bruises. A towel was laid across his forehead to hold his hair out of the way. Then I laid out the tools that Hogwarts had provided and got them ready for use. The pipette was placed beside an opened phial of venom. The phial of phoenix tears lay next to them, along with a stack of dressings and the scalpel.
“Alright.” I huffed. “Here we go.”

I lifted the scalpel and carefully cut into the scar, putting barely enough pressure behind the blade to cut the skin, but the crystal blade sliced cleanly through the scar tissue. Blood welled up quickly and I grabbed a dressing, pressing it to the scar I looked to see if I’d cut deep enough to reach the Horcruxe’s capsule.

“Thank God.” I whispered, when I saw the silvery surface.

I quickly wiped the blood away again, picked up the pipette and sucked up as much venom as the pipette would hold. I really hoped I wouldn’t need to use it all, there was enough there to kill half of Hogwarts’ current student population.

One… Two… Three… I was just about to put a fourth drop, when the silver capsule split, but the inky cloud didn’t leave, it just writhed around on itself, so that fourth drop went straight into the capsule. And I stepped back quickly. The greasy, inky cloud burst upwards, a skull-like face visible in it’s depths, just like the locket, when Ron stabbed it. As soon as the cloud faded and the noise died, I snatched up the phoenix tear phial and literally emptied it into the wound.

As I watched, the skin knitted itself back together and when I wiped Mini-me’s forehead with a fresh dressing, the blood and the tears wiped away, leaving clear, blemish free skin.

“Oh, wow.” I sat back and studied him.

He was me, but he wasn’t going to be any more. He was Harry and I was to be someone new. But he still had to go back to the Dursleys and that sucked.

“He has to go back, doesn’t he?” I asked, knowing what he was going back to.

Yes. Hogwarts wrote. And quickly.

“How do I get him out of there? And permanently?”

You know how.

“Pettigrew.” I sighed.

Yes.

“I don’t suppose I can require Pettigrew in a cage to be handed to the Aurors, can I?”

No. The closest I can come to that, is Pettigrew and a separate cage, or two cages and you can move him from one to the other.

“Something I require, but then I alter it?” I asked for confirmation.

Exactly.

“First off let’s get Harry back, before anyone notices he’s been gone… Will they notice he’s been gone? Will they notice the scar’s gone?” It suddenly occurred to me that no scar could be an issue.

No. Once we deal with the cleansed Horcruxes, I can… encourage Dumbledore to think that the destruction of Riddle’s body, the individual fragments of his soul couldn’t retain indefinitely, that over time the connections to their containers decayed and the fragments were released. There’s an old tome that implies this and I’ll push him to read it, then send
Trelawney a dream, she will tell the old man and as you’re the only Horcruxe he knows of with surety, he will scurry off to… Surrey, was it? Scurry off to Surrey to test the theory… and Mini-you with a scar-free face will just confirm what the tome says.

“Ah…? Question?” I grimaced, I hated not understanding.

Yes?

“What’s a tome?”

A tome is an ancient type of book, Master Potter. My library holds many tomes, both old and new.

“How do you get an ancient book, that’s new?”

A tome is a TYPE of book. It’s to do with the way it’s made and what it contains. Most family Grimoires are tomes.

“Okay, got it. Type of book, not age of book.” I nodded, that made more sense. “Alright. So, Mini-me, he’s Harry and I’m going to be someone else, right? But for now, let’s get him back.” I blinked as, even though I was expecting it, the young not-me-anymore vanished. “Thanks.”

You are welcome, Master Potter.

“So, snake-face is done. Mini-me… Harry… is Horcruxe-free. Now, I get to deal with everything else. I need a new iden—… Are you sure my time-stream is gone? That there’s nothing for me to go back to?” I suddenly felt alone, like I’d never done before.

I am. I am sorry, but there’s simply nothing there, it’s almost like it was never there to begin with. Perhaps… perhaps that time-stream was only there to bring you to the point where you are now.

“Is that possible?”

Strange things happen when magic is involved.

“Isn’t that the truth?” I grinned. In my mind I was seeing dragons, ghosts and a three-headed dog that guarded a life-size semi-intelligent chess-set. “So a new identity? And you think that… Webster…” I wasn’t going to call him Uncle, not if he was going to adopt me, “will help?”

There’s little harm in asking. If he says no, I can remove the memory of your conversation and he will go back to his life, non the wiser.


My recommendation is to tell him everything… he is at home, both he and his wife, they have returned home from work, but have yet to begin preparation for a meal, currently they are reading in a sitting room. Have a door created that opens into that room. Have a door created that opens into that room. I would suggest knocking to get their attention, do not leave the Room, if the door shuts behind you, it will not open again and you will have to travel by road, back to my castle, before you could access this room again. I would also suggest telling them, everything, the more they know, the better they will understand your situation, the better they understand, the more likely they are to agree to
help. After all, I can remove the conversation if they refuse.

I thought about it for a few moments. But really, what did I have to loose? If they refused, I was in no worse a position than I was currently. I absently wondered, were they Hogwarts only options for me?

“Do it, please.” I directed. “And I think we can get rid of most of this stuff, just leave a small table with the Horcruxe jars, the rest can go back wherever you got it from.”

The venom basin and it’s pedestal blinked out of sight, followed quickly by the large table I’d used as an operating table for Mini-me. The heavy table that the Purifying potion basin sat on, also vanished, but the jars holding the Horcruxes simply floated over to the delicate little table that had earlier held the phial stand and phials of venom, that were also gone. In the place of the operating table a door appeared. It was freestanding, having ‘legs’ that extended out to the sides, to support it, but other than that? It looked like a door I’d have expect to see in Aunt Petunia’s house.

Simple, clean lines and very clearly muggle.

I took a few deep breaths, I was struggling with the idea of having an Uncle. My head said he’s family, my blood, but my heart said, no, he’s a stranger. But I needed that stranger, I needed him to help me, to adopt me, but I didn’t want to live with him. I didn’t want him to be my family. I didn’t want him to replace my family. Oh Gods, talk about conflicted.

I lifted a hand and rapped my knuckles on the timber of the door and waited. It took a few moments before I heard a voice.
Chapter 3

I lifted a hand and rapped my knuckles on the timber of the door and waited. It took a few moments before I heard a voice.

“Hello?”

“Uh, hi… I’m looking for Webster Potter.” I said to the closed door.

“That’s me. Who are you and why is there a door standing in the middle of in my living room?”

“Oh…” I turned to the chalkboard. “Does he remember anything to do with magic?”

He remembers. Both he and his wife are squibs.

“Ta.” I grinned and turned back to the door. I turned the knob slowly and pulled the door towards me. It opened silently and I studied the view through it. “Hi. Um… this is really complicated and Hogwarts says I should tell you everything. I need help and we’re hoping you can be that help.”

“Hogwarts? What do you… No. First. Who are you?” The man looked like the pictures of Dad, but older, between ten and fifteen years older, I’d guess. It was hard to say, the lighting wasn’t great and he wasn’t getting close enough for me to be certain.

“My name is Harry. Harry James Potter… not sure if the Harry is supposed to be short for Henry or Harrison or something else or if it was supposed to be just Harry.” I was babbling, just a bit.

“Potter?”

“Yes, sir. My father was James Potter.” I winced as I said it. Who knew if he held my father responsible for his banishment?

“James?” He tilted his head in confusion.

“Yeah, Hogwarts says James was you younger brother.”

“Oh, the baby? His name was James? I never knew.” He said blandly.

“Uh…” What was I supposed to say to that?

“Web?” A woman stood up and crossed to join him.

“Yes, dear?”

“May I ask him a few questions?” Her face wasn’t as complacent or as accepting as his.

“Of course, you’ve more experience with the question and answer side of things, than I have.”

“Thank you, love.” She turned to me and I swear the temperature of the room dropped a few degrees, just because of her expression. “How is it possible that you, who appear to be about twenty, give or take a year, are the son of a man that should only be, at most, 25 years old?”

“Ah… this is where I tell them everything?” I leant my head back and watched as Hogwarts wrote.
Yes, it is.

“Okay, given the lack of… trust, on either side. Can I ask you to at least, sit down? This is going to take a while.” I waited while the woman, I assumed her to be Webster’s wife, studied me, before nodding sharply and pulling Webster over to a seat a little closer to the door. I simply summoned an armchair from the depths of the Room and wriggled my butt in it until I was comfortable. “Right, so… Like I told Hogwarts. I was born to James and Lily Potter in July 1980…” I began.

It took me what felt like hours before I sat back in my chair, finished. Now, all I had to do was wait for Webster and his wife to absorb what I’d said and agree to help. I wasn’t all that optimistic.

Minutes after I finished, the two were still sitting, leaning against each other.

“What do you want from us?” Webster’s wife asked.

“Hogwarts has suggested that I ask you to adopt me.” I answered and both of them tensed. “But I’m not sure, I don’t want another family, I have one - had one. Hogwarts thinks that you adopting me will let me keep that family, just alter how I’m connected to them.”

“And if we do that? Adopt you? What then? What will you do, then?” Her voice was still suspicious.

“I want to run a magical second-hand shop and Hogwarts says she can help me with that.”

“But what us, what will you expect from us?” She asked.

I shuddered, but I wasn’t a Gryffindor for nothing, I would tell them the truth, even knowing that it would likely cost me their help and probably their respect, too.

“Nothing. Nothing at all. If you want, I won’t argue against staying in contact, maybe meeting up for lunch a couple of times a year. But…” I looked directly at Webster, “you’re my Uncle. An Uncle that I never knew existed. An Uncle that my father, caused to be taken from his family, unwittingly maybe, but still… My grandfather cut you out of their lives, discarded you and you’d have every right to feel that my father is to blame for that. So, I’m sorry, but I think it would be too painful, for both of us, if we were forced to have too much contact with each other.” I was looking at the floor as I forced the words out.

“Oh, thank God for that!” Webster burst out. He climbed to his feet and crossed the room to the kitchen and began putting a pot of tea together.

Me head snapped up and my jaw fell.

“What? You think like that, why wouldn’t I feel like that, too?” He demanded, looking at me over the kitchen counter.

“Uh…”

“Look, I don’t mind helping, but Rachel and I? Neither of us ever wanted children, so while we’ll help you get started? Don’t expect us to want to be involved too much, after that. Neither of us have had much contact with our families for over a decade. Any at all for me.” Webster sighed.

“Can I ask…? Why? I mean… I get you, but your wife?”

“Rachel, I’m Rachel.” She corrected me. “I am a squib, just like Webster. Not the first in the family,
but…” She huffed. “That’s not important. As a squib in a pureblood family? I’m only glad that they were pro-muggle, otherwise they possibly would have killed me, who knows? I was brought here and adopted by the Browning family, my brothers used to visit occasionally but, my parents… both sets… didn’t approve. I haven’t seen them for a few years, now.” She tilted her head and snorted. “When Web and I had been dating for six months, he asked me to marry him, but the Statute meant I couldn’t really tell him anything, until we were married and I knew from his family history, that he’d see that as lying to him.”

“So she brought me home, with intent to break Wizarding law. Only the moment she pulled out a copy of Babbity Rabbity, I started nodding, it made sense. The alienation from her ‘family’, the odd education, the way she’d twitch sometimes, as we went passed certain buildings.” Webster came back carrying a tray, with tea and biscuits.

“It did. Web being a squib, meant I didn’t have to tell my brothers to leave their wands at home, when they came to visit. We prefer to live as muggle as possible, it’s easier this way, less heartache for both Web and I.”

“I see.” I nodded. “That makes sense.”

**It does.** Hogwarts wrote. **And we can use that to our advantage.** The chalkboard moved so it sat where Webster and Rachel could see it and read what was written on it.

“How so?” Webster asked.

*If you were to adopt, Master Potter, both you and he could sight the differences in your magical desires as a cause of a rift, between you. This would allow you to continue to live as muggles and Master Potter to have his magical ‘second-hand’ shop. It would also equate for the lack of contact between you, the rarity of your meetings and the distance between your home and his. Hogwarts offered.*

Webster and I exchanged looks and I shrugged.

“It’s up to you, sir. I’d really appreciate it, but it’s your call.”

“What’s involved in this adoption?” Rachel asked.

*I will provide a potion that Webster and Rachel will have to add their blood to, Master Potter will then drink the potion and recite an oath. The combination of the oath and the potion, means that the adoption will be permanent and untraceable, not even by goblin magic. I recommend lying down to recite oath as the moment you finish it, the potion will begin to affect you. I doubt there will be much change as you will be keeping almost half the genetic base, Webster having basically the same base as James. Rachel's genetics are more likely to allow changes. Rachel? May I ask? Browning is not a pureblood name, what was your name prior to leaving the Wizarding world? It may have a bearing on what changes we can expect.*

“Oh, I was a Prewett. My father was Percival and mother was Isabella.” She paused. “You know, I’m not sure if they’re still alive or not?”

“They are.” I was stunned, she was related to Ron.

“What? How do you know?” Webster asked.

“I just… you had brothers?”
“Yes, I had two brothers and a sister.” Rachel answered. “Gid-

“Gideon, Fabian and Molly.” I cut her off.

“Yes…” She said, puzzled.

“Ron? My mate Ron? The one I told you about?” I asked and she nodded. “He’s Molly’s youngest son.”

“Molly has a son?”

“No, she has six of them and a daughter. Bill, Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, Ron and Ginny. From eldest to youngest.” I answered.

“Your Ron is my nephew?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah, he is.” I answered.

Rachel and Webster exchanged sighs.

“What else does the adoption, involve?” Webster asked.

The potion and the oath, is all. But… perhaps, if you will allow? To create a stronger backstory, one that will reinforce the estrangement between you, I can use your memories to create pictures of an uncomfortable family life.

“I’m fine with that.” I said. “But, if Webster and Rachel were so anti-magic, where would I have learnt magic? If I hadn’t gone to Hogwarts and I’m sorry, but that would have put me here, inside your halls, in the last few years and bluntly… Remembering my father and the Marauders? The Professors would have noticed another Potter.”

They would. But the war was reaching towards a peak at the time you would have started, it only stands to reason that Gideon and Fabian Prewett would have advised their sister to keep her sons away from the Wizarding world and offer to home-school them, for her. And after their deaths, Rachel would have sought private tutors, after all, Harry would have been ready for his OWLS, if he hadn’t already sat them and Ron would have been, at most two years behind Harry.

“Yes. Harry and Ron. I was not going to suggest Ron, initially, but now that I know you are his mother’s sister, it is an obvious solution. Harry sees Ron as a brother and has done since they first met. And as you have the same genetics, broadly speaking, as Ron’s mother, there would be only minor changes, if he were to take an adoption potion like Harry. It was the first time Hogwarts had addresses me as Harry and it made sense, with both Webster and I in the same conversation, Hogwarts couldn’t really address both of us as Master Potter, now could she? Not without someone, namely me, getting confused. Unfortunately, because he is not here yet, Ron will be younger than Harry, there is no way to avoid that. It has to do with the amount of days actually lived, so while Ron has lived more days, right now, until he is here we cannot guess at the difference in age between the two.

“And the girl?” Rachel asked. “Will we have a daughter, too?”
“No.” I disagreed. “Maybe a daughter-in-law, if Ron ever gets his act together, but not a daughter.”

“Ah.” She nodded a few times. “I see.”

“Yeah.” I sighed. “It’s blasted annoying at times. I mean, yeah, I see Ron as a brother, but I also see Mione as a sister. I just wish, they’d get it together.”

Webster and Rachel chuckled at my mutterings.

**Indeed. I have seen many such couples and I have to say, I am glad I do not have arms, else I would likely have smacked their heads together or locked them in a room until they resolved the issue.**

“So you’ll have two sons? And Gideon and Fabian taught us. Exams? Where do we do them?” I asked, pulling myself back on track.

**There are four ways to sit exams,**

- Attend Hogwarts for five or seven years, depending on the exam,
- Home-school and attend Hogwarts only for the exams themselves,
- Home-school and attend the Ministry for the ICW-sponsored exams,
- Home-school and pay for private examiners from the ICW.

My recommendation is the fourth option. Again, sighting Gideon and Fabian’s reluctance to expose their squib sister and her sons, to the Ministry’s scrutiny. Once the adoption is complete, I will copy Harry’s OWLs and put him through his NEWTs and have the results attributed to an ICW examiner that is no longer alive. It’s almost two years since you sat your OWLs and you should be sitting your NEWTs in a matter of weeks, according to your previous time-stream and your age. Assuming you pass my requirements, and I do think you should, I can have your exams filed as being assessed by ICW Examiner Gerhard Brotte, just before last Yule. He died a week ago, so will fit in with our timing.

“He would.” Webster nodded. “Then what?”

Harry will stay here for a few days, while we work out what he’s taking from this Room. Then he’ll have to go to Diagon Alley and Gringotts. He needs a personal vault and a business vault. He’ll need to visit the estate department at the Ministry, to purchase a shop and residence. To register a business name, he’ll have to go to the Commerce department. Then there’s all the little incidentals that he’ll need.

“If he’s to portray a muggle background, he’ll need muggle-styled clothing, maybe not new, but suitable for someone his age and our business standing.” Webster added.

“But he’ll also need robes, Gideon and Fabian wouldn’t have let him get away without them.” Rachel put in.

“And a business requires ledgers, stationery and the like.” I grimaced.

**You wanted to run a business, Harry.** Hogwarts’ writing was almost smug.

“Okay, I get it, it’s ’Pick on Harry’ day.” I huffed.

“No, dear.” Rachel smiled gently. “We’re teasing you and I’m sorry, we shouldn’t be. But you do
need a lot of things to start a business, or at least, start it properly.”

“Yeah, I know, I just…” I trailed off.

“It’s getting too much?” Webster guessed.

“Yeah.”

“Well, Hogwarts? If you’ll see to the adoption potion, Webster and I will see to a list of things Harry will… Harry? Are you going to stay Harry or will you choose a new name?”

“I was kinda thinking a little of both. Change the formal name and only have a few friends that insist on calling me Harry. If and you and Webster call me by the formal name, it will also make the space between us more visible.” I answered.

“I like that.” Webster answered. “The few times I recall seeing my parents, after I came to live in London, they insisted on calling me ‘Webby’, even after I requested otherwise. So it is reasonable to assume that I would persist in using a formal name as opposed to a nickname.”

“Brilliant.” I grinned.

“But what name will you use?” Rachel asked.

“I was thinking… Hadrien. Spelt H-A-D-R-I-E-N. It sounds the same as the usual 'Hadrian', but is spelt differently.”

“Quite suitable. Might I offer a second name. Blaire. The cousin that raised me was Robert Blaire and given a chance I would have like to have taken his name, but my father denied it.” Webster informed me.

“I like that, it sounds… it flows. Hadrien Blaire Potter. Yes, I can be Hadrien Blaire Potter.” I nodded.

“And Ron?” Rachel asked. “Will you choose a name for him or wait until he arrives?”

No, it would be wise to set a background in motion, now, for Ron and for the girl. Due to Ron having to be younger than Harry, his NEWTs will have to be reassessed when he gets here, I may be able to do the same type of assessment-attribution. The girl? Once we have her identification sorted I'll get an underage exemption lodged in her name. And from what Harry has told me, I believe she would prefer to sit the actual exams as opposed to my sorting out her accreditation for her.

“Yes, Mione would.”

You should consider names for both Ron and… Mione(?), it will help in creating a believable backstory. Hogwarts suggested. And the potion will be ready in five minutes. I will need thirteen drops of blood from both Rachel and Webster once it is ready.

“Thank you, Hogwarts.” Webster nodded his head, addressing the chalkboard as though it were an actual person.

You are welcome, Webster.

Harry? Names for Ron and Mione?
“Ron… Hermione won’t forgive me if I change Ron’s name too much.” I answered.

“I’m assuming he’s Ronald?” I nodded in answer to Webster’s question. “What about Ronaldson?”

“A bit too heavy, dear.” Rachel disagreed. “Ronson.” She offered.

Webster and I both nodded, we could both handle that.

“And a middle name? Webster should get that one.” I held up a hand when Rachel went to answer.

“Hmm… something with meaning to us, we would be expected to have given our sons, names with importance to us.” He muttered before huffing. “Of course. Ronson Maitland Potter.” The two shared a private smile.

I blinked a few time as I repeated the name over in my head. Ronson Maitland Potter. Ronson Maitland Potter.

“Yeah, that’ll work.” I nodded. “Hadrien Blaire and Ronson Maitland Potter.”

Hadrien Blaire Potter. Ronson Maitland Potter. Yes, they will work nicely.

Given the information you’ve provided, I am currently estimating your date of birth to be somewhere around 15th – 20th of July 1966, it may differ slightly, it depends on actual days lived, so as you didn’t know the exact date of your last day in the other time-stream, there’s a little variation and we may be wise to alter that, to give us more leeway in regards to Ronson and his date of birth. We won’t know for certain until we do an identity test and I don’t want to do that until the adoption is complete.

The same will be done for Ronson and Mione.

Will you choose a name for Mione?

“Portia Alexis.” I responded quickly. "She always said that she wished her mother had named her that, instead of Hermione Jean. But… I’m not sure about surnames.”

Her surname is Granger?

“Yes, ma’am.”

Her date of birth?

“The 19th of September 1979.” I answered promptly, I felt a little like I was in Professor McGonagall’s class.

Suddenly, it hit me. If I saw her again, McGonagall wouldn’t know who I was. Neither would Neville or Remus or Molly or Ginny or Fred or George… or anyone else I knew. They would all look at me and see a stranger. It was too much to bear and I broke, I hit the floor, too shocked to even cry. My heart was racing so fast that I doubted even my Firebolt could have kept pace. I felt clammy and cold at the same time, I knew I was in shock, but I couldn’t do anything about it.

“Hush now.” Arms. I felt arms around me. Mione was the only one to hug me, not even Ginny instigated a hug and Mrs Weasley was like an attack on your senses, but you couldn’t call what she did, a hug. “Hush, breathe Harry, breathe.” A woman’s voice was above my left ear and a heartbeat under my right. I listened for the steady, slow ‘da-dump, da-dump, da-dump’. And after a while my
heart began to slow, still faster than the one under my ear, but Madam Pomfrey always said my heart-rate was elevated, something to do with reaction times. I kind of tuned her out, as soon as she pointed at the hospital bed I always used.

When I became aware of my surroundings again, I was sitting on the floor, just inside the door between Webster’s living room and Hogwarts. I was slumped to the right and almost draped over poor Rachel, her arms were wrapped around and she was relying on Webster to hold us both off the stone floor.

“Sorry.” I whispered, my voice harsh and crackly.

“Oh, hush, now.” Rachel crooned. “You’ve nothing to apologise for, Hogwarts has been expecting you to do this for the last hour. Just breathe and relax.”

Another few minutes passed, before Rachel felt that I should be allowed to sit up and then it was straight back to business. We still had a lot of ground to cover.

I looked up to see what Hogwarts had written while I was out of it, but her board was conspicuously blank. Huh. I wonder what she doesn’t want me to know?

**Nothing important, Harry.** Hogwarts wrote, so obviously I said that out loud. **Just a few things for Webster and Rachel to do in regards to the adoption potion.**

I just nodded, I felt almost too tired to respond.

“We’ve given Hogwarts our blood, Hadrien.” Webster started. “Once you take it, we’ll leave you with Hogwarts for a few hours.”

“The door will stay, though, as we’ll be back in a couple of hours with some muggle clothing and a meal. Hogwarts assures us she can talk you through aging the clothes, slightly.” Rachel added.

“You next few days are going to be very busy and while we will help where we can, we still have jobs to go to during the day.” Webster went on. “Hogwarts has made up a rough schedule for us of what you’ll be doing and when. While you’re going through whatever changes the adoption creates, I will be seeing to a meal and Rachel will be getting you a few changes of clothing, don’t worry, Hogwarts provided your sizes and the money.”

“Then it’s best if you rest, sleep. In the morning, Hogwarts will begin your testing.” Rachel added.

**In between bouts of that, we will be working on a plan for your shop.** Hogwarts wrote. **That and what to do with the remains of the Horcruxes.**

“They’re easy. Don’t the founders have offices here, at the school?”

**Yes.**

“Then the cup goes in Hufflepuff’s office, the locket in Slytherin’s and the tiara in Ravenclaw’s.” I answered.

**It’s a diadem, Harry. And the book?**

“Put it back where it was, let Malfoy stew on what happened to it.” I gave a weak grin.

**Brat.**
I gave Hogwarts my fakest smile. Webster and Rachel laughed, so I considered that a win.

I’ll have to dry the book out before I can do that, but… that is easy enough to do.

I’ve had a chat with the Ministry Building and he will do what he can to help, too. So, getting through there shouldn’t be quite the challenge it could have been. When you are ready for that, the Ministry Building will create appointments for you, that look to have been made anything up to a month prior.

“Which will help your back story.” Webster said. “But we-you can work on that later. Do the adoption now. Get that secure, then move on to the next step.”

I nodded. “Yeah, okay. Let’s do that.”

Webster handed me a pair of phials, one was a deep, dark blue/black and the other was a bright copper/orange colour. They reminded me of the colours of our hair. Webster and I had that dark blue/black, while Rachel’s was same bright ginger as Ron, Fred and George’s.

“You take that and Rachel’s got the oath, for you. There needs to be less than a minute between swallowing that and starting the oath. Alright?” Webster said as I closed my fingers around the fist phial.

The darker liquid tasted like blackberries and grapes, while the lighter one tasted light apricots and mangoes. Who knew that adoption potions tasted like fruit?

Rachel held up a piece of parchment, but shook her head when I reached for it.

“Just read it out loud, Hadrien.” She said.

I took a deep breath and started.

“I, who claim the name of Harry James Potter, do hereby take these people, this man, Webster Henry Potter and this woman, Rachel Anne Potter nee Browning, born Prewett, as my parents. I stand at this moment in time, an adult of legal age, such that none may deny my choice. From this moment forward, they are my parents and I am their son. I shall be known as Hadrien Blaire Potter. Let Lady Magic hear my words, let Her feel the truth of my choice. As I say it, so do I swear, as I swear, so shall it be. Ita fiat, esto.” The last three words were the hardest to say as the potions began to work, ‘esto’ was quite literally spat out and within seconds I knew why this wasn’t used often.

It hurt. Gods, did it hurt!

I’m sure even my eyelashes hurt. It came in waves, a dull ache that I could just about ignore, that built until it was right up there with Voldemort’s Cruciatus. Then it dropped, but my bones ached, deep and throbbing, similar to when Madam Pomfrey gave me Skele-grow after Lockhart the Incompetent, vanished the bones in my arm. Then it built again. And dropped. And built. And dropped.

The cycle went on and on. And I began to wonder if it was ever going to end. But it did, eventually it began to fade, the waves cresting with less pain, the aches weaker and the time between the waves getting longer.

Finally I was able to think around the waves, I rolled myself over on the floor, until I was face down, then I waited until there was a lull in the waves, before heaving myself up onto my armchair. I flopped back against the backrest and let the waves of pain wash passed me, not letting them take
How are you faring, Harry?

“Hurt worse.” I muttered.

Webster and Rachel will be back shortly.

“Kay.”

Now, Harry? You have to give the orders, remember? No one currently in the school knows about this Room and I’m not certain that’s going to change in the near future. Think carefully about what you want from here. Once you leave, I’m not able to help you. Only while you are in this Room.

“Want it all.” I muttered. “But no curses. No magic that is harmful or not beneficial.” My words were either, slightly slurred if I was in a wave-trough or bitten off if the wave was cresting.

I can do that, but there may some items that require a professional cursebreaker to deal with, I am only a school, after all. What about storing and moving items?

“Trunks.”

Do you want me to put things in the trunks?

“Yes and I’ll get you to empty all the trunks, keep the contents, though.” I paused and let a wave crest and recede. “Then we can fill them wit the uncursed stuff. Then? I'll deal with it. Summoned stuff, but altered state.” I recited.

Very good. You remembered.

“I did.” Another wave passed. “Right now I want four empty barrels.” A breath and I relaxed a little. “Just on the floor in front of me, is fine.”

A rumble came, I heard it before the barrels were visible and as they rolled to a stop, a new wave of pain hit. I huffed and snarled, not letting the pain control me. Then it was gone. “One barrel is for all the British Muggle currency that is currently in circulation.” Notes and coins flew from everywhere. “One is for British Wizarding currency that is currently in circulation.” More coins joined those in the air. “One is for all foreign currency, currently in circulation.” More notes and coins joined the swarm. “The last is for all out of circulation currency, wizarding, muggle and foreign.” More coins, notes and even a few ingots floated passed my chair. Hogwarts was amazing she was pulling money from everywhere and controlling thousands of items. “Make the barrels expand inside as necessary.” I saw coins and notes fall into the barrels but the level never increased. “Hogwarts?”

Yes, Harry?

“You are amazing. How many coins and notes are you controlling?” It was meant to be a rhetorical question, but Hogwarts answered me, anyway.

Right this moment there are thirteen thousand, eight hundred and eleven coins and three thousand, six hundred and two notes and forty three ingots, in motion.

“Holy shit!” I whispered, so distracted that I didn’t feel the last wave as it hit and left, never to return.
Language, please. I am a school, Master Potter. I could see the amusement in the slightly wiggly lines, of Hogwarts writing.

“Yes, ma’am.” I offered up a grin.

So, what next, do you think?

“Oh, that’s a loaded question.” I smirked at the chalkboard. “Are you sure you want me to answer that?”

No... I’m not, now... but answer it, anyway.

“Alright. The Wizarding money? I want some in three pouches, um... because I have the shop to fund, I want... oh, let's say twenty thousand wizarding coins in one and three thousand in the other two. The fourth pouch, I want um... twenty thousand pieces of muggle money, a mix of both notes and coins, in it. Five thousand pieces of muggle money in the two smaller pouches, they're for Ron and Mione. Okay, when that’s done I want all the trunks, emptied, all securities disabled and stacked against that wall.” I pointed to my left and the trunks started to appear. It took a few minutes and by the time the trunks had stopped emerging from the towering piles of items, they were stacked four deep and so wide and high that they looked like part of the wall. “Next, place all the money in separate trunks, one barrel per trunk, expanding the trunk as necessary.” Trunks slid forward and barrels lifted, coins poured from the barrel into the trunk. “Close the trunks and stack them against that wall.” I pointed to my right, this time and within a minute there were four trunks stacked neatly, side by side, against the wall.

You do realise that you have required those trunks to be as they are?

“Yes.”

And that as they are, they cannot leave the Room?

“Yes.”

Then... how do you plan to get them out?

“Well there’s two options. I’ll start with shrinking them and if that doesn’t work then I’ll do a colour changing charm and turn them all yellow. Or blue, maybe? Would that work, do you think?”

Oh.

“That’s it, just... Oh?”

Sorry, I was expecting some grand complicated plan.

“Yeah, no. Like Mio-Portia always says, ‘keep it simple, Harry’, that works the best.” I imitated my friend’s voice as best I could.

I’m not accustomed to simple. It might be a good thing, that in this Room I can only do as I am asked.

“Well, that I can do. One trunk, front and centre.” A trunk skidded around in front of me like a little dog sliding on a tiled floor. “Trunk, open.” The lid snapped up. “All the goblin made items, excluding money, into the trunk.” There was a stream of things, but not nearly as many as I’d expected and with in a minute or two the trunk lid fell closed. “Over with the other filled trunks. Oh
and each trunk will be labelled with its contents, just as I described them.” The trunk sprouted a tag that read ‘goblin made items, excluding money’ and gave the appearance of trotting over to the other four already filled trunks.

“Right, from here, it’s a little different.” I warned.

**Right…** I could see the caution in the word.

“Anything belonging to a student still attending Hogwarts, to include, items lost, stolen, misplaced, borrowed or just forgotten. These items are to be placed on their beds or if there’s too many items to fit, then in a trunk expanded as necessary, that will sit at the foot of their bed.” There was a flurry and many of the closer items vanished, along with a couple of trunks. “Same for the staff.” More things vanished, more trunks with them.

**Next?**

“Next… In that space there.” I point slightly to my right but in front of the wall of trunks. “Any item belonging to a student, where that student placed the item in this Room or any other room in the castle, in a deliberate attempt to rid themselves of the item.”

Things began to appear, some floating out from the depths of the Room, some just appearing as Hogwarts summoned them from other places.

“Oh, geez!” I screamed and leapt to my feet, I stumbled over, as fast as my uncooperative legs would carry me. “That!” I yelled, pointing. “Bring that here!” A cage slid down the slope of things, into my hands, the owl inside barely reacting to the movement. I opened the cage and gently lifted it out, I turned back to my seat and flopped back down, my legs jellified. “The tray of sandwiches that I brought in with me and a bowl of water, please, Hogwarts.”

A little table shimmered into being at my elbow and a tray sailed towards me, from where it had sat under the Horcruxe table, a bowl of water already on it. I lifted the bowl and gently held it so the owl could dip its beak in the water. Then I shredded some chicken from a sandwich and held tiny scraps up.

**Not too much, Harry.**

“No, I know. A little bit and often.” I repeated the mantra that I lived by for the first week or two of the school year, every year.

**Yes, a little and often.**

“That pile? Is there anything that is a parent is going punish a child for misplacing?” Two items slipped free. “Right, can we get them labelled and sent home?”

**Of course. Neither item is suitable for school use, anyway.** Of course not, daggers and swords were not the average school supplies and not something I could see Dumbledore allowing.

“Good, do it. So the rest of the stuff here is not belonging to a current student or staff, other than that pile. Correct?”

**Correct.**

“Great, how much will you let me take?”
As much as you like. I’m happy to start over with a clean slate, but… fair warning, there’s a thousand years worth of junk here. Yes, there’s some good stuff, but there’s also a lot of junk. And a lot of potions well passed their usable life.

“Yeah, potions stuff is next. Anything un-viable, damaged or tainted, get rid of it. Banish it. Flush it down the loo. Burnt it. I don’t care, as long as it’s gone, never to return. Trunk, front and centre, open.” A trunk appeared so fast the little owl on my wrist startled. “Easy little one, easy.” I crooned until it fluffed it’s feathers and settled. “All potion making equipment that has not been used.” The owl blinked and bobbed it’s head watching the flow of cauldrons, stirrers, knives and other implements. “Close and label. Next, all potions and potion ingredients that are still viable are to be put there.” I pointed beside the potions equipment trunk. “Right, then. Is there enough there to stock a potions cabinet or store cupboard?”

Not exactly. A full Potions cabinet holds at least a thousand items, depending on the level. Home cabinet, apprentice cabinet, Journeyman cabinet or Master’s cabinet. A home cabinet? Yes, there is. An apprentice cabinet? No, it’s short a dozen. A journeyman’s cabinet? No, it’s short about fifty. A Master’s cabinet? No, it’s short about a hundred potions and a number of ingredients.

“That’s still better than I thought. How many of each potion does a journeyman’s cabinet call for?”

Five.

“Are there any trunks set up as Journeyman’s potions cabinets?”

No, but there is one set up as a Master’s cabinet.

“Right, fill it to the Journeyman’s level, same with the ingredients, too, please.”

Certainly, but there will be some gaps.

“I know, I can deal with that later. Anything above and beyond, is to be sent to the potions Professor’s office and stored appropriately, a note detailing the various items.”

As in a stock listing?

“Yep.” I fed and watered the owl again, before turning my attention back to Hogwarts. “Trunk holding potions supplies and Journeyman's Potion cabinet-trunk, join the other completed trunks. An empty trunk, please.” A trunk skidded around the corner of my chair and the owl gave it a weak peeping hoot and turned away from it. “It’s alright, little one.” I held up a finger and the owl nibbled it’s beak along the edge. “You’re cute, Mi-Portia’s going to love you.” I sighed. “Okay back to work. All clothes in the trunk.” I waited until there was a steady stream of fabric, before I thought to add, “and headwear, footwear and handwear.” I grinned and shook my head as a pair of boots tied by the laces, came dancing down an aisle, beside a pair of ladies bedroom slippers.

“Everything else? A thousand items to a trunk, until you run out of trunks. Go for it.” I wave at the piles.

And if I should run out of trunks?

“Well in that case, you can do one of three things. Go back and top up all the other trunks. Transfigure an item into a trunk. Or just leave the leftovers behind.” I shrugged. “Whichever is best for you.”
In that case, I would prefer to top up the existing trunks. I have no idea how long something I transfigured would last.

“That’s your decision, just leave one trunk completely alone, I’ll use that to put all the others in after I’ve shrunk them.” I paused. “Shrunk or shrunk-and-coloured them. We’ll see what works.”

This is going to take a while…

“Yes, ma’am, I think it is. Oh hey, can we get the goblin-made-stuff trunk and stick it in the doorway between here and Webster’s? Then the door can’t accidentally shut if I leave the Room.”

Certainly. A trunk wriggled out of the ranks and somehow, without legs, walked itself over to the doorway and plopped down, between the door and the frame. How are you feeling, now?

“Pretty good really. The wobbly feeling is fading and… I’m not sure whether my eyesight is improving or not?” The last was a question.

Take your glasses off and let’s find out. If not, you could require me to provide the appropriate treatment so that you’d not need your glasses any longer.

I sighed and removed my glasses, closing my eyes as I did. This made me nervous. I’d never considered not having glasses, whether the solution was magic or muggle. I rubbed the bridge of my nose as I tried to calm my breathing.

“Hogwarts? If I require it, can you do something to repair the damage that my… the Dursleys did to me? It that even possible?” I raised my head and while the board was clearer, it was still blurred, that meant I had to put my glasses back on, to be able to read Hogwarts’ answer.

To a point, yes. Potions can repair the damage, but they cannot reverse it.

“I don’t understand the difference.” I admitted.

Potions can repair the damage to your bones, but they can’t reverse the damage. You height is a result of the damage.

“Okay, so you can fix the bones, make them as good as new, but they’ll still be the same size. I get it, now.”

Exactly. If you’re going to do that, I suggest that it be the last thing done before you sleep and be done over a number of nights.

“Why?”

Mixing different types of restorative or reparative potions can have detrimental side-effects. I would suggest a full body scan, to get a listing of all injuries, ailments and susceptibilities, before any treatment is started.

“Ah, right. How long does it take to do the scan?”

Approximately ninety seconds.

“Can you do that now? While I’m sitting here? Or do I have to lie down? And based on what you find, can you work up a schedule of what potions are needed and when I should take them? Starting with my eyes, please.”
Hogwarts didn’t answer, but a blue light started at my feet and worked it’s way up my body, pausing and pulsing as it went. When it started, the owl stared at it intently, following it’s path, when it reached my arm the silly bird turned it’s head upside down so as to keep track of the light as it moved. As the light reached my neck and face, the owl peeped a series of hoots, until I reached out and stroked down it’s back.

“Hush, now, Hogwarts won’t hurt me. She’s just scanning to check for injury. Hush.” It didn’t escape me that I was treating a bird just like Rachel and Webster had treated me earlier.

And speaking of Rachel and Webster? There was a crash from the door, that forced my attention away from the owl.

“What on earth? Hadrien!? Why is there a trunk in the doorway?” Webster demanded.

“I had Hogwarts put it there, so the door couldn’t be closed accidentally.” I answered.

“Ah… Didn’t think about that… and what is that on your arm?”

“An owl. Some heartless little brat, didn’t want the poor thing, they shoved it in a cage and abandoned it. No food, no water, no chance.” I snapped.

“Oh, I didn’t realise it was alive. Sorry.” The apology was as much directed at the bird, as at me.

The owl bobbed it’s head and peeped back.

“I think that’s an apology accepted, sir…” I trailed off. “Um, what am I supposed to call you, now?”

“Ah… I’m not… Rachel thinks… she thinks we’d best keep it formal, so Mother and Father. Most muggles don’t use the terms all that often, so it will provide the impression of distance without having to say anything more.”

**That is good advice, Harry.**

“Thank you, Hogwarts.” Webst-Father said. “I actually came to tell Hadrien that dinner is ready and that Rachel has your clothes. She wants to know if you want them washed before you wear them? And would you like a shower?”


I think he likes that idea, Webster.

“Indeed. Is this trunk, here, enough to hold the door open? If Hadrien comes through for a shower and dinner?”

**That trunk will stay there until Hadrien tells me to move it.** That was the first time Hogwarts called me Hadrien. I suppose with the adoption complete, it was expected. And that raised a though in my mind.

“What about the identity tests? When do we do them?”

**I would prefer to wait for a while longer, allow the potion to saturate your entire body. Go, shower, change, eat and then we can see to the testing.**

“That’s probably a wise idea, Hadrien.” Web- no, my father said.
Off you go, Hadrien.

Bossy castle, I didn’t say it out loud, though, just muttered it under my breath as I encouraged the owl, to move from my arm to the back of the chair, then I followed my new father out of the Room and into his house. Gods, I hoped that trunk was enough to keep the door open.

“This way, Hadrien, you can shower and change, then we’ll eat and we can chat a bit more. Rachel and I both have some ideas for your shop, but we need more information before we can make many suggestions.”

As he talked, we left the living room and went down a hallway and into a plain, obviously guest-bedroom. On the bed were piles of clothes. From underwear, to socks… oh, how Dobby would love Rachel’s taste in socks… to shirts, trousers, jumpers, shoes and even a leather jacket.

“Oh… my… god… How much did Rach-Mother spend?” I gasped.

“Not as much as you might think.” Father laughed. “Most of that is from a preloved clothing place, a few blocks from here, the rest is work wear, not nearly the quality either of us would like our sons wearing in public.”

“If this work wear…?” It dawned on me. “This is why you were suspicious about me when I first knocked on the door. You’re rich and you thought I was a… dirt-digger.”

“Gold-digger, but yes, that’s what we first thought, right up until you said you were uncomfortable with further contact. Rachel and I are both lawyers, she specialises in criminal law and I work mostly in family law, so we're quite well off. But it also means that between us, we know what you need to establish an identity and we’ll discuss that over dinner, with you and Hogwarts. But for now? Shower.” Father nodded in the direction of a bathroom and gave me a gentle nudge, before leaving the room and heading back to the kitchen.

Twenty minutes later, I felt clean for the first time since Fleur and Bill’s wedding, nearly eight months ago. Back in the bedroom, I chose a pair of soft trousers, a long-sleeved t-shirt and after re-straping the wand holster on, I pulled on a pale blue jumper and headed for the kitchen and something to eat.

“Hadrien? This way, we’re eating in here.” Mother's voice came from the living room, so that’s where I went.

I sat where she pointed and accepted the shallow bowl she handed me, the smell of rich creamy pasta made my mouth water.

“You don’t have to wait, Hadrien. Eat.” She ordered and being as hungry as I was? I did as I was told.

The flavour was rich, but light, sweet and creamy all at once, wherever Father had learned to cook, he’d had brilliant teachers.

As my emptied plate was placed gently on the coffee table, Father spoke up.

“Hogwarts has given us a brief outline of the types of things that were in the Room of Requirement, so Rachel and I made a few notes on things we believe you need to think about. Whether you take our advice is up to you, but there are certain things that are absolute must haves. Without them? Your new identity isn’t legal and you’ll get tripped up at the first hurdle.” He tapped a pen against a legal notepad that lay on the table.
“Okay.” I replied. “What do I need?”

“The first and probably most important is a recorded birth.” Father answered. “Next is a NIN, a National Insurance Numbercard. School records, we’re looking at a couple of really large primary schools in the greater Leeds area that went through major remodels, about the time that you and Ronson would have moved from primary to secondary school. And your secondary schooling, we’ve already discussed, Hogwarts suggested earlier, having Gideon and Fabian as your Wizarding tutor. We do feel, however, that you should sit for your GCSE, but we understand that your situation is difficult, so our suggestion is to have Hogwarts file slightly above average results for you and for you, over the next six to twelve months, do the study as you would have done, if you had attended structured lessons.”

“So, in other words, I’m going to have Portia’s favourite pastime... homework?” I replied.

“Yes.” Mother nodded. “Hogwarts will put the records that we decide on, into place for you. Birth, NIN, home-schooling records, exams and the other thing we felt you needed was a banking history. That’s going to take a little fiddling, as I believe we need to go back as far as ten years. Ten years worth of transactions? I’m working on a list now and will get that to Hogwarts as soon as I can, dear.”

“Outside that, you need all the things that people need when they leave home and start their own businesses. Firstly? Finances, now, Hogwarts says that the goblins will pay a finders fee for all the goblin made items, but you have to have a story of how you found them.” Father went on. “We suggested that, as we have just purchased a holiday house in the Yorkshire Dales area, you claim the trunk was in the attic, as was. Hogwarts agrees that this should work. But like Rachel said, we also feel that you need a suitable muggle banking history, so you’ll just have to tolerate that.”

“Next?” Mother took over. “A location. It will depend on what the Ministry of Magic estate department has available, but given the option, where would you like to go? To open your shop?”

“I’ve thought about that, while I was in the shower, Mother and there’s really only one choice, particularly with Ron and Mi-Portia still to arrive.”

“And that is?” Mother asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Ottery St Catchpole.” I answered.

“Your reasoning?” I felt like Mother was interrogating me.

“It’s simple, Ottery St Catchpole is central to Ron, Portia and I. Ron’s... The Weasley’s live there and we’ve spent each summer with them, since second year. It’s also a mixed village with a small number of purely magical shops and a larger number of mixed shops. It caters to a wider area than just the village. I understand it to be the next preferred shopping area after Diagon Alley and on a par with Hogsmeade. There’s the added positive that both Ron and Portia know their way around the village and... I was thinking, there’s got to be a way to send a patronus to them, that won’t go to our local counterparts, but I’m not sure how to do that, yet. I planned to ask Hogwarts for help on that, in the morning.” I shrugged. “Back to shops. There’s three or four shops, that were empty in the summer of ‘92 and I’m kind hoping that one in particular was—is empty, now.”

“That’s fair.” Father narrowed his eyes as he nodded. “You’ll need a business name and to register that, you’ll have to go to the Commerce Department. What will you call your shop, Hadrien?”

“At first I thought, something to do with the Marauders, but then I remembered that Remus and Sirius are still alive and in Sirius’ case, soon to be freed. So, no to the Marauder’s Den. My only
other option was something quidditch related, Golden Snidget’s like to collect odd things and I thought that was kinda apt for a second-hand shop. Plus I have snitch that Dumbledore left me in his Will, that likes to zip about and fly around me. So, yes to ‘The Snitch’s Nest’.

“I remember quidditch, I think. Flying about on brooms?” Father tilted his head back to study the ceiling.

“Pretty much.” I replied.

“And of course, you played.” It wasn’t a question, but a statement.

“I did, youngest school seeker in a century, according Portia.” I said brightly.

“Hmm… not sure I approve of that.” Father hummed.

“It doesn’t matter, not anymore, I’m not at school and I’ve not intention of playing professionally.”

“Good. Another thing you will need, is accommodation. But as many business premises have flats above them, that may be a moot issue.” Father nodded firmly at my quidditch comment.

“And I’ll help you set up a ledger and make sure you have some basic account-keeping skills. I do suggest, however, that you keep it simple, maybe a dozen categories of inventory.” Mother suggested.

“That’s kind of hard, as I’ve no idea what’s there… but I’ll do my best, Mother.” I gave her a half-smile-half-grimace.


“We do prefer that you don’t sell any weapons, other than potions knives, to the public, put them aside and sell them to the goblins or the Aurors.” Father requested. “Either that or have the goblins remove any charms or magic on them and sell to a muggle collector.”

“We’d prefer the goblins or the Aurors, though.” Mother added.

Before we went any further there was a bell chime from Hogwarts’ door.

“It appears as though Hogwarts wishes our attention.” Father took a deep breath. “Shall we?”

“Yes, please.” I answered.

Father offered Mother a helping hand out of her seat and gently guided her closer to the door, they sat in the same place before and both encouraged me back into the room, where the little owl gave a few ghostly peeping hoots and fluttered it’s wings at me.

“Hello there, I’m back. Are you hungry, little one? What am I going to call you? Hmm…?” I offered up scraps of chicken as I crooned to the bird. “Hogwarts? What type of owl is it and is male or female?”

SHE is an Elf Owl, the small species of owl in the world, they come from the Mexico-Arizona-NewMexico-Texas region of the Americas. And yes, she is fully grown, they average 5-5½ inches in length with a 10½ inch wingspan.
“Good grief, I thought it—**she** was only half grown, but... wow.” I gasped. “Whoever left her here, Hogwarts? Can you see that they don’t bring another owl to school? They don’t deserve it.”

I've already informed the elves, who will inform the Deputy Headmistress. And might I suggest a name?

**Lacy. The pattern on her wings is reminiscent of old lace.**

“Lacy? Would like that?” I asked the owl, who bobbed her head and peeped in reply. “Okay, then. I guess she’s a Lacy.”

“It appears so.” Father agreed.

**Are you ready to do the identity testing, Hadrien?** Hogwarts wrote.

“As ready as I’m ever going to be.” I answered.

A table rolled towards us, small wheels flicking about on the flagstone tiles, it stopped just in front of me. On it, a tray holding a phial of pale green liquid, a piece of parchment in a shallow tray and an athamé that looked a little like a silver version of a basilisk fang, on a small scale.

**Use the blade to cut a finger, let seven drops of blood fall into the phial. Put the stopper back in and gently shake it for a few seconds, then pour it out onto the parchment, not taking the parchment out of the tray.**

I huffed a breath and did as Hogwarts directed and watched the liquid change from pale green to a vivid, almost electric light purple.

“Here goes.” I whispered and up-ended the phial over the parchment.

**It will take about ten minutes to complete.**

“In the mean time, Hadrien? Pull up a chair and I’ll give you a quick lesson in basic bookkeeping. It’s only going to be basic, as I expect you to take your books to Gringotts... that’s still the Wizarding bank, yes?” I nodded to Mother. “Good, I expect you to take your books to them or to a business accountant recommended by them, every six months.”

“Yes, ma'am.” I replied and eased over to sit beside her.
Chapter 4

I stumbled as I apparated into Mother’s garden, the blind spot I’d chosen was just behind the garage and tucked up against the garden shed. It was completely hidden from sight, even from those in the house, but the ground was uneven and I was forced to throw out a hand to balance myself and I leant against the shed for a few moments, before huffing a breath of frustration and stomped towards the house. In the utility room I kicked my shoes off and headed for the living room on stockinged feet… which is a really weird phrase, considering I wear socks not stockings.

I grunted to Mother and Father and flopped into my favourite chair, the one that come from the Room of Requirement. Mother had insisted I do a *reparo* and a *renovo*, before she would allow it in her house, but that was fine, it was still comfortable even if it looked hideous.

“That doesn’t sound like your trip went well, Hadrien.” Father stated.

**It doesn’t, indeed.** Hogwarts wrote on her chalkboard.

“It did.. but now? I get why Portia gets so annoyed with me and Ron.” I huffed.

“Ron and I, dear.” Mother corrected.

“With the two of us.” I frowned, my frustration clear.

“What happened?” Father asked.

“James happened.” I snapped.

“Explain.”

Over the last few days, Hogwarts and I had worked through a ton of things, from how to lock away my memories of the other time-stream and Dursleys, in such a manner that no Leglimens, no matter how good, would ever be able to access them. To working on a listing of charms that would help with the shop, to the prophecy, to why Dumbledore so badly wanted the stone in the Peverell ring, that lead to what the Deathly Hallows were and why they were so infamous and the probability that the my cloak was a Hallow from my time-stream. That got us onto, what happens to it now it’s not in it’s native time-stream? Hogwarts had talk to the Ministry building again to be sure, but the Department of Mysteries was confident and it’s theory was sound, so we were accepting that, while my cloak was an exceptional cloak, in this time-stream it was *not* a Hallow. The only Hallows in this time-stream, were the ones native to it. Which was a good thing, as far as I was concerned, while the cloak was a connection to my Dad, the idea that it was Death’s cloak freaked me out. In this time-stream it wasn’t, it was just a cloak.

The other thing that Hogwart had suggested we do, was to clear Sirius’ name, so we spent a day, working on how. Yes, Hogwart could and did bring Pettigrew to the Room and yes, I moved him from one cage to another, to get around the ‘required but altered’ restrictions, but how were we to get him to the Aurors and in a way that made them listen? It was Father that suggested that we use the Peverell ring’s Resurrection Stone. His idea was to call Dad’s shade… I thought it was ghost, but Hogwarts said that spirits called by the Stone are more than ghosts, they can, in a limited way, interact physically with the living world, but were still semi-transparent. Anyway, Father suggested we call Dad’s shade and get his help, have him, with my invisible assistance, carry Pettigrew’s cage into the Ministry.
That was another emotional rollercoaster, with Mum and Dad not knowing what happened beyond my arrival, I was using the local Resurrection stone after all and that would call only spirits/shades from this time-stream. It took us hours to bring Mum and Dad up to speed, mostly because we couldn’t do it in one go, the longer a spirit is on our plane as a shade, the more painful it gets for them, but Mum wasn’t the ‘brightest witch of her age’ for nothing, it only took her a few minutes to work out that short stays five to ten minutes were bearable. It was Dad’s idea to do the delivery in the middle of the afternoon, when the Ministry was at it’s busiest, I’d figured the least likely to cause rejection was to delivery Pettigrew to Scrimgeour, who was Head Auror at the time, privately. But Dad disagreed, he said if we did it in public, there was no way they could deny it and ghosts can’t lie, if he (or his shade/ghost) said something was so, then the DMLE had to take that as given under veritaserum.

But Dad was a Marauder…

“There was no problem getting into the Ministry…” I said to Mother and Father. “Hogwarts? Please pass my thanks along to the Ministry building, it’s help was invaluable today. Like we planned, Dad came out of the wall beside the floo-fireplaces and caught the attention of the Welcome wizard pretty damn quick. The poor bloke nearly fainted. We walked through the Ministry, staying in the public areas until we reached the Auror office… you know how fast news travels? Well, rumour travels faster. By the time we got to the Head Auror’s office, the minister, her flunkies, Scrimgeour, Dumbledore and Moody were waiting for us…” I went on to tell them what happened.

Dad snarled and lifted his arm, while I levitated the cage to match it, so that everyone could see the cage.

‘One traitor, for you, Madam Minister.’ His voice had that hollow echoing sound we’d spent hours on and can I just say? In the a large room, it sounded really creepy. Like graveyard, Voldemort’s return, creepy.


‘You failed my son, so I was allowed to take action, myself.’ He answered shrugging.

‘Failed! We haven’t failed Harry Potter! Who said we failed him? How?’ Bagnold ranted.

‘You’ve jailed his godfather and allowed the man who betrayed us to live free.’ He dropped the cage onto a desk.

‘Sirius black in Azkaban.’ Scrimgeour objected.

‘He is, but why?’

‘He was your Secret Keeper, he was the one to tell You-Know-Who where you were. We-’

‘No, he wasn’t. Peter Pettigrew was our Secret Keeper.’ Dad said and pointed to the cage. ‘Which is why I brought him here.’

‘That’s a rat.’ Minister Bagnold said, stating the obvious.

‘Yes, he is. A stupid, fat, lazy rat, that deserves to be fed to the dementors.’ Dad snarled.

Scrimgeour frowned. ‘What are we missing?’ He asked.
Dad smiled and it wasn’t a nice smile. ‘Peter Pettigrew is an unregistered Animagus that has been hiding was a family pet, since he lead Voldemort to us.’

‘Excuse me, what?!” Bagnold gasped.

‘He’s been living as a pampered family pet, in a house with children. After what he did to us, you let him be around children?’ Dad yelled.

‘Pettigrew is dead, James.’ Dumbledore tried to calm Dad down.

‘Really?’ Dad turned to the gathered Auror trainees. ‘Who knows the Animagus revealing charm? Anyone?’ After a few seconds, a young black man raised his arm.

‘I hardly see-’

‘Dumbledore, shut up!’ Dad cut him off. ‘You’ve done more than enough harm to my family, keep your mouth closed for a while. Trainee? If you please.’ Dumbledore was stunned, but the trainee walked around to the side of the group and did the text-book charm and wand movements, where everyone could see.

‘In animo revelio.’ He cast and within a few seconds a bright yellow glow surrounded the cage.

‘Well what do you know? I was right.’ Dad snarled. ‘Oi, trainee? Any good with the Animagus reversal charm?’

‘Yes, sir!’ The trainee grinned. ‘Animo remetior’ and a familiar blue glow wafted over the cage and it’s occupant.

An occupant that was changing and the cage along with it. Soon enough the cage stopped enlarging and the other changes stopped and people gasped, that was Peter Pettigrew!

‘Veritaserum, anyone?’ Dad asked.

‘I hardly-’

‘Dumbledore, shut up!’ Dad wasn’t the only to yell at the old man. Both Bagnold and Moody joined him.

Dumbledore looked ready to argue, when Moody obviously figured out that Dumbledore wasn’t going to stop interrupting and threw a silencing spell at him.

‘Thanks Moody.’ Dad grinned. ‘So… veritaserum?’ He asked again.

‘Yes, I think that’s a very good idea.’ Scrimgeour nodded and reached into the pouch at his waist.

‘I see you trained with Moody, too.’ Dad snorted. ‘Him and his ‘constant vigilance’, drove me and Siri mental.’

‘Didn’t do you any good, did it, still got killed, didn’t you?’ Moody grunted.

‘Hey, I did pretty well, considering Scrimgeour, the DMLE and bloody Dumbledore wouldn’t let me put up any extra wards, over and above the bloody Fidelius.’ Dad snapped back, causing a few people to frown at those Dad named.

By this time, the black Auror had taken the phial from Scrimgeour and making sure people could see, applied a dose to Pettigrew.
‘Right, let’s get going.’ Scrimgeour stated.

‘Shouldn’t this be done somewhere more secure?’ Bagnold asked.

‘Not a bloody chance.’ Moody objected. ‘Make it as public as possible, make sure we’ve got nothing to hide.’

‘Oh. Oh, yes. Yes, of course. I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking.’ She replied quickly and waved him on.

For the next few minutes Scrimgeour asked questions and Pettigrew answered them.

‘I think we can safely say that Black is innocent of the charges that landed him in Azkaban. Moody? Take Robards and go get him. Williams? Take Pettigrew to a holding cell and make sure he’s got suppression cuffs on.’ Scrimgeour turned to Dad. ‘Anything else Potter?’

‘Oh, yes.’ Dad bared his teeth in a semblance of a smile. ‘Albus too-many-names bloody Dumbledore! How dare you? You witnessed our Wills. But that doesn’t matter does it, before Sirius was even arrested, let alone in Azkaban, you’d had yourself named Harry’s guardian, had our Wills sealed and placed Harry with muggles.’

‘It’s for the best, James. Harry needs to-’ Moody had obviously lifted his silencing of Dumbledore.

‘The best?! The best? He’s in danger every goddamn day.’

‘Harry’s safe behind blood wards. He’s with Lily’s sister.’

‘But blood wards only work if they share blood.’ Dad repeated slowly, like he was talking to a particularly difficult child.

‘Yes, he’s with Lily’s sister.’

‘Step sister, Petunia and Lily aren’t blood related.’ Dad corrected. ‘Petunia hated Lily and she taking that out on my son.’

Dumbledore froze. ‘What?’

‘You heard me. What gave you the right to ignore our plans for our son?’

‘Voldemort will-’

‘Voldemort is dead, Dumbledore.’

‘Oh, no, only disembodied. He-’

‘-created Horcruxes. I am aware. Chapter fourteen of Greenham and Westham’s Containers, Bindings and Blocks.’

‘What?’ Bagnold asked.

‘Unimport-’ Dumbledore started.

‘Very important. Voldemort made himself some Horcruxes.’ A few people gasped, but most just frowned. ‘Oh, come on, people.’ Dad moaned. ‘A Horcruxe is a soul container. You perform a ritual, murder someone, your soul splits in half and you store it in a container. It’s a way to cheat death, as while you have a Horcruxe, you can’t really die. But… But… There’s a big but… well, three actually.’ Dad’s smile was icy cold and vicious.
‘But?’ Dumbledore asked, not sure he wanted to know the answer.

‘But… **firstly**, the resurrection ritual has to happen within twenty-four hours. **Secondly**, the original body has to be used. **Thirdly**, it can only be done once, one Horcruxe only, any further destabilises the soul’s integrity and even if the resurrection ritual is performed in time, on the original body, it will fail. The body needs a minimum of half a soul to maintain bodily functions.’

‘But his body was never found.’ Bagnold objected.

‘Yeah, blame Lils for that.’ Dad grimaced. ‘She did a charm from the Potter Grimoire, right before Voldemort…’ he paused when people gasped, ‘oh come on, he’s dead, get over it, it’s just a name… Lily did a charm and when Volde…’ another pause, ‘Voldemort killed her, he activated it, making him Harry’s magical guardian,’ people gasped in horror, ‘but then the idiot tried to kill Harry. And what happens when a guardian tries to harm their ward?’ More gasps, but in understanding this time. ‘Yes, exactly. His own magic rebelled and destroyed his body, burnt it to a pile of ash.’

‘But without that body, the resurrection ritual won’t work, you said.’ Bagnold said.

‘Exactly. So… No original body. No ritual done within twenty-four hours. That meant that Voldemort’s Horcruxes were null and void. Dumbledore? Check Harry, you’ll find his scar is gone, because the Dark Idiot screwed up and made not one, but a number of them, deliberately, and one accidentally, using Harry as the container.’

‘What happens to the Horcruxes if they’re not used in time?’ Dumbledore begged for an answer, suddenly worried.

‘The ties holding the soul-shard to the container, break down and eventually the shard is released. It depends on the size of the shard as to how long it can hold on for. Anything less than a quarter of the whole and it only takes a matter of days. A half-soul shard can hold on for anything up to a moon, but no longer.’

‘And you’re certain he’s gone?’

‘He’s been and gone, Dumbledore, ages back.’ Dad just didn’t say how long ‘ages’ was.

‘Then why now, why have you come, now?’ The whiskered old man asked.

‘You left my son with Petunia. She hated Lily and she, and her husband, have been taking that hatred out on Harry. They broke his arm, **days** ago and they’ve **yet** to take him to a healer. They just shut him in a cupboard, he doesn’t even get a bed, Dumbledore, not even a **bed**. How is that **good** for him?’ Dad demanded. ‘And while we’re on the subject, I was under the impression that it is against Merlin’s Law for a Wizarding child be given to non-magical, non-related people, when magical blood related family were available? Huh?’

‘That’s true, but neither of you had magical blood relatives.’ Bagnold said.

‘My brother may be a squib, but he still out ranks a non-related muggle.’

‘Brother?!’ Many people muttered and others gasped.

‘Well, yeah.’

‘But you don’t have a brother.’ Dumbledore argued.

‘I don’t have a **wizard** brother, I have a **squib** brother. With my great-grandfather marrying a
muggleborn, that changed things for House Potter and Dad in his infinite wisdom, decide to take a pureblood stance on repairing those changes. Webster got the wrong end of the broom. He didn’t get a letter from Hogwarts, so Dad got rid of him, fostered him out in the muggle world, but he’s still a Potter, so Dad refused when his foster parents wanted to adopt him. I’d have preferred him to Petunia, if Harry couldn’t have stayed with Siri.’

‘Oh, my.’ Dumbledore whispered.

‘Yeah, I named Harry after his eldest son, Hadrien.’ Dad lied. How was he able to do that? He said shades can’t lie, but he just did, almost everything he’d just told them was a lie. How?

‘He’s… Is he… magical?’ Bagnold asked.

‘Hadrien? Yeah, sat his NEWTs before Yule, did real well, too. A credit to Gid and Fab.’

‘Why to them?’ Scrimgeour asked.

‘Web and Rachel hired them as tutors, of course.’

‘But why? They weren’t Professors or teachers.’ Dumbledore said.

‘Why not them, they were Rachel’s brothers, after all.’

‘What?!’ Arthur Weasley yelped and stepped forward. ‘They were what?’

‘Rachel’s younger brothers.’ Dad answered.

At that point I was very glad that the Ministry building was the one to be shielding me, as I started swearing at Dad, he’d gone so far off our plan that anything could happen from here on out. And I had nothing planned. Dammit.

Then Dad winced, visibly. Time was up.

‘James?’ Dumbledore asked.

‘Sorry, I… it’s painful to be here, a few minutes and it starts to hurt. Souls without bodies aren’t meant to be on this side of the shroud. But I made a promise to my son.’ He grimaced again. ‘I had to see it through. Please, I’m begging you. Sirius, give Harry to Sirius.’ He reached into his robes and pulled out a pair of small boxes and placed them carefully on the table. Or at least he appeared to, because it was me, hiding under the Ministry building’s invisibility charms, that cancelled the boxes notice-me-not and floated them to the table.

‘Potter? What’re those?’ Bagnold asked.

‘The black box is for Sirius, it’s a course of potions that counter dementor exposure. The brown box is for Alice and Frank, it’s Cruciatus Recovery potions. Both sets are labelled. Only Sirius and Augusta can open the boxes. Only they can handle the phials. And only they can open them.’ He gasped and bent almost double, wrapping his arms around his stomach.

‘James!’ Dumbledore stepped forward.

‘No. Nothing you can do. I’ve used up the time I was given, I have to go back. Lils is waiting. Get Harry away from Petunia, before they kill him.’ Dad ordered.

‘We will.’ Bagnold gave Dumbledore a hard look and the old man nodded, reluctantly.
‘You’ll want proof of what I said. Look to Greenham and Westham’s book, that’ll explain it, better than I can.’ He huffed and broke apart in a shower of blue dust, leaving behind a silent room.

It took time, but eventually someone broke the silence.

‘You all heard Potter. Black’s innocent. Pettigrew’s the traitor. You-know… Voldemort is dead.’ The young woman that spoke looked a lot like Rita Skeeter, but with darker blonde hair.

‘Bring Harry back where he belongs and let his godfather raise him, like his parents wanted.’ A man with oriental features added.

‘You’ve no right to keep them apart.’ A second woman spoke, she reminded me so much of the Patil twins, that I blinked a few times.

‘It appears as those the people have spoken, Dumbledore. You have one hour, if Harry Potter is not with his godfather in St Mungo’s inside that hour, you will be facing charges of kidnapping and child endangerment.’ Bagnold said and Scrimgeour nodded his agreement.

Everyone present knew that the latter was far more serious in the magical world, than the former. If found guilty, he would earn himself a stay in Azkaban.

There were quite a number of cheers, as the Aurors ushered people away. I waited quietly to see what would happen now.

Bagnold turned to Dumbledore. ‘You had better give careful consideration to your positions, Dumbledore. I doubt you’re going to have a lot of supporters after this. If… I repeat, if… you’re smart, you’ll play the ‘too many positions, caused a lack of attention to detail’ card and placate the public by giving up all but one chair. Which chair? That’s something you really need to think about and you better be ready to justify your keeping of it, to the Wizengamot and the public. And expect a fight, regardless, because frankly? Even I, who loathed Black and Potter personally, want to skin you for what you’ve done to them and that child. Use your head, old man, get it out of you ass, there’s no way anyone, was ever going to accept your actions.’

As she spoke, Bagnold’s voice got harder and colder. This was a Minister who would not tolerate people that couldn’t do their jobs and Dumbledore had failed to do his, spectacularly.

‘Millic-’

‘Dumbledore! Do not… just don’t.’ She held up a hand and sighed. ‘There’s no other way out of this for you. Too many people heard what Potter’s ghost said, you know ghosts can’t lie. You witnessed their Wills. You sealed their Wills and you didn’t go through the Wizengamot to do so. That’s an automatic dismissal, right there. Let alone placing a magical child with muggles. No. I can’t see any way out for you, other than loosing positions. Do it yourself, before the Wizengamot calls No Confidence.’ She put a hand on the table and leant on it. “It’s time to the right thing, what you should have done, three years ago. I gave you an hour, your time is running out. Go. I expect the to see the boy with his godfather in St Mungo’s. For now… get out of my sight, before I curse you, myself.’

Dumbledore practically ran from the room and I wasn’t far behind him. I’d gotten what I wanted and it was time to leave.

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I finished my explanation and slumped back in my chair.

“Ah.” Mother exclaimed quietly. “That explains it.”

**Well done for not cursing James.** Hogwarts wrote. **Ministry came close to kicking him out.**

“Would that have even worked?” Father asked.

**Depends on how Hadrien was feeling about him at the time. So… probably.**

“Well, it’s done, now.” I muttered.

“Only for the weekend.” Father warned.

“It’s Friday, Father, let me relax for a bit… Please?” I begged without opening my eyes.

I could hear Father’s huff of amusement, but he didn’t comment. Mother did, however.

“Oh, I suppose you could have the evening off… What say we just talk, tonight?” She offered.

“Sounds fine, dear.” Father agreed.

“I’m good with that.” I nodded, my eyes still closed.

A scratching noise finally got my eyes open, to see that Hogwarts had – sort of – agreed with us.

**I think a review of what has been achieved and what we still have in front of us, would allow a quiet evening.**

“It would at that.” Father nodded. “Hogwarts? Would you summarise for us? What’s been done?”

Certainly, Webster.

**Horcruxes recovered and cleansed –**

- Dumbledore has been informed that Voldemort is deceased and that Harry is no longer a Horcruxe
- Diary returned to Malfoy manor,
- The Cup, Locket and Diadem returned to founders’ offices,
- Peverell ring kept by Hadrien
- Harry returned to Privet Drv

**Hadrien’s adoption with background story -**

- **Hadrien Blaire Potter, son of squibs Webster Henry Potter and Rachel Anne Potter(née Browning/Prewett) born 14 January 1966.** Hadrien’s take a minor dose of a permanent aging potion, so that I could add six months to his age, simply to cover us, in case Ronson turns up earlier than expected.
- **Being magical child of squibs, Hadrien and parents are slightly estranged with estrangement getting stronger as Hadrien gets older.** Parents wish to remove Hadrien from risk of gangs, so acquiesce to Hadrien’s wish to open mixed second-hand shop in Ottery St Catchpole. Ronson to join him at later date, to be determined after Ronson’s arrival.
Schooling rimary –

- Primary - Sharp Lane Primary School, Leeds
- Wizarding – private tutors including Gideon and Fabian Prewett and James Potter.
- ICW certifications – 10 OWLs (Astronomy, CoMC, charms, defence, Herbology, History of Mag, Mag Theo, Muggle Studies, Potions, Transfig). 7 NEWTs (CoMC, charms, defence, herbology, muggle studies, potions, transfig).

Exemptions for underage magic, for both Hadrien and Ronson sighting private tuition, lodged with underage magic dept. (Hadrien’s obsolete but provides history)

Ronson’ adoption – planned but not implemented, potion ready and under stasis.

Finances – in progress.

- Hadrien - £3121, δ4627, κ11381, (tot = δ5015, δ4, κ12). £4982.75
- Ronson - £609, δ1406, κ1141, (tot = δ691, δ12, κ10). £1029.50.
- Portia - £714, δ392, κ634, (tot = δ416, δ5, κ25). £2982.75.
- Galleons for shop - undetermined amount due to cursed and obsolete exchange still pending
- Plans to return goblin made items for finder’s fee.
- Plans to exchange foreign and obsolete currency for Galleons

Shop –

- Business plan underway, stock in shrunken trunks, stock listing is per trunk
- Business name – Snitch’s Nest. Logo to be a nest with jewellery, a broom, a witch’s hat, a candlestick and a wand poking out of the nest, all sitting half-in-half-out of a cauldron laying on it’s side and a snitch flying around above it. Design may be subject to alteration.

Accommodation –

- Short term covered with accommodation trunk found in Room (basic trunk = 1bed, 1bath, kitchenette with living room), with intent to pass along to Ron and Portia when necessary.
- Long term still pending, depends on shop premises.

Muggle clothing suitable to Potter’s muggle standing

Robes suitable to young adult with restricted access.

Sirius Black – in progress –

- Pettigrew handed to DMLE,
- James' shade informing that Pettigrew was secret keeper,
- Aurors Moody and Robards ordered to remove him to St Mungo’s.

Harry Potter – in progress –
• Horcruxe removed
• Pettigrew handed to DMLE proving Sirius’ innocence
• James’ shade stating that Dumbledore had placed Harry with muggles without James and Lily’s permission or approval
• Dumbledore ordered to retrieve Harry and take to Sirius at St Mungo's

Peter Pettigrew

• Handed to DMLE
• Questioned under veritaserum
• Still in DMLE custody

“Good. Very good.” Father pushed his chin out as he studied the list, before nodding. “And what is still to come?”

Robes suitable to young adult with unlimited access. (suggest not until going to Gringotts)

Wands – Hadrien? I suggest retrieving all the wands from my lost wand room, none of them belong to either students or staff currently in my school. Go through them, after the adoption your core may have changed slightly and you may find a better match than the wand you’re using. Plus there is a good market for second-hand wands, many people prefer them to buying a new, untried wands. I can label them with their wood, core and suitability if you so ‘require’. I also suggest setting up a specific area for wands and their sundries and I will include a guide on how to assess a wand and gauge it’s value. Take the shelving, too, it’s removable.

Shop –

• Hadrien to visit Estate department, re premises
• Hadrien to visit Commerce department and register business name. (Will shop be registered in muggle world?)
• Get floo connected to whatever premises purchased, private and poss business(?).
• Stationery, flyers, leaflets.

Accommodation – short term covered (see earlier notes), long term still pending

Apparition licence, through the magical transport department.

Gringotts – Hadrien needs to visit Gringotts, pref this weekend, for -

• Formal identity testing
• Open personal vault,
• Open business vault,
• Exchange goblin made items for finder’s fees
• Inquire re accountant
• Deposit Room ֳ“galleons into vault
• Exchange various currency for ֳ“galleons or deposit

Magical maintenance, depends on condition of shop premises

Prepare for Ronson and Portia’s arrivals
• Ronson’ adoption – planned but not implemented. (See earlier notes)
• Portia’s names chosen, but no further details at this point (poss parents located, pending Portia’s approval)
• Finances in place (partial)
• Story to be fleshed out

Poss contact Sirius and Remus

Poss purchase house elf or hire fee elf (Hadrien’s pref)

Is there anything else that you can think of?

“Yeah. Household stuff, bedding, towels, groceries, shampoo, soap, owl food. Lacy can’t keep having people food, it’s not good for her.” I answered.

“Plus, Hadrien needs some type of muggle transport.” Father said. “I don’t suppose you can drive a car?”

I started laughing. “Trust me, Father, you don’t want me, or Ron, driving a car. The last one we tried to drive, we crashed from sixty feet in the air, into Hogwarts Womping Willow. And before you ask, Hogwarts, no, the tree wasn’t damaged.” I shook my head fondly. “But I do know how to ride a motorbike, Remus taught me the summer after Sirius died, Siri’s bike was destroyed getting me away from Privet Drv, last summer, though. I thought I might restore it after the war, so Mr Weasley was going to put the broken bits in his shed, but... well, here I am.” Held my hands out and shrugged.

“Motorcycles? I’m not wrapt in that idea, but it would reinforce the estrangement between us.” Mother gave a frown.

“It would. We’ll look at the papers tomorrow and see what’s available.” Father didn’t appear any happier with that, but we’d already agreed that a lot of my choices weren’t things either of them were going to be pleased with. I, however...? I just smiled.

Alright, then. A motorbike for Hadrien. Hogwarts wrote. I can’t help with that, not at all. Sorry.

“I had a thought earlier, Hadrien? About the shop? Ottery St Catchpole was the village you want? Right?” Father asked.

“Yes.”

“It’s a mixed village?”

“Yes.”

“Are the Wizarding and muggle sections completely separate, or all in the one area?”

“A little of both, Father. There’s a main shopping street that had some mixed shops, meaning that the shops are predominantly muggle, with a separate section within the shop for Wizarding stuff, usually there’s a muggle-notice-me-not on the door between the sections. Then there’s the Wizarding area, Niffler’s Lane. It’s accessed via a gate between two buildings and most muggles believe it to just be a shortcut from Stoatshead Hill Road to Wheeler’s Edge Lane. It’s got some hefty muggle aversion charms on it, but wizards and squibs use it a lot, enough of them that the local muggles don’t take
any notice. Portia says that as long as it is not a rarity then the attitude is ‘Oh, lots of people do that, just not me’. It’s used fairly commonly as a protection, in conjunction with aversion or notice-me-not charms.” I explained.

“Ah, I see. In that case? When you look at premises, see if there’s one on a corner, that has access from both sides, muggle and magical, it will give you a better camouflage.”

“I was thinking about that last night, actually. It occurred to me, that being so young, some of the older muggles are going to question if I just turn up in their village and don’t appear to have an occupation or income. So, I was trying to work out how to incorporate a muggle side, but still keep it separate from the magical side, but with only me, it has to be all one space. I was thinking that maybe a shop, like Father said, that opens both ways. Have a portion of the shop be muggle. And the main area a wizard-space room, accessed from Niffler lane and inside the shop, for the wizard stuff.”

“Oh.” Mother sat up. “No. No, dear. You have the main shop floor as muggle with a small muggle-notice-me-not area that covers the Niffler lane door, with the rest of the Wizarding side in a wizard-space room, covered by those aversion charms you talked about and have the register between the two sections. That way you can watch both sections and your magical customers can access all the shop, but the muggle ones will be none the wiser.”

“Ooh, I like that.” I almost sang.

“But you’ll need a different name for the muggle side. A snitch in the muggle world has criminal connotations, you don’t want that.” She added.

“No, mother, I don’t.” I answered fervently.

“If I remember correctly… snitch’s are used in quidditch, right?” Father asked.

“Yes, sir.” I nodded. “They’re based on a very rare bird, the Snidget. It’s a like a magical humming bird, only rounder like a ball.”

“Well, there’s a few options there. You could go with the sporting theme or stick with the bird theme, go with birds that hoard shiny things.” Mother offered.

“I was thinking of the types of things in the muggle-shop, things that some bird-like little old lady might like to take home…” Father started.

“To feather her nest!” I finished.

“Exactly.” Father nodded.

"The Feathered Nest. I like it." I beamed at him.

“So… ‘The Snitch’s Nest’ for the magical side and ‘The Feathered Nest’ for the muggle?” Mother asked and I nodded. “Yes, that will work well. We’ll get the paperwork filled out over the weekend, all bar the address and once you’ve found a premises that will work, I can lodge the application on your behalf on Tuesday.”

“I did overhear a conversation today that raised an idea, one that might benefit us.” Father said.

“Yes?” Mother asked.

“Well, I went to that little café for lunch, the one on Albion Place. I heard a woman talking to a pair of police officers, she raised the subject of sending her son out of town, she was worried that the
gang turf war was heading for the university and was asking their advice.”

“Oh… and?”

“They said it wasn’t at that point yet, but it was coming. It would depend on the boy’s age and schooling. She responded that he was just eighteen, finishing high school this year, but had no ambitions for university and her worry was that if she pushed him to go, and he didn’t want to, then he’d be ripe for the gangs to target. The officers countered and suggested getting him into the military or a trade-type school out of the area.”

“I see… and what has this to do with us?”

“I thought this would be a prime excuse for us to get our eighteen year old son, out of Leeds and set him up in a business that he’s interested in, somewhere a long way from a gang’s reach.” Father answered.

“Oh…” Mother just huffed in surprise.

“What she said.” I agreed. “It hadn’t occurred to me to say anything more than, ‘I wanted to get away from the parents’, though. But this works even better, because it would stand to reason that you would send Ron to me if there’s a chance he might be targeted.”

“Precisely, Hadrien, precisely.”

“If that’s it, I’m going to order in take-out. Pizza or Chinese?” Mother asked.

“I’d prefer Chinese, Mother.” I said, knowing that Father couldn’t care less.

“Certainly, Chinese is fine, dear.” Father nodded and mother left to ring their favourite delivery service. “If you’re going to keep the magical and muggle sides of the shop separate, that going to mean, you’re going to need to divide your stock. You might want to work with Hogwarts in the Room to get that done quickly. And all your documents? I picked them up this afternoon, you just need a wallet to put them in.”

“Looks like my weekend’s going to be busy.” I sighed.

“It could be worse, Hadrien. Just imagine what it would be like if you didn’t have Hogwarts to help?”

“Don’t give me nightmares.” I shuddered.

After Chinese and ice-cream, I said good night to Mother and Father and headed through Hogwarts’ door.

It took us upwards of two hours, but we separated out the muggle based stuff from the wizard stuff and worked out a rough system for stock sorting. A lot would depend on the shop premises and popularity. Hogwarts had tried to get the Ministry building to help, unfortunately the Estate Department wasn’t housed inside the Ministry building itself, but in the next block, that meant we were no closer to knowing which shops were available or how much they were going to cost.
But we did get the stock divided and not just into muggle and magical, but also into sub-categories. On the Wizarding side we had – Books, Brooms, Clothing, Furniture, Garden, Household, Jewellery, Kitchen, Potions, Paintings and Wands. On the muggle side we had – Books, Clothes, Furniture, Garden, Household, Jewellery, Kitchen and Transport.

Yes, it was a lot of categories, but I was going to be running the shop as two separate businesses. One muggle, one magical. I would need two registers and ledgers, but I would have to have them linked, not all magicals carried wads of muggle cash. If they wanted to buy a muggle item, I would have to have a way of either exchanging their galleons for pounds or have a Gringotts invoice pad. I made a note in the notebook that Mother had brought home for me on Tuesday.

Yet another thing to follow up on. Along with inquiries about the cost of wizard-spaces and their costs, muggle aversion wards, floo connections and apparition licencing. Yay... Not.

The next thing I did was fetch up the wands. Thank god for the Marauders’ Map, without it I would have been caught by both Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick. But I wasn’t, I made it to the room, tossed some notice-me-nots and silencing charms on the door and got to work. Firstly, I went through the wands to check if there was something to suit me better, now that the adoption was complete. And there was, two in fact. Two identical wands, Hogwarts told me later, that they were Canary Wood from Brazil, not just from the same tree, but a bifurcated piece of heartwood and the cores were just as rare, bifurcated heartstring of a Thunderbird. They were for all intents and purposes, one wand, just in two parts, independent of each other. After that I transferred all the other wands to a pair of barrels, as we’d used up all the trunks from the Room and shrunk the shelves, which I shoved into a third barrel, the one I’d found my wand holster in, but not until I dug up a second holster. Then floated them back to the Room, where I tipped out all the wands, so Hogwarts could identify them for me, wood, core and qualities. Then I transfigured all three barrels into trunks, unfortunately neither Hogwarts nor I were sure how long an expansion would last on a transfigured trunk. So, they were just normal trunks, but I was able to make them quite large, inside and out and give them wheels, that meant that once I enlarged my accommodation trunk big enough and turned it on its side, I was able to wheel the wand trunks into its living room. The whole process of identifying the woods and cores interested my enough to summon a few wandlore books from the stock trunks, that would give me something to read when I couldn’t handle anymore of Mother’s GCSE studying.

When I stood up to head to bed, we had brought the masses of items in Hogwarts’ Room down to just a few trunks. One to take to Gringotts, two of muggle based stock, three of wizard based stock and my accommodation trunk. Each of the trunks were jam-packed, we’d kept back some of the multi-compartment, expanded-capacity trunks and used them as the final storage for each sub-category. One per compartment. That sounds simple, but it wasn’t, inside each compartment were literally dozens of expanded capacity trunks, full of items that fell into that category, all shrunken to the size of a shoebox. The idea being that I could take out just one trunk at a time, from each compartment to use as stock for the shop.

It was a long way from the piles of things that stretched as far as you could see.

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Saturday morning was spent with Father, driving around Leeds looking for a motorbike for me. I knew what I wanted, something like Sirius’ but I didn’t need something as powerful as his Triumph. Unfortunately, I figure that with Portia’s dislike of brooms, I was going to have a frequent pillion, at
least until I taught Ron how to operate the thing. Then it would be a case of having to get a second bike, or I’d never get to use it, myself.

Four stops and I still hadn’t seen anything that came close to being suitable and I was almost ready to just go with a bicycle, when Father slammed the brakes on and took a hard left. Three more left and we were back were on the same road we’d left, but quite a bit further back the way we’d come. We crept forward for half a block, before Father pulled into a small service station and came to a halt behind the perfect bike.

“I just spotted the ‘for sale’ once we were passed.” Father said. “But that’s what you’re looking for, right?”

“Yeah…” I whispered. “It’s perfect.” I’m sure my heart was in my eyes, I wanted that bike.

“Pull it together, Hadrien. You need to how much they want for it, before getting carried away.”

I closed my eyes and took a few deeps breaths, then reached for the door handle. I took another breath as I reached the station’s shop door.

“Hi…”

“Mornin’, sir, jus’ gimme a sec here.” The elderly man behind the counter was older than Father by quite a few years. He wasn’t nearly as old as Dumbledore, but still easily old enough to have been my grandfather. “Sorry ‘bout that, just needed to git the books finished, afore the ‘countant takes over the office. Now, what kin I do fer yer?”

“The bike?” I asked. “Can you tell me more about? The cost? Why it’s for sale?”

“The Honda? It be a CX500 an’ were me grandson’s, ‘e died las’ week. Nah, not on it, cancer took ‘im.” The man’s voice trembled. “As a young’en ‘e were in ‘nd out a ‘ospitals, but ‘e were getting better, doin’ well. Then comes Christmas and down ‘e went. Went inter Seacroft and never comed out. His ma died when ‘e were babe and his pa did a runner a week later, aint heard from ‘im since.” He looked down at the floor and I could see tears on his cheeks.

“I’m sorry, so sorry, sir.” I whispered.

“Not yer fault young’en. It were in ‘is blood, ‘is ma had it and ‘is grandma had it. It took ‘em both, too. I’s selling up, lad, going south ter live wif ma sister. The auction is temorra, but the bike, tha’s special, I cain’t just auction tha’ off.”

“No, sir, you can’t.” I agreed.

“Tell me why’s yer want it.”

“My Dad, he was… he was sent jail for murder, but the person he was supposed have murdered was still alive, I was thirteen when we found out he was innocent and we spent the next three years trying to clear his name. But there was gang fight, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and his own cousin killed him and because he was accused of murder, the cousin got away with it.” It was almost the truth, if you considered that I saw Sirius as a father-figure. “Another of Dad’s friends taught me to ride Dad’s bike, during the summer holidays and helped me get my licence. August last year, there was an accident, he was run off the road and the bike landed in a pond. After flying through the air for way too far. We pulled it out in pieces… or some of the pieces, some bits will never be found.”

“An’ you’ve los’ ‘em both.”
“Yeah…” I sighed. “Gone.” My Sirius and Remus were gone, even if there was a Sirius and a Remus here.

“Iffen I let yer take the bike, how yer gonna use it?”

“It’ll be my only vehicle.” I answered. “I don’t have a car licence and I don’t want one. Mother, her husband and me, well we don’t have much in common, yeah? So, they’ve agreed to let me go, I think Mother will be glad that I’m not here for the gangs to target, I know she’s worried about my brother. I’m buying a place in Devon and I’m going to open a second-hand shop. I’ve got plenty of stock, been collecting for a while and even Mother says I’m almost ready. I just have to get a few permits and I’m right. I’ll get my stock transported down, but the bike is for me. They’re not terribly happy about it, but you can’t live your life for someone else.”

“Well, lad, I’ll need ter see’s yer licence and yer ‘elmet.”

I pulled out my wallet and dug out the licence that Hogwarts had provided.

“My helmet’s in the car with… Father.” I deliberately hesitated before saying 'Father'.

“Go git it.” He nodded and offered up a small smile.

“Yes, sir.” I answered and took off for the car.

“Well?” Father asked as I opened the front passenger door.

“Not too sure, yet, but he won’t consider me with seeing my licence and helmet.” I replied.

“Ah, that’s fair enough. Off you go, then.” He shrugged and pulled a newspaper out of the pocket between the seat.

Back inside the shop, the old man looked at my helmet and I was glad I had used Hogwarts aging charm on it.

“Right then, lad. Yer want the bike?”

“Yes, sir, I do.”

“Are yer prepared ter pay fer it?”

“As long as it’s within my budget, yes.”

“Well, it’s within yer budget, but… it will cost yer.”

“How much?” My heart sank to my boots.

“£100, plus yer company fer afternoon tea, once a month.”


“Yer heard me. Look, lad, yer moving to Devon, I’m moving to Devon. Yer’ll not know anyone, I’ll not know anyone outside ma sister. An’ yer remind me o’ Danny. £100 and yer company. That’s me price. Question is… are yer going ter pay it?”

“Where abouts in Devon are you going. Sir?” I asked.

“Tiny little nowhere village, yer’ll not ‘ave heard of it, dain’t worry. I’ll look at meeting yer at
“Sidmouth.”

“Try me, sir. I’ve spent a lot of time, not all that far from Sidmouth.” I grinned. Every summer since second year, in fact.

“Little village near Wiggaton.”

“Oh, you have got to be kidding me! You’re going to Ottery St Catchpole, too?” It couldn’t be anywhere else, not with my luck and the way he was hedging around it.

The old man’s jaw fell and he gaped at me. “Yer know it?”

“Mother’s people come from there.” I paused. “Sir? I didn’t tell the complete truth. Yes, I was telling the truth about the bike, but not quite about my Dad. It wasn’t my Dad, but my godfather, he was the most important person in my life. See… Mother and Father, we don’t… we don’t see eye to eye. So, rather than it become some nasty bitter thing, I’m going somewhere I want to be, with their blessing. I think it will be good for us all. I’ll get the shop and life in the country I want, next year I hope my brother will join me and Mother and Father will be able to go back to working all the hours of the day, instead of being forced to take time to eat with us and go to school meetings and… well… being parents.”

“Iffen they didn’t want to be parents, why’d they have yers?”

“Because that’s what young people did, if they wanted to be considered as respectable lawyers in the mid ’60’s. They may not have ever wanted children, but they’ve done their best by us, they just never… connected with us.”

“Ah, tha’s different. An’ yes, I’m going Ottery St Catchpole. Ma sister lives there, her daughter’s married to some fella that prints his own paper. Doesn’t sell a lot, but it keeps him happy and Pandi works from ‘ome doing research fer some company up north.”


“Pandora. Came as a ’ell of a surprise ter ma sister. She’s married to ‘Phil Lovegood.”

“Xenophilius.” I sighed. Of course it was. The way my luck was going, the local Luna would take one look at me and know exactly what was going on, but that’s only if she didn’t already know.

“Yer know ‘im?”

“I know of him. We’ve met twice, but it’s hard to say with him, whether he’ll remember me or not.” He shouldn’t, but he was Luna’s Father, so I couldn’t rule it out.

“Lad? Are yer…?” He didn’t say what but with the way his hand went to his forearm, I knew what he meant.

“Yes, sir. That’s part of the issue with Mother and Father… they aren’t.”

“That answers a lot, then. Right. The bike’s yers. Take it. Have yer got a place fer yer shop, yet?” He asked.

“No, sir. Doing that on Monday, going to the Ministry’s Estate department to see what’s available. I’m fairly familiar with the village, so if they have pensieve viewing, that’ll be fine. There’s only a couple of shops I definitely don’t want, but we’ll see.” It was a relief to not have to fudge about with what I was saying, to some unknown muggle. Unknown he might be, muggle he wasn't.
“I’m assumin’ yer going ter be on the Lane?” I figured he meant Niffler Lane.

“Yep, aiming for something that opens both ways. The muggle elders aren’t going take an eighteen year old kid moving into town, unless I have some sort of occupation and we felt I have enough muggle stuff to have a muggle-and-magical second-hand shop.” I answered.

“Huh, well, I guess I’ll be seeing yer, lad. With the auction and getting everything settled here, I’m not set ter leave fer a month. I’m guessin’ yer’ll be well on yer way ter being set up, be then.”

“It’d be nice to be open by then, yes.” I nodded.

“Yer know what yer calling it?”

“Muggle side will be ‘The Feathered Nest’ and the other side ‘The Snitch’s Nest’, sir.” Neither of us had said either of the words, ‘magic’ or ‘Wizarding’ and we weren't about to. Just in case.

“Oi, lad, ‘nuff with the ‘sir’, I’m Ben Cartwright an’ iffen yer call me anything but Ben, I’ll not be answering. Now, fill out yer details, take yer bike and git outa here.” The old man… Ben smiled at me.

“Yes, sir, Ben, sir.” I replied, snapping off a very fake salute and reaching for the papers that Ben hold out.

“Brat.” He muttered.

“That’s what everyone says, when they get to know me, Ben.” I grinned.

As I spoke I was quickly filling in the details, using Mother and Father’s address, as it was listed on my licence. I checked the numbers were all in the right place and gave Ben his section back, along with £100 worth of £20 notes. He held out the keys and then sprung yet another surprise on me.

“Yer’ll need ter come round ter the house and git the sidecar, here’s me address. Yer got a…” he touched his wrist, “on yer?”

“Yes, sir.” I let him see the tip of my wand.

“Good, lad. Don’t loose it an’ don’t break it. I did an’ Ollivander tells me tha’ ‘e can’t get me a new one, I have ter be getting me an older one. Problem bein’, nothing suits. I kin do a little wandless, jus’ enough ter stop me core overloading, but… Consider it a warning, don't loose, don't break it.”

“Ooh, I can help!” I burst out, before going to explain. “Mother and Father bought a place, up on the Dales and there were some trunks and stuff in the attic. Two of them were chock-filled with wands. Hundreds, maybe thousands, I never counted. I’ll bring them with me and we can see if one likes you.”

Ben smiled. “That’d be grand, lad. Temorra’s the auction and Monday, yer going to t’e Ministry, so… Tuesday? Come by the house on Tuesday and I’ll show yer ‘ow ter hook up the sidecar an’ we kin look at yer wands. Now, you kin do one o’ two things, yer kin either ride the bike away or wheel it ‘round the back ter the loadin’ bay and shrink it, the electrics is charmed not ter react ter magic, I had tha’ done afore I give it ter Danny, ‘e weren’t proper magical, not ‘nuff ter go ter ‘Hogwarts, but ‘e still did some accidental stuff. The young fella tha’ did the charmin’, ‘e wrote down all the charms an’ what they do an’ when ‘e did ‘em, they’s got muggle notice-me-nots and ‘ll need ter be boosted once a year, but yer got a few months afore yer need ter be thinkin’ on it. An’ the sidecar’s at ‘ome, so I’ll give yer tha’ on Tuesday.”
“If you don’t mind, I’d prefer to shrink it. Until the registration is transferred I don’t want to ride it, if I can avoid it.”

“Fair ‘nuff, lad. Kin yer apparate ter an address?”

“Yes, si-Ben, my Uncles made sure of it.”

“Right, then. Let’s git yer bike sorted an’ I’ll see’s yer on Tuesday.” Ben held out a hand and I shook it. I had the feeling that I’d just inherited myself a grandfather.

Five minutes and I was climbing back in Father’s car.

“Well, we’ll keep looking, Hadrien.” He said.

“No need, Father. I’ve got the bike.”

“You did? When do you need to come a collect it?”

“No, I’ve got the bike.” I held up a shoebox.

Father’s eyes widened and he spluttered “You… you… you don’t do that. Magic in front of muggles, I mean.”

“I didn’t. The old man, Ben? He’s a wizard, a halfblood who married a muggleborn, they returned to the muggle world, had a family, and ran a muggle business. Now, he’s retiring.”

“Oh, that’s different, very good. How much for the bike?”

I snickered. “£100 plus afternoon tea once a month.”

“You said… What?”

“£100 and afternoon tea.”

“But you’re leaving the area.”

“So’s he. We’re both going to Devonshire… in fact, we’re both going Ottery St Catchpole. And… I think I just got myself a grandfather.” I frowned in confusion.

Father just snorted and shook his head. “God, boy, you do have the Potter luck don’t you?”

“Yeah…” I sighed. “Both the good and the bad.”

“Well, you’ve only Gringotts to do and you’ve the rest of the weekend to do it. There’s a pub on Eastgate, the Tipped Kettle, it has a public floo, I’ll drop you there and head to the office until you’re done. Would you like put your bike in the boot until we get home?”

“Yes, please.”

“Have you got everything you need, to deal with Gringotts?”

I pointed to a satchel at my feet. “Muggle identification, a coin purse, the trunks and your statements. And I’m wearing my wand. So… Yes, I think so.”

“I hope so, Hadrien, I’d not like you to have to go back again and again.”

We rode in silence, not exactly uncomfortable silence, but not really comfortable, either. It took
fifteen minutes to get from where Ben’s service station was in Cross Gates, into the city and find a
car park on Eastgate.

“You saw it? Half way down the block, almost opposite the John Lewis Building?”

“Yes, Father. It had an animated sign, a kettle falling into a fire.”

“That’s it. you might want to wear a glamour, you look a lot like your Dad.” He warned. We’d
reached the agreement that he was Father and James was Dad, it worked for us, but I had no idea
what we were going to do when Ron got here.

“Yeah…” I sighed and focused on my metamorphmagi skills, different colour eyes and hair, should
be enough, add to that I notice-me-not-ed my glasses. I was getting plenty of practice at that
particular charm and it showed. Or not… depending on who you were and what I wanted you to see.

“It’s only for today, Hadrien, just until you’re through Gringotts. I know you can apparate, but don’t,
you don’t need the attention if you get spotted by an Auror, not until you’ve got your licence. Call
me, my office is only a couple of blocks away. Pick up a newspaper while you’re there, maybe a
subscription, we should catch up on what’s happening as far as Black and young Harry are
concerned.”

“Yes, Father.” I nodded. “Give me a moment to put this in the boot.” I grabbed my satchel and
tossed it over my shoulder, as I got out of the car, but I leant in carefully to pick up the box with the
shrunken motorbike.

“No, leave it there, I’ll put in when I get to the office, no sense in letting it slide about and maybe get
damaged.” Father objected.

“Oh, yeah, didn’t think about that.” I put the box back on the floor of the foot-well.

“You don’t use a car, Hadrien, so why would you have? Off you go and call me when you’re done,
here’s my direct number at the office.” Father handed me a business card with his details on it and
underneath was a handwritten number.

“Yes, sir.” I took the card and quickly put it in one of the outer pockets of my satchel. I waved and
watched as the car began to move and smoothly joined the traffic.

I turned and took a deep breath, time to test my glamours and head for Gringotts.
Travelling by floo was just as bad as I remembered, but at least this time I stayed on my feet… barely. It wouldn’t have been a nice introduction to the Wizarding world, to skid into the Leaky Cauldron on my ass. Stumbling, yes. Skidding, no.

I flicked my wand and banished the floo soot from my robe, suddenly very glad I had shoved one into my satchel before leaving Father’s house.

Interesting side note? I also realised that I didn’t think of it as home, but as Mother and Father’s house. And that while I called Webster, ‘Father’, I didn’t think of him as my father but as someone whose name or title was ‘Father’. I still thought of Dad, of James, as my father.

I nodded to Tom the barman, who didn’t look any different now to when I’d stayed here in my third year, and headed for the little courtyard and the entrance to the alley. A wave of affection hit me, when I saw those ratty old bricks. Here was where I got my first real look at the Wizarding world and it still thrilled me.

The witches and wizards trundled around the alley, stopping to talk to this person, stopping to look in that window, stopping to admire that robe, or owl, or broom. The options for my eyes to feast on were almost endless. They weren’t really, it just seemed that way, that no matter where I looked there was something else to see. I heaved a happy sigh and began my own meander down the alley, knowing that to hurry was to draw attention. I paused at the Owl Emporium and paid the young witch sitting outside with a tray of owl treats, for a bag of mini-mice for Lacy. Then at a stand between Wiseacre’s and Mulpepper’s for a paper bag of toasted almonds. Finally I stood in front of Gringotts.

Entering the bank felt no different than the only other time I’d been here, just before first year. Every other year, someone else had been in and collected money for my school things and a few galleons for me to spend during the year.

Approaching a teller I had the sudden thought about what they would think if I told them the truth? I wasn’t going to, Hogwarts had warned me that to the goblins, everything was for sale. Even your privacy. There was no confidentiality. Everything was for sale.

“Good morning, I wish to get an identity test done.” I was polite, but as I didn’t know this goblin, I didn’t waste time on chit-chat.

The goblin huffed and tossed me a slip of parchment, with ‘Identity - 4’ written on it, and pointed off to one side.

“Wait there.” Was all he said.

I simply nodded and moved where I was told. I waited for maybe five minutes, certainly no more,
before a younger goblin approached me.

“Identity test number four?” He asked.

“That would be me.” I held up the parchment.

“This way, please.” He said nothing more, but lead me into the corridors of the bank. We stopped at a door that had no marking, but the goblin seemed to know where he was, so, I assumed we were in the right place. “Wait here, you’ll be called.” And he was gone.

I looked from one direction to another, but there was no one in sight. There were also no chairs for me to sit on and for a few seconds, I considered conjuring my own, but this was goblin territory and I was an outsider, I had no idea if me drawing my wand was even allowed. So I leant against the wall and waited. All in all, it was no hardship, not after the crap I’d been through since leaving the Burrow.

Maybe two minutes passed, before the door opened and a sharp voice called out.

“Identity test four. In here.”

I shrugged and went in. I paused as I entered the door and gave the goblin behind the tiny desk a nod.

“Sit.” He said, not visibly reacting to my acknowledgement, but I thought I could see him blink quickly. That might have been normal, but I wasn’t sure. “There are three levels of testing available. Identity. Inheritance. And Propriety. Which are you after?”

“Can more than one be done at the same time?” I asked. “And what’s the cost?”

The goblin smiled, it wasn’t pleasant, but I’d seen worse, Bellatrix was a prime example.

“Identity is 1. Inheritance and Propriety are 10 apiece. And any combination can be done at any given time. They simply require blood in separate potions.”

I thought about it. Hogwarts hadn’t mentioned the other tests, but Father had, he said that there might already be a vault that I could claim, as he’d had a trust vault, until being sent away.

“I’d like all three, please. Plus, I would like to know Gringotts stance on goblin made items.”

“In what way?” Suddenly the goblin across from me was no longer a banker, but a warrior.

“I have some items that I think should be returned to the goblins, but… nothing is free.”

The goblin studied me for almost a minute before nodding and tapping a button on a device on his desk.

“Materials for your testing will be a few moments. But I can negotiate for the return of goblin made items. Finder’s fees are routinely paid, but few are significant. What do you have?” He smirked.

My smile in return was just a little vicious.

“As I said, I have a number of items.” I paused. “One thousand, eight hundred and twenty nine, to be exact.”

The goblin more than blinked this time. He gaped. His jaw fell and he openly gaped at me.
“You… have… what?!” He screeched.

“One thousand, eight hundred and twenty nine goblin made items.” I stated calmly. I liked this, screwing with him was fun. For a few seconds, anyway, then two goblin guards rushed into the room, weapons drawn.

“Stand down!” The first goblin snarled, then turned back to me. “How the hell did you get nearly two thousand goblin made items? And they better not be ʢalleons.”

“Nope, that’s not including the ʢalleons, sickles or knuts.” I shrugged. “My parents bought a house in Yorkshire and as I’m looking to open a second-hand shop, they told me I could keep everything in it, if I emptied it. Up in the attic were a heap of trunks. Even with magic, it took ages to sort through it. I have a shrunken, multi-compartment trunk with me, that is holding the afore mentioned items in one compartment. ʢalleons, sickles and knuts, in a second compartment. British muggle money, currently in circulation in another. Foreign muggle money in current circulation in another. Money not in current circulation in another. Cursed or tainted money, Wizarding and muggle, domestic and foreign in another. And weapons in the last.”

“How long had your parents owned the house?”

“Six months.”

“And the previous owners?”

“It was an anonymous sale, but Father was told they were deceased and their children didn’t want the place, they sold it with all contents included. I have a copy of the Bill of Sale with me.” I held up my satchel. “May I?”

The goblin nodded. “Do. And any other documents you may have that pertain to the matter.”

“Sure.” I dug into my satchel and pulled out the folder that Father had prepared for me and laid it on the table. “Bill of Sale for the property in question. Statement from my Father, acknowledging my rights to the contents of the house. And an approximate listing of the items found.” That listing was almost an inch thick.

“Ah…”

“Not including the goblin made items or the money.”

The goblin reached for the documents only to stop as a tray slid onto his desk. On the tray were three open boxes.

“Testing first, we can discuss the return of items while we wait for your testing to be complete.”

“Right.” I nodded. “What do I need to do?” This setup looked considerably different to what Hogwarts had provided.

The goblin retrieved a box and spread out the contents on the desk. A shallow silver tray, a sheet of parchment, a phial of pale green liquid and a pale blue crystal shard. The second box held the same but the liquid was a deeper green and the third box’s liquid was so dark it almost looked black until it caught the light. Once complete the three groups filled my side of the desk, with a few inches between each group.

“You will press the crystal into the tip of a finger and hold it there, until it absorbs the necessary amount of blood. It will turn purple and develop a slightly metallic sheen when complete.
Then the crystal goes into the phial, where it will dissolve. Once dissolved, you must pour the liquid over the charmed parchment. Then we simply wait for potion and the charm to do what they were created for.”

I didn’t answer, but I did pick up a crystal from the first group. I looked at it; it had a blunt end and a very pointy end. Needless to say, I pushed the pointy end into the tip of my left forefinger. There was a sharp sting, a pulling sensation and I watched, fascinated as the crystal slowly sucked up my blood and went from a pale, almost clear blue to a deep, violent plum-ish purple. Then there was a flicker of light and the crystal began to glisten.

“I’m assuming this is complete?” I asked, waiting for an answering nod before I withdrew the crystal from my finger. I carefully opened the appropriate phial and let the crystal slowly slide into the liquid, then stoppered the phial and replaced it on the tray. Then it was onto the next and then the third. When all three crystals had been placed into phials, I went back picked up the first phial, I could see the crystal was just a bare sliver; that as I watched, dissolved completely. At the goblin’s nod, I poured the contents, now a murky brown, out onto the parchment and stared as the liquid didn’t even puddle, it just absorbed into the parchment as though it were a sponge. I did this twice more before sitting back.

“Well, let’s put those aside and work on your other business. Firstly, please remove your glamour, we don’t approve of such things in Gringotts and you wouldn’t have been able to go any further without the glamour being forcibly removed.” The three trays were slid to the side of the desk.

“Of course, I simply didn’t wish to draw attention.” I concentrated and my eyes and hair regained their usual colour and unruliness. This level of control was the limit of my metamorphmagi, handy for time like today, but not really important in the long cast.

“Wandless?” The goblin asked.

“No, sir. Minor metamorphmagi, very minor.” It had taken six years just to get this point, I doubted I would ever get past it.

“And this is your… natural look?”

“My features are natural, but my hair is typical Potter hair so… no, but near enough.” I conceded.

“Potter? Ah. I see.” Evidently the goblins had heard of Dad’s visit to the Ministry yesterday.

“Yeah…” I sighed. “Mother despairs over it, Father cuts his really short, Ron couldn’t care less and I like it long enough to pretend it’s neat.”

The goblin barked a laugh and turned to the folder I had given him.

“The Bill of Sale is typical of muggle sales. The statement from you Father in regards to the contents is fine, but the list of contents? That’s a little extreme for the attic of a muggle house.”

“There was a wizard-spaced room in the attic, that according to the rune-work had an ‘as necessary’ sizing charm placed on it. From the age of some of the contents? We estimate that there’s nearly a thousand years worth of stuff. Unfortunately, as you can see, we have no idea when it was started, as the house isn’t a thousand years old. We do know that there’s nothing there that’s newer than the last few years. Obviously the deceased couple were collectors, but why? We have no clues and because the sale was anonymous, we can’t even ask the family.” I explained.

“Wizard-space? Someone collected these deliberately, then.”
“That was our conclusion, too.” I agreed.

“And we can’t help you, as the sale wasn’t done through Gringotts.”

“We figured that, too.” I nodded.

“Very well. I’ll have this copied and brought back.” The goblin gestured. “With your consent of course.”

“Sure, that’s why I brought it.”

The folder was placed in a tray and the tray sank into the desk, leaving a bare space.

“Now, your returns? What would you like to do about them?”

“I want to return them and be paid an appropriate finder’s fee.”

“The finder’s fees alter depending on the item. Normally, I or my equivalent can assess the item and issue an offer, immediately, but with nearly two thousand items? I’ll have to ask for assistance and even then it will take time.”

“Oh, it’s worse than that. Allow me to draw my wand and I’ll show you.” I smirked.

The goblin huffed and nodded. “You may draw you wand, wizard, for this reason only.”

“Thank you.” I pulled out my wand and the shrunken trunk and tapped the trunk with my wand, to unshrink it and put my wand back in it’s holster, immediately, I didn’t want an incident. I lifted the trunk’s lid.

“First compartment, Goblin items.” I touched the dial and moved it to the second slot. “Second compartment, galleons, sickles and knuts.” The goblin blinked at the coins and I turned the dial again. “British muggle money.” The space was full of a mish-mash of notes and coins. I turned the dial. “Foreign muggle money.” The dial turned. “Money not in current circulation.” The dial turned. “Cursed or tainted money and other items.” Yet more coins and notes and the dial turned for the last time. “Weapons.”

“Uh…” I’d never seen a goblin speechless before and I hadn’t even heard of it happening.

I waited patiently, not sure how long it would take for the goblin to gather his thoughts. As it happens, it was only a minute or so.

“I think, Mr Potter that I had best get permission to bring you and your trunk directly to the sorting level, as opposed to bringing assistance here. I think we’re going to need the entire department.”

“Not knowing how big the department is, I’ll accept that you know what you’re talking about.” I conceded.

“Very well, if you would please excuse me for a moment. Oh and may I show the memory of your trunk and it’s contents?”

“Of course. To both.” I sat back. “If you don’t mind that I read while I wait, that is?”

“Not at all. I shall return as quickly as possible.” With that the goblin was up and out the door, vanishing down the corridor, his footsteps racing away.

I, however, pulled a wandlore book from my satchel and began to read. While I had no intention of
becoming a wandmaker, knowing how they worked and how to repair them could come in handy, particularly if I could repair my phoenix feather wand. I knew I couldn’t use it, but the thought of leaving it broken didn’t sit well with me.

Over the next half hour, I discovered that if the subject interests me, I quite like reading. But so far, there was nothing about how to repair a snapped wand. Sigh.

The goblin trotted back in the door and over to his seat at the desk.

“Mr Potter, the assessment level is being prepared, but that could take a few minutes. Is there anything else Gringotts can help you with today?”

“Aside from my test? Yes, there is one thing.” I answered. “I’m looking to open a mixed, muggle and magical that is. A mixed business and I’m wondering how to set up a cash register? Do I need to have two separate ones? What about if a magical wants to purchase in the muggle side and doesn’t have muggle cash? Or if a muggleborn only has muggle money and wishes to buy a magical item?”

“Ah, you’ll be after one of our adaptive registers. It has a few special features. One being that the shopkeeper taps a button for the purchase of the item, a muggle items should be under ‘N’ for ‘Non-Magical’ and magical items under ‘M’ for ‘Magical’. The shopkeeper then enters the price of the item and the register will list both the muggle and magical prices. When the customer hands over their money, regardless of the type of money, the register will list and provide the correct change. Upon balancing of the register each evening, the register will tell the shopkeeper how much of both types of money there should be and if necessary convert from one to the other to get the correct amounts. The conversion capability being another, it works with magical and muggle money and Gringotts’ linked signets, rings and seals both.”

“Handy.”

“Yes, particularly in those places that have a lot of muggle and muggleborn traffic. Mixed villages and taverns a prime example.”

“Well, I’m looking to open a second-hand shop in Ottery St Catchpole, so that’s really handy. Do I have to wait until I have the Ministry stuff done, before I can order one?”

“Not to order, but you will, to collect it.” The goblin said.

“Right, so next on my list is accountants. Business accountants. Mother is insisting that I have my ledgers assessed every six months and from the books on starting a business, that I’ve read, that seems to be a good idea. Can Gringotts refer me to someone or do you have a department I can use?”

“If you take one of our registers, we have a department that will come to you or you can request an account manager that will handle all transactions. You can nominate how often those transactions happen, we concur with you and your mother, six months is good base.”

“Brilliant.” I sighed and carefully noted the details in my notebook, I knew Mother would be asking later. “That’s it… Unless? You can tell me where I can get wizard-space made to order? Neither Father nor I could figure out a way to move the wizard-space door where I found everything, not without damaging the integrity of the building, anyway.” And that was the complete truth, to remove the Room meant splitting Hogwarts and that would have caused the castle’s structural integrity to shatter. Not good.

“Oh, yes. ‘Space it out Doors’ are in Technic Alley. Just next to ‘Dovetail’s Furniture’, they are.”

“Thanks.” I jotted that down, I’d be back after I got a premises. “That’s it. Oh and the identity tests,
“Yes, let’s check them.” The goblin drew the trays from where they’d been pushed aside, until they were in front of him. “Well, now. Just to be clear, the tests show all items over the value of 1000.” He turned them so I could see.

The Identity test was simple.

**Hadrien Blaire Potter** (14 January 1966 -)

**Mother**— Rachel Anne Potter, nee Browning (born Prewett) (15 May 1948 -)

**Father**— Webster Henry Potter (23 September 1947 -)

**Godfathers**— Gideon Fredrick Prewett & Fabian George Prewett (1 April 1950 – 25 September 1981)

**Godmother**— nil.

The Inheritance test was just as simple, even if it held a minor surprise.

**Hadrien Blaire Potter** (14 January 1966 -)

**Mother**— Rachel Anne Potter, nee Browning (born Prewett) (15 May 1948 -)

**Father**— Webster Henry Potter (23 September 1947 -)

**Titles**— Heir Potter (non claimant)

**Vaults**—

- Vault 921 (Potter) - galleons, sickles, knuts, books, artefacts, portraits, jewellery, letters
- Vault 872 (Prewett) - galleons, sickles, knuts, books, artefacts, portraits, jewellery, letters

We hadn't expected two vaults, but there they were. Obviously one had been Mother's before her departure.

Now, as for the Propriety test? I figured that might be a bit different cauldron of Puffskeins.

**Hadrien Blaire Potter** (14 January 1966 -)

**Mother**— Rachel Anne Potter, nee Browning (born Prewett) (15 May 1948 -)

**Father**— Webster Henry Potter (23 September 1947 -)
- Personal funds – in expanded pouch £3121, £4627, κ11381, (tot = £5015, δ4, κ12)
- 2 x Expanded trunks – miscellaneous muggle goods (Shop stock – value undetermined)
- 5 x Expanded trunks – miscellaneous magical good (Shop stock – value undetermined)
- 2 x Oversized trunks – wands and associated sundries. (Shop Stock – value undetermined)
- 1 x Accommodation trunk (basic – £1572)
- 1 x Expanded trunk - miscellaneous good (goblin items, money, weapons – value undetermined)
- 1 x Enchanted motorcycle – Honda 1982 CX500 + Sidecar (≈£2400)
- Peverell Family Ring (right of descent – eldest magical male – value undetermined)

And that was it. But it was still a lot simpler than I’d expected, but it did group things by the trunk, that probably helped.

“Okay, that’s easier than I thought. How do I go about claiming the vaults? And getting a contents listing?” I asked the goblin.

He tapped another button on the desk and a tray rose from some pocket or hidey-hole within the desk.

“You sign here… and here… and by the time we get done with the assessments, your keys will be ready. And I’ll put the contents itemisation request with the claims, but that could take a few days. You’ve two choices there, one, come in personally and collect it or, two, we can owl it to you.” A quill was handed to me and I signed in the designated places.

“Well, Monday I’m going to the Ministry and Tuesday, I’m with a friend for the day. How does Wednesday sound? I’ve a heap of shopping to do for the shop, I can drop in then.” I handed the quill back.

“That will be fine, Mr Potter. And as you’re going to have to deal with those idiots, let’s just link your Identity test to you magical signature, that will void their objections, before they start.” A button on the desk lit up. “Ah, the assessment level are ready. Shall we?”

“We shall.” I agreed and used my wand, after gaining permission, to re-shrink the closed trunk, picked it up and put it in my satchel. “Lead the way.”

I was lead to the carts and we rode through the belly of Gringotts, coming to a sliding halt before the set of door that equalled Hogwarts’ Great Hall doors, maybe even bettered them. My goblin guide, whose name I had not been given, paused with a hand about a foot from the doors.

“Mr Potter?” He said. “I mean no insult when I say this, but being raised by squibs, it’s doubtful that you understand the significance of your presence here. In the little over five hundred years since Gringotts was first opened, you will be only the fourth human to enter through these doors. You may take pride in the knowledge that you are related to two of them. One was Lord Hardwick Potter, the second was Lord Layton Peverell, the third was Corlissa Burke, Headmistress of Hogwarts.”

“May I ask? Who was the other?”

“Newton Scamander. The day he brought Gringotts our first dragon.”

“Oh… wow…”

“Now you understand? This is… an honour, that does not happen often.”
“I’m beginning to see that.” I said dryly.

The doors were opened and I followed my guide through them. It was a massive space, easily three times the size of Hogwarts’ Great Hall, with large benches placed in alternating rows on each side of a wide aisle.

“This way, Mr Potter.” My guide trotted down the aisle and came to a halt beside a slightly raised platform. “This is Assessment Master Shatteraxe.” He bowed to the older goblin. “Shatteraxe, this is Mr Hadrien Potter.”

“So you said.” The older goblin replied and turned to me. “Mr Potter.”

“Master Shatteraxe, you have my thanks for allowing me to watch a master at his craft.” I had listened to Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon butter up enough potential clients, that I knew how to voice my appreciation.

The old goblin raised an eyebrow at my comment, then turned back to my guide.

“He’s got pretty manners, Snaprok, better than most wizards, I’ll give him that. But I’m still not certain that this is a good idea, however, the director is.” He turned back to me. “So, Mr Potter, tell me what you have, that warrants bringing you to my domain.”

Ah, so that was my guide’s name. Snaprok.

I nodded, slowly reached into my satchel, not stopping even though, Shatteraxe visibly tensed, I pulled out the shrunken trunk and placed it on the floor and replied. “One thousand, eight hundred and twenty nine goblin made items.” I said calmly, exactly as I had to Snaprok and just like Snaprok, Shatteraxe gaped.

“You… what?!” He gasped.

“I have one thousand, eight hundred and twenty nine goblin made items, in this trunk.”

His eyes wobbled, threatening to roll, before he got himself back under control.

“And that’s not all.” Snaprok grinned.

“Not all?” Shatteraxe sounded faint, even to my ears.

“No.” Snaprok turned to me. “Care to enlighten Master Shatteraxe?”

“Certainly, but I will need to draw my wand again, if only for a few seconds.” I replied.

Shatteraxe looked at me, his brows drawn together.

“You have my word that I will only use it to unshrink the trunk and nothing else.” I stated.

“Snaprok. What are the chances, he’ll keep his word?” The added ‘and his life’, remained unsaid, but clearly understood.

“Excellent.”

Shatteraxe studied me a bit more, but bluntly? After Voldemort? Shatteraxe’s glare didn’t phase me and I stayed exactly as I was, my hand pointed at the floor. Eventually he huffed and nodded.

“To unshrink the trunk, only.” He conceded.
“Of course, sir.” I flicked my fingers and my main Canarywood wand fell into my waiting fingers. A tap on the trunk’s lock and as it enlarged, I slid my wand back into it’s holster, not being subtle about it.

“Huh… A wizard that keeps his word.”

“If it helps, sir? I was raised in the muggle world.” I offered a small smile.

Shatteraxe’s lips twitched, but Snaprok actually laughed.

“It does.” The Assessment Master nodded. “Let’s see this trunk.”

“There’s seven compartments. First compartment, Goblin items. Second compartment, galleons, sickles and knuts. Third, British muggle money. Fourth, foreign muggle money. Fifth, money not in current circulation, domestic, foreign and wizarding. Sixth, cursed or tainted money and items, not including those goblin made. Seventh, weapons.” I stated as I opened first the trunk itself and then one-by-one each of it’s compartments.

Shatteraxe stared, his eyes bulged, his breath stuttered and his hands shook.

“Oh, sweet fires of the earth, how in the seven hells, did you get all that?”

I explained what I’d told Snaprok earlier, of the house, the wizard-space in the attic and me looking to open a second-hand shop. Then I waited. It took him a few minutes, but Shatteraxe huffed a sigh and turned to Snaprok.

“I was wrong. This kid... no, this Lord belongs here.”

“He’s no Lord, Shatteraxe.” Snaprok shook his head.

“He should be, any that he might be in line for?”

“Peverell’s the only one.”

“Think we could reinstate the title?” Shatteraxe asked.

“Please don’t.” I objected. “It’s going to be bad enough being a Potter, please don’t add a Lordship to it. I just want to have my little shop and have my brother and his girlfriend visit, or live with me.”

“That’s it? Not very ambitious.” Shatteraxe grumbled.

“No, it’s not. Look, I was raised in the muggle world, by squibs that wanted no magic in their house, it was only that Mother’s brothers argued, that we were giving training. There was no way Mother or Father were letting either myself or my younger brother Ronson go to Hogwarts, as far as they were concerned, magic is responsible for almost every negative thing in their lives, they don’t take it out on us, but there’s a distance between us. We’re magical and they aren’t. And that kind of says it all.” I sighed. “I’m eighteen and even in the muggle world that means that legally I am an adult, so they can’t stop me from doing what I want, but Ron’s younger and like me, he’s a wizard. None of us want the house to become a bitter, nasty place, so Mother and Father have given their blessing for me to have my shop and when he turns eighteen, Ron will join me. Possibly sooner if the street gangs’ turf war in Leeds escalates. Father overheard some muggle police, their Aurors, talking about young people, just barely old enough to leave home, being targeted.”

“Muggles.” The way Snaprok said it, it was not a compliment.
“Yeah.” I grimaced.

“That explains much, young Potter. I think that I would agree with you, a Lordship would not suit you and would drain your enthusiasm, quickly. Vey well. After we see to your… trunk, I shall speak to the director and see what he says, but a wizard that keeps their word to a goblin, that is a rarity and highly valued by Gringotts.” Shatteraxe sighed. “For now? Let’s see to this trunk. I am hesitant to start with the returned items.”

“Our brethren are likely to forget the other compartments, without encouragement.” Snaprok agreed.

“So, starting with a difference compartment?” I asked.

“Yes. We’ll start with the g’alleons. Chipblade, fetch a trio of trublies. Mr Potter? It’s far easier and faster, for you to move the coins from the trunk, than we goblins can. May I request that you levitate the contents to a trubly, please?” Shatteraxe asked and a young goblin ran from the room.

“I have no issue with that, but I would need to draw my wand, again.” What the hell was a trubly?

“In this room, Mr Potter, you may draw your wand to do anything that may assist us in the sorting and assessment of the contents of your trunk.” Shatteraxe’s response has a formal tone to it and I suddenly wondered how often this had happened, before today.

“My thanks, Master Shatteraxe. I would extend to you and Snaprok the right to use my given name, Hadrien.” I gave the two goblins a deep head-bow. I wasn’t all that sure how they’d take me actually bowing to them.

Both smirked and dipped their heads in return.

“We thank you… Hadrien.” Shatteraxe responded for both of them, just as the young goblin returned.

The goblin rode back into the room, on the front seat of a procession strange carts. Each looked like a dump truck, to be honest, but the front was goblin sized and the rear was a massive bucket.

“Trublies, sir.” He whispered, obviously uncomfortable speaking around me.

“Thank you, Chipblade. Stay here. Hadrien? Second compartment into one trubly, please.”

“Okay.” I flicked my wand into my hand and did the text-book flick-and-swish as I said the incantation to levitate the coins from the trunk. “Windgardium Leviosa.” Followed by the controllable movement levitation spell. “Levioso.” I turned and waved my wand to the trubly and lowered the tip below the edge of it’s bucket-thing. The coins flowed from one space to the other, a constant stream of gold, silver and bronze.

“Nicely done, Hadrien.” Shatteraxe nodded his approval.

“Thanks.” I grinned.

“Now, for the second trubly? The contents of compartments three, four and five, please.”

“Got it.” I moved the trunk’s dial and in seconds another stream of money, this time coins were joined by notes, made it’s way to a trubly. Another turn of the dial and a few more seconds, another stream of money. A third turn and yet another stream of coins floated passed. By the time the last coin settled, the trubly was almost overflowing.
“Chipblade, take the first trubly to deposits, it’s to go into vault…?” Shatteraxe turned to Snaprok.

“Which vault, Hadrien? Potter or Prewett?” Snaprok asked me.

“Prewett, please.”

“To vault 872, Shatteraxe.” Snaprok knew better than to speak to Shatteraxe’s underling’s without permission.

“You heard Snaprok. Deposit to 872. Grabknife. Take the second trubly to exchange. Deposit to vault 872. Go. Don’t forget the receipts.” Shatteraxe ordered and the two young goblins each climbed up onto the front of a trubly and drove them away. “Hadrien? Could you move the contents of compartment six? That had the cursed items, didn’t it?”

“It does.”

“Right. To the last trubly, please. Bentclaw.” A third young goblin rushed over. “To the curse-breakers, you’re to stay with the items. Then to exchange and deposits, before bringing any non-financial items back here.”

“Yes, sir, with reciepts.” The young goblin chirped and clambered up onto the trubly and was off.

“That one’s worth keeping an eye on.” Snaprok grunted.

“Yes, he’s coming along quite well.” Shatteraxe agreed. “What do we have left?”

“Returning items and weapons.” I answered.

“Ah… better be weapons, first, then.” Shatteraxe huffed. “Build up to the returning items. This could take a while, Hadrien.”

“Better get that book out, again.” Snaprok suggested as Shatteraxe stepped away from us to face the other goblins in the room.

“Ay! Listen up! We’ve a special task today. Assessment of weapons. And… assessment and return of goblin made items… over eighteen hundred of them.” He was met, first with whispers, but by the time he finished the room was filled with stunned silence. “We’re doing the weapons first, get them outa the way. So I want an orderly queue, starting right here. Each item is to be assessed, valued, tagged and a copy of the tag to be put in your tray. The items will them be placed on the shelf at the end of your workstation, runners will resupply your station and collect the items to move them to the relevant storerooms. There will be a more in depth assessment in the future to determine if items are part of sets, so just concentrate on the individual item. If it’s obviously is part of a set, for example a belt with multiple scabbards, mark that on the tag, nothing more needs to happen today. As it is, we will likely be here for a number of hours.” Every one of Shatteraxe’s staff were listening intently. “Ready?”

“Aye!” They cheered and trotted away from their stations in an obvious order of ranking.

Each goblin stepped up to the trunk and took a basket of items and returned to their station. Within a minute, runners were darting all over the room, up to the trunk to fill a wheeled basket-shaped trolley, before racing off to drop a few on this bench, then that one. While yet other runners, picked up the already assessed items and placed them in their trolley and raced off with them.

I watched for about ten minutes before shrugging.
“Do you mind if I read, Shatteraxe?” Obviously Snaprok didn’t, as he’d been the one to suggest it.

“Not at all. This could take a while. Any idea of how many items in that compartment?”

“A little over three thousand. I did keep back all the blades that could be used in a potions lab. I’d like to bring them in and just get a valuation on them. Plus the few that I kept for personal use.” I’d kept a matched pair for of knives, one set for Ron, one set for Portia and a third for myself.

“Three thousand… Yeah, we’re going to be a while. Valuations are easy. Just set up an appointment. I’ll make sure the juniors know that you’re on the approved contact list.”

“Thanks. A lot of items were small, though, knuckledusters, blades small enough to go in a buckle or a cuff.”

“That might speed things up a little. I’ve got twenty assessors, here, so we’ll just have to push them along.” Shatteraxe shrugged. “Between the weapons and the returning items, that’s roughly three hundred each. They should be able to get out at least a hundred and hour. I’d like to say more, but without knowing exactly what’s there…?”

“Three or four hours should be fine. Father is planning to pick me up at the Kettle in Leeds, later, he’s at his office now and can happily fill in the entire day there.”

“You won’t apparate home?”

“No, sir, I can apparate fine, but I don’t have my licence, yet. Monday, along with everything else at the Ministry.”

“Ugh.”

“Yeah, that’s my opinion of it, too, but to get my shop, that’s what I have to do.” I huffed a sigh.

“I don’t envy you th-” Shatteraxe cut himself off and dashed across the room to a bench and started yelling at the goblin there.

“Ignore that.” Snaprok advised. “Read your book. We’ll get done, when we get done.”

“Sure.” I answered and opened my satchel, again.

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I’ve no idea how long passed, but eventually someone placed a hand over the page I was reading, forcing my attention from my book. I found a pair rather amused goblins looking at me.

“What?” I asked.

“We both called your name, a number of times, in fact. Snaprok even went so far as to poke at you, but all you did was rock with it.” Shatteraxe answered.

“Oh, sorry, I was reading… it was interesting.” I muttered. I think i’d found how to repair my phoenix feather wand, so I marked the page with a piece of blue ribbon.

“Obviously.” Snaprok snorted.
“Alright, today’s not pick on Hadrien day, that was Tuesday.” I argued. “You missed it.”

Both goblins blinked, before laughing.

“Fair enough. But I’m tempted to put it in the calendar for next year.” Snaprok warned.

“Oh, joy.” I answered dryly.

“Aright, Snaprok.” Shatteraxe chided. “We business to complete.”

“We do, indeed.” Snaprok nodded.

“What’s the verdict?”

“Well, let’s end this in the order we started. Ûalleons. There wasn’t nearly as much as it seemed, most of what you had was sickles and knuts.”

“I figured that.” I had actually raided the trunk to fill individual pouches of Ûalleons, sickles and knuts for Ron, Portia and myself. And the same with muggle money, this was really just the leftovers.

“Exchanged up, it comes to Û2121, δ8, κ4.” Snaprok advised.

“That’s still more than I expected. Quite a bit more.”

“Well, it only gets better from here. The exchanged money? We exchanged it completely for Ûalleons and it came to Û9291, δ14, κ26.”

“Whoa…”

“Yes. Then there was the tainted items. That was a small Ûalleon amount, but we brought back some thousand-odd items. We did value the actual items, knowing that you were looking to sell them on. But as per the other compartments, we kept out the weapons.”

“Yeah. That was what I’d planned on doing, but my book…”

“Held you attention. We understand. The tainted items came to Û2249, δ15, κ13. And the value on the weapons came in at Û13478, δ1, κ10.”

“Oh, hell…” I whispered.

“And the finder’s fee on the returned items? Û19157, δ14, κ25.” Shatteraxe finished.

“Which comes to a total of Û46293, δ3, κ21.” Snaprok informed and grinned at what I was sure was a dumbfounded look on my face.

“I like him, Snaprok.” Shatteraxe grinned. “His reactions are entertaining.” And Snaprok nodded, laughing.

“Oh, shut up.” I mock-snarled at them, causing them both to laugh.

“So, Hadrien… where are we putting your gold? All of it into 872, the Prewett vault? Or some into the Potter vault?”

“Can we change the names on the vaults?” I asked.
“Of course we can. We can name them anything you like.” Snaprok agreed.

“Great. I want to change the Prewett vault to ‘The Snitch’s Nest’, for the shop and the Potter vault will become my personal vault. And top out the shop vault at 40000, the rest goes into my personal vault.” I requested.

“We can do that.” Snaprok nodded. “Oh, and here are you keys, I’d also suggest finding a suitable signet ring in the Potter vault and getting that linked to your personal vault. Not sure about the shop, maybe have a shop seal made?” I took the two keys and dropped them into my satchel, along with my book.

“Something to think about, for later.” I nodded. “That’s important, but not until the Ministry is pacified.”

“Good luck with that.” Shatteraxe snorted.

I grinned. “I’m not a Potter for nothing, Shatteraxe. I’ll get what I want and they can get stuffed.”

Shatteraxe turned to Snaprok. “It’ll be interesting to see how he does against the Ministry.”

“10 says he gets what he more of what he wants, than they do.” Snaprok held out a hand.

“10, you’re on.” Shatteraxe laughed.

“Alright, you two.” I huffed. “If we’re down to insults and bets, I’m out of here.” I stood. "That is… if you’re finished playing with my stock and trunk?”

“We have.” Shatteraxe pointed at the trunk on the raised platform.

“Excellent.” I reached for my wand, but halted, looking at Shatteraxe with a raised eyebrow, in silent question.

“Of course, Hadrien.” He nodded.

“Thanks.” I quickly retrieved my wand and shrunk the trunk, picked it up and dropped it into my satchel. “Anything else I need to do today?”

“Just the shop register. Did you want me to go ahead and order the adaptive register?” Snaprok asked.

“Yes, please. And get the forms ready for linking it to shop vault and a deposit pouch, too, please.” That raised another thought. “How do I go about getting an account manager?”

“Ah... Unless you want someone else, I’ve likely already been slotted into that position.” Snaprok bared his teeth in a grimace.

“Oh, okay, that’s fine.” I huffed a sigh of relief. One less thing to worry about.

“In that case, Mr Potter. Gringotts are pleased to assist you and we wish a pleasant weekend.” Shatteraxe gave me a semi-formal bow, which was still far more formal than I thought I would ever get from a goblin, and gestured to Snaprok. “Manager Snaprok will escort you to the foyer and make any appointments you may need.”

“Assessment Master Shatteraxe, I thank you for the assistance provided by you and your department. May your days be filled weapons and gold.” This time I did it, I bowed back.
And just like I'd thought they would, both goblins froze for a split second, before Shatteraxe began to swear in gobbledygook, while Snaprok laughed, his bony little arms holding his ribs.

“Guslkyn noain akmog, noanidiozae bloody brat. Smarmy little snoeldfig ageiden.” Shatteraxe shook a fist in my direction, but his eyes were bright with amusement. “Get him out of here, before I decide I’m adopting him, Snaprok.”

My eyes widened and I let Snaprok grab my arm and drag me from the room. We were through the corridors and out into the foyer before my head stopped swirling.

“What just happened?” I whispered to Snaprok.

“You worry about your shop, Hadrien, Shatteraxe is just yanking your robes. Ignore him. But… If he ever introduces you to someone as ‘Ya-disi Hadrien’? Come let me know immediately as ‘Ya-disi’ means my son and I’ll need to request a meeting with the director, to find out where you stand.”

“Oh, bloody friggin’ bollocks!” I grumbled under my breath.

“Don’t worry about it for now. He can’t do anything about it, until he’s known you for at least a year.” Snaprok patted me on the arm, to the alarm of an elderly witch nearby.

“Tell him if tries to adopt me without discussing it with me, I’ll hang him up by his toes, douse him in honeydew and leave him for the snidgets to eat.” I snarled and the witch winced.

“Uh, probably not a good idea to tell him, that’s more likely to convince him, he should.” Snaprok muttered.

“What… should I invite him for cocktails, buy him a pretty, pretty rose? Would that make him back off?” I asked sarcastically.

“No, Shatteraxe would consider that vicious and a positive thing. Best thing you can do at this point is to ignore him and focus on opening your shop.” He turned away and left me to leave the bank.

“Blasted goblins.” I stomped from the bank and into the alley.

“Excuse me?” I’d barely gone a few yards when a hand darted out to touch mine. I turned to find the elderly witch from the bank. “I’m sorry. I overheard you in the bank, you and the goblin. I apologise for speaking out of turn, but it’s rare that a goblin speaks directly with a wizard, especially such a young wizard. Please? Humour an old witch and satisfy my curiosity?”

“Oh, ah… Madam…?” I asked.

“Peppering. Alina Peppering. I’m up from the south for the weekend, for some shopping.” She answered.

“Ah. Well, Madam Peppering, I’d be delighted to explain the conversation… if you’d join me for a pot of tea?” I was suddenly starving and a glance at my watch meant, I knew that Father wouldn’t be expecting my call for another hour or so.

“The Cauldron or the Teabag? And might I inquire as to your name?”

“The Teabag, by choice, Madam Peppering.” I answered meaning Rosa Lee’s Teabag, a teashop that specialised in fine teas. “And my name is Hadrien Potter.” I said threading her arm through mine and lead her, unresisting in the direction of the Teabag.
“Ah. Well, Madam Peppering, I’d be delighted to explain the conversation… if you’d join me for a pot of tea?” I was suddenly starving and with a glance at my watch, I knew that Father wouldn’t be expecting my call for another hour or two.

“The Cauldron or the Teabag? And might I inquire as to your name?”

“The Teabag, by choice, Madam Peppering.” I answered meaning Rosa Lee’s Teabag, a teashop that specialised in fine teas and high-tea treats. “And my name is Hadrien Potter.” I said, threading her arm through mine and lead her, unresisting in the direction of the Teabag.

Once in the tea shop and seated, I ordered a pot of Darjeeling tea and requested a selection of sweets and warm savoury nibbles. I poured tea for an unresponsive Madam Peppering and myself and waited. The scent of the hot bacon and egg tarts finally made Madam Peppering move, she nose twitched first, then her eyes blinked and finally she shook her head and looked at me.

“Well, young man, I wasn’t expecting to hear that, although… now that I look at you, it’s rather obvious.”

“Really?” I grinned. “You think?” She was talking about the hair, I was sure of it.

“You have the Potter hair, you poor lad.” I was right and I was also glad I hadn't used my metamorph abilities, once I had my Identity test completed.

“Yep. You should hear Mother, she despairs of either Ron, my brother, or I ever looking presentable. Father just cuts his short, he likes a buzz cut.”

“Buss cut?” Madam Peppering asked slowly trying to make sense of the words.

“Buzz, B-U-Z-Z. It’s a style that is extremely short, less than a half inch, all over. I’m not sure where the term comes from, but the machine he uses does make a buzzing sound.”

“Ugh. I can’t see it. Webby was such a relaxe-” She started.

“You know him?” I didn’t think Father knew anyone in the Wizarding world?

“I did. Up until Fleamont, the great idiot, sent him away. No matter how I pleaded, the stubborn fool wouldn’t tell me where he’d sent the boy.” She muttered.

Up went a set of privacy charms and I frowned at her, dropping the friendly persona and treating her as a threat, maybe not as serious as a Death-Eater, but far more of a threat than the general public. She blinked at the change and carefully sat back, letting her hands rest on the table, in full view.

“Who are you and how is it you know him?” My voice was calm and quiet, but also a little cold.

“My name, as I said, is Alina Peppering. I was born Alina Alice Cartwright, I married that idiot Fleamont’s brother, Lawrence, the year I left Hogwarts, we ran an apothecary, until his death some years later, Webby had been gone for a year by then. I continued to run the store until I married Jaseph Peppering. Jaseph was an Auror and died ten years ago, the war with V-v-, with You-Know-Who took him and our youngest daughter. We had two daughters, Lauralynne became an Auror and Pandora is a spell researcher. I live-”
“Stop.” I held up a hand and shook my head. The Potter luck strikes again. “You’re Ben’s sister? The one that lives in Ottery St Catchpole?”

She blinked at me. “Yes…”, was said in a very confused tone.

I let my head fall forward and muttered obscene comments under my breath, for a few moments, before lifting my head.

“I bought Danny’s bike off Ben, this morning.” I sighed.

“Oh… I… uh…” Alina stammered, her eyes wide.

“Yeah. The sneaky old bugger charged me £100 and afternoon tea, once a month, but seeing as we’re both moving to Ottery St Catchpole? I think he’s going to be a regular, once I get my shop up and going, that is.”

“Oh…” She was still at the involuntary sounds point, which was fine, less questions for me to answer.

“And you asked about the goblin?”

“Yes…” She whispered.

“My parents bought a house up in the Dales and as they knew I wanted to open a second-hand shop, they said I could have the contents, if I removed them. Well, the attic had a number of trunks and a wizard-space room, the little bit of rune-work we understood said that it had an ‘as necessary’ expansion charm on the room. And it was huge… massive. We estimate there’s stuff going back as far as Hogwarts’ founding, but given the house is less than a hundred years old? Someone’s had to have been collecting for a while. Unfortunately, it was a deceased estate and an anonymous sale, so we can’t ask if there was a purpose, or if they were just hoarders. But there was a heap of goblin made stuff and Father figured, if I returned it to Gringotts, I would be able to get a finder’s fee. So, that’s what I did. I’ve been in Gringotts today, since about eleven-ish and we had only just finished when you heard me threatening to curse Assessment Manager Shatteraxe.” I explained.

“I know many people dislike the goblins, but few actively threaten them. What did they do?”

“Snaprok did nothing, other than be the messenger. Shatteraxe, the blasted snot, threatened to adopt me. He finds me… entertaining.” I grimaced.

“Ah… Right…” Alina replied.

“Snaprok was just warning me, so I told him to tell Shatteraxe what I’d do, if he did, but Snaprok said that Shatteraxe would probably see that as a bonus. Goblins being the bloodthirsty and vicious beings that they are, they respect that type of reaction, but only if it’s genuine.” I huffed.

“I see…”

“I’m glad someone does, because I don’t.” I whined.

“No whining, it’s not becoming of a Potter.” Alina chided.

“A Wizarding Potter, maybe, but muggle and muggle raised Potters are quite good at whining.” I grinned.

“Not around me, they’re not.” She responded sharply.
“Yes, Aunt Alina.” I replied, automatically. When had I began to think of her as ‘Aunt Alina’?

She said nothing for a moment, but I could see the tears in her eyes.

“You’re moving to Ottery St Catchpole, you said?” And when she said that, I figured at this point, I could drop the privacy charms as, with people listening in I wouldn’t have to hide who I now was and it would help cement my public story, just by having the news spread as a rumour.

“Yes, ma’am. I’m planning on opening a mixed second-hand shop on the Lane.” Meaning Niffler Lane. “I don’t have a premises, yet, but I’m going to the Ministry on Monday to speak to the Estate Department and see what’s available, but that’s the goal. I’ve got an accommodation trunk and about a half dozen other trunks, each filled with anything up to a hundred shrunken trunks, all full of stock for the shop. Plus Danny’s bike. If everything goes according to plan, I should be right to head down later in the week.” While I might not have said Ottery St Catchpole, mentioning ‘the Lane’ would tell people where I meant, as London has Diagon Alley, Hogsmeade has the Gateway Drive, HolyHead has The Harpy’s Court, Tutshill has Pegasus Place, Ballycastle had Quaffle Row and Ottery St Catchpole has Niffler's Lane.

“A mixed shop? I’m a little surprised, squibs don’t usually welcome magical children, not enough that the children still associate with them or the muggle world, after Hogwarts.”

“Yes, I can understand that. Mother and Father, well, they’re not really all that pleased that Ron and I are magical, but there’s not a lot they can do about it. If it weren’t for our uncles, who knows what might have happened, but Uncle Gid convinced Mother that while we needed a magical education, sending us to Hogwarts was asking for trouble, that You-Know-Who and his followers were targeting muggleborns and with two squibs for parents, that’s how we’d show up on the Ministry’s wards.”

“You would have, yes.” She nodded and from the corner of my eye, I saw a few other tea-drinkers nod, too.

“So, Uncle Gid and Uncle Fab trained us, both Ron and I excelled in charms, defence and transfiguration, but we’re pants at potions… well, not really, but it’s hard to excel when your teachers are pants at a subject.”

“I can imagine. Have you completed your OWLs?”

“Yes, ma’am, and my NEWTs. Ten OWLs and seven NEWTs.” I grinned. “Even with Uncle Gideon and Uncle Fabian’s help.”

“Gideon…? Fabian…? Prewett?”

“Yes, ma’am. Mother’s their eldest sister.”

“Huh, I don’t recall…” She trailed off in thought.

“I don’t know, Mother refuses to talk about her family, other than our uncles, of course.” I shrugged. “She’s a squib and both she and Father are happy living as muggles. But Ron and I? We’re wizards and we don’t like having to watch everything we do, just in case something upsets Mother or Father. And it’s getting harder as we get older. With us being muggle raised, Uncle Gid and Uncle Fab felt that Ron and I should stay in the muggle world until we were legal adults there, we know that seventeen is considered adult in the Wizarding world, but in the muggle, it’s eighteen. My birthday was in January and it’s taken me this long to get everything together, for the shop. I’ll head down as soon as I’ve been through the ministry and get started on setup and Ron will join me later.”
“When?” Aunt Alina asked.

“Not real sure, either later this year or maybe next year, it kinda depends on how long until he's ready for his NEWTs. And on how long before the muggle street gangs’ turf war expands. Mother doesn’t want him around when that happens.” The idea of a young wizard working with the street gangs was the stuff of an obliviator’s nightmare.

“No, that would not be good.” She huffed and our conversation halted while we enjoyed our tea. It wasn’t until a second pot was ordered and on the table, before we began to talk again.

“So, you bought young Danny’s bike?” She started.

“I did, this morning, in fact. I had a quick read through the papers that Ben gave me with it and was quite surprised to see a letter and certification from the Unspeakables.” I answered.

“Really? Why would they be involved?”

“Ah, Danny’s bike? It got charms on it. The letter mentioned something about it not being the first muggle motorbike with charms, but that the other one wasn’t done by the Unspeakables and they wanted to know how it was done. So, apparently they called in a wizard responsible for some of the charms on the first one and he did the charms, while they spectated. Which is really quite handy, as I won’t have to worry about the Misuse of muggle artefacts Department throwing a tantrum over a flying motorbike.” It had been a shock to see Remus’ handwriting detailing the charms needed to make the bike fly.

“It flies?!?” She exclaimed.

“So I’m told. Ben claimed that because of his age and being missing part of a leg, he didn’t feel secure on a broom and asked if the Unspeakable could make the bike fly. Oh, it has a load of muggle aversion and notice-me-not charms, too. The Unspeakables made sure there was little chance of breaking the Statute.” I assured her and the few people that I’m sure were eavesdropping.

“Oh, if the Ministry and the Unspeakables have certified it, there’s little cause for me to complain.” She allowed. "What are your plans for the next few days, Hadrien?”

“Um, tomorrow, Mother wants to run me through some more accounting stuff, just to make sure I don’t stuff up my books before Gringotts can check them. Monday, I’ll be at the Ministry. I need to visit the Estate Department, get the shop on the Commercial registry, get my apparition licence and I’m sure there’s a few other things on the list. That’s likely to take up most of the day, I think. Tuesday, I promised Ben I’d come over to pick up the sidecar and so we can go through my stock of wands and get him a new one, apparently Ollivander told him, after Danny accidentally broke Ben’s wand, that Ben couldn’t get a new wand, he needed to get an experienced wand, but so far none had chosen him. I’ve got two trunks jam-packed full of wands, so we’re going to see if one of them likes him.” I snagged a tiny treacle tart and munched on it.

“He’ll like that, he’s been working hard on getting ready for the move, having a wand and being able to use magic will be helpful.”

“I know, I’d struggle to live without magic and that’s part of the problem Mother and Father have with Ron and I, they’re very happy without it and we’re not.”

“I can imagine. Will you be getting in contact with your other relatives?” Aunt Alina asked.

“Other relatives?” I answered in a confused tone. “We don’t have any, other than cousin Harry, of course.”
“I meant your Aunt Margaret, dear.”

“Margaret? I don’t know any Margaret’s, Aunt Alina.” Who the hell was Margaret?

“Margaret is your Mother’s sister, she’s a few years younger than your Mother. She married Arthur Weasley, they live just outside Ottery St Catchpole.” Oh, thank gods, she meant Molly.

“Really?” I groaned. “Mother never said anything. How many other relatives are going to come out of the blasted woodwork?” I grumbled, even if that’s not how I felt.

“Well, on the Potter side, I’m it, even if I’m not a true Potter, just by marriage. On the Prewett side? Oh, let me see. There Margaret, of course, and her brood. There’s your grandparents Percy and Isabella. Ignatius and Lucretia, your Grandfather’s brother and his wife. And Muriel, she’s the eldest of the Prewett’s and current title holder.”

“And Mother was the eldest in her family, wasn’t she?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Please? Please, tell me that there’s no chance of Muriel passing the title to me? Please?” I leant forward anxiously.

“No, dear. You Mother being a squib, disqualifies her and her descendants, unless all other branches of the family die out.”

“Oh, thank god for that.” I flopped back in my seat and sighed in relief.

“Most people would quite like to hold a Family Title, Hadrien.” Alina warned.

“Maybe they would, but not me.” I huffed. “Look until just now, I had no idea that there was a Family title and why, in the name of all that’s holy, would I accept a title to a family that kicked my Mother out for being a squib? I may not see eye to eye with Mother, but she kept us, she could have easily done what her family did to her and sent us away, I’m sure the our uncles would have loved to raise us, but she didn’t, she kept us. She saw that we had a magical education, alongside a muggle one. She and Father are helping me, as much as they can, to get ready to open my shop. Her family abandoned her, but she didn’t abandon us.”

“Hmm…” Alina nodded. “Fair enough, Hadrien, fair enough. The shop? You mentioned having to visit the Estate Department?”

“Yeah, I want to get a place in Ottery St Catchpole, I had no idea there were family still there, but Mother was raised there and it’s a long way from Leeds and it’s street gangs. The Estate Department? Well, I’ve no idea what available and what’s not, and Father suggested that the Estate Department would have that information.”

“Have you ever been to Ottery St Catchpole?”

“Oh, yeah, we spent the last few summers there, after Uncle Gideon and Uncle Fabian vanished, Mother felt that Ottery St Catchpole was her best chance of getting any information about what happened.” That was stretching the truth, but not all that much.

“Oh, dear.”

“Yeah, the local newspapers answered that, but I liked the area and spent my summers staying with schoolmates, not that far from there.” That was entirely true.
“I see. Good. Well, there are a number of shops vacant at present, but you mentioned a mixed business? On a corner, wasn’t it?”

“That’s my preference.” I nodded. “But we’ll see…”

“Well, you may be in luck, dear. The Lane has five shops that open onto muggle streets. And two of them are empty. One is considerably larger than the other, it’s also unusual in that, the corner that would intersect the Lane and Stoatshead Hill Road on the east of the Lane, had been cut off, for a barber’s shop, that opens directly on the corner. The missing piece is small, little more than ten feet by ten feet.” Alina explained.

“But that’s enough to separate it from the Lane, as far as the muggles are concerned.” I grinned.

“It is, indeed.” She agreed.

“Great, if it’s empty, then there’s a chance that it’s available to buy, cause I’d rather buy than rent, more secure that way. Do you know if there’s a flat upstairs? I could really use one.”

“There is, but I don’t know if it’s connected to the shop or is independent. I’m sorry.”

“No worries, Aunt Alina. At least I know there is one, I can find out from the Estate Department on Monday.”

“You certainly can. You said you were going to Ben’s on Tuesday?”

“Yes, I have to get the sidecar and we’re going to find Ben a wand… hopefully.”

“I do hope you can.” She nodded and drew in a deep breath. “Thank you for tea, Hadrien, but I’m afraid I must get a move on. Ben is expecting me for dinner and as I have never been fond of apparating myself, that means floo-ing to Leeds.” I stood and held her chair as she climbed to her feet. “Thank you, dear.”

“No worries, Aunt Alina. And I’m floo-ing back the Kettle in Leeds, too.”

I offered her my arm and after a quick stop at the register, we left the tea house. We meandered up the alley towards the cauldron and this time I made no effort to camouflage who I was, it meant a lot of sideways glances, but no interruptions. Once inside the Leaky Cauldron, I nodded to Tom and tossed him a sickle and nodded to the floo. He smiled and nodded back. Alina and I both took small handfuls of the grainy powder and looked at each other.

“Ladies first.” I gave her a very theatrical bow.

“Impertinent brat.” She shook her and stepped into the fireplace. “The Tipped Kettle, Leeds.” She said, tossed the handful of powder at her feet and burst into bright green flames.

I huffed a laugh, before stepping into the fireplace. “The Tipped Kettle, Leeds.” I repeated what Alina had said and my world was flickering green.

Stumbling from the flames only served to remind me that I needed to learn how to use a floo, properly. I was the eldest of the three Potter wizards and it wasn’t respectable to fall on your face as you left the floo. I looked up at Alina’s choked off laugh.

“Something amusing, Aunt Alina?” I demanded.

“No, dear, just the fact that you’ve inherited more than just the Potter hair. Neither Lawrence,
Fleamont or James, ever truly mastered travelling by floo. The only magical transport they liked was a broom, James especially.”

“Really? I like brooms, too, but apparition is easy. I’ve done all the training, but I’ve not done my test, yet another thing to do on Monday.” I sighed.

“You don’t have trouble apparating?”

“Nah, my first experience at that was accidental magic in primary school, I think I was about six or seven, I was being chased by a bully and I rang around the corner of the school and suddenly… I was on the school roof. No one saw me, they all thought I’d climbed the caretaker’s ladder, which was right there, too.” I told her.

“Ah, well done, I’ve never really been comfortable with it, something to do with having Mumblemumps, too early. I can do it, but I never come out on my feet and frequently splinch myself.” She laughed. “Ben always has a bottle of dittany on the dresser for me and the spare bed’s where I apparate to, so it doesn’t matter if I’m not upright.”

I giggled at the thought and an idea occurred to me. “Where’s the apparition point, here?”

“Out in the courtyard, dear.” She answered.

“Cool, show me, please?” It was always handy know, you never know when I might need to pop back.

“Of course, this way.” And she lead me to what in a normal pub, would be the beer garden, then around a corner of a brick wall into a dead-end.

“Here we are.” She waved a hand. “Well, I’d best get a-”

“Wait.” I tossed up another set of privacy wards and then spoke again. “I’ve been apparating by myself for a year and with a side-along for the last eight months, I’ve yet to splinch myself or my passenger. Let me take you to Ben’s. He gave me the address and I’ve no trouble apparating with less information, the joys of having Aurors as teachers. I’ll cast a notice-me-not before we leave, so no muggles will see us, but why should you have to risk a splinch, if you don’t have to? Let me take you? Please?” I said quickly.

Alina studied my for a few moments.

“You are such a Potter.” She sighed. “Very well, just remember that your privacy charms will fall when you disapparate, unless you apply them to walls, here.”

“I know, but that’s fine, because the barkeep will be expecting to hear an apparition crack. Instead of it being you leaving, it will be me coming back.” I reasoned.

“I had not thought of that. Fine, Hadrien, take to my brother’s.” She held out a hand.

I nodded and leaving the privacy wards alone, I cast a strong notice-me-not on the pair of us and focused on the address that Ben had given me, as I took her hand. Then it was a familiar feeling of being squeezed through a tube and when that all went away, we stood beside a letterbox.

“Oh, nicely done, Hadrien, very nicely done.” Alina smiled at me. “And so easily.” The last was said slightly wistfully.

“Magic has always come easy to me, Aunt Alina.” I answered and glanced at my watch. “Crap. I better get back, Father will be waiting for me. I’ll see you Tuesday, if not, leave your address with
Ben for me and once I get to Ottery St Catchpole, I’ll drop by and let you know I’ve arrived. Alright?"

I barely waited for her to nod in agreement, before I apparated back to the Kettle, this time I could hear the echo of the crack as I arrived. I hurried from the garden, through the pub, pulling my robe off as I went. At the nearest payphone, a BT Phonecard went into the slot as I dug out Father’s card, I then entered the number and waited, while the call connected.

“Potter.” Father’s voice was sharp.

“Father, it’s me. I’ve finished with Gringotts.”

“Good. Head up Eastgate, away from the City Centre Loop, before you reach the end of the block there’s an alley or driveway between the buildings on your right. Behind the buildings there’s a car parking area, I’ll meet you at the far end, on Templar Street, in… oh, give me ten minutes.” Father said without fuss.

“Yes, sir.” I got out, before the call disconnected. “Well…” I hummed and began to mutter to myself. “Let’s see if I can follow his directions.” I hung up the receiver and turned around. “Up Eastgate. Easy enough. Away from the City Centre Loop. Right, I’m assuming the Loop is that round-about back there.” I turned my back on the round-about and huffed. “Right… up the road, but before the end of the… Oh, there it is.” I turned into the alley, my fingers itching to reach for my wand, but this was muggle territory and wands were a ‘no-go’. “Ah, the car park. And Father said the far end?” I walked, just enjoying the early spring evening, to the end of the car park, pausing as a policeman rounded the corner.

“Excuse me?” I asked.

He looked at me with a frown on his face. “Yes?” His answer was a little terse.

“Is that Templar Street?” I pointed to the street a dozen or so yards away. “Father gave me directions and said to meet him on the corner of Templar Street, but I’m not great at following directions…” I trailed off and the policeman’s body relaxed slightly.

“It is, son.” He answered.

“Great.” I beamed at him. “Thanks.” I trotted up to the curb and sat myself down, turning Father’s card over in my hands.

“Son?” The policeman had followed me and now stood a few feet away.

“Sir?” I replied.

“How long did your father say he’d be?”

“Oh… um, ten minutes, his office is over on… Regent Street.” I answered, glancing at the card in my hands, just long enough to read the address.

“Ah, good. It’s just this isn’t a good area to wander alone, at night. The gangs are getting brazen.”

“Then why are you alone?” I asked in response.

“I’ve got backup.” He jerked a thumb over his shoulder and I studied the area for a few seconds, before I saw what appeared to be a homeless person, but they were watching us too carefully.
“Okay, good. And he’s got a radio or something that can call for help if things go pear-shaped?” I asked worriedly.

“Yes, lad, they do.”

“Good, good.” I sighed clear relief.

“You seem more worried about me than yourself.” The officer said.

“Why shouldn’t we worry about you? You police are on the front line of crime, you’re the ones dealing with the thugs and the druggies, the thieves and the muggers.”

“And what about you?”

“Me, I’m leaving the city. Going to Devon, Mother’s family come from a small village near the coast. I’m going to open a second-hand shop, been collecting stuff for ages. And Mother doesn’t want me around if the gangs are getting worse.” I answered.

“That’s a sound idea. You’ve got family down there?” He seemed to settle in for a chat, given the way he was leaning against the squared off lamppost.

“Kinda. Mother’s people come from there and today I found that her sister is still in the area, but my main contact will be Father’s Aunt by marriage and her brother, who’s like a surrogate grandfather. And next year, when he’s finished his exams, if he can hold out that long, my brother will move down with me.”

“Why so long? He could transfer?”

“Nah, home schooled, but Ron’s not the most conscientious of students, so…”?

“Ah, so many aren’t. What happens if he can’t wait? Or if the gangs worsen?” He asked.

“Well, if that happens, it kinda depends on how old Ron is, I may get temporary guardianship, or power of attorney, or something. Father’s the family lawyer, not me, he knows what it’s called. But Ron will be under my care if he hasn’t turned eighteen, by then.”

“So, you do have a backup plan, good to know.”

“Sir, my Mother’s a Criminal Prosecution Lawyer and Father’s a Family Law Attorney. We have backup plans to backup plans. And I wouldn’t be surprised to find that they’ve got backup plans they haven’t told us about.” I laughed.


There was a movement and suddenly Father’s car came to halt in front of us. The passenger window whirred as it slid down and there was Father looking at me with an exasperated expression.

“Hadrien? Everything alright?”

But it wasn’t me that answered. “Yes, sir. Just keeping him company, this isn’t the safest area, come dark.” The officer explained.


“Sorry, I hadn’t expected Aunt Alina to keep me so late.” I shrugged and saw Father blink at my comment.
“No harm done, son.” The policeman patted my shoulder. “You best get along, I’m sure your family are waiting for you.”

“Will do.” I sat climbing into the car. “Thanks for the company.”

“No worries, son, you look after yourself, yeah?”

“I will.” A waved and Father put the car in gear.

“Aunt Alina?” He asked as we zipped through the streets.

“Yep, do you remember her?”


“Nope, this one’s all yours. She fought with Grandfather to be told where you were, but when her husband, your Uncle Lawrence died, Grandfather cut their contact with her. She married again and had two girls, one became an Auror like her father, but both he and she were killed during the war. The other daughter is my friend Luna’s mother. Oh and she’s Ben’s sister.” I’d told Father about Ben and even planned to dig out a pensieve so they could watch the conversation.

“Ben? The old man.. uh, the wizard from this morning? That Ben?”

“Yes. So the chances were, we were going to meet, anyway.” I shrugged.

“It could only happen to a Potter.” Father muttered.

“I know.” I replied overly brightly, being sarcastic.

Father just huffed and kept driving.

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Sunday was spent with Mother and Hogwarts, going over my shop ledgers and working out how to send a patronus to Ron and Portia, but not to their local counterparts.

And wasn’t that fun? Not.

Right after breakfast, Mother grabbed me by the arm and dragged me into the bedroom that she uses as an office and sat me down in front of her desk. On the desk were three sets of receipts and mock-ups of register tallies. All I had to do was enter them in a mock-ledger and balance them.

All… I… Had… To… Do…

Six years of Hogwarts-based schooling does not teach you how to balance a ledger. In fact, unless you’re studying Arithmancy, there’s no math to be had. Oh, sure potions has a minor amount if you have to make smaller or larger amounts of a potion, but really? Other than twenty-nine knuts equals one sickle and seventeen sickles equals one galleon and one galleon equals £5? There’s little mathematics in the Wizarding world.

So, I was relying on my memories from primary school mathematics classes, which were sketchy, at
best. Mother had spent most of Wednesday and Thursday teaching me the basics and trying to bring me up to date with my muggle age group, but it was slow going. I agreed to do an hour a day of school-type studying, but that the shop came first. It took me hours to get her to understand, but eventually, I got the message across. I would study, but I wasn’t going to abandon my future, just to catch up to someone else’s past.

Then, Hogwarts and I had to sit down and work out a variant to the patronus charm, to be able to send Ron and Portia a patronus, without it going to their local counterparts. It meant having to change the incantation, as ‘*expecto patronum*’, means ‘I await a guardian’, but I didn’t need a guardian, I needed a **messenger**.

Then there was the issues of how to differentiate between my Ron, who we hoped would become Ronson Potter and Ronald Weasley, who was currently aged four. It got more and more complicated, until I finally snapped and asked why I couldn’t just send a messenger and use ‘the Ron that I shared dorm with’ as the identifier? That started a whole different set of research parameters, but after a bit of trial and error, we got it sorted.

I would cast a charm, which we called ‘The Messenger Charm’. Original, I know, but we were keeping it as simple as we could. The incantation was ‘*Nuntio Expecto*’, in English it means ‘I await a messenger’ and the wand movement was nothing like for the Patronus Charm. For the Messenger charm, you hold the wand in front of you, but slightly to the side, wand at roughly shoulder height. Point your wand almost vertical and flick your wand tip down diagonally across your body, sharply, like you were shaking something off your wand, the idea being that the tip of the wand would end up almost directly in front of your mouth when the messenger emerged.

The messenger itself, looked like a cross between an incorporeal patronus and a bluebell flame. The shape and look of bluebell flames, but the colour and transparency of an incorporeal patronus. Once the Messenger is in front of you, you are able to give it an identified destination. Whether that destination was a person or a place, made no difference, but the big thing was that the destination was your version, the way you thought of a person or place, not the official designation. So, I could send a message to Hermione Granger or a message to the Hermione that Chaired the D.A. In my mind they weren’t the same person, anymore, so my identifier for them was different and my magic told the Messenger that.

The other thing we did, was to give it a time-delay capability. I could cast the Messenger and say ‘deliver to Mother, but not until after midday and she is alone and unable to be overheard’. In which case, the first time Mother was somewhere private, after midday the Messenger would deliver my message. But… and it was a minor ‘but’. The Messenger would only last twelve hours, if a message was undelivered in that time, the messenger would return and state ‘message undelivered’.

Simple, right? That simple, two word charm took the thousand years of knowledge that Hogwarts had, my stubbornness, fourteen hours, two chalkboards of notes and twenty-five miscasts before we got it right.

But we got it right and the plan was for me to send a messenger to Ron and Portia each day, twice a day, until they turned up. At this point, we were still divided on what to say, but Mother suggested that we just give an address. For now it was Mother and Father’s address, but once I got through the Ministry and moved into the shop premises, it would change to the shop’s address. They’d know my voice, so would know that the message was from me, particularly as I planned to use their nicknames. Ron was Checkmate and Portia was Research.

The only other things I did for the rest of the weekend, was to change the shape of my accommodation trunk and move the door that Hogwarts created, the one that went from the Room to
Father’s living room. The trunk had been a typical suitcase type trunk, but I wanted something that I
didn’t have to bend almost double or climb a ladder, just to get into the flat and I could only enlarge it
for a short length of time. Hogwarts walked me through the process of a permanent transfiguration of
the trunk’s exterior, one that wouldn’t alter the interior or any of the runes or expansion charms cast
on it, but would allow it to look more like a freestanding door and frame. Then I went to the Room
and moved the doorstop, now one of the stock trunks, and closed the door to Father’s house.
Hogwarts had already explained to us that the door was a temporary thing, she could hold it only for
a day and recommended that I move the door on a daily basis, from one wall to another.
Unfortunately neither Hogwarts nor I had any idea how long we would need her help, but I guessed
that I wouldn’t need her much passed the shop opening. Ron and I could apparate to the shrieking
shack when he got here and use one of the secret passageways, same for Portia.

Moving the door to my trunk was easy and quick, but it was also a sign for Mother and Father that
our time together was coming to an end. And somehow, I don’t really think any of us were going to
regret that too much. We weren’t really comfortable with each other. Sure, we could and did, chatter
away together, but when the conversation stalled, it became awkward very quickly. I treated them as
advisors and they treated me as a trainee and really? That was the best we could do.

Yes, I called them Mother and Father, but in my heart, they definitely weren’t my parents. I doubted
that either they or I were going to have any trouble portraying an estranged family. For the muggles,
we had decided to base that estrangement on academics, my not wanting to follow them into law,
and them not coping with children as stubborn as them, that won’t be pushed into what they want.
Add to that the street gangs in Leeds and you’ve got an acceptable hypothesis for me and Ron
leaving Leeds and not looking back.

Portia was going to be the difficult bit, how to bring her into it? We weren’t too sure, yet. Hogwarts
suggested telling Ben and Alina that Portia had trained with us and like us, had a difference of
opinions with her family. Maybe say that they kicked her out? Neither Hogwarts nor Mother felt that
Alina or Ben would let Portia live with us, but that was something to think about later. It was kind of
pointless until she got here, anyway.

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Father dropped me at the car park where he’d met me and the police officer, bright and early on
Monday morning. I was heading to the Ministry, with Hogwarts and the Ministry building having
made appointments for me, that looked to have been made about a month prior. First was my
apparition test, which I wasn’t at all concerned about. Then it was to the Estate Department to find a
shop premises, after that I needed to register the business and see about a floo connection, although
the floo would depend on the condition of the property and whether it was safe to connect the floo
immediately or if it needed work.

But that was for later, right now, I had to get to the Ministry by 8.30am for my apparition test.
Entering the Kettle, I slung my robe over my shoulder and dropped a knut on the bar, just to cover
the cost of the floo-powder.

I took a deep breath and entered the floo fireplace. “Ministry of Magic.” I said clearly and dropped
the powder.

Emerging from the flames, I was once again surprised to find myself on my feet. Surprised, but
pleased. I joined the flow of those visiting the Ministry and found myself in front of the wand
“Wand.” The wizard pointed to a device that looked a little like a muggle rotary/drum pencil-sharpenor, just on a larger scale. On the side that faced me there was a single hole that had an arrow pointing towards it. I tentatively pushed my wand into the hole and jerked as there was a mechanical clicking sound. It continued for about fifteen seconds, then it went silent. A count of five and the registry wizard pulled a piece of parchment from the back of the drum. “Done.” The wizard said. “I keep this, until you leave. You can take your wand. Welcome wizard is off to the right.”

I retrieved my wand and stepped away, conscious of the queue behind me. I approached the welcome desk and was greeted before I could even open my mouth.

“Good morning, sir!” The wizard bright and cheerful… and I wanted to smack him, I was not looking forward to today and as a result, was rather grumpy. “Where can I direct you to, today?”

“Four locations. Apparition testing?” I muttered.

“Level six, sir. Turn left from the lifts, third door on the right.”

“Estate Department?”

“Ah. There’s a dedicated floo in the Public Information Services office on level four. Out of the lifts and turn left, second door on the left.”

“And Commerce Department, Business Registry?”

“Same floor, but to the right of the lifts, sixth door on the right.”

“Floo connection is level six?”

“Yes, sir, opposite the apparition testing office.”

“Hmm… Thanks.” I grunted and turned to the lifts.

“You’re welcome, sir. Have a magical day.” The man was lucky I didn’t hex him for that.

I waited patiently for a lift and smiled as, when the doors opened, there was Alastor ‘Mad-Eye’ Moody. My smile grew, when almost everyone waiting took a step backwards. I snorted and stepped into the lift and pressed the button I needed.

“Something amusing?” Moody sounded like I felt.

“Just them.” I nodded towards the crowd that were very deliberately not looking at the lift.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” I didn’t elaborate, but stood quietly waiting for the doors to close.

“What level?” Moody grunted.

“Six. Apparition testing.”

“Yer didn’t do that at Hogwarts?”

“Didn’t go to Hogwarts. We were home schooled.” I answered and he grunted in acknowledgement.
I walked out when the doors opened and made my way to the appropriate door, quite aware that Moody had waited until the lift began to close, before putting out a hand and stopping the doors. He stepped out of the lift and ambled along the hall behind me, while I strode down it, quickly.

The door to the testing centre was open, so I just walked right in, there was a counter to one side, with an elderly witch making notes on a parchment.

“Morning.” I said quietly as I got closer.

“Good morning. How can I help you?”

“I’ve an appointment at 8.30am for my apparition test. Hadrien Potter.” I answered and heard Moody outside the door catch his breath.

The witch looked at me with wide eyes, but she marked the form and pressed a button.

“Mr Twycross will be with you in a moment, Mr Potter.” She whispered.

“Thank you, ma’am.” I gave her a half bow and took a seat. I could hear Moody still outside the door and I wondered what he was waiting for, then it occurred to me. He was waiting for me to be called in by Twycross, so he could question the reception witch.

Typical Moody. Gods, I hope he never changes.

“Mr… Potter?!” I assumed that this wizard was Twycross.

“Yes, sir.” I answered as I stood up.

“Potter?” He whispered.

“Sir?” I replied.

“This… This way, Mr P-Potter.” He gestured to a short corridor. I followed him down the corridor to a large bare room, that housed only some markings on the floor, two circles and a large square.

“Right, then, Mr Potter.” He seemed to have got over his surprise. “Let’s cover the basics, shall we?”

I heard the click-stomp of Moody's steel foot in the corridor.

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re home schooled?”

“Yes, sir.”

“May I ask, who were your primary teachers?”

“Extended family.” I did consider Remus family and Bill, Fred, George, Sirius and in a strange way, I also considered McGonagall and Flitwick a part of that family. So I didn’t quite lie… I just didn’t tell all the truth.

“Were they fully trained, do you know?”

“I would assume so, some of them were Aurors.” I’m sure I heard Moody in the hallway, gasp, but it could have just been Twycross.

“Aurors? Their names?”
“Gideon and Fabian Prewett.” I answered. Gideon and Fabian were Mother’s brother, even if they weren’t the Aurors I meant. Dad and Sirius were Aurors right alongside the Prewett brothers and McGonagall and Moody were Aurors before them.

“Oh… ah…” He spluttered and started again. “Right, we can assume that your instructors were qualified to teach you apparition, then. But… They’ve been dead for two and half years, surely they weren’t your only instructors?”

“We had a number of tutors, but not for apparition.” That was true, Bill, Fred and George were the closest we got to formal tutors and that wasn’t saying much. Ron, Hermione and I pretty much taught ourselves, which is not the best of things, but we were in the middle of a war. And in the middle of a war, you do what you need to, to survive.

“Do you practice? How much do you practice?”

“We do, but only when other magicals are present, just in case we splinch.”

“Have you ever splinched?”

“No, sir, but my brother has. First time he left an eyebrow behind, another time, he lost a bit of muscle from his upper arm, near his shoulder. Nothing a bit of dittany couldn’t fix, but it left him a nice spiral shaped scar. Now that he knows what can happen, he concentrates a bit more.”

“What’s the furthest you’ve apparated in training?”

“One hundred and ninety three miles, from King’s Cross Station to Father’s house in Leeds.”

“In training?!” Twycross gasped.

“Aurors.” I shrugged. Like that answered everything.

“Aurors.” He grunted. It kind of did answer everything. “And the shortest?”

“One foot, to face in the opposite direction.” I sighed. “Repeatedly.”

“Aurors.” Twycross shook his head. “Side-along?”

“And?”

“Furthest and least?”

“Same.”

“Aurors?” It came out as partly a whine and partly a question.

“Aurors.” I sighed, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

“Oh, hell. Right stand in one circle and apparate to the other, please.”

“Sure.” I stepped up to the nearest circle, took a steadying breath and willed myself to be in the other circle.

Crack.

I was in the other circle and I was still facing Twycross.
“Good, lad. Now, I want you to step into this square over here and when I give you the okay, apparate to the Leaky Cauldron and wait for me beside the access to the Alley.”

“I wasn’t aware that you could apparate to or from the Ministry.” I frowned.

“You can’t… Not unless you have one of these.” He held up an odd triangular-shaped coin. “It’s an access key, you hold it in your hand and you, only you, can apparate in and out of this room. And only in this room can you release it, it’s charmed so you can’t let go of it anywhere outside of this room. There’s more to it than that, but that’s all you need to know.”

“Yes, sir.” I held out my hand and he carefully put the coin on my palm. “In the courtyard, you said?”

“I did.”

“See you there.” I focused and again, felt that tight squeezing sensation and when I opened my eyes, I was standing in the Cauldron’s apparition point. I waved to Tom and wandered my way to the courtyard, sitting myself down on a barrel to wait.

Less than five minutes passed before Twycross ambled through the door to the Cauldron, munching on a cauldron cake.

“Ah, there you are, Mr Potter. Tom says you arrived with no issues?” While it should have been a statement, it came out as a question.

“No, sir. Apparating is easy, I’m told one of my first major accidental magic outbursts was apparating away from bullies at school, ending up on the school roof.” I huffed at the memory. “I’m just glad that no one saw me, the teachers all assumed that I’d climbed the caretaker’s ladder, but I hadn’t even seen it.”

“Well, you’d be the first Potter not to excel on a broom.” He laughed.

“Oh, no. I do that, too. There’s nothing as freeing as a broom.” I started with a laugh, but ended wistfully. “I’ll have to get myself another broom, mine fought a tree in a storm and lost.” The memory of Ron holding the shattered handle, still made me wince. My Firebolt was a great broom, but McGonagall had given me the Nimbus and it was only my second real present. I refused to think about a Hedwig whose parents probably hadn't even been hatched, yet.

“Oh, dear. Well… you can’t go passed a Nimbus, Quality Quidditch carries them.” He glanced towards the brick that stood between us and the Alley.

“Hmm…” I was so tempted, but… “No, not today. Today is for dealing with the Ministry.” I huffed a sigh.

“We’ll be finished within half an hour.” Twycross said. “You’d have plenty of time to pop down and do some shopping, before they shut.”

“Nope, I won’t. I’ve got far more to do at the Ministry than just my apparition test, I’ll be lucky to be done by lunch, probably more like sunset.”

“Ah… why don’t we head back, then? Seeing as you had no trouble getting here and you had Aurors for teachers, why don’t you side-along me and we’ll get that out of the way?”

“Sure.” I held out a hand in such a way that he could either take my hand or take a hold of my arm. With his fingers gently encircling my arm, Twycross nodded and I nodded back, apparating
back to the testing room and a possible confrontation with Moody.

“So smooth.” Twycross whispered.

‘Of course it’s smooth.’ I thought to myself. ‘I’ve spent the last eight months in a war, apparating all around the country trying to avoid Death-Eaters. I couldn’t afford to land off balance, I had to be ready to fight, instantly, if I needed to. That was absolutely essential. I could put up with dirty clothes or little food, but being defenseless because of wobbling on arrival when apparating? No, that wasn’t going to work.’ Not that Twycross was ever going to know that.

What I did say was, “Thank you, you can put that down to lots of practice.”

“It certainly paid off, young man.” He was smiling now. “Come on, let’s get your licence filled out and you can get onto the rest of your day.”

“That would be much appreciated, sir.”

It took five minutes to fill out all the paperwork and pulse my magic into the completed forms, that’s so that if I have a major splinching episode, the Ministry can use the form to track down the parts of my body that I lost. It’s also the reason that Ron, Portia and I didn’t get our licences before Bill’s wedding, we knew that Voldemort was in control of the Ministry and with Magical Transport able to track us using an apparition licence form? It made sense to stay off their books.

After thanking Twycross, I left the apparition office and headed back to the lifts. Oh, look there’s Moody again. If I didn’t know better, I’d think I was waiting for me, but I did know better, he wasn’t stalking me.

He nodded to me. “All done?” His voice was a sharp rumble.

“Not a chance. I’m off to Estate now.” I sighed, pressing the appropriate button and waited for the doors to close.

“Estate? Moving away from home?”

“Yes.” Obviously Moody wanted answers, so I figured I’d give them to him. “My parents are both squibs and… well, they’re not… we don’t get along too well. They’re not abusive or anything, just… they don’t get us not wanting to stay in the muggle world. But the gangs in Leeds are getting worse, so we finally came to an agreement. I’m moving to Ottery St Catchpole, where I’ll open a mixed second-hand shop and my brother will join me later.”

“Later?”

“Depends on the gangs, his schooling and how long he, Mother and Father can tolerate each other.” I shrugged.

“Mixed shop?” Moody’s questions were short and designed to get me to provide expansive answers. I planned to give it to him, but… in little bits, here and there. Just to annoy him.

“Well, yeah, it’s kinda got to be. Ottery St Catchpole is a mixed village, right? So if an eighteen year old kid moves into town and doesn’t look to have a job or income, the muggle elders aren’t going to be very welcoming, now are they?”

“Huh, put like that…”

“Exactly. I’ve got plenty of stock. Father bought a country house up on the Dales and told me, I
I could have the contents, if I removed them. I figured I’d start at the top and work my way down. But the attic wasn’t the attic of a muggle house, it had a wizard-space room that was absolutely massive. Easily the size of a quidditch pitch, it had piles of stuff that formed these narrow corridors between them. It took ages to sort through it and pack it up.” I babbled. “Not all of it was magical, though, there was a lot of muggle stuff, too. I returned the goblin made to Gringotts on Saturday, for the finder’s fee.”

“That would have been a nice pouch.” Moody grunted.

“Oh, yeah. It was really handy, now I should have enough to buy a premises for my shop, instead of just renting. And I need something with accommodation or I’ll have to buy a flat or house, too.” I shrugged. “I just have to see what the Estate Department have.”

“Smart thing to do.” Moody grunted again. “So, level four then?” He said as the doors slid open.

“Yep.” I looked out into the hall and saw an elaborate number ‘4’ on the wall opposite the lift. “Well, that’s me. See you.” I tossed him a grin and turned to my right, waiting for him to correct me.

“Information’s to the left.” Moody called before I’d taken more than two steps.

“Oops, thanks.” I spun around on my next step without slowing and kept walking.

“Second door on the left.” He called after me and I noted that he’d left exited the lift.

“Thanks.” I waved as I paused in front of the door, I took a quick breath and entered the Public Service’s office and approached the receptionist. “Hi, um… Floo to the Estate Department?” I asked.

“Ah. The floo’s behind you, sir, beside the door.”

“Ah, great, I didn’t see it there.” I gave the reception witch a smile. “A knut for the powder? I asked.

“No, sir, paid for by the Ministry, just toss the powder down, there’s no address needed.”

“Oh, nice one. See you.” I grinned as I took a small handful of powder and stepped into the floo fireplace, tossing the powder at my feet.

I stumbled out of the other fireplace, catching myself before I hit the ground, or the reception desk.

“Oh, good save.” The wizard at the reception desk said.

“Yeah, lots of practice stumbling from fireplaces.” I grumbled. “But I still haven’t got it right. Dammit.”

“Not to worry, sir, you’re not alone, many people never grasp floo-travel.”

“I hope I improve, I know I’m not nearly as bad as I used to be. My first try, I skidded out on my butt.”

“Ouch.”

“Oh, yeah. I felt like I was picking splinters out for days.” I replied.

“Ooh, nasty.” He grimaced.

“But not today and not anymore, now I just need to get the timing of the spinning right and no more stumbling for me.”
“That’s the spirit. Now? What can we do for you, today?”

“Oh, I’m looking for my own place.” I answered.

“Well, we can certainly help with that. So that I know which of our staff to call on… What type of place are you looking for and in what area?”

“I want a shop in Ottery St Catchpole. I would prefer one with a flat above the shop, but that will depend on the shop.”

“Ah, in that case, you’ll need to speak to Michael Chang. If you’d have a seat, I’ll get a hold of him.” The wizard suggested.

“Sure.” I shrugged and took a seat in the waiting area.

“Oh, before I go and speak to Mr Chang, can I get your name? For our attendance book, you understand?”


The poor man blinked and his jaw fell open, before he visibly shook himself.

“Right, shan’t be long, Mr Potter.” He said and left the room via a door partially concealed by a large freestanding screen that held display leaflets on a number of houses and businesses. It took a few minutes and a distant screech of ‘What?!’, before the reception wizard came back and with him was a short man, with coffee coloured skin and features that made me connect his name with one I knew well. Cho Chang.

“Oh, Mr Potter, I’m Michael Chang. Come on through and we’ll see if we can find what you’re looking for.” He gestured for me to follow him, we went down a long corridor and into a small room, that had a pair of picture-it-windows, picture frames that are linked to actual windows somewhere else. These two showed a pretty park beside a stream. “Have a seat, Mr Potter.” He flicked his wand and a seat skidded from across the office to sit beside a desk holding a pensieve and a set of shelves holding phials of memories, above it.

“Call me Hadrien, I feel like I should look for Father when you say ‘Mr Potter’…” I huffed. “I’d say call me Harry, but that could cause confusion.”

“It would indeed. It was only recently that the Wizarding world became aware of there being other Potters than just Harry Potter.”

“Yeah, I can relate. It was a shock to discover I was related to those Potters. Father doesn’t talk about his Wizarding family much.”

“When did you find out?”

“But until almost a year after James and Lily died, but the only point of contact that either Mother or Father had were Mother’s brothers… and they died in the weeks before James and Lily, Mother didn’t find out about them, until mid February, just gone.” I answered.

“Oh.” There was not much else he could say, really. “Robby said you were looking to go south? Ottery St Catchpole?”

“Yea, Mother’s people come from there and Saturday I was told that her sister still lives there, I’m kind looking forward to meeting her.”
“You’ve… you’ve never met her?”

“Oh, no, Mother’s parents, both her birth and adopted ones, didn’t approve of her birth siblings having any contact with her. But once Mother and her brothers were legally adults, the parents couldn’t stop them.” I explained.

“Good, family are important.”

“They can be, yes.”

“So… Ottery St Catchpole?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What type of place?”

“A shop. I’ve been told there’s a couple of places that open onto both Niffler's Lane and the muggle roads.” I answered.

“Ah. There are… There are two shops that front both ways. One has it’s main entrance via the Lane, the other is an odd shape, it’s got a corner cut out, that houses a muggle barber’s.”

“That’s the one I was most interested in. I was told that it has a flat or accommodation upstairs, but Madam Peppering didn’t know if it was connected to the shop or not. Can I…? Can you show me that one, first?” I asked.

“Of course. Have you ever used a pensieve?” Mr Chang ran his hand along a row of phials on a shelf, each one clearly labelled.

“Yes, sir, but not a lot. Maybe a dozen times.” Mostly the Headmaster’s sessions on Tom Riddle, but they still count as ‘using a pensieve’.

“Good, good. Just let me locate… the… correct mem- Ah, here we are.”

His fingers stopped at phial that’s label read, 127 Stoatshead Hill Road, Ottery St Catchpole. He touched his wand to the liquid inside the phial and withdrew his wand, a long strand of silvery/gold fluff hung from it’s tip. A touch of the fluff to the surface of the pensieve.

“Shall we?”

I just nodded and allowed the pensieve to pull me in.
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Unlike Dumbledore’s pensieve with it’s dull, slightly green tinge, the light in Chang’s pensieve was clear and the colours were bright. The memory itself was sharp and felt so real, that I wanted to wander off and check out the village, see if Molly Weasley or Mr Diggory were in town. But I couldn’t, not with a memory.

There was a flicker to my left and Chang faded into being. Looking towards me and over my shoulder.

“Ah, Hadrien, if you turn around, you can see the shop front. This memory is, as you can see, from myself and is taken from a visit here less than a week ago, so what you see is quite recent.” Mr Chang watched as his memory-self walked across the road and unlocked the door. “Shall we follow?”

I walked through the door that memory-Chang left open and studied the space. Other than the corner that was cut off, it was a single large space. Big windows along Stoatshead Hill Road, brought in the light and would allow me to show off my stock to anyone walking along the footpath.

“The space is a reasonable size, as you can see, roughly thirty by fifty feet, less the space for the barber’s shop, which just under ten foot square. There’s a counter over here and a small office area behind that wall, there.” He pointed to an area that would be behind the barber’s. “The access to the Lane is on the other side of the office, so if you preferred, you could remove the office, it would however expose the staircase to the upper level. As you can see the office walls don’t go all the way to the ceiling, that would be a minor fix, either way.”

“No, I think I’d prefer to get a wizard-space room with two doors. I could put it here, under muggle aversion and notice-me-not charms. That would keep the muggles completely unaware of the magical side, but if I position the wizard-space doors just right, magicals could enter the main shop, giving the appearance of simply entering from the Lane.” I rocked my head back and forth. “That would give me much the same disregard from the muggles, as the Lane gets.”
“That’s something you’ll have to take up with the Invisibility Task Force, but if you’re prepared to take their advice, after you’ve talked to them and work with them, you should be fine.” Chang offered.

“Sounds good, so far. Is this all there is to the property? I was told about a flat upstairs, but my… informant didn’t know if it was connected to the property or was separate.”

“Ah, that’s the main reason that this property has been empty as long as it has. Few people are interested in a joint property like this, but the Ministry have been informed that the cost of separating the commercial premises from the residential ones, are exorbitant and far more than the value of the property as a whole. The good news, as far as you may be concerned? That has brought the price down, considerably.”

“Hmm…” I hummed, I wasn’t committing to anything until I’d seen it all. “Can we see upstairs?”

“We can. The memory will take us there in a minute or two.” He answered. “As you can see, the entrance to the Lane has a much smaller set of windows with a door between them, fairly standard for most wizarding shops. The entrance to the two upstairs flats is tucked in behind the office, the enclosed staircase is hidden, it’s being hidden physically by an intermediate space that is used as a cloak and robe storage space for the magical customers. The door to the stairs themselves is camouflaged as a cloak rack, with a double row of hooks and a low shelf. Somewhere your customers can leave their other shopping while they browse through you wares.” Chang was beginning to sound like tour guide.

“Right.” I tuned him out and wandered off to look into the narrow office, noting the built-in desk and wall of shelves and cubby-holes above it.

“Hadrien, we’re about to move upstairs.” Mr Chang called.

“Coming.” I answered and hurried to his side, I had no idea what happens if you get lost in a pensieve memory and I didn’t want to find out.

It was only a matter of a few seconds before memory-Chang pulled the shop door closed and crossed the empty ground floor, in the direction of the office. But he didn’t go into the office, instead he slipped passed it and into a blind-spot behind it. One side of that blind-spot housed the stairs to the upper level, as Chang said, it was tuck up against the office, running along the outside wall of the building. We entered what at first glance, did look like a cloak room, racks, hooks, shelves and even a low bench seat along one wall.

Memory-Chang reached up and turned one of the hooks upside down and the back wall of the tiny room opened towards us. Without a pause he walked up the stairs that ran back along the cloakroom’s longer wall, the one it shared with the narrow office. He moved smoothly, not quickly, but not dawdling either, at the top of the stairs he paused on the small landing, one door to each side.

“The property comes with two flats, one much larger than the other.” Chang explained, gesturing first at one door, then the other. “The front flat is the larger, with a spacious living area and two medium size double bedrooms, a reasonable sized bathroom and separate laundry room. The second flat is, as I said, much smaller, it has a small living room with kitchenette, a small double bedroom, a bathroom that for the size of the flat is quite large, but it does house the washer and dryer as well. The main flat looks out over Stoatshead Hill Road, while the smaller flat looks out over the Lane, that means unfortunately that you can’t rent the smaller flat to a muggle.”

Memory-Chang turned towards the smaller flat and opened the door. He walked into the living room and over to the kitchenette. I followed and carefully studied the appliances, not sure what I was really
looking for, but certain that if it wasn’t there, I’d notice.

“Both flats are muggle-proofed. By that I mean that the electrics have been given a magical dampening treatment. The main reason for this is the fact that Ottery St Catchpole is a mixed village, we can’t hide everything, so all the buildings in town have electricity connected, whether you use it is up to you, but the ITF made sure that all buildings in all mixed villages, like Ottery St Catchpole, Wimbourne, Chudleigh or Appleby are connected to all the muggle amenities.”

“Hide in plain sight?” I asked.

“Pretty much.” Chang agreed. “Both flats have the wiring for telephones, but not connected as yet.” He added.

“Muggleborn?” I asked.

“Not me, but my wife’s mother is. Why?”

“Most wizards we’ve met don’t know what a telephone is and some can’t even pronounce the word.” In my mind I heard Ron talking to Portia about using a ‘fellytone’.

“Oh, I know. Suka and I have been married for nearly ten years and I was one of those that didn’t know the difference between electricity and a telephone.”

“Ouch.” I grimaced and followed memory-Chang as he went into the bedroom. It was small, yes, but no smaller than Dudley's second room at Privet Drive, big enough for a double bed, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe at the foot of the bed. I ducked my head passed memory-Chang to look into the bathroom, it was small, too, but bigger than I’d expected. A shower and toilet at one end, a vanity in the middle and space for a washer and dryer at the other end, for a one bedroom flat it was more than suitable.

Memory-Chang moved back through the flat and out onto the landing before entering the second flat. The door opened into a tiny entrance hall, a door to the right had a sign on it that read ‘laundry’, so after a quick peek inside, I ignored it in favour of the door at the end of the hall. It opened into a large living space that had big windows with frosted glass panels on the lower sections. They gave a sense of privacy, because the muggles couldn’t see in.

At the far end of the living space were the two bedrooms, sticking my head through their doors I could see that they were much the same size, about fifteen foot square and while only one had windows to the street, magic meant I could put picture-it-windows in the other room and it would be just the same as having real ones. The bathroom was between the interior bedroom and the dining area, which in turn was alongside the kitchen. Both flats had modern-ish appliances, probably as modern as they could be, given the year, and I knew that Portia and I would have no problems using them. Ron on the other hand…? That was going to be interesting, but food ruled Ron’s life, so I figured he’d get the hang of it pretty damn quick or he’d go hungry.

While I was sticking my nose into the different rooms, Mr Chang was rambling on about the various selling points of the flats, but I wasn’t listening.

“I’ve seen enough, do we need to wait for the memory to end or can we leave?” I came to the living room to join him.

Mr Chang’s shoulders slumped. “We can leave whenever you like, Hadrien.” He sighed.

A few minutes later and we were back in the drab little office, that’s only brightness were the pair of picture-it-windows.
“We have a couple of oth-” Mr Chang began.

“Stop.” I held up a hand. “You said the property had been on the market for a while and that the price had been lowered due to the cost of splitting it. How long and what’s the price now?”

“Oh… ah…” Mr Chang stammered. “Um… Three years. It belonged to the Prewett brothers, who ran a herb and vegetable shop on the weekends. They did quite well at it. The muggles thought they were plain-clothes police up in Bristol or Oxford, depending on the year.”

“Oh good grief…” I hung my head forward and shook it from side to side. “And the cost?”

“It was cleared out and put on the market the month after they died, with an asking price of ₤35000. Not cheap, but considering what you get, it was a reasonable price. Unfortunately there’s been little interest. I understand their family put in an offer, but the sale fell through, when the ITF insisted on connecting the muggle amenities.”

“I can imagine.”

“The price has been lowered a few times, the last just a week ago, the same day as that memory.” He dipped his head in the direction of the pensieve. “Now, it’s listed at ₤7500, an absolute steal. The Ministry could get that for the shop alone… if they were prepared to sell on the muggle market. But with a door that opens onto Niffler’s Lane? That’s not going to happen.”

“₤7500 for the shop and the two flats, combined?” I asked, I wanted to be certain I understood him right.

“Yes, ₤7500 for the shop and the two flats, combined.” He agreed.

“Sold.” Was all I said, causing him to blink rapidly.

“O-Okay.” He stuttered. “I can get the paperwork started and as it’s a Ministry controlled property, we can get settlement done quickly.” He pulled out a file from a drawer and placed it on the table.

“How quickly and why is it Ministry controlled and not left to their family?”

“The brothers left a will that stated that all their possessions were to be sold and the money equally divided between their two sisters.”

I leant back in my seat and laughed.

“That wasn’t funny, Hadrien.” He chided. “They were-”

“My Mother’s brothers.” I finished for him.

“What?”

“My Mother was Rachel Prewett.”

“Oh.”

“Yea, but I still want it. All of it. Even if that means part of the money goes to my own Mother.”

Talk about Potter luck.

“I’ll get right on it. How were you planning on paying?”

“Well, there’s two choices, I can go to Gringotts and get you seven and a half thousand ₤alleons, or
I can get a Gringotts bank draft for the same amount.” They were my only two options at this point.

“Ah. Of the two, a bank draft would be preferable, but there is a third option. And the total cost, including all the administration and stamp duties is £7652. £7500 for the property itself, £100 for the administration fees, £50 for the transfer of title and £2 as an archiving fee.” Pulled over an invoice pad and began to fill it out. “If you take this to Gringotts, the bank can transfer the amount directly to the appropriate Ministry vaults, if you provide the relevant authorisation, that is. After which, they will stamp this form and provide a receipt. You bring that back to me and I should have the transfer ready to go to archives, with a copy, backdated for the muggles, so that you can take control of the property this afternoon.” He paused. “I don’t suppose you have a contact address for Rachel Prewett? There’s a note here that after her adoption, her new family refused contact with the Wizarding world.”

“Rachel Potter, please. Yeah, the family weren’t happy having her ex-brothers just drop in whenever they felt like it, but once Mother was eighteen and classed as an adult in the muggle world, there wasn’t a lot they could do. And an address? I won’t give out the house address, that’s a breach of trust, but her office address? That’s public knowledge, if you know what to look for.” I offered.

“Business address is fine, Hadrien.” Mr Chang nodded and offered me a quill. I, in turn, handed over one of Mother’s business cards.

“Oh, that’s convenient.” He smiled and used a sticking charm to attach it to the inside of the file. “Now, I have a question and I hope you’ll humour me. See, I was in the Ministry atrium on Friday and there was a disturbance. New information was brought forward about James and Lily Potter, in relation to their deaths and about Sirius Black and his crimes. And the names Webster and Hadrien Potter were raised. Could you tell me…? Are you connected to James Potter?”

“Of course, Father is Webster and James was his younger brother. Father was removed from the Wizarding world when he failed to receive acceptance to Hogwarts. But wasn’t Sirius Black, cousin Harry’s Godfather?”

“He was.”

“But that mean that he would have had to offer a blood-bound oath of protection to Harry…” I trailed off.

“Yes, that’s fairly standard.”

“But… if Black really did lead V- You-Know-Who to James and Lily’s cottage, magic would have seen that as Black breaking his oath and retaliated, if not killing him outright, then stripping him of his magic.” I recited what Hogwarts and Neville had told me, in regards to various oaths.

“Oh… oh, gods…” Mr Chang whispered.

“Did no one think to check that?”

“I… I don’t know…” He shuddered. “But Black and little Harry are both in St Mungo’s, the Minister ordered Dumbledore to retrieve him.”

“Dumbledore?”

“Headmaster of Hogwarts.” Chang explained.

“Yes, I know who he is, I was asking why him?”
“Oh, Dumbledore was the only one that knew where Harry was. He was living with Lily Potter’s step-sister.”

“But merlin’s law? Shouldn’t he have stayed with a magical family?”

“Apparently Dumbledore put up blood based protection wards around the step-sister’s house.”

“But… she was a step-sister, they shared no blood, the wards would have been useless.” I argued.

“Yes, but Dumbledore wasn’t aware of the ‘step’ issue, he thought they were sisters.”

“Ugh. Guess who failed to do his research?”

“Oh, yeah. James Potter’s ghost turned up and tore into the minister, the DMLE and Dumbledore in the middle of the Ministry. Very exciting, it was.” Very frustrating from my point of view, but if it got the job done, I could tolerate it. “There’s a Wizengamot session from now until Wednesday and the talk of the Ministry is that Dumbledore will be asked to step down as Chief Warlock.”

“Isn’t he Headmaster of a school, too?”

“Yes, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.”

“You know? There are some things the muggles get right and that’s one. In the muggle world the headmaster of a school can’t hold any other positions of authority while he’s a headmaster.” I sighed.

“That’s not a bad idea. I might pass that along if you don’t mind?”

“Go for it.” I picked up the invoice. “I’ll go and see to this and be back in, say… an hour?”

“Best give me two. I’ll need to contact a few different departments and it will be quicker if I go in person. Mondays are shite for getting things done.” Chang shrugged.

“Mondays.” I huffed.

“Mondays.” He agreed.

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Almost five minutes later, I pressed the button for the lift on the fourth floor and when the lift doors opened, guess who was leaning against the lift’s back wall?

“We meet again.” I grinned and stepped inside, I pressed ‘8’ for the Atrium level and stood back, like Moody I leant against the wall of the lift.

“We went well?” He asked.

“Yep. Got a place, just have to get Gringotts to transfer the funds, wait a few hours for the documents to be lodged and I’m good to go.”

“So… what’d you get?”

“Shop and two flats in Ottery St Catchpole. Irony is a bitch, isn’t it?”
“How?”

“It wasn’t until we were discussing payment that it came up… the place belonged to Mother’s brothers.”

“Ottery St Catchpole? Who were they?”

“Gideon and Fabian Prewett.” I watched as Moody’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Who’s your Mother?” He demanded in his usual manner.

“Rachel, she’s a squib and her parents adopted her out into the muggle world.”

“And your Father?”

“Webster Potter.”

“James’ brother?” It was almost a whine.

“Older brother, yeah.”

“He’s a squib, too.” It wasn’t a question.

“Yeah, part of the reason I’m leaving Leeds. We don’t… it’s not that we don’t get along, just… we don’t… they want different things for us than we do. Mother and Father want Ron and I to stay in the muggle world, but we don’t want to be that restricted. Sure, there’s things in the muggle world that we like, movies, games and that sort of stuff, but magic is a part of us and there’s so much the Wizarding world can offer, if you’re not dead set against it.”

“And they are?” He frowned.

“They’re not as bad as they were. At least now, Ron and I can practice without Mother and Father leaving the house. If we damage it we have to fix it, those are the rules.”

“Not bad rules to live by.”

“No, but it’s still their house and they’re still uncomfortable with us using magic in it. So, we try to avoid it, but sometimes…” I trailed off.

“Shit happens.”

“Sometimes.” I agreed. The lift ‘pinged’ and the doors opened. “This is me. Later, Moody.” I was out of the lift and down the corridor before he realised that I’d used his name.

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Leaving Gringotts, I was in a foul mood, Snaprok had issued the transfer and placed the stamp, he’d also informed me that Shatteraxe had spoken privately to the director, who’s name no non-goblin would ever know, and there was a rumour, unsubstantiated but still there, that I was the subject of said meeting. And add to it that Shatteraxe left smiling?

Then there was the fact that bloody Snaprok had ordered up all the signets from the Potter vault and
demanded that I select one to be linked to my personal vault. He also told me that the itemisation of both vaults was underway and suggested that I open a trust vault for my younger brother and split some of the House Heirlooms with him and maybe put some aside for young Harry. I told him that while I would think about it, but I’d decide nothing without a look through the listing and chose a very Potter ring, gold with a large square-cut ruby that had the upper body of the Gryffindor lion, holding Gryffindor’s sword, point down, etched into it. Snaprok said that it would also work as a person seal in a pinch, but suggested that I get it copied onto a proper seal.

I stood on the steps of the bank and like others doing the same, I grimaced. A glance at my watch told me that I still had about almost an hour before I needed to be back in Mr Chang’s office. Did I want to spend that being grilled by Moody or more pleasantly?

Oh look, there’s Quality Quidditch Supplies. Gods, I want a broom. I haven’t been flying… well on a broom, since June last year at school, I didn’t think that being shoved into the sidecar beside Hagrid, counted as flying. And that only served to remind about Hedwig, dammit.

As I opened the door into QQS I inhaled deeply, just the scents of handle wax and polish calmed me. It was so familiar in this different time.

“Morning, sir. What can we help you with?” The shop clerk asked.

“What’s the best all-round broom you have in-store?”

“Well, now that does depend on your intended uses. Wait.” He held up a hand at my huff. “For a beginner, a casual flyer or a more advanced flyer?” That made sense.

“Oh, I see. Advanced.”

“For an advanced flyer, we’ve two good brooms. The ‘Cleansweep Seven™’ and the ‘Nimbus 1700™’. Both are excellent, personally I prefer the ‘Seven’ for it’s smooth handling, but my contacts in the Quidditch League are raving about both.”

“What positions are which brooms suited for?”

“I’m told, and please understand that I’ve not played on either broom, the healers won’t let me. Anyway, I’m told that the ‘Seven’ got a better report for beater and keeper, while the Nimbus was better for seeker and chasers.”

“Right, hmm…” I knew the clerk was trying to figure out who I was, even if all I changed was making my hair longer, I still looked like James Potter. Mentioning my name was going to be celebrity-seeking and I hated doing that. “Well, I was told, I’d make a fair a beater, but seeker is my preferred spot, so…?”

“The Nimbus?”

“Yes, please and do you have travel or storage cases, that will enable me to shrink the broom?”

“No, sir, there isn’t such a thing. We have fabric covers, storage cases and travel case, but none will allow shrinking, your best bet is a travel trunk with shrinking charms, one large enough to house the broom.”

“Hmph.” I huffed. “Alright, I’ll take the Nimbus and a light travel case. Oh, the cost?”

“£750, I know that’s steep, but I do believe it’s worth every knut. And I’ll throw in the travel case.” He offered a weak grin.
“Hmm…” I wondered whether I should get one for Ron, too? I only had Hogwarts word that he and Portia were coming. Alright, Hogwarts, the Ministry building and the Tower of London’s word, but even just Hogwarts’ was enough for me to start planning. Why would getting Ron a broom be any different? “Make it one of each.”

“Sir?”

“One Nimbus and one Cleansweep, my brother’s better as a keeper.”

“O-of course, sir.” The clerk bustled off to fetch the brooms and I browsed the shop. When he came, he carefully placed the two cases on the counter. “Anything else, sir?”

“A standard servicing kit and a tub of Wakefield’s Wax, too please.”

“Right.” He ducked over to a set of shelves and was back with a familiar flat box and tub. “Right, just let me ring that up for you…” He tapped at the register and it chimed. “£1456, sir.” He blinked at the total.

“Pay by signet, alright?” I asked.

“Certainly…” He tapped something else on the register and it spat out a slip of parchment, that when presented to me, was an invoice. “Just press your signet to the Gringotts crest and pulse your magic through it. Be warned, sir, if you’re not authorised to access the linked vault, it will stun you and the goblins and Aurors will be called.”

“Well, I had better hope that my account manager knows what he’s doing, I’ve only had the ring for ten minutes.” I grimaced.

“In that case, sir, perhaps you’d care to tell me the name of your account manager, so if it does stun you, I can relay that to the Gringotts’ representatives.” He suggested.

“That… would be very handy. Snaprok’s handling my accounts.” I answered and watched as the clerk wrote it down.

“Here goes nothing.” My grimace grew, but I pressed the signet to the parchment. “Nothing yet.” A deep breath and I pulsed my magic through the ring. There was a slight buzz, more like passing through a heavy ward, but no stunning. I opened my eyes. “Well, I’m still here.” And lifted my hand from the counter.

The clerk grinned. “Looks like you account manager’s alright.” It was then that he saw the signet impression, his eyes widened a fraction but he made no other reaction.

“Thank Merlin for small mercies.” I muttered. I pulled my satchel from inside my robes and reached into it, pulling out a shrunken trunk, the one that I’d taken to Gringotts on Saturday, placed it on the floor and tapped it with my wand, enlarging it. I carefully placed the two travel cases and their contents in the trunk, along with the servicing kit and the extra wax before shutting, re-shrinking and tucking the trunk back into my bag.

“That’s the way to do it.” The clerk smiled at me.

“It works, but I was hoping for something that would allow me to access it a bit quicker.” I agreed.

“Well, if you work it out, come in and show me, I’ll stock it if you make it, I get asked a lot.”

“Something to think about.” I nodded slowly. “I’d best get a move on, I’ve an appointment in…
Emerging into the Ministry atrium I was confronted by Moody.

“Lad-” He started, but I held up an open hand.

“Moody, you’re just going to have to wait, I have to get back to Estate for the settlement of the property, then to business registration and Floo connection. Then... I’ll have time to talk to you. If you want to walk and talk, I’m fine with that, but my main focus right now, is Estate, Business and Floo. You don’t rate, not until they’re done.” I said nothing more but began to walk. There was silence for a few seconds before Moody’s click-stomp started after me.

“So, you know who I am?” He barked.

“Of course.”

“How?”

“Who doesn’t?”

“Most squib raised and muggleborns.” He replied.

“Most muggleborns don’t have Aurors as teachers.”

“And you did?”

“I did.” And wasn’t the that truth? Moody himself tried to train me, even if Dumbledore objected. And Sirius had been an Auror, so had McGonagall, Tonks and Kingsley.

Moody reached ahead of me and pressed the call-button for the lifts.

“Whose idea was it for you not to go to Hogwarts?”

“I’m told that Gideon was the one to suggest it, with two squibs as parents, Ron and I would show up as muggleborns and the war was escalating.” The lift chimed.

He grunted and when the lift doors waved me in and followed, close on my heels.

“Where were you trained, there’s no underage magics registering to you.”

“There wouldn’t be, we had home-schooling exemptions.”

“Huh.” He grunted again.

“Didn’t look for that, huh?”

“No.” He answered sourly.

The lifts opened and I stepped out, heading for the Public Information office. I glanced behind when I heard that Moody wasn’t following.
“You go, we’ll talk more when you get done with business registry.” He said sitting down opposite the lifts.

“Sure.” I answered and kept walking.

Three hours, twelve forms, four offices, six officials, two busted quills and a cramped hand later, I flopped down onto a seat in the atrium and let my head rest back against the wall.

“Done?” Moody’s click-stomp joined me from the left.

“Ugh…” I half grunted, half moaned and my stomach rumbled.

“Come on, kid. Let’s go and get you something to eat.”

I whined, but stood and stumbled after him, through the floo the Cauldron and into one back dining areas with the lowset arches separating them from the main room. My stomach was grumbling again, as I sat down.

“Tom?” Moody called as he sat opposite me. “Two lunches…” He turned to me. “Roast alright?” I nodded and he turned back to Tom. “Two roast lunches, rolls and a pot of tea, thanks.” Tom waved in reply and turned his attention back to me.

“So…?” He drawled.

“Moody, I’m hungry and I’ve hearing been about you for years, I’m not telling you my life story, not unless you’re going to reciprocate.”

“Not a chance.”

“Yeah, didn’t think so. You ask a question, I’ll ask a question. You answer, I’ll answer. When you stop answering, I stop answering. Fair enough?” I raised an eyebrow in challenge, knowing that Moody would understand the challenge, but not be able to ignore it.

He huffed and snorted for a few seconds before giving a sharp nod.

“Fire away.” I waved at him as Tom slid a tray onto our table. “Thank you.” I gave him a grateful smile.

“Your Father’s a squib. Why’d he not come back to the Wizarding when he was seventeen?” Moody asked.

“The Wizarding world had taken everything from him. His Mother, his Father, his aunts, uncles, cousins and friends and even the trust vault that should have been his. Why would you expect him to want to return?”

“Fair enough. What do you wanna know?”

I studied him and wondered how he would react if I let out my inner Marauder?

“Why did you not regrow your natural eye?”
“I knew about the charms this one has, being able to see through some structures and to see different charms comes in handy as an Auror.” He answered. “I did a little homework while you were getting through Estate, Business Registry and Floo connection.”

“So…?”

“So… There’s not as many questions as there would have been, had I not gone hunting.”

“And…?”

“And… Why now, kid? You’ve come back to the Wizarding world, why do it now?”

I started to laugh. “Moody, I’ve been here since I left muggle school at eleven, just like every other muggle raised kid. I’ve been in and out of Diagon so many times… It’s not a case of coming back now, it’s just that I’ve finally reached an agreement with Mother and Father.” I paused and ate a few mouthfuls of succulent roast pork. “Look, you’re an Auror, do you keep up with what’s happening in the muggle world, much?”

“To a point.”

“Leeds. The street gangs are warring, it’s been a cold war, up until now. Now, the police are getting concerned, particularly about kids in the sixteen to eighteen age groups. The gangs are targeting them, going for those that are in unhappy homes, that are loners, that are from low income families, from broken families, that are in jobs they don’t like.” I was painting a grim picture and that was the idea. “And it’s getting worse. I’ve been working towards this for… gods, ages. With the stuff from the new place that Father bought, I’ve more than enough stock for my shop and that meant there was no reason that Mother could reject it.” I huffed. “There is no ‘why now’, this is simply when we were ready.”

“Huh…”

“Mr Chang, from Estate, said there was a disturbance in the Ministry, something about new information about Uncle James and Aunt Lily’s deaths. What happened?”

Moody snorted and explained it from his point of view, but I didn’t really feel the need to pay close attention. My lunch was more important, I’d asked the question for two reasons, one, to give the impression that I was unaware and two, so that he’d talk while I ate. He rattled on for some minutes, but said nothing that I was unaware of until…

“… so now Child Welfare are getting involved and they want to press charges against the muggles, but-”

“But to do that would open the Wizengamot up to scrutiny, wouldn’t it? I mean the Wizengamot screwed up, are they prepared for the public to know that?” I interrupted.

“What do you mean, ‘screwed up’? How?”

“Cousin Harry? Sirius Black is his Godfather, right?”

“Yes, we all know that, everyone knows that.”

“The Wizengamot, included. But did they stop to think about what that means?”

“Means?”
“Black had to offer a blood-bound oath of protection to Harry, before Lady Magic would recognise it. Right?”

“Right. Where you going with this, kid?”

“If Black made a blood-bound oath to Lady Magic and broke it? What would happen to him?”

“He’d die.” Moody answered slowly.

“And did he?”

“No…”

“No, he didn’t. Therefore Lady Magic doesn’t consider that Black broke his oath. But if he’d betrayed his so-called friends by turning to You-Know-Who and leading him to their house, wouldn’t that be enough to break his oath? I mean we all know that You-Know-Who planned to kill Harry. Whoever lead him there had to have known.” Moody was looking a little sick at this point.

“Then there’s the fact that Black was adopted as a Protected Minor by House Potter, due to Grandfather and he both being descendents of Cygnus and Violetta Black, Grandfather being their Grandson and Black being their great-Grandson.”

“Forgot that they were related.” Moody whispered.

I continued like Moody hadn’t said anything. “So, reality, if Black had betrayed them, not only was he breaking a blood-bound oath, but he was also going against the directives if his House and deliberately endangering the Lord of his Family.”

By now Moody was looking decidedly ill. Horrified, even.

“Lad, I gotta go. The Minister and the Wizengamot need to know what you just said. It’s not occurred to anyone, how he was connected to Potter before, we didn’t take it into consideration, didn’t even think about it. Oh gods…” He stood and leant against the table. “What have we done…?” I heard him whisper as he turned away.

I watched him leave and shook my head. The Wizengamot were a bunch twits, when they gathered they left their brains outside the meeting chamber.

“Sir?” I looked to my left and saw Tom standing there. “Sorry for interrupting your meal, but… Moody… he left in a hurry and he didn’t look good. Is everything alright?”

“Yes and no. Nothing he didn’t already know, he just hadn’t put the pieces together.” I answered a bit vaguely.

“Sir? Please?” Tom asked.

“Sirius Black is Harry Potter’s blood-bound Godfather and was a Protected Minor of House Potter.” Tom tilted his head in thought, before his eyes widened in shock.

“Oh, gods.”

“Now, you understand?” I offered. “Moody knew all that, the Wizengamot knew all that, but for some reason, nobody put it all together.”

“No…” He whispered, but it was clear the word wasn't in reply to my question, but a reaction to the entire situation.
“Exactly.” I sighed.

“Anything the public can do to help, do you think?” He was quite concerned.

“All I can think is to remind people what happens when someone breaks the type of oaths Black had to make to be what he was.” I wanted to do some much more, but this time-stream’s local Sirius belonged to local Harry, not me, he’d never be my Godfather, again. And that hurt, but Sirius was alive and out of Azkaban and little Harry would have a family again.

“I’ll do just that, sir.” Tom nodded. “Your meal is on the house, to thank you for your advice.” And he was gone.

I quietly finished my meal and tossed couple of sickles on the table beside my empty plate, before standing and leaving the Cauldron by the Alley door. Once in the tiny courtyard, I focused on the corner of Mother’s garden that I’d designated as my apparition point and willed myself to be there. I was ready for a quiet evening and tomorrow I was going to see Ben and Alina.

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Crack.

When my feet met the ground I heard raised voices arguing. Listening closer, I could hear it was Ben and Alina.

I debated with myself for a few seconds, but the paranoia that had developed during the Hunt was still very much there, so I took a deep breath and ‘reached’ out with the magic ‘ears’ that Bill had worked so hard to try and teach me. In the lead-up to his wedding Bill, with the help of the twins, had snuck away each day to meet me in Surrey, he was disgusted at the Order’s failure to train me and decided that if they wouldn’t, he would. The result was that, for the entire summer after sixth year, he’d come to Surrey and we’d head in the direction of Farnborough, just far enough away from Privet Drive that no magic could be attributed to me. Then we’d apparate to… somewhere, a different place each time and Bill would walk me through sensing wards, avoiding them, disabling them and putting up my own.

My ‘ears’ went out and ‘listened’ for the ‘hum’ of Ben’s wards, the terms I used were the simplified version that Bill had given me. And now I was using what I’d learnt. Ben’s wards were almost non-existent, based solely around aversion and notice-me-nots. I cast a notice-me-not on myself and crept closer, right up to the side gate that lead to the back yard where I could see the two sitting in the morning sun, tea on a table between them.

“Look, Ben, it doesn’t work like that. Hadrien might like you, he might come to see you as family, but he’s not the Lord Potter and he never will be. He-” I heard Alina ranting.

“Why not?” Ben’s sharp reply cut her off.

“Because Webster is a squib.” It sounded like she was talking to a child.

“Aye, I git’s tha’, but tha’ don’ answer, the question. Why not?”

“Because Webster is a squib, he and his descendants are removed from the succession unless there are not other living witches or wizards with Potter blood.”
“Oh, well, whyn’t yer say that?”

“I thought you knew that! “ She yelled.

“Why would I? Millie was a muggleborn, who was gonna tell me?” Bem reminded her.

“Huh. Never though of that.” She huffed and her voice settled down. “The best you could ask for, Ben, is for him to head a cadet branch of the family and to do that he has to have the approval of Lord Potter.”

“Wha’ aboot Prewett? Muriel’s Head, ain’t she?”

“Yes, but… Ben why are you so determined that Hadrien be a Head?”

Ben huffed and snorted, but finally answered her.

“There’s a clause in the Family Laws, all of ‘em. Grimoires kin only be given to Family or to those that accept the last Grimoire-holder into their family. An’ grimoires kin only be held by a wizard no' a witch or a squib, some’it to do with Arthur an’ Merlin… I don’ know. But it meant I couldn’t give the Grimoire ter Danny, I tried, but ‘e said it were burning ‘is ‘ands.”

“I…”

“Iffen Hadrien were to be a Head and welcomed me as a protected elder in ‘is Family, I kin give ‘im the Cartwright Grimoire and it wouldn’t be lost.”

“Oh, oh, Ben…” I heard Alina sniffle.

And that was too much for me. I dismissed the notice-me-not and tapped on the gate.

“Hey.” I gave them a bland smile.

“Hadrien.” Alina smiled at me, at least until she saw the almost blank look on my face. “Hadrien? I something wrong, dear?”

“Yer heard?” Ben made no effort to mask the amusement he felt.

“Of course, I bloody well heard. The way you two were going on, anyone in a half a mile heard.” I snarled, flopping down onto a seat opposite them.

“Oh, dear. We’re sorry. It-”

“Stop.” I raised a hand. “It’s not even as simple as Ben said.” I frowned, trying to remember the lecture that Neville had given me, when I’d commented on Malfoy and his bookends, Crabbe and Goyle. “I can request approval to name a cadet branch from either, or both, the Prewett or Potter lines. After that it gets technical.”

“In wha’ way?” Ben asked.

“I have no obvious reason to bring Ben into the family as a protected elder. Alina, yes, but Ben’s harder. For Alina, I can claim the marriage bond she had with a blood relative and offer her our protection. And to bring Ben in, I’d have to do that.”

“Why?”

“I can’t do anything on the Prewett side, because neither of you have any connections to the Prewetts
in the last four generations, right?”

“Right.” Alina answered.

“So, it has to be on the Potter side. Alina was married to a Potter, so I can claim her as a protected elder, for two reasons, one, her marriage bond. Two, she has no paternal Head of House, right?”

“Yes, our magical blood came from our Mother and she was disowned for running off with a muggle.” Alina explained.

“Exactly. So, that gives me two reasons to bring Alina in, but only one to bring Ben in. That of a vulnerable elder already connected to a protected member of the Family.”

“Oh!” Ben sat up in a hurry. “No, no, it’s not. I made a oath to Lawrence, when he were dying, I promised that I’d always look out fer Alina.”

I sighed and sat back, unsure whether to be pleased or not. First Shatteraxe wanted me to be Lord Peverell and now, Ben and Alina want me to be a Head of House for a cadet branch.

“Dammit, Ben…” I whined. “That means I have to speak to cousin Harry… or his guardian… Oh, bollocks.”

“What now?” Alina grit her teeth.

“Harry’s in St Mungo’s and so’s Sirius Black, the man his parents both named as guardian, but until Black gets cleared by the Wizengamot, he can’t make any decisions on Harry’s behalf.”

“Ah, I can help there.” Alina tossed a copy of the day’s Prophet on the table in front of me.

SIRIUS BLACK INNOCENT

Last night in an emergency session, the Wizengamot declared Black innocent.

New information has been brought to light that has previously been overlooked. We were today reminded that Black, at age sixteen, had been welcomed into the Potter Family as a Protected Minor, something that can only happen if the minor in question shares blood with the Head of the Family and has no living parents or has just cause to fear for their lives if they were to remain in their parental House. Which make Sirius Black, for all magical intents and purposes, a Potter. Jump forward three years and Fleamont Potter’s death means that James Potter is now the Head of House Potter and reaffirmed Black’s position in House Potter. Jump forward another year and James Potter, Head of House Potter, makes Black the Blood-Bound Godfather to his first-born child, Henry James Sirius Potter, now known as Harry Potter.

This means that there was no way that Black was able to betray the potters. Not and live.

To have betrayed the Potters, Black would have had to break his oath to protect Harry, but he would also have been deliberately endangering the lives of the Lord of his Family and two other members of said Family. Anyone who has studied Magical Law will know that Lady Magic would actually see the crime as five individual events – endangering the Lord of House Potter (James), endangering a member of House Potter (James), endangering a member of House Potter (Lily), endangering a member of House Potter (Harry) and endangering his Blood-Bound Godson (Harry). And that three of these acts alone, would see him forfeit his magic. But for five? Lady Magic would take his life.
So, the fact that Black is still alive and still retains his magic?

It was at this point that a member of the public asked, how was this missed at his trial? Only to be told that, like many of those arrested during the weeks before and after the end of You-Know-Who’s reign, Black was sent straight to Azkaban with no trial.

Minister Bagnold stood and swore under veritaserum that she believed that the evidence against many of those imprisoned was so great, that there was no need of a trial, but it was clear that at least some of the evidence provided was inaccurate and would authorise multiple trials immediately, starting with Black. Dumbledore also gave testimony under veritaserum, but he stated that he had been lead to believe that Black was guilty and not just by the evidence of the day. He was now questioning many months worth of information given to him prior to the Potters’ deaths, to verify it’s accuracy. He also gave a heartfelt apology to Black and declared that he was stepping down from the Wizengamot and the ICW, stating that this incident proved beyond any doubt that one person could not hold multiple positions without allowing mistakes to happen, mistakes that should never have occurred. His last act as Chief Warlock would be to read the Wizengamot’s verdict in relation to Black’s trial.

Minister Bagnold ordered the appearance of Black before the Wizengamot, but was informed by a St Mungo's representative that Black was not in a fit condition to leave the hospital. Bagnold inquired as to when St Mungo’s believed Black would be fit and the reply was, some weeks. Lady Augusta Longbottom asked if Black was permitted visitors and was assured that he was, she then suggested that the Wizengamot select an Abridged Court to visit Black and hear his testimony under veritaserum while still in the hospital. Both the St Mungo's representatives and the Wizengamot approved this and votes were called for names to represent the Wizengamot Court in an Abridged Court, with the voting taking almost an hour.

Those chosen were, Lady Augusta Longbottom, Lord Erland Avery, Lord Malcolm Fawley, Lady Jacinta Ollivander (proxy for Lord Garrick Ollivander), Lady Rosalind Selwyn (proxy for Lord Blaine Selwyn), Lord Trevor Macmillan and Lady Muriel Prewett, as well as the Minister for Magic, Millicent Bagnold and Chief Warlock, Albus Dumbledore.

The Wizengamot Court stayed in session, while the Abridged Court went to St Mungo's. For the next hour, the Wizengamot deliberated and constructed a schedule of trials for all inmates of Azkaban, regardless of their having received prior trials or not. The results were that they would be tried according to length of stay, longest to shortest. Two Abridged Courts would run simultaneously, their members being randomly selected each day, with no one person able to sit on an Abridged Court more than three days out of five.

Upon the return of the Abridged Court, Black’s testimony was replayed for the Wizengamot, via pensieve projection and the deliberations began in earnest. It took a remarkably short time, less than half an hour, for a verdict to be handed to the Chief Warlock, who had removed himself from the voting.

Sirius Black is innocent and has been granted total custody and guardianship of his Godson Harry.

For information on the new evidence in the Sirius Black case, see page 2.

For more information on Albus Dumbledore’s decision, see page 5.

For more information on the Abridged Court and it’s history, see page 12.

For more information on Protected Minors and Blood-Bound oaths, see page 21.
I laid the paper down carefully.

“Alright, so Black has been cleared and is Harry’s guardian.” I looked at Ben and Alina. “Do you really want me to do this? Do you understand what it means?” I looked at Ben as I asked.

Both nodded.

“We do, lad. Alina and me… We’re not young anymore, we needs someone ter speak fer us, but we wants that someone ter listen ter us, not jus’ decide what they think is best fer us. An’ yer won’t.” Ben assured me.

“That’s not all there is to it. I would be your Head of House, I would responsible for you, for your actions and those taken against you. If you really want this, I need to get Mother involved.”

“Why? She’s a squib.” Alina asked without animosity.

“Yes, she is, but she’s also a Criminal Prosecution Lawyer and Father’s a Family Law Attorney. Getting them both involved is, to me, essential. I would demand a contract one that protects us all. I will be the one to speak for you, but while you are capable of understanding what’s going on around you and the consequences of your decisions, I must consult you and take your wants and needs into consideration before I hand down a decision.” I was pretty much repeating what Neville had told me had happened when his Grandmother had brought Harfang Longbottom’s widow Callidora into House Longbottom, Harfang being the Uncle of Augusta’s late husband Markham.

“Well, lad I guess we’re making appointments ter speak ter yer parents.” Ben drawled.

“Best let me speak to them first. Them and Black.” I huffed, I wasn’t ready to speak to Sirius. Not by a long shot. “Have you got a telephone, Ben? I can call Father and get that started.”

“I do.” He heaved himself to his feet and lead me inside the house. In the kitchen, the telephone sat on the counter, an innocent device that I dreaded using. “I’ll leave yer to it.” Ben went back out and I heard he and Alina begin a discussion about the cottage Alina lived in and the alterations that were going to be needed to give the two of them a bit of privacy from each other.

I took a few deep breaths and picked up the receiver, I pressed the buttons of the number Father had given me and waited.

“Potter.” Father’s voice filled my ear.

“Father, it’s me. The Potter luck struck again.” I replied hesitantly.

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“What now?” He muttered.

For the next fifteen minutes, I explained it to Father. All the details I knew and all the things I suspected but had no way for knowing for certain. And my hesitancy to see Sirius face to face. Father suggested that instead of approaching Black in person, I write a letter and explain all the details, he also suggested that I exaggerate the timeframe of having known Ben and Alina, as he doubted that Sirius would approve of such a snap decision. I disagreed and sited the fact that Sirius was a Gryffindor, a Marauder and an honorary Potter and added that I could always claim ‘Potter Luck’ as fault.
To which Father agreed. Potter luck answered for so many things.

It was also agreed that Father would bring Mother and himself to Ben’s house at 2pm to work out a tentative contract that would only come into effect when/if Sirius approved the cadet line. In the mean time I would work on a letter that would go to Sirius. We could deal with the Prewetts after I got the shop open. I had to face Molly first and only the Gods know how she was going to react.
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At Father’s suggestion, we hired a truck in Exeter and drove it to Ottery St Catchpole, on Tuesday morning. I’d already been down the night before and covered all the windows with two layers of paper, I didn’t need the muggles peeping in and seeing me move things around using a magic wand. And now we were moving the rest of my stock in.

Father had been the one to remind me that I would have to hire a truck, as Ottery St Catchpole was a mixed village, I couldn’t just open the doors one morning and start selling. I would have to prime the village for that, hence the covering the windows and hiring a truck. We planned to park the truck, cab out, in the Lane, opening the rear doors and covering them with drop-cloths to block the muggle public’s view. Then Ben, who’d come with us for the day, and I would make the truck rattle and rock, to create an impression of people moving things about, but in reality Father would be upstairs working on a case-file he’d brought with him, while Ben and I were whisking things around the store, magically.

It had taken another week to get to this point, in part thanks to Ben and Alina’s request and in part as I had to wait while various things happened. The electricity had to be connected, so had water, telephone and the floo. I visited the muggle shire offices to present my documents, just to cover anything we might have missed. Then there was the wizard-space issue, that wasn’t as simple as I’d hoped, but after a visit from the witch from ITF and wizards from ‘Spaces For All Occasions’ and ‘The Builders’ Wands’, I had the interior of the shop rearranged to my satisfaction.

The wall that was between the barber and the shop, from the muggle point of view, now ran to the back of the muggle section of the shop. The bit behind the barber’s was the office and it housed the stairs to the flats, now. A ten foot wide hall lead from the magical entrance to the wizard-spaced
room, but to the muggles it would appear to be just a bare wall with a storage room behind it. The other thing that changed was that the shop wasn’t thirty by fifty, like Mr Chang has said, but was in fact forty by sixty, somehow it had been written down wrong and no one bothered to actually measure the space and so, it stayed wrong. Until I needed the builders and wizard-space people to rearrange it.

Thankfully I hadn’t needed to change anything upstairs.

But all that was done, now, and all I needed to do was to place things where I wanted them. For the muggle section, Ben and I hung blinds on the three large window and above the double doors, that I could close each night. Then we marked out zones, bedroom furniture here, kitchen over there, garden and transport in the alcove that one window created, a lounge/living room in a second and a set of cabinets laid out like a jewellery store behind the window nearest the barbers and alongside where I intended to place my service counter.

The Wizarding side was bigger, much bigger. About a hundred feet in each direction, with each section having a clearly marked out area. Jewellery and wands were the closest to the counter, with books, brooms and potions equipment next, then clothing, household items, kitchenware and equipment, followed by furniture, paintings and statues. All run in diagonal rows from my counter back to the opposite corner.

The other thing that had been suggested, by the goblins no less, was that I split the opening of the shop, for at least the first month. That way I could devote my attention to only one section at a time, mabye until the mad rush of a new business settled, maybe longer. So, the front or muggle half of the shop would be open from 9am-2pm and the rear or Wizarding half would be open from 2.30pm to 6.30pm. however if a magical customer wanted something from the muggle section, I would be closing the doors and blinds fronting onto Stoatshead Hill Road at 2pm, so as long as they were respectful, I had no problem with a magical customer wandering through the muggle side. But for the muggleborn and squib customers, they would have to alert me and it would depend on the time of day and how busy it was, before I’d drop the wards on the magical side.

Once the excitement of a new shop faded, that might change, but I wouldn’t know for sure, not until we reached that point. Ron’s arrival would help, but that might only be a stop-gap measure as, last time we had talked about the future, Ron had wanted to be an Auror. If he still wanted to do that, I would just have to get used to manning the shop on my own or talk Portia into joining me. We’d see.

After placing the stock, Ben kept making the truck move and creating noises in the shop, pretending to be physically moving things around, while I pulled out a pad of art paper and a group of pencils. I needed to draw up the designs for the windows and a sign for both entrances.

For the muggle entrance, I was going for a nest, sitting in the top of a pot in a broken box with the front of the box missing. The nest was draped in jewellery, feathers and had a candlestick poking out of it. Also in the box were a frypan, a flower pot with flowers and a hand spade, a cup and saucer, an open jewellery box, a hat sitting on a pair of boots and a handful of pieces of doll’s furniture. The shop's name would be on a ribbon draped across the back of the box.

For the magical side I wanted a witch’s hat hanging from a broom with a nest half out of the hat. Jewellery, a wand, the edge of a picture frame, a small statue of a knight, a candlestick and feathers all woven into or poking out of the nest and every so often the wing of a snitch would appear from the edge of the nest, but never the entire snitch. The shop name would be written on a ribbon draped across the length of the broom in wide loops and the candles would light up when the magical side of the shop was open.

I’d made up the signet logo for the shop, a tiny snitch with the word ‘nest’ in the shape of a nest
below the snitch and had that linked to the account. In the magical entrance to the shop, I’d had the builders put a floo-fireplace and had that connected as there were no other public floo connections on the Lane. And I’d opened my mouth to the floo office and suggested putting a permanent floo on the lane, as right now? Including my shop, there were only three floos, the other two being the offices of the candle-maker’s and the boot-maker’s. The response at the time wasn’t positive, but I noticed, when Father parked the truck, that the little bit of bare wall opposite the bakery, halfway down the Lane, was now filled by a floo and I was glad the apothecary on the Lane that sold floo powder, was open for almost twenty hours a day.

Once I had the artwork designed, I figured I would be as ready as I was going to get. I planned on having the grand opening on the Wednesday and getting it over with, I guessed that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday would be busy, but hoped that by Saturday the madness would have calmed a little. And that was how we spent the day. Ben was in his element, rattling the truck and tossing out expletives about heavy things or yelling at non-existent labourers to not drop things, only when there were muggles about, of course. Father spent his day calmly writing up reports regarding the removal of a pair of boys from their drunkard mother and recommending they go to their milkman father, Michael Creevey, but only after I told him that both boys would turn out to be wizards. And I spent my time scribbling, sketching and finessing my designs.

4pm rolled around and Father came downstairs, the big and bulky Compaq portable computer that looked like a bloody suitcase, hanging from one hand and a briefcase in the other. While he loaded them carefully in the cab of the trunk, I went around and ensured that I’d locked the doors properly and made sure that I had the bike, shrunken, in my satchel. Father drove us back to the rental place in Exeter and we handed over the truck and it’s keys, before leaving their office. We wandered into an alley and after I tossed up a notice-me-not, Ben grinned at me, gave me a slap on the shoulder and apparated away, his new-ish wand tucked securely into the forearm holster I’d given him.

I apparated Father back to the house in Leeds and said goodbye to Mother. She’d already ordered me to call them each week for an update and that they would be down to Exeter in a month’s time for a conference and would come and see me then. Assuming I had no issues that I couldn’t cope with, after that I would be on my own, but that they would expect me for lunch, on Christmas day.

Back in Exeter I’d apparated to a blind alley and cast yet another notice-me-not and un-shrunk the bike. I mounted up, started the bike and headed for my new home.

As I rode through the main shopping district, I suddenly wondered, how long would it take Sirius to reply to my letter? I’d sent it via Gringotts, as a cadet request was a formal thing and not something I just asked an owl to deliver and talking of owls, I was glad the shop and both flats had owl windows, the shop’s above the Lane entrance and the flats’ were in the living rooms, otherwise I would be forced to leave a window open for Lacy and that could have been a problem, but Wizarding owl windows were charmed to not let the weather or the bugs in. I also knew I was going to have to get another owl, just for the shop, Lacy was too small to do deliveries, I needed something much bigger than her for that.

In Ottery St Catchpole, I pulled the bike into the Lane, stopping by the barber’s, I went in and introduced myself and chatted for a few minutes, while the old man cleaned up. He asked where I planned on parking the bike and blinked at me when I said that the shop had an entrance off the Lane and I planned on using that. He frowned slightly and looked to my arms and asked point blank if I was muggleborn. I laughed and said I was a squib-born pureblood. He nodded and said he looked forward to seeing the shop and when did I plan on opening? My answer of the next day, but muggles in the morning and magicals in the afternoons, had him nodding. I left his shop and wheeled the bike into the Lane, pulling the shop ward-key from under my shirt as I went. I pressed the key to the door and it swung open, I tapped the bike and shrunk it, picking it up and closing the door in one motion.
A touch of the ward-key to the lock and no one, magical or muggle was going to get that door open.

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Upstairs, I heated up the pasta that Mother had sent home with me and waved my wand to move the furniture where I wanted and after humming about it for a bit, I conjured a platform that the Lane end of the living room and, after casting a feather-light charm on my favourite armchair, I picked it up and put it on the platform. I could sit there and look out through the clear upper panes of the windows. And it gave me a clear view all the way to the river Otter and beyond. I was both glad and sad that I couldn’t see the Burrow and I wondered how Mrs Weasley was going to react to me.

Lacy began to hoot and shuffle about on the fancy, multi-tiered stand I’d kept for her, moving from the large open perch to a smaller tier and it wasn’t until another, larger owl swooped in through the owl-window that I worked out why. The Horned owl settled on the open tier and hooted at me.

“Alright, I’m coming.” I crossed to the stand and waited for the owl to fluff it’s feathers and take a drink of water from the stand’s water dish, before I reached for the letter tied to it’s leg. “As I’m uncertain whether or not this needs an immediate reply, would you like to rest for a bit and have snack, while I read this?” I asked the owl, it hooted and bobbed it’s head up and down in response. “Alright.” I reached into the stasis box that held Lacy’s mice and brought out one for each bird. “Here you are. I’ll get you another before you need to leave. Okay?” The owl hooted again and accepted the mouse, the other went to Lacy, then I crossed back to my seat before opening the letter.

I studied the letterhead for a few seconds, before it hit me.

“Aw, man…” I whined. “That’s the Potter letterhead.”

The letter was from Sirius.

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Mr Hadrien B Potter
c/-o Account Manager Snaprok
Gringotts Accounts department
Gringotts Bank
Diagon Alley
London

Mr Hadrien Potter

I confess to being beyond startled to receive your letter. In actuality, I confess that my first reaction was that your identity was a prank, it took the assurances of both Gringotts and the Ministry before I ceased to doubt, but it wasn’t until speaking with a previous mentor of mine, who was able to enlighten me of a little of your personal history, that I accepted you were genuinely who you claimed to be.
It was only at that point was I able to give your request the attention and consideration it deserved. It wasn’t something that should be taken lightly, but after consideration and consultation, I accept that you have given it as much thought as is possible.

And your comment of Potter Luck strikes again? That explains so much. I recall many times your grandfather despaired, due to James being struck by it, both good and bad. Although what you have encountered does strike me more as being of the ‘good’ end of the spectrum and I hope I do not jinx you when I say that I hope that you never experience the ‘bad’ end, as it is truly devastating.

Your reasoning for starting a Cadet-House to the principal House of Potter is understandable, as is your desire to remain connected, instead of seeking complete independence. Those I consulted agreed and suggested a trial period of ten years. If at the end of that time, you still wish to remain separate, then your House would be granted Release from the House of Potter, but if at the end of that time, you accept then, you and those under your banner will be reintegrated back into the principal House.

Moreover it has been suggested by a number of people that you and yours, as a Cadet-House of House Potter, should be given the opportunity to know the Lord of your Principal House better. Unfortunately, both he and I are guests of St Mungo’s and while we shall be leaving here shortly, St Mungo’s do not recommend introducing new people to my godson at this time, his mental health has been so significantly adversely affected by his time in the care of non-related muggles, that such introductions could have detrimental and long lasting negative effects. Having said that, the healers and myself do believe that some form of communication should be commenced.

To that end, I request that you continue to communicate with us, so that I may relay your letters to my Godson, Harry. St Mungo’s healers believe that doing this will cement your identity in his awareness, without having to force him to accept another person, physically, in his comfort zone. It may take months before Harry, who I understand was named for you, is ready to meet you and those of House Potter-Prewett, the Cadet-House of House Potter.

I suggest a visit to Gringotts in the not too distant future to complete the necessary documentation needed to identify House Potter-Prewett, while a visit to the Wizengamot is necessary to formally ratify any new House.

Sorry, you can’t get around that, not if you want it to be legal.

As Regent for House Potter, I’ve done our part, now it’s down you. You have until one year to present yourself to Gringotts with your chosen Heir and take the Oaths of Dominion and Fidelity to your House. A word of warning – choose your Heir well, you can’t change it for the length of the trial period.

Good Luck, Hadrien.

Sirius Orion Black

Regent to Lord Harry Potter

Seneschal to House Potter

P.S. One other thing? My mentor/contact says that you and your brother are the sons of a disowned squib of House Prewett? If so, you might think about contacting Lady Muriel Prewett and inquiring
about doing the same with House Prewett, before speaking to your grandparents. S.B.

Oh, Sirius.

I dropped my head into my hands and cried. The letter from Sirius was gutting. He wasn’t my Sirius, he was Harry’s Sirius. How in the seven hells was I supposed to write to him without destroying what was left of my heart? Without loosing the last part of my real parents? Without destroying my sanity?

How the Hell was I supposed to do that?

A hoot from across the room made me lift my head. The horned owl was watching me.

“You want me to write back?” I asked and got hoots and a bobbing head in reply. “I’m not sure I can.” The owl hooted, not quite aggressively, but certainly not calmly. “Do you think I should write to Siri or to Harry?” The owl’s head dipped and bobbed and swayed and it took a few seconds before the owl made another sound. It hooted twice. “Harry?” Both the postal owl and Lacy bobbed their heads in a repeated nod. “Alright, I can do that. I think.”

I hauled myself to my feet and wobbled my way to the little table in the dining area beside the kitchen. Standing beside the table, I sighed and accio-ed a fountain pen and parchment pad, then went to put the kettle on.

“I’m going to need a cup of tea, before I can face this.” I warned the two birds. Both hooted at me quietly, Lacy fluttered over to sit on my shoulder, butting her head against my ear and peeping her breathy little hoots at the horned owl. They seemed to be having a very detailed conversation, but I didn’t understand them, I don’t speak bird, I speak parseltongue.

Once I had my pot of tea, I sat down at the table and pulled the pad towards me. Picking up the pen, I began to write.

Hi Harry.

I’m Harry, too. I think that Sirius has told you about me. I hope he has. I’m your cousin, Hadrien, but my brother and our friends call me Harry.

I’ve opening a shop in the country, tomorrow is my first day and I’m nervous. What if no one comes in? Part of me knows that the locals are going to come in, just because they’re curious, but another part is scared, that once they know what the shop is about, they won’t come back. I try not to think about it, but sometimes I can’t help it…

For the next two pages, I wrote to little Harry. Mini-me that isn’t Mini-me any more. But regardless, I wrote. I told him about my shop, about the little flats, about Ottery St Catchpole. I wanted to tell him about Ron and Portia, but I figured that I was better off keeping it a little impersonal just yet. I needed to get my head around it before I started to open up too much.

I rolled the letter and sealed it with wax and pressed my new personal seal, collected only the day before, into it and smiled to see the Gryffindor lion and sword. I picked the now sealed letter up and held it out to the owl.
“Would you like me to tie it to your leg or would you prefer to carry it in your claws?” I asked the bird. It rocked it’s head from side to side and lifted one foot, the claws opening and closing. “Right, another mouse before you go?” I got a hoot and head bob. “Cool, hang on a second.” I got to my feet and once I was in front of the owls I reached into the stasis box and retrieved two more mice. “Here you are, thank you for bringing me that letter and thank you for waiting while I wrote my reply.” The horned owl swallowed down the mouse, it’s head and throat bobbing until only the tip of the mouse’s tail was visible. “And here’s my letter, please take it to Sirius Black?” The owl bobbed it head and again held out a leg. I placed the letter in the bird’s claws and they closed carefully around it, flap of it’s wings and it was airborne, the letter now held securely by both feet. Five seconds later and there was no sign that the bird had ever been in the flat.

Then something Sirius had written caught my attention. I picked up his letter and re-read the postscript.

_P.S. One other thing? My mentor/contact says that you and your brother are the sons of a disowned squib of House Prewett? If so, you might think about contacting Lady Muriel Prewett and inquiring about doing the same with House Prewett, before speaking to your grandparents. S.B._

Now, why would he say ‘before you talk to your grandparents’?

I made a fresh pot of tea and sat sipping at it, thinking back over everything that Mother had told me about her parents. After finishing my tea, I reached for the pen and pad and began to write.

_Lady Muriel Prewett_

_Lavender Cottage_

_Ottery St Catchpole_

_Dear Lady Muriel._

_I am unsure if you are aware of who I am and why I am writing. I am the son of your great niece Rachel, the squib daughter of Percival Prewett and his wife Isabella. I understand and welcome the fact that Mother being a squib removes me and my brother from the succession, but I wished to make it clear that I have no intention of ever seeking the Prewett title._

_Our Father is Webster Potter, the elder brother to James Potter, the late Lord of House Potter. Father is also a squib and as such, our line is also removed from the succession of House Potter._

_Bearing this in mind and that there are vulnerable elders that have had an impact on our family, we have with Mother and Father’s approval, expressed the wish to protect them in their declining years. To that end I have approached the Regent to the current Lord Potter, one Sirius Orion Black and requested permission to make a Cadet-House to House Potter. This evening, I received his reply._

_I have one year to present myself and my chosen Heir to Gringotts to take the relevant Oaths. And while I plan to do this, I shan’t be doing so until my brother has sat his NEWT’s and that could be anything up until early next year._

_But one thing that Regent Black said that stuck in my mind was the suggestion that I make the same request of you, Lady Muriel, and to do so before speaking with my grandparents. Thinking over what Mother has told me in regards to them and their treatment of her, I am inclined to agree._
And so, I formally request permission from you to register the family Potter-Prewett, Cadet-House of House Potter (Unofficial as yet), as a Cadet-House of House Prewett. Regent Black’s terms are a ten year trial, at the end of which the Potter-Prewett family can request Release or Reintegration. If we were to receive your blessing, my brother and I will happily add Prewett to our names and be known as Potter-Prewett.

We ask nothing further from House Prewett, be-it financial or social. If a member of House Prewett wishes otherwise, we will consider it, but we make no requests, ourselves.

I wish you the Lady’s Blessing upon you.

Sincerely

Hadrien Potter.

This sucked. I was having to do all the planning, integration and paperwork. Where was Portia when I needed her? I hoped that she was alright, wherever she was. And I really hoped that Ron would hurry up and get here, I needed backup. And an Heir. I snickered at the thought of Ron being my heir.

Before I changed my mind, I rolled and sealed the letter.

“Lacy? Would you make a delivery for me?” Lacy hooted excitedly. “Lady Muriel Prewett lives just out of town, on Chanter’s Hollow Lane. I’m not going to tie this to you. Okay?” Lacy did like the horned owl and clapsed the roll of parchment in her claws and flew away, as she did, I was glad I had rolled the parchment tightly. It was almost as long as she was tall.

As she left I decided that I would rearrange the furniture in the bedrooms and the smaller flat. I figured that if Mother and Father were to visit after their conference in May, they would be far more comfortable in the small flat, where they would have a private space. And when Ron arrived, he would stay with me in the front flat.

Portia was still an issue, not her but how to house her while still keeping her ‘respectability’. Only young ladies with ‘loose morals’ would live with two young men, with whom she was not related. And quite bluntly? I really wanted the two of them to get their acts together and get together. She’d been crushing on him since at least fourth year and he’d been crushing on her since the middle of fifth year. The whole situation was ridiculous, but it was so them, that I could only laugh and be a sounding block for them.

After destroying the locket, Ron and I had stayed up late one night, talking. And I think we cleared the air somewhat, certainly me stating that while I loved Mione as a sister, her habit of grabbing things, made me want to smack her across the knuckles, helped. Ron had laughed, but I had heard the surprise and relief in that laughter.

Fifteen minutes after Lacy left and with no sign of her return, I began to worry. I impatiently waited a few more minutes, before I lost the battle with my worry. Downstairs in the office, there were two large maps, one of England, Scotland and Wales and one of the Ottery St Catchpole area and at Ben’s suggestion I had cast a tracking charm on Lacy and linked it to both maps. I tapped the owl symbol in the corner of the local map and waited as the charm located my little owl. Ten seconds later and I knew that she was stationary, but was she stationary from choice or from injury? Just as I resolved to go and get her, she began to move. Then I realised that she had been at a house on Chanter’s Hollow Lane, Muriel Prewett’s house, most likely.
I tracked Lacy as she returned from her flight, but made sure I had time to get upstairs before she got to our building. Waiting for her to come through the owl window was a lesson in patience and most people would say I don’t have much to spare. Lacy flew to her perch, her feathers ruffled and it was clear that she was still not fully recovered from being abandoned at Hogwarts. I took the small scroll she held and replaced the water in her dish with fresh water.

“I'll give you another mouse before I go to bed, Lacy. You rest there, alright?” Her ghostly peeping agreed with me and she tucked her head into her feathers to rest.

Over at the table I cracked the seal on the scroll and unrolled it.

Master Hadrien Potter-Prewett (Well, that was a positive start)

As we are family, I’ll not waste time in social niceties. I spoke with a close friend of mine, Lady Alina Peppering, some days ago, whom explained the true reasoning behind you formation of a Cadet-House to House Potter. Keeping a Grimoire from destruction or abandonment is a noble gesture. After which, I have been expecting you to contact me, in regards to a similar matter. I had not expected that it would happen just yet, I must admit. But your comment about Percival and Isabella, served to remind me of their attitude and actions towards your Mother and how they will likely react to your reappearance.

And I find I must agree.

Unlike House Potter, the House of Prewett does not require a cadet branch Head to nominate an Heir immediately, but I would suggest getting to Gringotts before the end of the weekend. Percival and Isabella are currently holidaying abroad and will likely not know that you have re-entered the wizarding world. If you can get your half of the paperwork for the formation of a cadet branch to House Prewett complete before they return, you will be in a position to accept or reject their demands for involvement in your life, without allowing them to control you.

I will be attending Gringotts tomorrow to complete the necessary paperwork from the House principal point of view and as I said, I suggest completing the cadet paperwork as quickly as possible. Percival and Isabella are not likely to be pleased with either your appearance or your request, having disowned your mother, gives them little grounds for complaint, but complain they shall. Stating your intent to never assume the title of Lord Prewett will go a long way to placating them, but I fear that they will never truly accept you.

Your Aunt Molly, on the other hand? She will probably try to absorb you into her brood on sight, if you don’t want that, you must stand firm, Molly tends to barrel right over objections, if she doesn’t want to hear them.

I shall endeavour to visit your shop, either Thursday or Friday afternoon, Alina tells me that you will be open for the muggles in the morning and for the rest of us, in the afternoon. I wish to meet my nephew and see his shop.

Your Aunt,

Muriel

Lady Prewett.
Oh, man talk about ‘Potter Luck’. This was getting complicated and fast. I made a note on the notice board that was the dining area wall, the one that was shared with the smaller flat, to go to Gringotts Saturday evening and get the Prewett paperwork complete. Who knew what Mother’s parents were going to try and pull? And I wanted to be as prepared as I could, in advance. After thinking for a few moments, I added a note to call Mother and ask her advice on dealing with Percival and Isabella. I wondered just for a second if it was something to do with the name Percival that turned people into idiots, as Percy Weasley from my time-stream, was also a prat.

But that was all I could do, now.

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Wednesday morning was bright and clear. I sat in my ugly chair and sent up a prayer that I was ready for the day. I really hoped I was.

At ten til nine, I headed downstairs, a mug of tea in my hand. That was placed on the counter, while I attacked the windows. I raised the blinds and then ripped apart the layers of paper, letting the shop fill with bright morning light. Somehow, I was unsurprised to see the barber leaning against the wall between his shop and mine.

With a bundle of wadded up paper in my arms, I used the ward-key and it’s attached muggle-style key to unlock and then open the door.

“Morning.” I greeted him. “Come on in, I know you’re dying to.” I gave him a grin as I shoved the keys back into my pocket and opened the second door and propped both doors open. “Feel free to sticky-beak.” I headed back to the office and jammed the discarded paper in the garbage can and left the office.

I picked up my tea and sipped at it as I watched the steady trickle of people come in and look around. I noticed that a fair number of them cast sidelong glances at the sign just inside the muggle notice-me-not-ed area that housed the entrance to the Snitch’s Nest. A few read the sign and left, but many continued to browse the selection of muggle products.

There was a steady stream of people approaching the counter, some to buy, others to ask about an item and still others wanted to know if I had an item either in stock or storage. Many I was able to yes to and suggest that they return the next day and I’d have said item, to others I replied that I’d have to check my storage area over the weekend, some I had to say no to. But there was no offense when I did. There were even a few inquiries about whether I would be interested in purchasing items? I replied that it would depend on the item and the price being asked.

Two o’clock rolled around and I was glad to wave farewell to the last of the public. Or what I thought was the last of the public.

After locking the shop door, I turned to make my way to the window, when a movement caught my eye. A movement under a poorly cast notice-me-not.

“Alright. I don’t know who you are, but notice-me-nots are not welcome in my shop. Either drop it, or leave.” I continued to the windows and pulled the blinds down, obscuring the interior of the shop. When I turned around again, I was faced with a very familiar redhead.

“Uh… Hello…?” Mrs Weasley hesitantly said.
Even though I knew her, I still had an image to present and not being able to leap over and be bundled up in one of her assault/hugs hurt. But Hogwarts had made it clear, I couldn’t just expect people to accept me just because I asked them to. If I said I’d dimension hopped or time-stream jumped, the Aurors would hand me over to the Unspeakables faster than I could say ‘please don’t’. It was the main reason behind the elaborate scheme to hide in plain sight as a Potter-Prewett.

“Who are you? And why shouldn’t I call the Aurors?” I demanded.

“Um… I’m Molly. Molly Weasley.” She said.

“That’s nice. Is that supposed to mean something to me?”

She blinked at me.

“I’m Molly. Rachel’s sister. Molly Prewett.”

“Oh… Oh! Right, right. Hello.” I stammered, trying to portray someone that still wasn’t sure who she was.

“I’m your Aunt, dear.”

“Aunt? I… Um…”

“Yes, Rachel is my eldest sister. She left when I was young… I was never told why.”

Oh, wow, I wasn’t expecting that, I thought she knew.

“She’s a squib.” I replied bluntly and Molly winced.

“Oh, that would explain it. Mother and Father… they’re…”

“I’m well aware. Mother’s told us.”

“Us?”

“I have a younger brother, Ronson.”

“Is he here with you?” She looked around, as though Ron was going to just appear from nowhere.

“No, not yet. Mother’s insisting he finish his NEWTs before she’ll let him come and join me.”

“How old is he…? Isn’t he seventeen?”

“He is, but in the muggle world parents are responsible for their children until that child reaches eighteen.”

“But…?”

“We were raised there and the muggle authorities and various government department would be alerted if we disappeared before we should. Uncle Gid was the one to suggest we stay away, with two squibs as parents, we show up as muggleborns on the Ministry’s wards and with You-Know-Who and his supporters rampaging about? It was safer for us to be home-schooled. And with Mother and Father being fairly well to do, us just disappearing would not be not good. It would just bring the muggle authorities out to look for us. So, Ron’s staying there until he’s finished his NEWTs.”

“Oh… Yes, that makes sense. Will he be coming here for holidays or weekends, do you think?”
“It’s unlikely, I think he just wants to get it over with as fast as possible. Then he can come and stay.” I answered.

“I see, that’s probably a smart idea.” She bit her lip. “Do... do you know much about our side of the family?”

“A bit, Uncle Gid, he told us a bit, Ron knows more than me, I concentrated on my studies more than Ron did.” I laughed. “I know that you’ve got six boys and were expecting another, but beyond that?” Yes, I knew about Ginny, but Mother had said the last contact she had with Gideon and Fabian was before Ginny was born and that was what we were using as a guide. “Look, I’m sorry, but I’m starving and I’ve got less than half an hour before I need to open the doors on the Lane. If you want to talk, you’re going to have to follow me upstairs.” I headed for the office and the stairs, Molly Weasley at my heels.

Once upstairs I quickly put the kettle on and pulled sandwich makings from the fridge, while Molly walked around the flat. And wasn’t it bizarre, this wasn’t a Molly Weasley I’d ever met, not even that first trip to King’s Cross. This Molly was younger and more vibrant, possibly this Molly hadn’t been dragged down by worrying about her children after they left Hogwarts. Bill going into curse-breaking and Charlie going to work with dragons, can’t have been easy for her accept. And Fred and George? They were enough to make anyone worry, even before they got to Hogwarts.

“Cups are in that cupboard.” I just pointed and left her to decide whether to get one or not. “Want a sandwich?”

“Oh, ah... yes, please.” She stammered.

“No worries.” The least I could do was feed her, after all, how many meals had I eaten at her counterpart’s table? Hundreds? Thousands? I’ve no idea, but it was a lot. I laid a chicken and salad sandwich down in front of two empty chairs, before sitting in one.

“It’s so... different...” She whispered.

“What is?” I asked.

“The flat. When the twins were here, it was covered in dark rich colours. Reds, golds, blues. They had screens all around, screens and curtains. I didn’t know it had such large windows. Or was so bright.” She answered without seeming to be aware of what she was saying.

“I don’t like dark spaces.” I replied. They remind too much of the cupboard under the stairs.

“Light and bright. I like it.” Molly nodded and joined me at the table, placing the mug she’d taken from the cupboard, before she’d started her wander, on the table next to her plate. “Oh, this looks nice.”

“It’s lemon and thyme marinated chicken and oriental salad.” I explained. “Light, easy to eat and it’ll keep me going for the rest of the afternoon.”

“Oriental salad?”

“Chinese lettuce, capsicum, carrot, spring onion and pickled ginger.”

“Chinese lettuce? I’ve not heard of that before.” Molly said.

“The greengrocer here has it, although he’s got it labelled as stem lettuce.” I shrugged.
“Oh, really? I’ve stem lettuce in the garden at home, I use it in a lot soups and stews.” Yeah, I was well aware, as Molly was my first introduction to that particular vegetable.

“You should try shredding it and adding it to your piccalilli. It’s yum.” I said between bites of my own sandwich.

For the next fifteen minutes we exchanged snippets of conversation between eating our sandwiches and drinking our tea. I learnt that Bill was in his third year at Hogwarts and already hinting that he was interested in curse-breaking, which alarmed Molly. I shared a few stories that Bill had told me, with her, about how Gringotts trained them and the security measures taken, trying to lighten her worry, but I wasn’t sure how that went. Charlie was in first year, almost desperate to get a broom of his own and join the quidditch team next year. Percy wasn’t due to start Hogwarts for another three years, but already he was stealing Bill’s books, he was a bit put out that Charlie had to take them to school.

I offered Molly a few of the poorer condition books for Percy, stating that they would only have ended up in the freebie bin, as no one would buy a book in the condition they were in. When she objected I explained that I had put a few broken trunks on a shipping pallet and the items in them were freebies. There were books, clothes, dented pots, chipped cups, ratty old shoes, etc. I’d been through and repaired what I could, but some things were just old and tired. Others, like books, didn’t take a *reparo* or *renovo* all that well, if I’d pushed, I’d probably find the ink smearing or running. So books in poor condition were in the ‘freebie bin’, as I called it.

At that point I suggested we head downstairs as, by the time I got the Lane door open, it would be two o’clock and time for the first of my magical customers.

That Wednesday seemed to become the model of what my days were like. I’d have breakfast, send a Messenger to Ron, just Ron, as according to Hogwarts, Portia wouldn’t get here until after Ron, so for the present I was only sending one Messenger. Then it was sorting out something for lunch, before opening the shop and serving my customers. I got a letter every few days from Sirius and within a month, I was getting odd little drawings from Harry, who had taken to calling us big-Harry and little-Harry and didn’t Father snicker at that? The kid didn’t know that we were counterparts, but as far as he was concerned we were both Harry’s and that meant we needed a way to tell us apart when Sirius or Remus were talking about us.

I opened the shop from Tuesday to Saturday, mornings for the muggles and afternoons for the magicals. And it worked well. Within a month, Gringotts had begun approach, me mostly based on Shatteraxe’s recommendation, they ask me to bid on the contents of deceased estates. So far nothing had come of Shatteraxe meeting the director and I was kind of hoping it would stay that way. In addition to Gringotts, I had a few people offer me the chance to buy the contents of a store or house that an elderly relative had left them, or ask me to empty their attics. It was good for business, but I promoted a family friendly vibe, so any cursed items went straight to Gringotts to be dealt with, as did armour and weapons.

The months passed and I settled into a routine. I opened my shop. I met Alina and Ben for afternoon tea each week. I had Sunday lunch with the Weasley family. Over the summer first Bill, then Charlie came to shop asking for summer jobs for pocket-money. It hurt to see little-Ron, as I privately called him, but not as much as it would have if I’d know my Ron at the same age. I helped Bill with his DADA, CoMC and as much as I could, potions, but while Hogwarts tested me as passing my NEWTs with an O in potions, I still felt like I wasn’t the best mentor for that. I helped Charlie save the money for a broom and taught him some of the riskier moves I’d used when I’d played, but
Molly was pleased when I also taught him some additional safety measures that Madam Hooch didn’t teach. I helped Arthur sort out some of the machines in his shed and he was in raptures over the bike, sometimes I thought he would love nothing more than to strip it down to figure out how it worked, thank heavens he never did it. Percy would often come in with Molly and rummage through the books, hunting for who knew what. Little-Ron only came to the shop a few times, he was totally enamoured with my snitch, he’d chase it all over the store and come back absolutely exhausted. After digging out a ratty old ‘Quidditch through the Ages’, Ron would join Percy in digging through my books and once he’d given up chasing the snitch, he’d happily sit and study the pictures in a book. Ginny only came to the shop once and once was more than enough for me to decide, I didn’t like little-Ginny, she was a spoilt kid and a bit nasty with it. So different from my Ginny, but maybe she’d grow out of it. For her sake I hoped so, otherwise she was going to end up friendless.

Luna was… sunshine. I couldn’t describe her any other way. The first time she came into the shop, she bounced in like she was on a pogo-stick, right up to the counter and ask me if liked this time better, did I like being Hadrien and could I save her my butterbeer corks, she wanted to make a necklace to keep the nargles away, they upset her at night. I was so stunned that I actually answered her. Yes, I did like this time better, as there was no pressure, and being Hadrien was busy but I enjoyed it. And I would make her a spray to squirt around her room that would stop the nargles from roosting in her room. So while her Mother wandered around the shop, I darted upstairs and discovered that Luna had followed me. I raided my potions cabinet for some African Red Pepper, allhosty, dandelion dew, horseradish, mallowsweet, pomegranate juice and some valerian pollen. I set them in distilled water and brought it to an almost simmer, before removing and leaving it to steep for two minutes, then I strained it and poured it into a spray bottle and added seven drops of orange blossom oil and gave the bottle to Luna. I told her that if she squirted each curtain three times, morning and night, and her pillow, two squirts, each morning, it would stop the nargles from roosting. That it was also a sanitiser and air freshener didn’t matter, if she believed it kept the nargles away, then I was fine with that. After that, she would appear at odd times and ask odd questions, just typical Luna stuff. What did the colour nine, smell like? Was purple sad? Did daisies like lemons? What colour was the basilisk?

Where I could I answered. Where I couldn’t, I told her a story about whatever it was she’d asked about. She seemed happy just to have someone that talked to her.

Mother and Father visited after their conference, they wandered the shop and there was a tearful reunion between Mother and Molly, but when Percival and Isabella turned up the temperature dropped and became almost frigid.

They were not nice people, I likened them to a Light version of the Malfoy’s, very much purebloods, they might have been pro-muggle, but squibs were beneath them and a stain on the family name. Being told that Mother had two strongly magical sons, they were overjoyed and started to demand custody of both boys, only to be told that both Ronson and myself were seventeen or older and wanted nothing to do with them. Then there was the explosion over me being granted permission to create a Cadet-House to house Prewett, they were furious. Of course, Muriel rubbed it in, that Ignatius, as eldest child of Muriel’s only brother, would inherit the Head of House title, but that I as a Head to a Cadet-House, could never inherit the principal House’s title, even if I were the last Prewett alive, I could only ever be Regent for the next generation. They’d stormed off and I fully expect that I will never see them again. Hopefully.

Especially after informing them that Mother and Father’s marriage vows were magical vows of fidelity. I guess I’d better explain that, huh? For a magical fidelity vow, both partners must be virgins, or Lady Magic won’t recognise the vow. Now, that doesn’t sound too bad, but Percival and Isabella told their pureblood friends and family that Mother had been caught in a compromising position with a travelling salesman, at twelve and ran away from home to avoid being punished. Well, guess what?
Mother and Father’s vows make liars of Mother’s parents, that and the fact that I’ve made no secret that Mother and Father are both squibs. I doubt I’ll see them again, I kind of hope not.

So… there I was. It’d been nearly nine months since I’d opened the shop and my life was calm and steady. And of course that’s when the Potter Luck struck.

First there was a letter from little-Harry… and Sirius.

\textit{Big-Harry.}

\textit{The day after tomorrow is solstice and Uncle Siri says I can invite you to have Yule dinner with us.}

\textit{Please?}

\textit{Little-Harry.}

\textit{Hadrien}

\textit{Harry’s right, you should come. And see if you can talk your parents into letting Ronson join us, too. On the off chance that you will, I’ve included a portkey that will activate with the phrase ‘Marauders’ Lodge’. It will deposit you on our front lawn, inside our wards.}

\textit{This is the first time that Harry is eager to see someone and I hope you will come.}

\textit{Sirius.}

\textit{Oh, bollocks.}

I got up the next morning and I still hadn’t responded to Harry and Sirius’ letter, I didn’t know how to. I was in no hurry to open the shop and given the foulness of the weather outside, I doubted that anyone would be out and about. So, I dawdled through my morning routine and after finishing breakfast, I did what I did every morning and sent off a Messenger to Ron.

And that’s where things changed.

A bare two or three minutes after the Messenger’s flames flickered away, there was a crash and a banging at the shop door to the Lane. When I stumbled down the stairs, I was greeted by a sight that brought tears to my eyes. I flicked the ward-key at the door and the locked clicked.

The door flew open and a body barrelled in, shivering and wet.

“Bloody hell, Harry, it’s cold out there!” I could hear the teeth of eighteen year old Ronald Bilius Weasley chattering.
Chapter 9

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For all of ten seconds, I gaped at Ron.

Ron.

Ron was here.

Ron was here. I wasn’t alone, anymore.

Ron.

Then it hit me. He was turning blue, he was so cold.

“Oh geez, Ron. Let’s get you upstairs and into a hot shower.” I grabbed a cloak off the rack and draped it around his shaking shoulders, turning him in the direction of the office and the stairs to the flats.

“Wha..?” He was slurring his words, oh crap, that wasn’t good. In the flat and into the bathroom, I didn’t bother stripping him, just pushed him into the shower and turned the water on, grateful that I’d gone for the biggest muggle hot water system there was. As the steam rose, I left him to it with a quiet word.

“You get warm and clean, I’ll see to some clothes and put a sign on the door.”

A dash downstairs and out the muggle door and into the barber’s to let the barber, Grady, know that I had a family drama, Ron got lost in the foul weather and was in a rough shape, so I was keeping the shop shut for the day to care for him. Back into the shop and a hastily scribbled sign went up, just saying a family emergency. Then it was back upstairs and into my bedroom and scrabbling around to try and find something that would fit Ron, then I remembered that when Father had been down the weekend before and helped me to replace the insulation in the roof, he’d left a change of clothes behind. I’d cleaned the clothes them and planned to return them when I went up for Christmas dinner, but they’d fit Ron, so Father would just have to wait a bit longer. Into the laundry for said clothes and I was back to the bathroom.
“Hey? Alright in there?” I called.

“I’m warm…” Came the blissful answer.

“Know how that feels, mate, here’s some clothes and are you hungry?” Of course he was hungry, he was Ron. I opened the door a crack and tossed the clothes through.

“Food? There’s food?” He asked quickly.

“Bacon and eggs?”

“Oh, please?” He sounded like he was going to cry.

“I’m on it. When you come out of the bathroom, turn right, kitchen’s right there.” I hurried off to throw a half dozen slices of bacon under the grill, scramble up the same number of eggs and toast off half a loaf of bread. That should hold him for a few hours… if I was lucky.

The bacon was done, toast was in and the eggs were ready to go on, when Ron appeared, holding up the trousers I’d left him.

“Oops, they’re a bit big. Want me to shrink them?” Did he have a wand? I couldn’t remember if he’d grabbed wands in Malfoy manor, too, or if it had been just me.

“Yeah, thanks mate.” He grinned. “So… what happened?”

“Uh… that’s going to take a bit of explaining, give me a minute to get this done.” I poured the eggs into the frypan with one hand and pointed my wand at him with the other. “\textit{Diminuendo.}” I whispered and flicked my wand away as soon as he let go of the trousers.

“Thanks. Can’t eat one handed. Explain?”

“Grab the toast and butter up a couple of slices? For the eggs?” He nodded and got to work.

“That bad?” He asked, his hands busy.

“Worse” I answered. “Far worse.”

“Ugh…” He screwed up his face.

“Yeah. As you know this is Ottery St Catchpole. But I’ve been here for nearly nine months.” I started.

“Nine! Shit, mate. You time travelled?!” His eyes were wide.

“Yes and no. It’s far worse than \textit{just} time travel, Ron. Hogwarts explained to me, when we left Malfoy manor, Por- Hermione was hurt, right?” It was odd to call her Hermione, now, when I’d been calling her Portia for the last nine months.

“Yeah.”

“So was the goblin. And Bellatrix, the bitch, threw a knife at us?”

“Yeah, I remember, good thing she missed.”

“She didn’t. According to Hogwarts, she got Dobby.”
“How bad?”

“Don’t know. See that’s the problem. Having injured elf apparating an injured goblin and witch, plus you and me, through Malfoy’s anti-apparition wards? To get all of us out Dobby had to tap into our magic, yours and mine, more mine than yours, but—”

“Why more you than me?” He frowned.

“Oh, that’s coming, I promise and it’s not an issue any more.” I spooned the eggs onto a slice of toast. “Eat and I’ll talk.” He nodded and sat, picking up a knife and fork. “Right, Dobby had to tap into our magic to get us out of there, but he was hurt and so were… Hermione and the goblin? Hogwarts said that breaking through the wards with an injured elf, goblin and witch caused a problem. A big problem.”

“How big?” Ron paused in his eating.

“Massive. I’m going on what Hogwarts told, here.”

“Who’d you speak to? McGonagall or Flitwick?”

“Oh, no, Hogwarts herself.”

“Wha?”

“Hogwart’s was a living person.” Hmm, Ron was very anti-Slytherin, but knowing this might help, so… “She was engaged to Gryffindor’s son, but a week before their wedding she was kidnapped and tortured by muggles and some muggleborns, it’s why Slytherin was so against muggleborns.”

“I don’t…?” He shook his head in confusion.

“She was Slytherin’s adopted daughter.”

“Oh…” He blinked.

“Yeah. Anyway, when it became clear she was going to die from her injuries, the founders worked out a way to make her the heart and soul of the school.”

“Oh, wow…”

“Pretty much my reaction, too. So she’s a magical building. It was her that I talked to, she’s the one that told me not to go to Dumbledore or the Aurors and why. See, she and the other magical buildings think we’ve jumped time-streams and the Ministry building says that the other people that jumped time-streams, they went into the Department of Mysteries and never came out alive.”

“What?! But… Hermione?”

“She’s safe, she’s not here yet.”

“But…”

“Let me finish and then we’ll hash it out, okay? Okay. So, Hogwarts says ‘no’ to letting the authorities know how we got here, then it was a case of how to get us back only to find out that our time-stream is… it’s gone. Shattered. Like it never existed.”

“But Hermione?”
“Ron, it took no time at all for me to get here, from my point of view, but… not only did I jump time-streams but I went back in time, not nine months, but years. It’s 1984, I arrived on the 20th of March 1984, the day before the spring solstice. You’ve arrived today, the 20th of December 1984, the day before the winter solstice. I don’t think that that the solstices have much to do with timing, but I won’t rule it out. Hogwarts thinks it’s only a byproduct, more to do with my accidental magic outbursts, but that the timing is more Aunt Petunia’s fault than mine. But no time passed for me when I appeared, and it’s the same for you, none at all. When Hermione arrives, it will be the same for her, it’ll be like she apparated from Malfoy manor and appeared, wherever she landed.”

“So, we’re what? Stuck here?”

“Yep.” I sighed.

“What about You-Know-Who?”

“Dealt with. That was the first thing Hogwarts and I did. Got rid of his Horcruxes, I mean. And that was why Dobby was able to draw more power from me than you. Old snake-face screwed up when he killed Mum and Dad and accidentally made another Horcruxe, he made me into one. Whoa! Hold up!” Ron had leapt to his feet and pulled a wand from his pocket. “Hogwarts said that the bit of his soul that was in my scar wasn’t strong enough to survive the jump between time-streams and was unable to stay attached. So, it’s gone, I don’t even have a scar anymore, see?” I pushed my hair up to show my scar-free forehead.

“Whoa, mate…”

“Yeah, but destroying snake-face’s Horcruxes here? That meant I had to deal with this time-stream’s version of me, I had to cut open my four year old counterpart’s head and drip basilisk venom directly onto the Horcruxe’s capsule.”

“Ew, gross.”

“Yeah, very. But it meant little-Harry was Horcruxe free.” I sighed. “Then it was what about me? Us? You, me, Por- Hermione?” I sighed, again and got up to make a pot of tea. “Hogwarts offered to help, she couldn’t do it for me, that’s not how the Room of Requirement works, you know that. But she could help. She told me that my Dad, James, had a brother and suggested that if I didn’t want to lose my family, I could just change how I was connected to them, that I could get Webster to adopt me and if we did it inside the Room, she could provide a permanent adoption potion that would be completely untraceable, not even by the goblins. Oh, the other thing she told me was that if I asked the Room for something and after it was provided, if I altered it, it wasn’t the same item anymore and that meant I could remove it from the Room.”

“That would have been real handy, we could have dealt with the Horcruxes before we even left school.” Ron muttered.

“True. But… we would still have had to deal with old snake-face himself. I didn’t have to here, with his wraith only being a little over 1.5% of his total soul, it wasn’t strong enough to anchor itself without one of the other Horcruxes, not unless he had a body to put it in. And he didn’t, not then.”

“Okay, that makes sense. So you got a new family?”

“Not really. Webster and Rachel were happy to help after Hogwarts and I explained it all, but they never wanted children, so while they helped in the set up, they don’t plan on being much a part of my life, from here on out.” I answered.
“So what about me and Mione?” Ron frowned. “If we’ve jumped time-streams, I can’t just go and knock on the Burrow door and say ‘hi Mum, what’s for dinner?’, now can I?” He asked, sarcastically.

“No you can’t. And that’s where things get even more complicated.”

“More? He whined.

“More. Rachel and Webster adopted me and they’re prepared to do the same for you. Not Mione and I’ll explain why in a bit. But yes, for you. Because… Rachel? She’s… she was… is… you Mum’s older sister.”

“What?!” Ron’s eye popped wide open.

“Yeah, she’s a squib and your grandparents told everyone she ran away, your Mum never knew what happened, just that she was gone, but their dumped her in the muggle world and didn’t tell anyone. Your Mum and Rachel get on alright, now, but Rachel’s a squib and she’s not comfortable in the Wizarding world, so they mostly just write to each other, via me.”

“So, they’ll adopt me, too?”

“Yep, you get to keep your family, just… instead of them being your parents and brothers, they’re your Aunt and Uncle and cousins.” I smirked at him. “Little-Ron’s a cutie and just as quidditch mad as you are.” I laughed when Ron went bright red. “But… Ginny? Little-Ginny? She’s a bitch. Nasty little shit, she is.”

“Yeah, I remember, it wasn’t until she was about six or seven… one of the Weasley cousins, not the one we polyjuiced you into, but his brother, I think… Anyway, Ginny was being her usual shitty self and hitting Darren, well he waited until Uncle Tristan was watching and he hit her back. Mum chucked a wobbly, but Uncle Tristan saw the whole thing and made sure that Ginny got what she deserved, after that she wasn’t so bad.” Ron explained.

“Cool, at least she gets better, she’s not welcome in the shop until she does, Molly wasn’t too happy but Arthur backed me up, so I’d say he knows, but Molly’s in charge of the kids.” I replied. “So, Rachel and Webster will adopt you, then Hogwarts will test you for OWLs and NEWT’s and get them listed, she puts them as being assessed by someone from the ICW, someone that died not long ago, so they can’t be challenged.”

“Right, but what about Gringotts and the Ministry?”

“Gringotts can’t detect Hogwarts’ adoption potion, Rachel and Webster will read as our natural parents and the Ministry building will place everything we need in the relevant places. Home-schooling underage exemptions, notice of OWLs and there’ll be an appointment for apparition testing, one that looks like it was made a while ago, probably by mail.”

“Home-schooled? Me?” The look on Ron’s face was hilarious.

“Yep and Hogwarts will give you a generic pensieve-type memory, not anyone’s but a combination of many peoples, that will give you a muggleborn’s understanding of the muggle world.”

“Really?” He wasn’t too pleased about that.

“Just think how please Por- Mione will be that you actually know how to use a telephone properly.” I grinned.
“She would be, wouldn’t she?” He perked up at the thought, then frowned. “What about Mione, she’s not going to be adopted by them, too is she?”

“No, no way. At this point Hogwarts is… there’s two options for parents for her. One? Her Father’s brother died a few years ago, 1980, I think Hogwarts said, Hogwarts can provide an adoption potion with him as her Father, a Mother is undecided. Two? Go with a completely unrelated couple, that just have the same surname. We’re not making any decisions until she gets here. And speaking of that, hang on while I send her a Messenger.” I flicked my wrist and let my wand drop into my hand. “Nuntio Expecto.” I waited for the flames to settle and added my message. “Message for Portia, immediately upon arrival. Message…. Hey, Research? The Snitch’s Nest, Niffler Lane, Ottery St Catchpole. Hurry up, now.”

“What the…?” Ron gaped. “What was that?”

“That was a Messenger. It took Hogwarts and I fourteen hours to work it out. Our big problem was how to send it and have it go to you and not to Little-Ron, but we got it.”

“Whoa mate… That’s wicked.”

“I know, right?” I grinned, it was so good to have him here.

“So… now what?”

“Now, you take the adoption potion, while I ring Mother and Father. Then we go downstairs and find you a new wand and some clothes. Then—” I cut myself off and smacked myself in the face. “Shit!”

“What!” Ron looked ready for battle again.

“Little-Harry. Sirius is free and has custody of little-Harry, we’ve been writing back and forth for a while and now? Little-Harry wants me to come for Yule, tomorrow and Sirius told me to bring you, too.”

“So?” Ron settled back and sipped at his tea.

“So, we have to get everything done today. Maybe not the Ministry, but the adoption, the memories, testing you for NEWTs, the parents, wands, clothes, all that sort of thing.”

“Ugh…” He grimaced.

“Better off if we get it over with. So come on, let’s get you a new wand.”

“And how we gonna do that?”

“Oh, didn’t explain that, did I? Oops, sorry. Well I emptied the Room, I got Hogwarts to pack everything in trunks, then shrunk them and changed their colour, which got around the ‘summoned but altered’ condition. I took everything, even the lost wands and there were hundreds of them, as many as in Ollivander’s shop. Bill and Charlie now have wands that like them, no more struggling with incompatible wands. All the money went into vaults, I divided it up between the three of us and the shop. And all the goblin made stuff went back in exchange for a finder’s fee, again divided up. But the actual items? I kept them all for the shop, only the money was divided, but I am putting money aside for you two out of the profits and Gringotts are simply waiting for you to open a vault so then I can transfer your share straight into it.” I lead him back downstairs as I talked. “I’m going to stay with the shop, but if you want to, you can go into the Aurors, your identity will be completely secure, you can do anything you like.” I looked at him. “No more hiding behind brothers. Not even
Ron didn’t say anything, but he did have a thoughtful look on his face, I knew that he felt overshadowed by his brothers, but once the adoption was done, I would be his only brother and I had no desire to overshadow anyone. But this was Ron, so who knew what he’d do?

I lead him into the Snitch side of the shop and over to the wands. “If you’ve got wands on you put them on the table there.” I pointed to a velvet covered tray and watched as he pulled out five wands and laid them where I’d pointed. “Then step into the middle of the space, close your eyes and hold out your wand hand, imaging you’re holding the perfect wand for you… Now, keeping your eyes closed, cast a *lumos*.” I waited for a few seconds before the lights began. Three of them, two bright and a duller one. “Open your eyes, Ron.” He needed to see this. “See, mate, you’re strong. Strong enough to call two wands.” The third wand had already faded, but the stronger two were still lit. “Call them, Ron, call your wands to you.”

“*Accio* my wands.” His voice was quiet, but calm and sure. And both wands slid from their shelves and into his waiting hands.

“There you go, let’s get you a pair of holsters. Can’t be keeping your wands in your pockets.” I grinned. “I did actually see a muggleborn wizard sneeze and blow the bum out of his jeans, once. Scared the crap out him and his wand was never the same. Poor bloke.”

Ron didn’t answer, he just stared at the wands in his hands, one Bocote and the other black walnut, an awed look on his face. I shrugged and moved about the shop, gathering up stuff, an expanded satchel here, a pair of boots there, a belt, some shirts, some trousers, a jumper, a jacket, a robe, some jogging shoes, a pair of jeans, a sweater. I waved my wand and made a pile on the counter. I had unopened packs of underwear and socks upstairs, he could have some of them.

“There we go. That will do for the moment.” I looked at Ron, he still looked shell-shocked. “Come on, let’s get you another cup of tea, before we head for Hogwarts. Remind me to take Cookie with us, so I can send him to Sirius… You will come tomorrow, won’t you?”

Finally Ron looked up and spoke. “I got your back, brother.” And gave me a soft smile, the one usually reserved for Bill or Charlie, when they weren’t looking.

I swallowed and bit my lip. “Thanks.”

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While the kettle boiled, I wrote an acceptance to Sirius and rang Mother and Father. That was a truly awkward conversation, but it was a necessary one. Ron and I would both be heading to Mother’s house for Christmas lunch, but we all decided that we’d have the rest of the day to ourselves.

While I chatted and bustled about, sorting out Ron’s clothes, making a thermos of tea, packing some stew and some sandwiches to take with us, Ron sat and thought. Now, while no one can deny that Ron’s not the greatest student, he does have a very capable mind, he might not use it for much outside chess and quidditch, but it is there. And right then, it was in full use, I could almost see the cogs ticking over. So I left him to it, knowing that when he’d worked it all out, he’d talk to me about it.
I placed a bowl of stew and a plate of bread in front of him and watched as he mechanically ate, his mind working on other things. A mug of tea and a biscuit was all I needed, breakfast wasn't all that long ago.

Then, about an hour after he’d called me ‘brother’, he looked up.

“Right. So, who taught us?”

“Gideon and Fabian. Then private tutors, with ICW approved OWLs and NEWTs we don’t have to list our tutors.” I answered.

“How do I get OWLs and NEWTs?”

“Hogwarts will test you and submit results based on that. Your tests will be labelled as being assessed by an independent ICW examiner, one that died shortly after your testing is documented as having been done. For your OWLs it might be months or even a year or more, for the NEWTs, probably only a few days after.”

“Real people?”

“Real people and Hogwarts will get the results labelled properly, have the appointments registered wherever they should have been. They’ll be forwarded to us by owl mail from the ICW and be completely legal and even under Moody’s eye.”

“Cool. Apparition, too?”

“No, that one you’ll do in person, I have primed the department there, though. While I was filling out the paperwork for my licence, I commented something about Mother not letting you get your licence until you had your NEWTs.”

“Right. Gringotts?”

“Yep. But not until after the adoption, Hogwarts and Father. Hogwarts will give you an appropriate test so we can work out how old you’re going to be, we might need Father to mock up something for the muggles, to say that I have temporary custody until you’re eighteen. She changed my date of birth and name, can’t have two Harry Potter’s with the same birthday running around, now can we?”

“What name did you choose, then?”

“Hadrien Blaire Potter. Born the 14th of January 1966. We chose a name for you, so that Hogwarts and the Ministry building could put some support papers in place early, just in case Moody or the Aurors went looking. We chose Ronson Maitland Potter for you. What do you think?”

Ron tilted his head and silently repeated the name over and over.

“Yeah, I can be Ronson Potter.”

“Actually, Muriel gave me permission to form a Cadet-House to House Prewett, but we needed to add Prewett to our names, so now, we’re both Potter-Prewett. Potter first, but only because Sirius as Potter Regent gave his permission first.”

“So… Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett?”

“Yeah.”
He screwed up his mouth in amusement and huffed. “I can live with that.”

“Gods, I hope so, cause it’d be a nightmare to change now.” We both laughed.

And his questions continued. “Why’d we move here? Why’d we not stay near the parents?”

“Few reasons. One? They’re not family orientated, both are lawyers, Mother’s a criminal Prosecutor and Father’s in Family Law and work a lot of long hours. Two? They’re squibs, we’re not. That created a bit of a divide, particularly as we like magic. Three? There’s a muggle street gang turf war happening in Leeds and people our ages are being targeted, so the parents both wanted us out of the area. Me first, being older, I finished my exams and sat my NEWTs first, you later as Mother wouldn’t let you go without your NEWTs, we’ll try and get that for some time in the last few weeks and you, not being able to wait any longer, ran off without permission.”

“But…”

“Wait.” I Held up a hand. “It has to be that way or you wouldn’t have turned up here, right now. This storm? It’s all over the south of England, blew in yesterday and likely won’t blow out before the new year. There’s no way anyone would happily travel in weather this bad.”

He hummed for a few seconds.

“What about Mione, you said that Ra- Mother and Father… gods, that feels weird. Anyway you said they wouldn’t adopt her, why not?”

“Ron do you really want Portia as a sister?”

“Portia?”

“Remember after I came to Grimmauld Place after the dementors in Surrey? She’d brought this book of some of Shakespeare’s plays? She used to moan about ‘why couldn’t her parents have named her Portia?’ Went on and on about it, said if she ever figured out how to become an Animagus, she was going to call her Animagus form Portia.”

“Oh, yeah, I remember. She went on for days, until our letters arrived. Then it was all school, again. I don’t know which was worse?”

“Exactly, so we, Hogwarts, Mother, Father and I, tentatively chose Portia Alexis as her new name, but nothing’s set yet. She doesn’t have famous connections, like we do, so we don’t have to get everything done in advance.” I answered. “But do you really want her as a sister? I thought… after the locket… that you… you know… you fancied her?”

“Yeah, I do… So no, not a sister. Good.” He nodded firmly.

“Glad I got that right.” I sighed in relief.

“Right. So, when do I take the potion?”

“I was going to say now, but… I think it’s better if we go to Hogwarts and do everything there. I mean, Mother and Father know and can back us up if needed, but Hogwarts is the important bit. We can get pretty much everything else done there. Adoption, date of birth, OWLs, NEWTs, memories, she can contact the Ministry building and get appointments sorted. File the notice of your NEWTs. Then we can come home and relax and get your story sorted before we go to Sirius’ tomorrow.”

“Is the weather as bad, where he is, as it is here?” Ron asked.
“Nah, he’s up near Glasgow, these days. His Mother’s still alive and living in Grimmauld Place, so he used the back pay and compensation money from the Ministry to buy a place, where he and little-Harry can live. Remus is with them, he uses an expanded trunk during the full moon and Sirius just pulls out the ladder, so he can’t climb out.”

“So, what’s the weather like up there?”

“Today? Cold, clear and bright, I’ve some sunglasses and you’re going to have to choose a pair. It snowed up there, so it’s bright enough to give you a headache.” I warned.

“Great. What’d you say the date was?”

“20th of December ’84.”

“Right, so a white Christmas?”

“Except Sirius is a pagan, so a white Yule. But yeah.”

“What about gifts?”

“Ah… I have no idea. What do I give them?” I hadn't even given gifts a thought.

“Well, there’s certain things that are always given. A candle, some seeds or something from your garden, something to wear, usually a cloak or a robe and something for the house or their room.”

“Right…” I hummed. “I’ve got some Niffler’s fancy that are just taking off. So, that covers the garden. Candles? Yeah, I’ve got some alihosty spiked barrel-candles, can give one each to Remus and Sirius, not for little-Harry, though, maybe… hmm… Check that cupboard, Ron are there any orange or lime spiked candles left?” I was already digging in a different cupboard and just pointed at the one I wanted Ron to check.

“Yep, both, mate, which one do ya want?”

“Lime, I loved the smell of lime when I was little. Lime and cherries. Oh… cherries. I’ve got a miniaturised cherry tree, I can give little-Harry that.” I crowed and left Ron in the kitchen while I ran downstairs. I paused as I went passed the cloaks and tilted my head. Nope, none of them were right. I quickly waved my wand and floated the three plants after me, as I headed back upstairs.

“All sorted?”

“Almost. Check me?”

“Candles?” Ron dutifully repeated.

“Check. Alihosty for Sirius and Remus, Lime for little-Harry.”

“Something from the garden?”

“Check. Miniature cherry tree for little-Harry and Niffler's Fancy for Sirius and Remus.”

“Something for them to wear?”

“I’ll need to stop in muggle London or somewhere for that.”

“Why?”
“I’m thinking a hooded blanket.” I answered.

“A what?” Ron frowned.

“A hooded blanket. It’s a large blanket that has a slit right in the middle with a hood on one side of the slit. You wear it like a pullover raincoat or a poncho and it reaches to your knees… or longer, in little-Harry’s case. Sirius is going to love it and Remus? I can see him cuddled up in the thing, right after a full moon.” I froze for a second. “Ooh, I’ve an idea, remind me on the way home to grab some buckwheat seeds.”

“Uh…?”

“Heat packs, Ron. Like a warming charm but you can make it hot, not just warm and move it around. It’ll be great for Remus for his aches, Sirius can keep his toes warm and little-Harry can cuddle his, if I make in the shape of a monkey.” I explained.

“Brilliant. I was stumped on that one.” Ron grinned. “Can we go, now? To Hogwarts, I mean.”

“Sure, just let me get the thermos and the pot of stew. This is going to take a while and you’re going to be starved when it’s over.”

“You better tell Mione where we’re going, too.”

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Ron looked like Hogwarts had really put him through the wringer, she’d tested him before letting him drink the adoption potion, explaining that for the first few hours, his balance would be off as the minor changes happened. Which meant that I got to cheer my new brother on, as Hogwarts put him through his NEWTs, or at least through the practical assessments and verbally through the rest.

But in the end, she was pleased. While he was going through the changes that the adoption potion was wreaking on his body, she told me that he’d done well. Well enough that he’d have not trouble getting into the Auror corps. His potions knowledge wasn’t perhaps as high as mine, but he hadn’t had Snape’s potions book for almost a year, in everything else he was right alongside me in getting mostly O’s. Mother and Father were going to be pleased and Portia was going to be stunned.

Just as soon as he was stable on his feet, Hogwarts would do an identity test, so that if we needed to adjust anything, we could get it done, before the potion was completely set. Then, I’d take him home, feed him and put him to bed. By morning, he’d be the Ron he was going to be for the rest of his life.

Ron lay on the floor panting.

“That sucked hairy bollocks.” He rasped.

“It does, doesn’t it?” I agreed.

“An’ yer wan’ Mione, ter do it?”

“Portia and yes, I do. The alternative? If she’s caught, it doesn’t bear thinking of, Ron.”

“Nah, s’pose it don’t.” He sighed. “Now, wha’?”
“While you were writhing around on the floor, Hogwarts suggested a minor memory charm.” I answered.

“Fer wha’?”

“I’ve had the last nine months to work on this and I still have to catch myself, sometimes.” I answered. “Hogwarts is suggesting a memory charm that makes us think that we are, who we are now. That our memories will match our written histories, at least as far as telling anyone is concerned. So, for me, even if I was under veritaserum, I know that my name is Hadrien Blaire Potter-Prewett and that’s the only name I can give. For you, your sense of self would be as Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett. The only place we would, or could falter, would be in adding Prewett, but even Moody will admit, that’s a late addition. It would also enable us to think and speak about Research as Portia, not as Hermione.”

“Is that a good thing?”

“I think so. I mean, how many Hermione’s are there? If she keeps the same surname and is Hermione Granger? There’s already a Hermione Granger here in this time-stream. Add to that, she’s a muggleborn or halfblood and didn’t go to Hogwarts? This close to the war? That’s just asking for trouble.”

“War?”

“It’s December 1984, the war didn’t end until after the Godric’s Hollow thing, at Halloween 1981. That’s just three years ago. For Moody, that’s as good as yesterday.”

“Right…” He sighed again. “So, a memory charm? Just us or Mio- Portia, too?”

“I’m thinking just us, but we’ll have to see when she gets here. I mean, Research already uses Portia as an alias, you’ve seen her owl-mail stuff, it’s all addressed to Portia A Granger. Kinda where I got the name from.”

Ron sat up, his eyes slightly unfocused. “But only outside Hogwarts. I mean… I’ve heard her introduce herself to muggles… while we were on the Hunt… as Portia. And…” He paused clearly thinking. “And when we stayed at Grimmauld Place? We went to Diagon, remember?”

“When we used glamour-rings to follow Malfoy?”

“Yeah. She said her name was Portia, then, and some of the shop owners knew who that was, or at least one commented about some order that they couldn’t fill and another had her order ready.”

“And Portia accepted that…”

“…she was pleased, even asked if he had the any other books by the same author. She pulled out this notebook and told him what she already had, he commented that she hadn’t bought the first one from him and she said it was a gift. Remember?” Ron shook his head in amusement.

“Yeah, neither of us got a chance to ask after that Legilimency book.” I grimaced. “It would have come in handy.”

“Yeah.” He grunted. “Can I do the test, now? I kinda wanna get off this floor and have another shower.”

“Hogwarts? Has enough time passed to do Ron’s test?”
A chalkboard appeared, resting against the wall and on it, more writing.

Certainly, Hadrien.

A table with the relevant equipment appeared. A knife. A phial. And a sheet of parchment.

You know what to do, Ronson, Hadrien.

“We do.” I answered and held out the knife to Ron, he stabbed his finger against it and let ruby red blood drip into the phial. I let it fall until the right number of drops had fallen, then I stoppered the phial and gave it a gentle swirl to mix the liquids completely. We waited for a few seconds, then I ceremoniously handed it to Ron and gestured to the parchment.

“Come on, bro, pour it out.” I pleaded, dropping the ceremony.

“Keep ya pants on.” He grinned, but poured the liquid over the parchment and it soaked in without pooling. In seconds, the words began to appear.

Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett (14 November 1966 -)

Mother– Rachel Anne Potter, nee Browning (born Prewett) (15 May 1948 - )

Father– Webster Henry Potter (23 September 1947 - )


Godmother– nil.

“Bollocks.” We both said, together, looking primarily at the date of birth.

“Okay, so that’s not going to work.” I sighed.

“Nope, too close to yours.” Ron agreed. "Ten months is not going to work."

“Bugger.” I huffed, then a thought occurred to me. “None of the Weasley’s are in January, just me, why don’t we put you there, too, we can do your birthday properly this time. No having to scrape just to get a basic meal.” I was trying to tempt him and he knew it.

“But…”

“Look Luna’s in February, little-Ron’s in March and so’s Remus, the twins in April, your D-Arthur’s in May, Molly in June, little-Harry in July, Percy in August, Hermione in September and we’ll keep her there for the moment, October’s empty but already gone, Bill and Sirius are in November and Charlie’s in December. But there’s no one in January, other than me and we can share.” I babbled on.

Ron, meanwhile was laughing.

“Okay, okay. I’ll be in January with you, but how?”

I gave him a foul look and turned to the chalkboard.
“Hogwarts can we have a permanent de-aging potion that will make Ron’s birthday sometime in January the year after me. Ron pick a date.” I ordered.

“3rd of January.” Ron answered.

“Hogwarts? Please?”

Of course. On the table a small phial shimmered into being.


Three minutes, Ron.

“Cool. Can I get something to eat, Harry?” He asked. “I’m starving.”

I’d anticipated that and was ready, I pointed my wand at a bowl of stew, I’d got ready. “Calidius.” I said firmly, I wanted the stew hot all the way through, there’s nothing worse than lukewarm stew or soup. “There you go. Get that into you.”

“Ta, mate.” He grinned, grabbed a spoon and dug in.

The time passed, Ron ate his stew and we both had tea, then Hogwarts began to write again.

Gentlemen, are you going to use the memory charm?

Ron and I looked at each other and shrugged, but I left it for him to answer. He already knew my choice.

“Yeah.” He said. “Disappearing into the Department of Mysteries don’t sound too good. If Harry trusts you, so will I… And he said something about memories of the muggle world?”

Yes, I can provide memories, combined memories, not a particular person’s. They show a place or an event from an exterior point of view, not from a particular person’s. It will give you the opportunity to understand the muggle world as a muggleborn, or muggle raised, would. It won’t give you the memory of doing something, but it will of watching someone else do it. When the weather clears, spend a bit of time wandering through a muggle city, it will reinforce what you’ve learnt and the charm will help, too it will set it in your mind.

A second identity test kit appeared on the table, along with a large jar of swirling memories.

Once you’ve done the identity test, all you have left are the memories and the memory charm. I suggest absorbing the memories before setting them with the charm. To assimilate the memories, you will need to use two wands. One to begin to lift the memories free of the container and a second is needed to direct them to your head. It would be best to be sitting down when you do this, the intake of memories is be off-balancing and you’re still slightly unstable on your feet, due to the adoption potion.

A chair, very similar to the ones in the Gryffindor common room appeared and Ron huffed, but sat, he hated admitting a weakness, but Hogwarts had warned him it would happen. And thankfully it would last only a few hours.
Identity test first, if you please, Ronson.

“Sure.” Ron reached for the knife and stabbed his own finger this time. The blood dripped into the phial and he stoppered it and gave it a little shake. When the liquid was a uniform colour he tipped out over the parchment and waited.

Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett (3 January 1967 - )

Mother – Rachel Anne Potter, nee Browning (born Prewett) (15 May 1948 - )

Father – Webster Henry Potter (23 September 1947 - )


Godmother – nil.

“Much better.” I grinned at Ron. “Little brother.”

“Guess I was destined to be your brother… one way or another…” He said, a subtle dig at Ginny and my relationship.

“Yeah, no. Not a chance. Little-Ginny’s a bitch. I’m not going near that and I’ll work my butt off to see that, if she doesn’t do a heck of a lot of growing up, she’s never going to get her claws into little-Harry.” I snarled.

I doubt there is much of a chance for her, not with little-Harry being raised by Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. Add in the reaction to James Potter’s shade’s comments and people are already starting to raise Lily Potter to the position of The-Woman-Who-Outsmarted the Dark Lord. Harry is slowly becoming a nonentity. Muggleborns are already being told that Lily Potter ended Voldemort, but when Harry is mentioned, it’s simply ‘oh, he’s Lily Potter’s son’. Even Molly Weasley is changing the tales she’s telling Ginevra. They no longer revolve around Harry, but are now more suited to a child her age.

“Well, that’s something at least.” I sighed. “He deserves better than what she is right now.”

“You said it, mate.” Ron nodded fervently. “At this age, she deserves a right thrashing, only she won’t get it, Mum dotes on her. She’s the first girl in the Weasley family for five generations.”

“That’s no excuse.” I responded.

“Nope, it’s not, but that’s Mum for you.” He shrugged. “So, the memories?”

“Yep.” I answered.

Yes, Ronson. One wand to begin the lifting process and then the second wand to direct them to your mind.

Ron sat forward a little, before flicking his wrists and letting his wands fall into his hands. I lifted the lid on the jar and stepped back.
“Right.” He raised one wand and let the tip fall into the twisting strands, one latching onto the dark Bocote-wood wand before he lifted it high enough to touch his second wand to the filmy strand and guide it towards his forehead. As the strand touched his skin, there was a shimmer and the strand contracted almost violently, disappearing into his skin like a rope pulled through a hole. He shuddered and shook, trembling so badly that his fingers couldn’t keep hold of his wand and they began to slide towards the floor.

“Accio Ron's wands.” I pointed one of my canary-wood wands at them and both wands zipped towards my waiting hand.

He will be disorientated for a while, Hadrien, you will need to cast the memory charm and tie it to his blood. It is of no use to either of you if it can be removed with a simple ‘finite’. If it was possible I would even suggest parseltongue. Hogwarts wrote.

“I can do that… I think… How long should I wait?”

Do it know before he realises, it is quite painful, the headache will require potions to alleviate.

“Should I do myself first?”

No. Definitely not. As I said, it is quite painful. You likened having a Legilimens attack you, to suffering a concussion? This will be much the same.

“Ouch. Right. What’s the charm?”

I can only give you the Latin version, I am afraid that I do not understand parseltongue.

“If I require it? Can you, then?”

No, it a part of a blood line, the Potter bloodline and I do not share your blood.

“Potter? Ron? What’s the chances of Ron understanding it?”

It’s possible, I do not know, there is no documented evidence to say it will happen, but other blood-borne gifts are recorded as being gifted to those adopted. You will just have ask him, but I suggest not doing so, now.

“Yeah, no. Not now. The charm? In Latin?”

Et scripsit historiam tuam, memoriam vestri. Ita fiat esto.

“What’s it mean? In English, I mean?”

Make your written history, your memories. So be it!

“Right, give me a moment.” I was doing my best to ignore Ron, who was now lying on the floor and moaning, holding his head in his hands. I closed my eyes, letting the thought of snakes fill my mind and took a deep breath before I open my eyes and mouth.

:§: Et scripsit historiam tuam, memoriam vestri. Ita fiat esto. :§: I hissed in parseltongue, more than a little surprised that it worked. On the floor Ron tensed, then slumped, unconscious.

“Was that supposed to happen?” I asked, alarmed.
It’s possible that his pain tolerances aren’t as elevated as yours. While he’s still unconscious, feed him the analgesic potion, a few drops at a time, not enough to choke on.

“ Ana-ana- algessic?” I stumbled over the unfamiliar word.

Analgesia, pronounced anel-geez-ee-a, is the inability to feel pain and analgesics are medications that induce that inability.

“In common English, they’re painkillers, then?” Sometimes Hogwarts forgot that I was only eighteen and had lived a fairly isolated life.

They are. I could read the exasperation in the two words.

“Okay.” I reached for the phial of potion that had appeared on the table and with it in my hand I turned to Ron. “Arrigo.” When Ron was in a semi upright position, I knelt beside him and tilted his head back, lifting the phial I trickled the potion into his mouth, slowly enough that he was able to swallow the metallic blue liquid. When the phial was empty I conjured a mattress and floated him to it.

“Can I take the analgesic potion, before I do the charm?” I gave up trying to pronounce the strange word.

No, unfortunately not, the potion works too fast.

“Can the potion be slowed?”

In what manner? Altering the potion will render it useless.

“But what if I didn’t alter it?” I hummed in thought. “What if I encased it in something that cancelled automatically after a set amount of time?”

Like what?

“Like…” I looked at the thermos. “Like tea? A bubble of tea that holds it’s shape for… oh, say thirty seconds?”

There was a familiar sound of an engine humming as Hogwarts thought about what I’d said.

That might just work. If you surrounded an orb of the analgesic in a very fine layer of air then a second layer tea or milk and then placed just that outer layer under a timed stasis… That would get you the best result. But be warned… the charm may still have time to render you unconscious before the analgesic has a chance to mitigate the side-effects.

“Damn.”

Agreed. But it is worth it, for the lower levels of discomfort and the shorter recovery time.

“Yeah?” I hadn’t thought about that. “Alright. Give me a phial of potion on the table, please.” While I waited for it to appear, I poured a mug of tea. “Right. So…” This, I knew how to do, I did it each month when I cleaned my fish tank, well… part of it, part of it was used for cleaning and another part for containing fumes and another part was commonly used in potion making. “Pila facere.” I pointed my wand at the phial and watched as the contents poured themselves upwards and blobbed together into a vaguely round shape. “Iacuit caeli.” A shimmering layer of air formed around the blob, forcing it into a perfect sphere. The tip of my wand touched the surface of the tea in the large
And the tea rose trickling up and around the orb, until nothing was visible but the tea. I took a deep breath before I cast the last bit, if I screwed this up, the whole thing was lethal. “Moram finite ad 30 seconds.” I sighed in relief when I saw the strands of light encircle the orb, mixing two languages in the one spell or charm was touchy, mess it up and it basically becomes a magical version of a muggle hand-grenade. Now all I had to do was get it into my stomach.

“I’m not sure that’s flexible enough to swallow.” I grimaced.

It’s not. You’ll have to banish it, directly into your stomach.

“Ew, great. Alright, here goes- wait. The charm? Can you put it up for me, cause it’s going to be different for me than what I did to Ron, right?”

That’s right. You will need to use this version… ‘Ut mihi scripsit historiam, mea memorias’. The wording is slightly different.

“Thanks. Here goes nothing.” I took a deep breath and sent up a quick prayer to Lady Magic, that I’d got everything right and that this worked. “Exclusio intra corpus.”(Banish inside body) And touched my wand to my stomach, suddenly I felt like I’d swallowed a ball and in a way I suppose I had. “Don’t let me die. Please, Hogwarts.” I begged.

I shan’t.

:§: Ut mihi scripsit historiam, mea memorias. Ita fiat esto:§: I cast the memory charm and the pain in my head was instant. Gods, it was bad, not even Snape’s legilimency attacks hurt like this. Hell, not Voldemort’s hurt like this. I’d just managed to think that when everything went black.

I had no idea how much passed, but suddenly I was awake.

“Ugh… Not doing that again.” I grumbled.

“Nope.” Ron agreed.

“Help me up?” I held out a hand and as expected Ron dragged me to my feet. My other hand went to my head, it felt the size of a house. “Hogwarts? Would a headache potion help?”

No, but this might. A small phial sat on the table. It’s variant on the potions for the Longbottoms.

“It does help.” Ron said. “She gave me one and the headache went from Bellatrix’s Cruciatus to the Ferret’s.”

“Great.” I quickly swallowed down the slightly bubbly pink potion and felt the ache drop almost instantly. “Oh, that’s nice…” I sighed.

“Longbottoms?” Ron asked.

“Why should little-Nev have to go without parents when Hogwarts can fix them?”

“Oh… okay.” Ron tilted his head and looked at me. “What next?” Sometimes the trust Ron gave me, scared the crap out of me. I’d just put him through something that to me felt like a mental Cruciatus and here he was asking, ‘what next’?
“Hogwarts? What do we have left to do? For Ron, I mean?”

So far we have completed -

- New wands
- Basic clothing
- Webster and Rachel have been notified
- The adoption. Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett (3 January 1967 -)
- The memory charm.
- The muggle memories.
- Money, awaiting a vault.
- 9 OWLs, (Astronomy, CoMC, Charms, Defence, Herbology, History of Magic, Muggle Studies, Potions and Transfig.). I’ve put in a request for a additional copy of Ronson’s results to be sent with his NEWTs results.
- 7 NEWTs (CoMC, charms, defence, herbology, muggle studies, potions, transfig). Results have yet to be forwarded to you. Your exams are registered as being assessed by Erica Littleman with your last test being five days ago, Madam Littleman was killed in a muggle car accident in Vienna, yesterday.
- Rachel has provided outline for muggle schooling, banking and health records to be lodged at midnight, when the computer systems turn over.

There is very little that still needs to be completed

- Get muggle authority letter from Webster stating that Ronson has permission to be with Hadrien until his eighteenth birthday. (optional as only a fortnight away)
- Gringotts for personal vault and formal identity testing.
- Apparition test.

After these are done, the only thing to be done is to wait for the arrival of Portia. But most of all, you both must live the lives before you. Do not mourn for those from your native time-stream, Tower of London, Ministry and I have reached the conclusion that their souls have be assimilated into other time-streams. Their souls, not necessarily their consciousness’s, but the actual souls.

“I’m not sure that makes it any easier.” I sighed sadly.

No, it may not. But take comfort in the fact that they have not been discarded.

“There is that.” Ron allowed. “But what I meant was… what now? As in… now, today, this next minute.”

“Oh, well I need to send- oh bollocks, bollocks, bollocks.” I swore and smacked forehead repeatedly with the heel of my hand.

“What?” Ron held out both hands in surprise.

“I left Cookie at home.” I moaned.

“Well… what’re we going to do about it? Can we send him when we get back?”

“No. He can’t fly in the weather in the south.” I huffed. “That would be cruel.” Not even a huge eagle owl should be asked this weather, he and Lacy were staying home.
“What about that Messenger thing? What you sent Portia.” He blinked. “Oh, hey? It worked. I didn’t even think about it, Research is Portia.” Ron beamed at me.

“Really? Wow, that’s great.” I grinned back. “As for a Messenger? I didn’t even give it a thought. Of course I can send one to Sirius. Hang on a sec.” I turned slightly to one side. “Nuntio expecto.” I waited until the Messenger flames settled in front of me. “Message to Sirius Black, Remus Lupin and little-Harry, to be delivered when they’re at home and two or more of them are in the one room, with no muggle present.” I figured that Sirius and little-Harry would eat dinner together each night, if nothing else. “Hi Sirius, Remus, little-Harry, it’s Hadrien. I apologise for not sending an owl in reply to your invitation, but the weather is foul down here. I’ll not let my owls get sick in it. So… consider this to be the alternative. I would be happy to join you for Yule on Friday. And yes, Sirius, Ron will be joining me. He’s finished his NEWTs and decided that he couldn’t wait until his birthday, to join me. Knocked on my door this morning, almost blue with the cold. Idiot. Anyway… We’ll be along about… huh? What time? Ron?” I turned to Ron, who’d yelled ‘Oi’ when I called him an idiot.

“Midday. Unless we hear otherwise.”

“Right. Hear that? We’ll be along about midday. If you want a different time, send us a Messeng-”

“Patronus, Harry. You haven’t told anyone, other than me, how to send a Messenger.” Ron cut in.

“Oops, right. Um… Yeah. Midday or send a patronus?” I flicked my wand and the flames flashed bright and vanished.

“That’s going to get an interesting reaction.” Ron laughed.

“Oh, you’ve no idea. The Messenger records all voices in a certain proximity.”

“Ah…? In English, mate?”

“The heard you, too.” I grinned.

“O-kay… That’s definitely going to get an interesting reaction.”

We exchanged looks and began to laugh.

Oh, get out of here you two. Come see me when Portia arrives. Hogwarts wrote.

“Hey? Can we have a door to a blind spot in a shopping mall car-park. Somewhere I can get blankets and groceries. Please?”

Certainly. Any particular town?

“As long as the weather is fine and the shops are open, I don’t really care.”

That I can do. If you would look to Hadrien’s left, you will see a door to a lovely little blind spot in Waverly station in Edinburgh. You’ll find almost everything in the Waverly Mall beside the station.

“Brilliant!” I crowed.

I suggest you go now. There seems to be a lull in the shoppers and closing time is less than an hour away.

I looked at Ron. “You ready to face the muggle world?”
“As long as I’m just following you, I’ll be fine.” He huffed. “Come on, let’s get your blankets and wheat and go home. Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Gods, it was so good to have him at my side, again.
I looked at Ron. “You ready to face the muggle world?”

“As long as I’m just following you, I’ll be fine.” He huffed. “Come on, let’s get your blankets and wheat and go home. Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Gods, it was so good to have him at my side, again.

The next morning I opened the shop as normal, the weather was still rough, but it was much better than it had been and I was surprised by the number of people who came in. I probably shouldn’t have been. Ottery St Catchpole is a small village and it had gone around quite quickly that I’d put up a sign yesterday. One that claimed a family emergency. Of the people that came in, only two didn’t ask what had happened, Grady and Mrs Tibbling, whom never spoke and I wasn’t quite sure if she could speak.

I did warn everyone that came in that I would be closing early, Ron and I needed to sort out the legalities of him staying with me, as he didn’t turn eighteen for another fortnight. In reality, Father had sorted that out after I rang him and after I’d fed Ron and sent him to bed, I’d popped up to collect a letter of authority. Plus I put up a sign on the Lane door, closed for Yule. Not that I needed to, the entire Lane was closing for Yule celebrations.

The only other thing I did was to send Cookie off to the Burrow with a letter for Molly, to tell her that my brother had arrived, unexpectedly and that we had spent the day sorting his stuff out and that today we were going to little-Harry’s for Yule. We were planning apparating back to Leeds for Christmas day, but hoped to catch up with her and the brood, as I’d taken to calling them, for New Year’s, or there abouts.

Now, Ron and I were ready to go. I had the shrunken box with Sirius, Remus and little-Harry’s gifts, tucked into my pocket.

I snickered as Ron ran a hand through his hair.

“Something funny, bro?” He demanded. He’d taken to calling me ‘bro’ instead of ‘mate’, since the adoption and every time gave me a buzz of joy. Having Ron as brother was everything I’d dreamed of as a kid.

“Yeah.” I grinned. “You’ve got Potter hair.”

“I’ve got what?” He gave me a confused look.

“Come on.” I dragged him into the bathroom and stood him in front of the mirror. “Potter hair.” I pointed from his to mine and let mine shorten to match his.
The resulting mess, baring the colour, was almost identical.

“Whoa…” He exclaimed silently. “We look like brothers.”

And we did. We weren’t identical, but there were enough similarities for the connection to be obvious. Our hair was a different colour, mine was black with the odd ginger tint, if caught in the right light. Ron’s was ginger still, but there were hints of darkness about the under-layers, like it should be darker but the outer-layers were sun-bleached to a bright ginger. The shapes of our jaws had changed, just fractionally, his a little squarer, while mine was more pointed, but together that evened out. We both had the same full bottom lip and our ears were the same, which meant mine stuck out more. Other than that…?

“Your eyes, Harry. They’ve changed. They’re… they’re blue!” He gasped.

“What?!” I leant forward and studied them in the mirror, stunned. “They’re a mix of blue and green, but… they’re not just green, anymore.” Now, the irises were a streaking of blue and green, more green, but the blue was still clearly visible.

“Wow.” Ron grabbed my face and pulled it around to face him.

“R-Ron…?” I stammered. “You’ve got the same eyes. They’re the same as mine.” Up close I could see it now. Where I had green with blue streaks, he had blue with green streaks.

“They’re the same, but the opposite.” He grinned, then frowned. “Change your hair back. Make it longer, again.” I concentrated and over a few seconds my hair grew in length from a shaggy few inches, like his, to the just below shoulder length, that I’d worn since my arrival. “Better.” His head tilted. “That’s metamorphmagi, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Like Tonks.”

“Yeah.”

“And you got that because yo- our great-grandmother was a Black?”

“Dorea Black was the sister of Pollux Black, Sirius’ maternal grandfather. She married Charlus Potter, Fleamont’s Father.” I explained, I’d had time for Sirius to send me a copy of the family tree and to work how our two Houses were connected.

“And Fleamont was James and Father’s, Father.” Ron obediently recited. “And because of the adoption, I’m more Father’s son than Daddy’s.” We’d decided that James was Dad, Webster was Father and Arthur was Daddy, at least between ourselves. We swore never to call James or Arthur by anything other than their names when anyone else could hear us.

“You are.” Not sure where he was going with this.

“So… If it’s in the Potter blood and I share the Potter blood? What’s the chances that I can to that, too?” He asked.

I blinked at him. “Um… possibly, but if you got that… what about parseltongue? I don’t buy Dumbledore’s view that I got it from snake-face, particularly as I still have it and he’s well and truly gone.” I focused on the thought of the basilisk and hissed. :§: Can you understand me?:§:

Ron’s eyes almost bulged out of his head. :§: I can...:§: He answered me... in parseltongue.
I let the image of that foul serpent fade and refocused on the person in front of me.

“Okay, then. That’s a new one. But with us and little-Harry all being speakers... We weren’t even in the Wizarding world and the Potters being so Light...? That’s going to turn a few heads in confusion.” I grinned at him. “Cool prank on the masses and the Ministry, let them think it's in the Potter blood.”

Ron laughed and shook his head. “Alright, we said midday and it’s almost passed that.” He poked me in the arm. “Can we get a move on, or are you going to play with your hair, some more.”

I mock-snarled at him. “I'll give you, ‘play with my hair', ruddy brat.”

I chased him from the bathroom, through the flat and down the stairs. We’d deliberately left Sirius’ portkey on the floo mantle-piece, not wanting to accidentally set it off before we were both ready. We were still tussling when we both took hold of the masculine necklace.

“Maruaders’ Lodge.” We both said and the portkey yanked us away.

We landed on a neatly trimmed lawn, still tussling and playing. After a few seconds, we realised that someone was laughing and probably at us. We raised out heads and saw Sirius, Remus and little-Harry. I caught my breath, the stab of joy, and pain, at seeing Sirius, was literally breathtaking.

“Oh, wow. You were right.” Ron leapt to his feet and leaving me sitting on the grass, trotted over to them. “Little-Harry does look like you at that age. Or at least, the photos of you at that age.”

Hogwarts was an amazing being, she’d taken a small blood sample from little-Harry and little-Ron and added the adoption potion to it, then extrapolated out what they, or us, would have looked like at various different ages. Then she’d made up photos that were supposed to be Ron and I at those different ages and in different places, for me to put in an album, which I had shown Ron last night. Now, here was Ron, commenting on the fact that there was so little difference between little-Harry and I.

“It’s mostly the hair.” I answered, climbing to my feet.

“Yeah, but you’ve got the same build.” He hummed. “And very similar faces, we’ve a fair idea what little-Harry’s going to look like when he grows up.”

“Isn’t that the truth?” Sirius had gasped when he’d first seen me, face on.

“But the eyes? They’re different.” Remus said.

“Your eyes are blue and gween un my's are gween.” Little-Harry said, leaning out of Sirius’ arms to study my face. “But you gots more fweckles den me.” Yeah, we weren’t the same person, anymore, and that helped me to treat him as his own person.

“Yep.” I grinned and tapped him on the nose. “Blame the redheads in the family for that.” I waved a thumb in Ron’s direction.

“Oi. Don’t go blaming me, that’s Mother’s fault not mine. You had them, before I was even born.” Ron argued.

“Your Mother?” Remus asked.
“You remember Gideon and Fabian Prewett?” Ron asked him.

“Yeah?”

“Mother’s their older sister.” I added.

“Oh, right…” It was clear that Sirius hadn’t told him that.

“Come on, let’s get inside, it’s cold out here and someone…? Someone didn’t sleep well after getting your message yesterday.” Sirius dug a finger into little-Harry’s sides, making the boy laugh and squirm.

“Yes.” Remus gestured. “Your message was… unexpected. Who taught you to do that?”

“I made it up.” We entered a large utility room and all of us took our boots off, before heading into a large kitchen.

“You made it up?” Sirius gasped.

“Well, yeah. We needed to be able to send a message, but privacy and security were essential, Mother and Father are muggle lawyers, they’re often in a muggle courtroom, I can’t just send a message any old time. I have be certain that they’re alone or with each other. And Ron's girlfriend is a muggleborn, so...?” I explained.

“And your message can do that?”

“Well, yeah. I summon the Messenger, give it a destination and any conditions and off it goes, if it can’t deliver the message within a set timeframe, it comes back and tells me.”

“What sort of conditions can it accept?”

“What sort of conditions can you come up with?” I countered Sirius’ question with my own.

“It’s that flexible?”

“I could tell it to deliver a message to Remus, but only when Remus has his back to Sirius and little-Harry is upside down and all of you are in the hallway.” I shrugged. “Whether or not it can deliver it’s message is a different barrel of nifflers. If the conditions are met, it’ll deliver, if not, it comes back to me.” I huffed.

“Uh…” Remus clearly wasn’t getting it.

“Look, take this, for example. Ron’s girlfriend? She’s out of the country right now, her parents are muggles, she’s a muggleborn that’s been studying with us for years. If Ron wanted to send her a message, he could put the following conditions on the delivery… He could say… ‘Deliver to Portia, when she’s in a space alone, where no muggles or her parents can overhear, but not until after she and her parents have checked into their hotel’. Or he could say ‘deliver to Portia when she’s in her bedroom, alone’. Or a bathroom, alone. Or in a park. Or… You get it, now?” I huffed.

“Yeah…?” But it was obvious he didn’t.

“Nuntio Expecto.” The Messenger flames sparked into being in front of me. “Message to Remus Lupin, deliver when Ron has only one foot in the hallway and little-Harry is hanging upside down from the doorframe. Message… Get it now?” I flicked my wand and the flames flashed away.

“Ron?” I didn’t have to say anything more, he crossed back to the door and stuck one foot through
the doorway. “See? Only part of the conditions are met, so no delivery. Sirius, hold Harry up and stick his feet to the doorframe. Just for a few seconds. Please?”

Sirius snorted, but did as I asked, while little-Harry laughed and wriggled, waving his arms around. Soon his feet were stuck to the door lintel and his little hands were stretched out trying to reach Ron and I. Within a few seconds of this, the Messenger appeared in front of Remus and spoke with my voice.

“Get it now?”

Sirius laughed and unstuck little-Harry’s feet, much to his annoyance. He darted over to me and bounced in front of me.

“Whad else? Whad else can you do?” He asked.

I looked him for a few seconds, before I reached into my pocket and pulled out a small box. I tapped it with my wand and whispered. “Engorgio.” And the box grew in size, funnily enough so did the surprise in little-Harry’s eyes. When the box was about a foot long, I put it on the floor beside me and whispered again. “Engorgio.” And again the box grew. At full size, it was roughly the same size as an average trunk.

“Wow…” little-Harry whispered and looked at me in awe. Made me feel like the first time I visited the cauldron at eleven and I didn’t like it any more now, than I did then.

“Sirius can do more than me.” I pointed out. “He was an Auror.” Little-Harry spun around to look at Sirius, accusingly.

“Gee, thanks.” Sirius muttered. “I’ve been trying not to use too much magic around him.”

“Why? He’s magical, he does accidental magic, he lives in the magical world and he’s going to have to learn, sooner or later.”

“He’s also a Potter. They don’t follow rules well.” Remus laughed at the disgruntled look of Sirius’ face.

“Better to give him a little and let him get used to that, reward him for following the rules and punish him for breaking them. If he’s anything like Harry, you reward him with more magic and punish him by taking it away.” Ron advised.

“What about you?” Sirius asked.

“Nah, I took after Mother’s side of the family. We follow the rules, until we don’t… but we don’t break the important ones. Harry, on the other hand…?”

The discussion went on, we talked about lots of things. Family, friends, the future and the past. I let Ron carry most of the conversation, I was still hurting at the loss of my Sirius. Then it was lunch time, a little she-elf popped in to call us to the table. A table that was almost groaning under the weight of the dishes. Roast pork, baked potatoes, roast chicken, beans, carrots, peas, gravies, bread rolls, mushrooms, apple sauce, plum sauce, tiny roasted pumpkins, squashes, crispy bacon and fat sausages.

At Sirius’ direction, when we sat back, groaning and holding out bulging bellies, the elf packaged up half of the leftovers for us to take home. Then we went back into the living room for gifts.

“Siri, you’re the eldest, you get to hand out the presents.” Remus ordered.
“Yay!” Sirius was still very much a child at heart, but I was so pleased to see that Hogwarts’ course of potions had restored him to full health. “Let’s see… Who’s this for…? Ooh Ronson.” He beamed and handed a box to Ron.

“Call me Ron, mate. Ronson get’s a bit heavy.”

“Right, Ron. Open it, come on.” Sirius nodded to the box.

Ron raised an eyebrow to little-Harry, who giggled. “Should I, or should I make him wait?”

“Open it, open it.” Harry’s little voice piped.

“Okay, then.” Ron dug his fingers in a tore at the wrapping paper, exposing a sturdy timber box with the three House crests beautifully carved into the lid. “Oh, wow…!” He gasped.

“Remus suggested that as muggle raised, you may not have had anything bearing your family crests.” Sirius explained. “So I got in touch with Lady Muriel Prewett and between us we commissioned these, one for each of you. And we worked together to design a crest for the House of Potter-Prewett, a Cadet-House to Houses Potter and Prewett. But we drew the line at designing House rings for you. You get to do that.” He pointed to the crest on the left. “That’s the Potter crest. A standing lion with a sword at his feet. Much like Gryffindor’s but that’s rampant Lion holding a sword.” He then pointed at the crest on the right. “The Prewett crest. A charging ram under a war axe. Apt, as the Prewetts are descendants of the Vikings, hence the red hair.” He grinned at Ron, then pointed to the third crest. “What Lady Muriel and I came up with is this. A ram, not the same one but then you are a Cadet-House so that’s excusable, and a lion, again not the same one, both rampant and back-to-back, with the sword and the axe crossed above them.” He looked from Ron to me. “What do you think?”

Ron and I exchanged a long speaking look and I could see the acceptance and pride in his eyes. I’m sure he could see the same in mine. We nodded together.

“We like it.” I spoke for us both.

Sirius flopped back in his seat in relief. “Thank the gods for that.” He huffed.

“Me next, Unca Siri?” Little-Harry asked. He held a box in his hands and was bouncing on his feet.

“Sure, Prongslet, you next.” Sirius smiled at him and little-Harry bounced over to me.

“For you.” My counterpart had the cutest grin, unlike me, who at that age never smiled.

He also held out the box to me, I took it from him, surprised at the weight of it. I grinned and like Ron tore into the wrapping and like Ron I had a beautiful box. It was also a portable writing desk.

“Oh…” My fingers ran over the inlaid crests and I lifted the lid and saw the contents. A pad of parchment all with the Potter-Prewett crest and letterhead, a stunning silver quill-grip and holder, six nibs, four feathers, 3 bottles of ink, an inkwell, two sticks of sealing wax in my preferred deep plum and a space for a seal, all with held in place with carefully laid charms.

“Ron’s is a little simpler, but as Head of a House, even a Cadet-House, you should have something like this. Ron’s is, as I said simpler, but still the quality befitting of an Heir.” Sirius explained.

It was only then that Ron opened his and realised that it wasn’t just a box. His had the same items as mine, just not as elaborate, the selection of nibs and feathers more basic, but just as many.
“Whoa…” Ron gasped again. “That’s… that’s wicked.”

I wasn’t able to say anything.

“Okay, that’s the formal stuff, now onto the personal pressies.” Sirius laughed, reaching for a brightly wrapped floppy package, which he handed to Remus.

From then on it was pretty much a free for all. We all ended up with odd things. Sirius got a dog bed and collar, a fluffy cushion, the hooded-blanket, heat-pack, candles, a robe, a pair of gloves, the Niffler's fancy, a pot with a dogwood seedling and a pot of tiny miniature yellow water lilies. Remus got a muzzle, a set of four different coloured inks, a quill stand, a hooded-blanket, heat-pack, candles, a cloak, three pair of socks, the Niffler's fancy, a magnolia seedling and a pot of red miniature water lilies. Ron and I got much the same as each other. The writing desks, simple cloaks, pots of herbs, chocolates, candles, a pair of scarves and a box of games to share between us.

Little-Harry got the jackpot. Clothes, yes of course, he got clothes. He also got a photo album of James and Lily and their friends, a slew of candles and cloaks, some scarves, hats and gloves. Then there were the plants, two oak seedlings, a willow seedling and the miniature cherry. The hooded-blanket was a winner, as was the heat-pack. But the thing that lit him up, that had him bouncing off the walls, was a Bluebottle junior, a training broom for kids.

It was also the only thing that Sirius whined about. To the point that, after exchanging looks with Remus, I cast a ‘silencio’ on him.

“Enough, Black. If you’re that worried about Harry riding the thing, give it here.” I held out a hand.

“Why? Whacha gon do to it?” Harry asked me, his hands holding the small broom tight to his chest.

“I’m going to put some safety charms on it.” I’d gotten used to doing this with the brooms I sold in my shop, as many of them were older brooms, people bought them for their children and grandchildren. It had taken me less than a week to realise that while the brooms were still very capable, that meant they were also still quite dangerous to small children. I had done some research and found an old book on obsolete safety charms and had started to apply them to the brooms. Labelling the additional charms, caused sales to increase and now they were standard features on any broom I sold.

“Safety charms?” Remus asked.

“Yes, all the brooms I sell have them.” I answered, but I was talking to Harry. “I have lots of brooms in my shop and all of them have safety charms.”

“What sort of tcharms?” He asked.

“Well, the brooms I sell, don’t have many safety charms on them, before I get them. So, I put a cushioning charm on them, then two different tether charms, one to keep you on the broom and one to keep the broom within a certain distance of an adult. Then charm so it can't go too high or too fast and an anti-collision charm, that means the broom won't got near something larger than itself.”

“Oh, oktay.” Little-Harry handed me his little broom.

“Uh, hold on a second…” Sirius tried to cut in.

“Why don’t Remus and I work out the best charms to put on your broom, to keep you safe and to keep Sirius from whining like a sad puppy?” I suggested and Remus was instantly nodding his head.
“Yes, that’s a good idea, Hadrien.” Responded.

“Why Remus?” Sirius whined.

“Because if he can put charms on a motorbike and have the Unspeakables sign off in it, he can put safety charms on a broom for little-Harry.” I replied nonchalantly.

“Motorbike?” Sirius sat up. “You took my bike to the Unspeakables?”

“No! Of course not.” Remus denied.

“Nope.” I agreed. “He was asked come in and put charms on another bike.”

“Another bike? How many other flying bikes are there?” Sirius was starting to sound like a whining little brat.

“All up? Two. Yours and mine.” I smirked at him.

“What?!” He screeched.

“Unca Siri?” Little-Harry’s worried voice stopped him in his tracks.

“Harry, pup.” Sirius quietened down quickly, hugging the small boy to reassure him that Sirius was angry with him.

“It’s alright, Harry, Uncle Sirius is feeling grumpy because I didn’t tell him about working on another bike.” Remus explained.

“Oh…” Harry screwed up his little face. “But… why?”

“Why is he grumpy or why didn’t I tell him?”

“Uhuh…”

“Well, he’s grumpy because he thought his bike was the only bike that can fly and because he’s a spoilt princess, he doesn’t like that. And I didn’t tell him, but only because the subject hasn’t been raised. Which reminds me, Sirius? Hagrid still has your bike, if you want it, you had better go and get it.”

“Remus!” Sirius was really whining, now.

“Oh, knock it off, Pads, or I’ll transfigure you into Padfoot and keep you that way for a week.” Remus bopped him on the back of the head, causing little-Harry to giggle. At the (fake) betrayed look on Sirius’ face, little-Harry tried to smother his giggles with his hand, but failed, abysmally.

Four hours later, little-Harry lay draped across Sirius and Remus, sound asleep, fingers barely twitching. Ron and I were slumped on the sofa opposite the trio and we were all exhausted.

“Hadrien, you are evil, just plain evil.” Sirius whimpered.

I smirked as I replied. “Why, this time?”

“That damned broom.”
“Yeah? What about it?” Ron asked.

“You made it safe for Harry, then you let loose that bloody snitch. It stayed just out of bloody reach, all bloody afternoon, right up until you put your bloody hand up and the bloody thing just flew straight to you. How?” He started off snarling, but by the time he finished, he was back to whining.

I looked at Ron. How the hell do I answer that? I took a deep breath and tried.

“The snitch? It was given to me, left to me, actually, by an old wizard that taught us. He was… special to us, yeah? He died over two years ago, nearly three and he left me the snitch. It’s tied to my blood, almost like house wards are, it responds to me and what I want, over and above the traditional quidditch charms.”

“That’s… unusual.” Remus said cautiously.

“It’s bloody dangerous, is what is, but the old man? He felt that if he didn’t hurt anyone, what did it matter?” Ron muttered.

Both men looked from Ron to me.

“Eh. He’s right.” I shrugged. “It was dangerous, so many of his plans went ass-up, the snitch could easily been one of them, the fact it wasn’t? Just kinda emphasises the ones that did. He was predominately in charge of hiring the people that taught us, but some of his choices…?” I grimaced.

“They sucked.” Ron moaned.

“He hired an author to teach us DADA, but the twat could only cast one spell properly. And sorry, but I don’t particularly fancy being obliviated on a day-to-day basis. Then there was the Death-Eater hiding under polyjuice.”

“Oh gods.” Sirius’ eye were so wide, they threatened to pop out.

“Where were your parents?” Remus demanded.

“They’re squibs.” Ron said bluntly.

“And they had no idea, we had no idea. We could only go on what others said and for the most part everyone agreed, he was our best chance at a high quality education.” I hesitated to continue, but Ron and I had talked about it last night and decided that we would call Dumbledore by two of his middle name, in reverse order. “Brian Wulfric was a scatterbrained, manipulative old man, but he cared about us. He just didn’t know how to show it, he didn’t know that muggles and magicals were raised differently. He tried, he just didn’t get it.”

“How did you even pass your OWLs, with help like that?” Remus demanded.

“Did you pass your OWLs? You did, didn’t you?” Sirius almost begged.

“Yes, we passed our OWLs.” Ron answered. “I’ve got 9 and Harr- Hadrien’s got 10.”

“NEWTs…?” Remus asked, with a grimace.

“7 apiece.” I answered.

“The same 7.” Ron grinned. “Although, smarty pants here, dropped history at the last minute.” He jerked a thumb in my direction.
“Oh, lay off. You dropped divination.” I smacked him on the shoulder.

Remus and Sirius both sighed in relief.

“Good.” Remus nodded.

“Yeah, very good. As a Head of House, even a Cadet-House, and his Heir, an education is vital. Whether you use it, that’s up to you, but if you don’t have it, no one is going to take you seriously.” Sirius added.

“Well, I’m staying with my shop, at least for the foreseeable future, Ron’s still debating the Aurors.” I replied.

“It’s not a bad choice.” Sirius said, obviously trying not to push.

“It’s not, but Portia’s still got her NEWTs to do.” Ron said. “And I’m a little worried that me in Auror training and her in the year before her NEWTs might be too much pressure.”

“Which is stupid, this is Portia we’re talking about, she thrives on study. You’re more at risk of being forced to study alongside her.” I warned.

“Yeah, that, too.” He grinned. “Gimme a break, I only just finished my exams.”

“And people are already talking about the future, huh?” Remus asked.

“Yep.” I grinned and nudged Ron’s shoulder with mine.

“Alright, bro, lay off.” He bumped me back.

Little-Harry rolled over and if not for Remus’ werewolf reflexes, he’d have hit the floor.

“Oops, easy there.” Remus lifted the still three quarters asleep boy into his arms. “I think I better put this pup to bed.” He nodded to us as he left the room.

“Yeah, we’d best make a move, too. Someone’s got to open the shop tomorrow.” Ron nodded in my direction.

“Really? On a Saturday?”

“Tuesday through Saturday.” I answered. “Mornings are muggle and afternoons are for magicals.”

“That would work.” Sirius nodded. “We’ll have to come down and see this shop.”

“You’re more than welcome. If you want to come over the full moon, we’ve a separate flat you can use.” I offered.

“Oh…” Sirius made an odd noise.

“What? You don’t think the uncles would have told us?” Ron asked.

“About Remus and his ‘furry little problem’ I think they called it?” I added.

“Oh…” Sirius grunted.

“What’s the problem? He’s obviously safe or you wouldn’t let him around little-Harry.” I stated bluntly.
“Most people don’t think that way.” Sirius grimaced.

“Most people aren’t Potters.” Ron countered.

Sirius snorted and laughed at the same time. “That is so true.”

Remus re-entered the room. “What’s so true?” He asked.

“Sirius said he’d have to come down and check out the shop.” I answered.

“And Harry offered the spare flat, over the full moon.” Ron took up the thread of the conversation.

“At which point Sirius grunted and Ron commented that the uncles had told us…” I added.

“…about your furry little problem. Sirius seemed surprised that we knew or would want to be around you.” Remus looked from me to Ron.

“And I said that you were obviously safe otherwise, you’d never have got near little-Harry.” Then back to me.

“Sirius said most people don’t think that way.” To Ron.

“To which, Ron said that most people aren’t Potters.” And me, again.

“To which, I said that is so true.” Sirius finished for us. “And.. that’s where you came in.”

Remus shuddered as he looked at us. “It was bad enough having James and Sirius finish each other’s sentences, don’t you pair start… Please?”

Ron and I looked at each other and laughed. “We don’t, not normally. I think it’s just because we’re so glad to be back together, again.” I answered for us. “Ron’s been working on his NEWTs and I’ve been concentrating on the shop, so we haven’t seen much of each other for months. But not any more. He’s finished his NEWTs and he was coming to stay with me permanently once he turned eighteen, but obviously that went out the window.” I huffed.

“Hey, it’s only a fortnight.” Ron protested.

“It’s fine, I don’t mind, just meant I had to apparate up and get a letter of authority from Father, just in case the muggles protest, as he’s not eighteen until the 3rd.” I went on, seeming to ignore Ron’s complaints, just as we had planned.

“Ah… that’s a smart idea.”

“Yeah, so we’re waiting until after then before Ron will make any major decisions as far as his future is concerned.” I said and finished on a yawn.

“But we’ve go plenty of time.” Ron said. “And if he’s yawning, we better get going. I don’t have my apparition licence yet, so he’s gonna have to take us.” He stood and dragged me to my feet. “Come on ya old fart, on ya feet.”

“You can’t apparate?” Sirius asked, frowning.

“O’ course I can, but I’m not getting fined, simply cause he’s tired.” Ron huffed.

“Ah… fair enough. This way then, you can apparate from the front hall.” Sirius lead the way out of the living room.
“I’ll get the basket from the kitchen.” Remus offered and headed in a different direction.

By the time we’d got our boots from the utility room, reached the front hall and put our boots back on, Remus was back with a basket full of shrunken containers.

“That should keep you going for a bit.” Sirius grinned.

“And stop us from over eating.” Remus added.

“We’re teenage boys, it won’t last long.” I snorted.

“Well, I’d say you’re fairly close to physical maturity, so the appetite should start to taper off, soon. Depending on how much physical exercise you get.” Remus tilted his head as he studied us.

“Gods, I hope so.” Ron huffed. “I’m so tired of being hungry all the time.”

“It won’t last much longer.” Remus assured him.

I yawned again and both Remus and Sirius pushed at us.

“You’d best get home before he falls asleep standing up.” Sirius laughed.

“Yeah…” Another yawn interrupted me. “Shop floo’s open from 2.30pm, drop in anytime.”

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Sunday found us being escorted into Snaprok’s office within Gringotts.

“Ah, Hadrien, good afternoon. How is business?”

“Good. That last estate is almost sorted, I think another hour or two and I should be done.” I replied.

“Excellent, excellent. We’ve had a request come in. Silas Undergate has approached us, requesting that we contact you on his behalf, with his Uncle’s death, he’s looking to close down the estates and sell them, Silas lives in the US and doesn’t intend to return to England.”

“Undergate? I don’t know the name, did he say how the shop came to his attention?”

“He did. His Uncle’s sister-in-law is a regular customer, Jeremina Tibbling.”

“Oh. Oh, that’s nice. I’ll have to thank her for the recommendation when I see her next. Do you have any other details?”

“We do. I’ve a folder with a contents listing for you.” Snaprok placed a folder on the desk. “Mr Undergate has put a letter of offer in with the listing and has stated that he’s prepared to negotiate on the final price. The only condition is that he wants the buildings completely empty by the end of January. I understand that’s a very small window of time, but the new owner’s are muggle and will be taking possession on the 19th of February. Unfortunately, between emptying the buildings and that date, Gringotts will be removing the wards and all traces of magic from the property. And as you are aware, that can take a number of days.”

“I’d like to study the listing, briefly, if I may, before making an offer.” I nodded towards the folder.
“While I do that, as you can see, my brother has joined me. He needs an identity test and a personal vault. Oh and he needs to formally add Prewett to his name, as I plan that he will be the Heir to the House Potter-Prewett, Cadet-House to Houses Potter and Prewett.”

“Certainly, Hadrien.” The goblin pushed the folder over to me and at the same time pressed a button on the desk. “You study that and I’ll see to the identity test.”

I picked up the folder and opened it, quickly reading the letter, before moving on to the actual listing, all the while listening with half an ear to the conversation between Ron and Snaprok. One manor house, two cottages, three barns, one stable block, two warehouses and one shop in Diagon alley. Oh, that’s a familiar shop, one day, if things stayed the same, the twins would open their joke shop there. I turned back to the offering letter and re-read it, Undergate was asking a very small price for what was a reasonably large property portfolio. Finally, I came to a decision and looked up.

“Snaprok? You said the estate had been sold to muggles? What about the shop in Diagon?”

“Ah, I thought you might have spotted that, but was unsure if it would interest you.”

“It does, but… not for me. I’m thinking of it as an investment property, I know a pair of young, still very young, men that it would suit and depending on the price, I’m prepared to buy it now and just hold onto it until they’re ready. Some short-term lease rentals, maybe.” I could see Ron nodding, off to the side. “Tell me about it, please.”

“Of course, Hadrien. 93 Diagon Alley, the corner of Diagon and Technic Alleys. Houses a triple level commercial premises, with approved potions lab basement, wizard-space storage room on the ground floor, alongside an office, with a two bedroom flat on the upper-most of the five levels. Four access points, three from the shop, a floo fireplace in the office, the main Diagon Alley doors, the supply entrance in Back Alley, the potions lab also has access to the Back Alley and of course the flat has a rear access and a sealable access to the shop. Wards are multi-layered, the flat has standard residential wards, while the entire premises, flat, lab, storage and shop have extensive commercial wards. I do have a listing, if needed.” The goblin stated in a professional manner.

“And the cost?”

“Ah… That’s interesting. Mr Undergate wants the entire estate disposed of, as quickly as possible. He’s only asking 10,000. That’s why I kept it out for you, I wasn’t sure if you would be interested, but I thought it prudent to present it to you.”

“Sold.” I snorted. “Now, the warehouses? Are they both sold and where are they?”

“We have interest in one, but at this point, it’s only interest and not in a particular one. Both are in Back Alley and have similar commercial wards. Once quite large structurally, but it is a physical size, while the second is externally smaller, but has interior expansion charms. Both have small offices, that are the primary apparition points. For the larger structure, Mr Undergate is asking 5,000, but due to the expansion charms, the smaller structure is so much larger internally and he’s asking 7,500 for it.”

“The second unit, please. Can you facilitate the sales?”

“Certainly. Ronson’s finished, he has completed his identity test and has his vault key. You mentioned the House of Potter-Prewett and Cadet-Houses?” Snaprok leant forward. “Are you ready to take the Oaths and name your Heir?”

“I am. For both the Cadet-House of Potter and also that of Prewett. My brother is to be Heir to both.”
I answered.

“Very well, I shall make the relevant appointments with our Regency and Inheritance departments. And will you require an appointment to present yourselves to the Wizengamot?”

“We will.” I huffed. “As much as I would like to avoid it, I understand that I can’t. Just.. if you would, please notify both Lady Prewett and the Potter Regent.”

“Certainly.” Snaprok made some notes. “Is there anything else I can help you with today?”

“Nope, we’re good with that.” I said after looking at Ron, who shook his head, but said nothing.

“Very good. Gentlemen, that concludes our business.” The goblin tucked all the parchment away. “Hadrien? I have some news for you, personally.” Snaprok grinned viciously, causing Ron to pull back a little.

“What now?” I whined and Ron looked at me, clearly questioning my sanity.

“Shatteraxe has formally petitioned to have you recognised as a member of the Axe clan.”

I dropped my head and swore, clearly, viciously and at length. Ron leant back in his chair and just looked at me.

“Potter Luck?” He asked.


“Well, it seems that Potter Luck likes you… there were sufficient objectors that the motion was overruled. But… I consider it fair to warn you that Shatteraxe was given leave for the matter to be reassessed in two years time.”

Ron stuck his chin out and nodded his head back and forward, while I continued to swear.

“Quite a vocabulary he’s got.” Snaprok told Ron.

“Yeah, but so far it’s all physical, which means he’s annoyed, but not truly pissed off. When he starts threatening someone with magic, warn them. He’s out for blood and means it.” Ron responded seriously.

“How…? What would make him that angry?” Snaprok frowned.

“I can’t tell you, it’s Family Business, but it is complete, I can say that it involved some of the people that were supposed to teach us but didn’t, instead they deliberately put us in life-threatening situations and it was usually due to Harry that we got out alive.”

“Ah… I shall warn Shatteraxe.”

“Do it. If he pushes too far, he’ll regret it.” The ‘for however long he lives’, remained unsaid.

I lifted my head. “Tell Shatteraxe, that if he acts without consulting me again, I shall withdraw from Gringotts, completely.” My voice was cold and hard.

Snaprok blinked in shock at the change in my voice, I’d never been anything but pleasant to him, but now I sat opposite him and let everything I’d lived through since starting at Hogwarts, colour my voice and posture. I was a warrior and it showed. (Not that I knew that, until Ron shared the memory with me in a pensieve later that night. He said it was something I needed to watch, as this was how
many of the D.A. saw me. He and Portia, included.)

“I shall, Lord Potter-Prewett.” He replied formally.

“You have my thanks, Account Manager Snaprok.” I answered just as formally. “Anything else I should be made aware of?”

“No, sir.” The goblin denied.

“In that case, we shall take our leave. I find I am in need of time in the air.” I stood and bowed slightly, Ron following my lead, after which we got the hell out of there. We quietly and calmly walked back to the cauldron, but I was obviously giving off vibes or an aura of ‘don’t mess with me or I’ll rip you apart’, as people actually cleared a path for us. Once in the cauldron courtyard, we apparated back to the flat and I dug out the broom I’d bought Ron and grabbed mine, from the rack I kept it on. We apparated from there to Hogsmeade and the public quidditch pitch, I needed to chase a snitch for a while.

Minutes passed while I tore through the air, I twisted and turned and pushed myself and my broom to it’s limits, forcing myself to focus on nothing but the snitch. Every time I let my mind wander to Shatteraxe’s actions, I found myself gritting my teeth, wanting to cast Colovaria Fuscia and Tarantallegra charms as well as a permanent obscurio at the bloody goblin. But I refused to let my temper control me, hence my pushing myself and focusing on the snitch.

I had no idea how much time had passed, but I did notice when Ron whistled. I pulled my broom to a halt and looked around for him. He whistled again and I turn my broom in his direction.

Oops…

Bill and Charlie were standing with him.

I let my broom float back to ground level and across the pitch to join them.

“Hey.” I grunted, still feeling out of sorts.

The Weasley brothers turned to Ron with a frown. “What’s with him?” Bill asked.

“Goblins.” Ron said.

“What’d they do?” Charlie asked.

“Threatened to adopt him.” Ron smirked.

Both looked at him with wide eyes before turning to look at me, then back to Ron.

“And he doesn’t like that?” Bill asked tentatively.

“No.” I snarled.

The two still-Weasley brothers turned to the no-longer-a-Weasley and asked. “How can we help?”

Ron looked them, I could read the emotion on his face, but they couldn’t. “Charlie? Seeker duel. Bill, give him your broom? Harry needs to unwind. Bill? Any other seekers staying on over the holidays?”

“Yeah, Gryffindor and Slytherin. Why?”
Charlie and I took to the air, Ron’s answer almost lost in the wind. “We’re going to need them, Harry’s going have to work to get passed this and no matter how good Harry says Charlie’s going to be, he’s only a first year.” Ron was in D.A. Drill Sargent mode.

Fifteen minutes and I could see Charlie wilting under the pressure of staying with me, when someone zipped passed him and yelled at him as they went passed.

“My turn.” The new flyer was older than Bill and wearing green, so I assumed they were a senior Slytherin and flew accordingly.

We dipped and rose and twisted turned, bumped and feinted and spun. And it went on and on. Twice more my opponents changed, but I kept going. When my fourth opponent fell behind me, I began to slow, the worst of my frustration finally gone. I lifted my face towards the sky and let the broom settle back to earth slowly. Finally, I felt at peace again.

Until I opened my eyes and saw the reception waiting for me...

A dozen students and three Professors. Charlie was doing his damnedest to hide from Professor McGonagall, after all he was a first year and even though it was the middle of the Christmas holidays, first and second years didn’t have permission to leave the school grounds. But it was Snape and Dumbledore stood off to one side, further back, that made me pause. At least McGonagall was with Ron.

Bollocks.

I heaved a sigh and walked over and stopped a few feet away.

“Good afternoon, Professor McGonagall.” I gave her a head and shoulders bow.

“The other Mr Potter-Prewett, I presume?” She gave me a tight-lipped smile.

“Hadrien Potter-Prewett, Professor.”

“After having spoken with your brother, I am given to understand you are not likely to be aware that Mr William Weasley came running up to the school almost an hour ago and yelled something about ‘if anyone wants to seeker duel, come down to the Hogsmeade pitch’ and ran off again.” She said.


“Cause Ronson said you need to chase a snitch and doing by yourself was too easy.” The Weasley in question, answered.

“Oh.” I huffed.

“Ah…” Professor McGonagall sighed. “I thought it might be something like that, but I hadn’t a chance to ask him, myself, he keeps dodging me, most likely trying to keep Charles from sight.” The two Weasley brother sighed and stopped sideling away. “Consider yourselves lucky, gentlemen, as it is Christmas break, I shall not remove points, but both of you will serve detention with Madam Hooch, tomorrow…” She hummed. “Three hours, I think, will suffice.” With that she turned back to me. “I do not appreciate our students being pushed by a professional seeker, Mr Potter-Prewett. I-”

“I’m not professional, Professor, I fly for the joy, the peace, not the game.” I cut in, watching as Snape and Dumbledore came towards us.
“Not a professional?”

“No, ma'am, and no intention of ever being one. I have my shop and that’s the totality of my ambitions.” I answered.

“Heh hum.” A throat clearing sound to my left, told me that the Headmaster and his spy had reached us.
While I was never going to be a Snape fan, after listening to Hogwarts detail exactly why Dumbledore was so certain of Snape’s loyalty and my having to recount every time the sour-faced potions Professor had either saved my live or stepped in before it got that bad, Ron and I could admit that he wasn’t the vile man that we had feared. That his treatment of us was actually part of his protection, as weird and as sad as that sounds. I still didn’t like him, but at least I understood why he was like he was and why Dumbledore supported him in being that way. However with the removal of snake-face, he had a chance for that to change.

Both McGonagall and I turned towards the two newcomers and from the corner of my eye I saw Ron sigh. This was going to be interesting.

“Headmaster.” Professor McGonagall nodded respectfully. “Mr Snape.”

“Minerva.” Dumbledore smiled, his eye twinkling brightly.

“Professor McGonagall.” Snape’s voice was quiet and thoughtful.

“Introductions?” Dumbledore asked.

“Certainly, Albus. These young men are Hadrien and Ronson Potter-Prewett. Gentlemen, Headmaster Albus Dumbledore and Hogwarts’ Potions Apprentice Severus Snape.” McGonagall gestured to each of us in turn and both men nodded to us.

“Snape?” I asked. “Aunt Lily’s friend?”

Both men startled, just slightly.

“Yes…” Snape replied hesitantly.

“She used to write about you, about how brilliant your were with potions and how much tutoring you did.” I said.

“Father thinks she was trying to recommend you as a tutor for us, but our schooling… advisor, had this grumpy old bat that he insisted teach us.” Ron added. Like me wasn’t all that happy at finding out that Snape wasn’t snake-face’s right hand man, and was more than a little surprised to find he was completely ‘Dumbledore’s Man’.

“We got our NEWTs, though so… I don’t suppose it matters.” I shrugged.

“You might have got a high O, but I missed out by five points.” Ron grumbled. We acted like the slightly snarky, one-line arguments between us were a common thing.

“Yes… I did. Until I decided to undertake my mastery.” Snape allowed.

“Cool, I’ll have to owl you, I’m trying to combine a pesticide with an air-freshener, so far, no luck.” I huffed.
“Holidays are, thankfully, fairly quiet, so I do have a little time to talk with like minded people.” Snape replied in his formal manner.

“Brilliant.” Ron beamed. “When we get home, I’ll get him to write it down, he’s got people asking and we can’t get it right.”

“I look forward to hearing from you.” Snape nodded, while Dumbledore could be seen to be twitching impatiently.

“Headmaster.” I nodded to him, my voice just a fraction colder, even though I’d tried not let it change. His sealing of Mum and Dad’s Wills and putting me with the Dursley’s, when I could have been raised by Father, still rankled.

“Mr Potter-Prewett.” He nodded to Ron. “Mr Potter-Prewett.” He looked at me a little more. “That was some very impressive flying, my boy.” Oh, how I hated being called ‘boy’. “Have you ever thought of trying out for a professional team?”

“No. And I will not be. My shop is more than enough for me.” I was adamant.

“That would be a loss the game.” Dumbledore tried his patented ‘I’m disappointed in you’, look.

“Too, bad. I fly for the pleasure, I’ve no interest in the game, outside of catching the snitch, itself.” I responded tartly.

“Ah…” He back-pedalled quickly. “I see. Well, you do that quite splendidly.” He smiled, turning on the grandfatherly charm. “I understand that you’re James Potter’s nephews?”

“So we’re told.” Ron answered blithely.

“So you’re told?”

“Well, we knew Uncle Jimmy, but it wasn’t until after Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Lily died that we worked out that our Uncle Jimmy was your, James Potter. Mother and Father knew, but neither of them were wanted by the Wizarding world and as a result, neither of them were comfortable talking about it.” Ron explained.

“So, yeah, we had to work it out for ourselves…” I finished.

“But you both came back to the Wizarding world.” Dumbledore started.

“Oh, no. We never left.” Ron corrected.

“Well, kinda. First trip to Diagon was… eleven?” I turned to Ron to ask.

“For you, yeah, ten for me.”

“That’s only cause you’re younger than me.”

“Uh… duh.” Ron shook his head.

“But you didn’t come forward as Potters until this year?” McGonagall asked.

“Not our fault none of the shopkeepers asked for a name.” Ron muttered, just loud enough to be heard.

“We didn’t have a vault at Gringotts, true. But that’s only because Father wasn’t comfortable with
the idea of a money source, that he couldn’t monitor.” I replied to McGonagall. “And we had Aurors for teachers, you can’t expect them to just walk down the alley without some type of glamour, now can you?” I knew that even McGonagall wore a glamour sometimes, when she went to Diagon Alley.

“That is true.” She nodded.

“Aurors?” Dumbledore asked.

“Uncle Gideon and Uncle Fabian. Until they disappeared. They were coming for dinner, I’d just got my OWL results, but they never turned up, we didn’t hear what happened to them until February this year. Mother decided that she needed to know and went down to Exeter and checked out the archives of the local newspapers, until she found what she wanted to know.”

“Oh, my.” McGonagall raised a hand to her chest in shock/surprise.

“It was only a few weeks later that Father heard the Leeds police suggesting people get their eighteen to twenty year olds, out of the city. The street gangs were targeting them and few were able to avoid being pulled in, the gangs were using blackmail, threats and drugs to get what they wanted.” I went on.

“Mother and Father decided that Harry had enough stuff for the shop he wanted, but while our original plan had him waiting until I finished my NEWTs and was eighteen, the danger of him stayed was climbing.” Ron took up the story. “So, after emptying the house up on the Dales, Harry went off to get started.”

“That meant Gringotts and a vault. The Ministry and all the joy that entailed.” I sighed.

Dumbledore turned to Ron. “And have you finished your NEWTs?”

“Yep, last exam was CoMC, last Sunday. Don’t have my results, yet, but I’m done...” Ron sighed blissfully, causing a few snickers from the senior students that were listening in.

“Then the idiot decided he couldn’t handle Mother and Father, alternately nagging or lecturing or ignoring him, so he came down to me, a fortnight earlier than expected.” I shook my head.

“Landed right in the middle of the ruddy storm, I hadn’t seen the news and up in Leeds, the weather was fine. I didn’t expect to almost freeze to death, before he opened the door.” Ron shuddered in remembered cold.

“Is that why we haven’t heard from Mum for a week?” Bill asked.

“Yep. No one’s going to send an owl out in that. Be cruel.” I answered.

“Oh, no wonder the school owls ignored me when I went to send a letter. I don’t suppose you’d deliver it for me? You are going for New Year’s aren’t you?” Charlie added.

“We are.” I started.

“Should teach them how to send a Messenger, Harry.” Ron cut me off before I could go any further.

“What?” Bill asked.

“A messenger?” McGonagall asked.

“Excuse me?” Snape asked. All three at the same time.
“Oh, I wanted to send messages to my girlfriend, she trained with us, but her parents are muggles. So, I couldn’t send an owl all the time, or a patronus. Not if she was in a muggle area or with muggles. That’s against the Statute. So, Harry created a Messenger charm that I can use.” Ron explained.

“Does that not still threaten the Statute?” Snape asked, frowning.

“Nope, because I can set conditions on when it delivers my message.” Ron had suggested that he and Portia would be a perfect excuse for the creation of the charm and that Mother and Father would have been a way to test it until it was right.

“I’m not sure I understand.” It was interesting to see Dumbledore flounder.

“After the Messenger is summoned, you give it a destination and a set of delivery conditions, then the message and off it goes. If it can match the delivery conditions within the timeframe, it will deliver the message, if it can’t, it returns and states ‘message undelivered’ and you decide your next move.” Ron’s reply was rather blasé.

“Surely, it’s not that simple?” Dumbledore asked.

“Oh, but it is.” I assured him. “Cast the charm, give the address, conditions and message and off it goes.”

“I would be quite interested to learn this… messenger charm.” Snape commented.

“Indeed, Severus, as would I.” Dumbledore tilted his head at me. “Would you be prepared to share?”

“Sure.” I shrugged. Ron and I had talked it over and saw no reason not to.

“Now?” Dumbledore gestured to the gathered student. “We do seem to have a small class in attendance.”

“Are you sure? I mean, yeah, I will, but they’re your students. You sure you want to open that bag of kneazles?”

“I have no issue.” Dumbledore replied and was cheered by the students.

“I do have a question, though.” Snape stated.

“Yes, fire away.”

“Is there a way to trace such a charm back to a sender. If a student were to send an abusive or threatening message?”

(Of course. Any Messenger sent or received within a set of wards, will register on those wards and the ward-archives will list it, the sender, the message, the receiver and the times sent and received. It will depend to a degree on your wards, as to how in depth the archive records the message. Some will record the message word for word, others with give a summary. For example, it may register as ‘business based message’, or ‘private love note’ or ‘stock summary’ or ‘product request’. I can’t guess what Hogwarts’ wards would register, the Headmaster would have a far better idea than I.” I answered.

“Lovely.” Dumbledore beamed. “Why don’t we have a seat and listen to Mr Potter-Prewett? Students, please note that while we are outside of Hogwarts and underage magic laws still apply, I will shield this area so anyone under anyone seventeen may use their wands as they would in a
classroom, I shall notify the Ministry of holding an external class. Please conjure cushions or chairs for yourselves.” A flurry of wand-waving and cushions appeared everywhere. I snagged one that went flying passed me and with a flick of my wand, stuck it to the shaft-tip of my broom and jumped up onto it like it was a very tall stool. Another wand movement and the footrests slid up the shaft and were at exactly the right height. I perched there and waited until the students and Professors were all seated, smiling slightly at McGonagall’s choice of seats, a lush armchair with deep cushions that she curled in, legs under herself, much like her Animagus form would curl up. Dumbledore’s chair was an old fashioned, shell-backed boudoir chair that raised a few eyebrows from the students. Snape’s a simple wingback armchair, that had a writing desk attached to one arm. Ron, Bill and Charlie were bundled up in big fluffy beanbags and Ron was quickly and quietly conjuring each student a hooded blanket. Some looked at them in confusion, but some knew what they were and were quick in getting them on.

“Oh, nice.” One Ravenclaw girl held the silky blanket up and rubbed it against her face.

“Alright. Everyone got a chair or a cushion?” I was greeted by lots of yeses and no no’s, so I moved on.

“Hands up, all those that can cast a patronus.” I requested and of the dozen or so students seated around me, five raised their hands. “Great, you lot are going to find this easy. But if you can conjure bluebell flames, you can cast the Messenger.”

For the next hour, Ron and I walked the group, including the Professors through casting and sending a Messenger. Some got it easily and others struggled, but all of them got it. I suggested that to Dumbledore that restrictions would have to be placed in the wards, to stop Messengers from reaching students during classes and exams. Perhaps limit them to the dorms and common rooms? That was up to him and he would need to discuss that with the other Professors and possibly the Board of Governors.

I also agreed to come to the school and meet with Professor Flitwick and to give more lessons. After extensive negotiations between Ron and Snape, it was decided that I would come up on Sunday afternoons and give lessons to a small class. It wasn’t just the Messenger, either. There were lessons on housekeeping, cleaning, customer service, muggle integration and how to apply charms, potions and transfig into their lives outside Hogwarts.

I found watching Ron talk with Snape to be a slightly scary sight.

This was a Ron that had been through a hell of a lot at my side and while he had times where he couldn’t deal with whatever situation, he always got passed it, sometimes it took longer than others, but he always got there. And this was no different. I’d used a pensieve and shown him everything Hogwarts had said. About Dumbledore, about Snape, about the Potters, about the Prewetts and every action we’d taken as a result. We might never personally like Snape, but we could respect what he’d done... to a point, anyway, enought to wait and see what he would do with a Voldemort-free future.

Ron's negotiations with Snape were brilliant, but then, this was tactics and that was his forte. I spent far more of the negotiations watching Dumbledore, McGonagall and the other students’ reactions. This was a good thing, here was a young man, not much older than them, arguing with Snape. This man was not treating Snape as the feared and grumpy potions apprentice, not at all, not this man was treating him like a professional, a student of his craft, someone to be respected, but not feared.

They started off arguing over a timeframe, how many hours I’d give, then it went to what subjects, before a complete deviation to how many students in each class, before back to subjects and the details within each subject. Then there was the location, did I come to Hogwarts or would classes be
held elsewhere and if so where and who would escort the students and… and… and…

And the negotiations went on far longer than the little class had. Before they’d been at it for ten
minutes, Dumbledore and I had sat back and looked at each other in amusement.

“Do you truly allow him to negotiate on your behalf?” McGonagall asked, some time later.

I laughed quietly. “Ron is a tactical genius, Professor, whatever ground he gains will be far more
than I would gain.” I dropped off my broom and conjured an armchair just like my favourite one that
I had tucked up against the windows in the flat, that horridly ugly thing I got from the Room of
Requirement.

“But Mr Snape is near ten years his senior.” She protested.

“That makes little difference to his ability to negotiate and can often lead to underestimation by his
opponents.” I paused. “Unlikely with Mr Snape, but anything can happen with a Potter.”

“It can at that.” She nodded in acknowledgement.

“As for this?” I jabbed a thumb in the direction of the almost heated discussion. “Ron knows how
important my shop is to me. If I had to choose between my shop and your students? I’m sorry,
you’ve already lost.” I shook my head. “What Ron is doing is making that clear to Mr Snape, that no
matter how much he argues, I’ll only give a certain amount of hours and only on certain days.”

“And you would abide by what they agree on?” Dumbledore had listened in on our conversation and
now showed his surprise.

“For the most part, sure. Professor, Ron isn’t just my brother, he’s also my Heir, if I can’t abide by my
Heir’s words, few would respect my House. Which is also why Ron’s demanded the remains of this
year as a trial and limited the ongoing contracts to one year.”

“Your… your Heir?” Dumbledore eyebrows rose sharply in surprise.

“Well, yeah. The House of Potter-Prewett is a Cadet-House to the Houses of both Potter and
Prewett, although, Father insisted that I wait until Ron is considered an adult in both the muggle and
magical worlds. So… I’ve yet to front the Wizengamot, but the paperwork is done and my Gringotts
account manager is scheduling the relevant appointments, probably for the week after Ron’s
birthday.” I shrugged, unconcernedly.

“Oh…” Professor McGonagall exclaimed quietly. “I hadn’t realised that you were…” She sat up a
little straighter. “My apologies for my casual behaviour, Master Potter-Prewett.”

“And that’s why I didn’t say anything, Professor. I don’t like the attention. It wasn’t an easy choice,
but in the end I couldn’t deny it had to be done. There were two main reasons behind the formation
of a Cadet-House, one was Vulnerable Elders and Protected Minors. Father’s Uncle Lawrence died
reasonably young and left behind a widow, Alina Cartwright, who went on to marry again. She and
her second husband, Joseph Peppering, had two daughters, one of which followed her father into the
Auror corps. Unfortunately Lauralynne and her father were casualties of the war against You-Know-
Who. The other daughter married a man whose muggleborn Mother was an early victim of You-
Know-Who’s Death-Eaters, Xeno Lovegood being the result.” Both McGonagall and Dumbledore
winced. “Yeah, exactly. It got the poor girl disowned by her muggle family and left to raise a son
alone. Pandora married Xeno and while they have a beautiful little girl, Pandora and Alina are
amongst the first to acknowledge that Xeno’s early life and his Mother’s suicide the day after his
seventeenth birthday, have affected him adversely.”
“That would be why Mr Lovegood withdrew from Hogwarts, halfway through his sixth year.” Professor McGonagall sighed.

“I would assume so.” Dumbledore agreed sadly.

“Well, because of all that and the fact that Alina and her brother are half-bloods, none of them can claim Head of Family. That brings me to the second reason, Family Grimoires. Alina’s maternal grandfather left the Family Grimoire in the care of Alina’s brother Ben, but due to it being their Mother’s side that were magical and they’re a patriarchal Family, Ben can’t be Head, even though he can be guardian to the Grimoire. And of course, Grimoire lore states that a Grimoire can only be handed to a magical male child of the same Family or in extreme cases, an Elder may hand it to a Head of another House, if that other House has brought that Elder into their care.”

“So…? You formed a Cadet-House and brought the Cartwright’s into that House? How is that possible?” McGonagall asked.

“Not yet, I can’t until after I’ve fronted the Wizengamot, but that’s coming in the next couple of sessions. Then I have to do things in stages. First the formation of the Cadet-House of House Potter and wait for three Luna cycles. Then bring Alina into the House, as a Protected Elder and wait another three cycles. Then Ben and his Grimoire, Ben being dependent on Alina for his living conditions allows me to offer him a place on my House. And another three cycles and Pandora, Xeno and little Luna will come under the banner of House Potter-Prewett, as the only descendants of a Protected Elder.” I stated. “St Mungo’s and Pandora are hoping that once Xeno is an accepted member of a House, Lady Magic may allow Xeno to touch our Family magic and balance out his magical instabilities.”

“That would also give their daughter a link to your Family magics.” McGonagall commented.

“That’s what we’re hoping.” I said. “It’s going to be a long, slow process, but we should be sorted by the end of the coming year.”

“Harry?” Bill’s voice cut into the quiet conversation.

“Yeah, Bill?” I turned to the redhead.

“I think they’re finished, they seem to be arguing about potions now.” Bill said.

“Potions?” Dumbledore blinked.

“They mentioned polyjuice, but…?” Bill trailed off, realising who he was talking to.

“Let me guess, Ron said three second years could brew that in a bathroom?” I sighed.

“Um… yes…?”

“I am never going to live that down.” I huffed.

“You did what?!” Snape spun around at McGonagall’s near-screech.

“What did they do?” The younger man demanded.

McGonagall huffed. “Apparently… brewed polyjuice in a bathroom in second year.”

“The equivalent of second year.” I corrected.
“Oh, my apologies, the equivalent of second year.” McGonagall repeated sarcastically.

“You’re not serious?!” Snape demanded.

“Uh, yeah.” Duh.

“Why would you do such a thing?” Dumbledore asked, the twinkle gone from his eyes.

“We had an instructor that was a criminal fraud, we knew it, but we had to prove it.” *Or near enough.* I shrugged. “And none of the adults around us knew or believed it.”

“He ended up in a residential mental ward of a hospital. The equivalent of… of… Harry? What’s the mental ward at St Mungo’s?” Ron started, then turned to me.

“Janus Thickery Ward.” I answered.

“Yeah, that’s it.” Ron nodded. “I knew it was Jan-something-or-other.”

“He was a complete incompetent. We didn’t miss him, that’s for sure.” I snorted.

“And you expect me to believe that two second year-”

“Three, Portia was with us.”

“Oh, that makes it so much- Who’s Portia?” Snape started to snarl, stopped and then snapped the question.

“Ron’s girlfriend, if he ever gets ruddy act together.” I huffed.

Snape just grunted.

Ron grinned. “So… I suppose you want to know the outcome?” He flopped down onto the arm of my chair and rested his elbow on my head, this was a common position for us and had been since the middle of first year.

“That would be handy.” My usual retaliation was to dig my fingers into his ribs and that’s what I did.

“Oi! Lay off, ya git!” He squawked and jumped up, gave me a dirty look and conjured his own chair, in Chuddley Channon orange. Ugh.

“Details, brother mine, details.” I flicked a colour change charm at his chair and sat back.

“Spoilsport.” He pouted for a few seconds, causing a few laughs. “Alright, details. So… One year contract with mutual option to renew. Sundays, 1pm to 5pm, lunch too if you want it. Subjects are pretty much whatever you want, but there are certain things that must be covered.” Ron answered formally and seriously. “General housekeeping and maintenance, things like dishwashing, cleaning, laundry, repairing a window or a roof, that type of thing. Customer service, not just being nice to a person, but how to get the customer what they need and not just what they want. Muggle integration and how to apply charms, potions and transfig into their lives outside Hogwarts. Basic first aid and potions and how to use them in the home. After that? Whatever your wand falls to. Class size will be twelve or sixteen, depending on the subject, the more practical ones, twelve, the more information based, sixteen. To be made up of equal numbers from each house.”

“Correction.” Snape cut in. “Equal number of seats for each house, but if one house refuses to attend, that is their loss.”
“Yeah, what he said.” Ron grinned, all formality gone. A few more students laughed.

“I have a few questions, gentlemen.” I rode over the laughter.

“Fire away.” Ron turned to face me.

“One year. Is that a school year or a calendar year or from opening feast to end of year feast?”

“Ah…?” Snape looked at Ron. “Well?”

“2nd of September to end of year feast?” Ron offered. “With… from tomorrow until the end of year feast as a trial, that either party can withdraw from with or without the agreement of the other party.”

Snape’s lips narrowed as he thought about it. “Fair. The terms are acceptable.” He nodded and both he and Ron faced me again.

“Supervision. I refuse to even consider this without some type of Hogwarts supervision.” I said.

Ron and Snape turned and exchanged looks, both nodding.

“It would depend on the subject matter as to which Professor should be in attendance.” Snape allowed.

“Agreed.” Ron said.

“Parental notification. I don’t care whether parents approve or not, but they should be notified that students will have the chance to attend extra-curricular sessions.”

“Agreed.” Both nodded.

“No student will be pressured to attend, nor will any student be pressured to not attend.”

“Agreed.” Both nodded.

“Subjects may be random, but students will be notified in advance of the subject matter, by way of a protean charmed sign-up sheet, that each Head of House will retain. I will try to work out a schedule for a few weeks in advance, but no guarantees.”

“Agreed.”

“Payment and position title?”

“Payment… that of a Professor Emeritus? Title? Guest Lecturer and Living With Magic?” Snape offered.

Ron pursed his lips and hummed.

“Living Skills. Sooner or later Harry’s gonna drop in a class on something muggle-based.” Ron warned and Snape nodded.

“Exams?”

Both Ron and Snape shook their heads. “At this stage, highly unlikely, but that would remain under discretion of the Wizarding Examinations Authority.” Snape clarified.

“Fair enough. Now a question for the Headmaster.” I turned to Dumbledore. “With no disrespect to
Mr Snape, intended… Why are you allowing him to negotiate on Hogwarts’ behalf?”

Snape twitched his lips in amusement at the look of befuddlement on Dumbledore’s face. Had no one ever questioned the man’s actions before? Even after Dad’s shade, Pettigrew, Sirius and little-Harry?

“Severus has my complete trust.” Dumbledore stated.

“Perhaps, but that is not an answer.”

“Oh… uh…” It was clear now, that I expected a proper answer and as he didn’t have one, he’d have to think fast, not a trait that Dumbledore was comfortable with outside a duel situation. “Severus is nearing the end of his apprenticeship, only a few more months and he’ll sit his Mastery exams. He will taking over as Potions Master for the coming school year, as well as Head of Slytherin House. He’s an extremely gifted potion creator, which requires that he be able to think clearly, calmly and logically. He’s young, it was only six years ago that he left here as a student, so he’s still familiar with the classes we have and their requirements. You stated that your brother is a tactical genius, Severus is as well. And like many young adults today, he’s lived through a dreadful time and emerged relatively unscathed.”

“But he had plenty of practice at that, with Uncle Jimmy and his friends.” I turned to Snape. “I’ve torn strips off of all three of them for that, bullying is bullying, no matter who does it. Expect formal apologies from Black and Lupin.” I turned back to Dumbledore. “Sorry for the interruption, Headmaster, please continue.”

“As many are aware, Severus was publically allied with many of the subversives, but has sworn under oath, before the Wizengamot that even prior to the death of V-… of Tom Riddle, he was not willingly a member of their society and had been forwarding information to the Aurors for a number of years. The Wizengamot cleared him of all but two charges and he was merely issued fines for those, that of failing to notify of a death, in a timely manner. A minor charge, considering his position and the information he had provided.” Ron and I blinked, we hadn’t known some of that, but Hogwarts was the first to state, she didn’t know everything. “And of course, I will still have to authorise it, not even Professor McGonagall as Deputy Headmistress can sign off on the hiring of staff, which is essentially what this is. So while Severus and Mr Potter-Prewett can negotiate as much as they like, you and I still have the final say.”

I nodded. “That is true. Thank you for the explanation. There were a number of things clarified, that I hadn’t considered, as yet.” I nodded. “When shall we finalise this? It is getting a little late in the afternoon for such things.”

Dumbledore looked around, surprised to see that evening was drawing in on us.

“Yes, it appears it is. Perhaps tomorrow? Would you like to join us for lunch? Finalising and writing up your contract should likely take the better part of the afternoon. And your first formal class… giving the returning students a chance to speak to those who stayed… perhaps we could say…? The first Sunday of the New Year? The sixth?”

Ron and I looked at each other. I hadn’t planned on ever coming to Hogwarts publicly, but this was just another layer of camouflage and protection, who’d suspect that Hogwarts would accept an illegal immigrant (of sorts) as a teacher?

“I’d like to bring Ron along.” I started.

“And you should probably speak to Mother and Father, too, Harry. They’re the lawyers, if we’re
dealing in contracts, it’s a good idea.” Ron added.

“True. I’ll telephone them when we get home.” I nodded before turning back to Dumbledore.
“Definitely Ron and probably a parent… hmmm… or two… more likely…? I don’t know.”

“Hard to say.” Ron agreed. “Mother might do the overprotective thing, but Father’s more familiar with contracts, Mother’s more familiar with a courtroom.”

“A courtroom?” McGonagall asked.

“Oh, both are lawyers, Father specialises in family law while Mother is a Criminal Prosecutor.” Ron answered.

“I see…” it was clear that Dumbledore didn’t see, but if he wanted to pretend, I would let him trip himself up later. “Shall we say… midday? I’ll have someone meet you at the Gates.”

“At this point… that sounds fine, but I’d like to confirm that in the morning, if you don’t mind? After having spoken to Mother and Father.”

“Of course, my boy, of course.” Dumbledore twinkled away at me.

A rumbling noise was heard and I turned to Ron.

“Not me.” He held up his hands.

“Uh, no, that would be me.” Bill went nearly as red as his hair.

“I think we’re done for today, Mr Weasley. Let’s get you and your classmates back to the school, along with your brother.” Professor McGonagall wasn’t letting Bill and Charlie off the hook.

“Yes, Professor.” They both sighed.

“Charlie? You got that letter for your Mum?” I asked.

“Yes!” Charlie dug around in his robe pocket. “I’d planned to send it from the owl post office, but… we never got that far.” He handed over a crumbled up letter.

“I’ll get this to her tonight, maybe there’ll be a reply tomorrow, maybe not.” I warned.

“Whatever, we were just getting worried, Mum always writes once a week and to not hear from her for nearly three weeks?” Bill added.

“We understand and will do what we can.” I patted him on the shoulder. “Now, off you hop. For those of you that don’t live in the south, you might want to write to your parents before sending them a Messenger, I’m told have bluebell flames suddenly appear in front of you and start talking is a bit of a shock the first time. Be nice and give them some warning. Alright?”

A round of giggling ‘yes, sir’ answered me and the students began to gather around Professor McGonagall.

“If you bring your notes on your project, depending on time, we may have a chance to discuss the subject after you’ve finished with the Headmaster.” Snape offered.

“That would be helpful, Mr Snape. Thank you.”

“And I should thank you for speaking to Potter’s friends.” Snape said hesitantly.
“They were idiots, bullying idiots, but having to raise little-Harry? It’s given them a different outlook on their behaviour. The thought of little-Harry being bullied like they did to you, literally made Black sick. Lupin is made of stronger stuff, must be the werewolf, but even he went a little grey.”

“You’re aware of his… condition?” Dumbledore asked cautiously.

“Of course, have been for years. One of the things, I’m working on is a way of making him un-infectious. I don’t believe that lycanthropy will ever be ‘cured’, but if we can make it so that a bite from a werewolf is no longer infectious, unless the victim wants to be infected? That would go a long way towards acceptance.” I answered.

“Either that or something that will sedate them for the entire transition.” Ron added.

“Preferably both.” I agreed.

Snape’s eyes widened and narrowed as Ron and I spoke, while Dumbledore just gaped at us. A rumble of Snape’s stomach called a halt to the discussion.

“Tomorrow, gentlemen, unless notified otherwise. Good evening.” I said and Ron and I bowed slightly to them, summoned our brooms and after banishing all the cushions, chairs and beanbags, apparated away.

We landed in the hall of the shop and quickly made our way upstairs.

“I’ll see to updating Mother and Father, if you deliver Charlie’s letter.” Ron offered.

“Ta, mate. Pull out the leftovers from Sirius and Remus, too?” I asked.

“Will do, get going. The sooner you go, the sooner you get back. Tell Mu- Aunt Molly, that if she hasn’t already sent them, we can drop off the boys’ Christmas pressies tomorrow.”

“Will do.” I headed straight back downstairs to floo the Burrow.

Seven o’clock the next evening rolled around and Mother, Father, Ron, Sirius and I were exhausted. Apparently signing on at Hogwarts is as much a ceremonial thing, as it is an educational or legal thing. The final negotiations were witnessed by a goblin, from Gringotts’ Contractual Documents department, a witch from the Wizengamot, Lady Delvine Nasterberry, a representative of the Wizarding Examination Authority, Lady Griselda Marchbanks and a few invited guests that were introduced, but meant little to me. On my side, after being warned by Snape, I invited a few others. Sirius and Lady Muriel as Regent and Lady of my Houses, as I had yet to complete the formal requirements for either Cadet-House, Moody as a senior Auror, Ron as negotiator and our ‘parents’ for their legal knowledge.

The actual negotiations were a repeat of the day before, with Dumbledore and I nominating Snape and Ron as negotiators. And both seemed to revel in it, there was no heat behind the arguments but the intensity and seriousness of the whole thing, I found hilarious and was glad that Sirius was seated behind me. I’m sure that if I saw his face, I would have broken down in laughter. But I somehow managed to hold it together until they were done, while Lady Marchbanks’ aide was furiously scribbling down each detail as it was agreed upon, before handing his notes to the goblin, to compare and compile the final contract.
Each clause was read out before and after it was written down and we had to agree to it both times, signing as we went. Then a final summary was detailed, agreed upon and ceremoniously signed, whereupon I was handed a plaque bearing my name and position. I was then escorted to the second floor of the DADA tower, to the rooms that were to be mine, classroom and office. Then it was back to the Headmaster’s office and a chance to officially meet the other Professors and staff and join them for drinks. I… don’t… do… drinks…

I was beginning to regret agreeing to this, until Mother quietly took me aside and pointed out that, with Sirius, her and Father present, I had just cemented Ron and I as legal, pre-existing members of this time-stream and society. And with Ron’s comments previously about Portia, the likelihood of her being outed as a ‘stream-jumper’, as Mother called it, was extremely scarce. This one event, as annoying as I found it, had secured our positions in the Wizarding world.

Me, as a soon to be acknowledge Master of a joint Cadet-House, a businessman and a Hogwarts’ Lecturer. Ron, as my Heir, a newly graduated NEWT student and a gifted tactician who was interested in joining the Auror corps. Portia, as Ron’s muggleborn girlfriend, a studying NEWT student and intended seneschal of the afore-mentioned join Cadet-Houses.

And now we were just exhausted. I looked over at Ron and he shrugged, he knew what I was asking. Do we make these people go home or do we just point them in the direction of a bed? I huffed a sigh and dragged myself to my feet.

“Sit, stay.” I pointed at Sirius, who ’woofed’ at me in response. “Mother, Father come on, the flat’s just where you left it and I’ve even got a change of clothes for you. Shower, change and come back over, I’ll have food ready by then.” I had to nudge Father to get him to his feet, but Mother was up and already heading in the direction of a shower. I got Father as far as the flat’s front door, I wasn’t going any further as Mother had a tendency to shed her clothes en-route to the shower, especially after society social functions. And basically, that’s what the afternoon was.

As I headed back to the main flat, I considered whether or not I should contact Remus. In the end, I decided that if Sirius was as exhausted as I was, having little-Harry around could only brighten up the evening. And wouldn’t you know it, Ron was thinking along the same lines, as when I reached he and Sirius, the two were tiredly arguing the matter. I said nothing but dug out the accommodation trunk and set it up against the wall that the living room shared with my bedroom. Then I flicked my wrist and let my wand fall into my hand.

“Nuntio expecto.” I sighed and watched the flames flicker and build, like my energy they were subdued. “Message to Remus Lupin, deliver when no muggles within hearing… Pack up little-Harry and get your butt-side down here. We’re too tired to move.” I glanced at Ron and gave him a pointed look, nodding to Sirius. He nodded back. “We’ll feed and house you tonight. Plus there’s something you and Sirius need to be told and bluntly… I’m too tired to tell it twice. Hurry up, Moony.”

That last word had Sirius sitting up in a hurry. He had not, even once, mentioned the name ‘Moony’ to me, either in letters or when Ron and I had visited for Yule.

“What did you call him?” Sirius’ voice was quiet, calm and very, very clear.

“Moony.” I answered. “And yes, I plan to explain how I know it and no, it wasn’t James. But… I’d prefer to wait until he gets here, cause like I said, once is more than enough when it comes to explaining this.”

Sirius frowned at me.
“I’ll happily swear that I mean no harm to you, Remus or little-Harry.” I snorted.

“In fact once we’re finished, you understand why harming little-Harry is the one thing Harry cannot and will not even contemplate doing. He would die for him… I’d prefer that they both lived, but if the choice was him or little-Harry, he’ll see that little-Harry lives, Sirius. Above all else, he’ll see that he lives.”

Sirius blinked at the harshness in Ron’s voice, something he’d not heard before. A spluttering of flames appeared in front of us and Remus voice emerged.

“Can we floo? Harry’s not keen on apparition at the best of times.”

“Nuntio expecto.” Another set of flames emerged from my wand. “Reply to Remus Lupin, no conditions. Of course you can. Floo address is ‘The Snitch’s Nest’ and the password is ‘Jumpers’. Whenever you’re ready.”

While we waited for Remus, Mother and Father, I pointed out the trunk to Sirius and told him to shower and change, Ron would bring him some clothes and I would see to dinner. I figured that we could all do with something substantial, but light with it, so I came up with stewed tomatoes, zucchini and onions, with poached eggs for the adults and a scrambled egg for little-Harry.

When we heard the floo downstairs whoosh, Ron went to fetch Remus and little-Harry, they were happily ensconced in the oversized armchairs that made up our lounge suite when Sirius stumbled out of the trunk. He threw me a considered look, but said nothing as he joined the pair. Mother and Father wandered in, looking very relaxed and almost boneless and a part of my mind shuddered away from how they’d gotten that way. I just didn’t need to know.

After dinner Harry chased my snitch around the living room, bouncing off of chairs and people, egged on by Sirius and Ron, laughed at and with by Remus and me, while Mother and Father watched on quietly. Eventually, he wound down, going from lap to lap for cuddles and stories. He settled on my lap and while I told him hiking through the forest of Dean with Ron and Portia, he fell asleep.

“He’s out like light.” I smiled down at him, before looking up at Sirius and Remus as they sat opposite Ron and I.

“Alright, Hadrien, explain.” Remus sat beside Sirius on an old but sturdy settee, with Mother and Father sharing a loveseat nearest the wood-fired stove that we used as a heater.

“You need to let me finish, once I start. Please?” I asked, almost begging.

“Why do I not like the sounds of that?” Sirius grimaced.

“Because you won’t.” Ron warned.

“I really don’t like the sounds of this.” Sirius looked at Remus and screwed his face up, almost whining.

“Hush, Siri. Let Hadrien speak.” Remus turned from Sirius to me. “We didn’t know about you two. James never said anything.”

“Yeah… there’s a reason for that.” I winced. “Let me tell the entire story and then we’ll talk. Please?”

Remus and Sirius shared a long complicated wordless conversation, before Sirius sighed.
“Begin.” He waved a hand.

I took a deep breath, letting it whoosh out quietly.

“First thing I’ll say is this… I was Harry James Potter, son of James Fleamont Potter and Lillian Jessica Potter nee Evans. And this is how I became Hadrien Blaire Potter, son of Webster Henry Potter and Rachel Anne Potter nee Browning and how Ronald Bilius Weasley became my younger brother Ronson Maitland Potter.”

I watched as their eyes widened almost alarmingly.

“Yes, I did say that. Now are you ready to listen? Will you keep an open mind?” I asked.

Neither replied in words, but both nodded.

Another deep breath and I began.

“It started with my best mate, Ron, and I in a dungeon…”


I watched as their eyes widened almost alarmingly.

“Yes, I did that. Now are you ready to listen? Will you keep an open mind?” I asked.

Neither replied in words, but both nodded.

Another deep breath and I began.

“It started with my best mate Ron and I in a dungeon…”

Sirius Black stared at us, the two versions of Harry Potter. Little-Harry, the one rescued from the Dursleys’ generous ‘care’ and me, the almost nineteen year old time-stream ‘jumper’. Hearing about my life and how I came to be where I was, obviously scared the collywobbles out of the prankster and left him completely incapable of speaking.

“Now what?” Remus asked.

“Now they move forward.” Father answered for me and Ron.

“But…?” Remus objected.

“But what? There are no buts, not now.” Father corrected.

Remus tilted his head and frowned.


“Hadrien?” Father turned me. “Care to elaborate?”

“Sure, why not?” I grinned. “First up… I’ll open the shop tomorrow, as per what has become usual for me. I’ll send an owl to Ben Cartwright and ask him to man the shop for a week or so, some time in January, to be confirmed when. I’ll sit down and work out an offer on the Undergate estate and submit that to Gringotts. Take Ron and have New Year’s with the Weasley clan. In January, I’ll empty the Undergate estate and store the contents in the new warehouse that I’ve just bought through Gringotts, probably with the help of Ron. I’ll write up a plan for my Hogwarts’ classes and get them approved by Dumbledore. Begin to teach said classes.” I paused. “Then it’s a case of various repetitions. I’ll give Ron until the end of February before I start nagging him, in regards to a job. I don’t mind if he wants to work with me, go into business for himself, join the Aurors or if it’s something completely different. It’s fine… as long as he make a call by the end of February.” I mock-frowned at Ron. “After that? We wait for Portia to arrive. Once she does, we get her through the process of a new identity and sort out what’s happening with her NEWTs and support her through that. Then she’ll get the same as Ron, two months of peace, before the nagging begins.”
“And somewhere in that…” Ron added. “We’ll visit Gringotts to take the Cadet-House Oaths and attend the Wizengamot to formalise the creation of House Potter-Prewett.”

“And what of us?” Remus asked.

“Well, before you leave here, I’ll be getting an Unbreakable Vow from you both, to not disclose our secrets in any way to anyone, be they living, dead or otherwise. Then-”

“Otherwise?” Sirius cut in.

“Are portraits living or dead?” Ron asked almost seriously.

“Oh… Uh…” Sirius floundered for a moment. “I don’t know…”

“Neither do we, which is why we say, ‘living, dead or otherwise’. I explained.

“So… that’s it?” Remus asked. “You’re just going to ignore all this?”

“What would you have me do, Remus? Huh?” I asked.

“I… I… I don’t know… but… surely there’s something…”

“There is… and we’re doing it. We’re living. “ I assured him.

“But what about the Hallows?”

“What of them? The cloak was handed down to James Potter, who in turn left it to his son, but in this time-stream, Harry Potter is little-Harry, so he get’s it, I still have the cloak from my time-stream. It’s been weakened a little by the transition to this time-stream, but I still have it. As for the Resurrection Stone, I’ve claimed that as the eldest magical descendant of the Peverells’. Dumbledore has the wand, now. Even if he leaves it to little-Harry, because I have the stone, little-Harry will never have to go through what Hogwarts told me, was the hell that becoming the Master of Death entails.”

“You don’t want to be Lord Peverell?” Sirius asked.

“No, Gods, no. But even if I did, it would take a crap-load of finagling for Gringotts, before I could. The Potter’s married into the Peverell family, Iolanthe Peverell married Hardwin Potter, son of Linfred of Stinchcombe, who was the first to be called ‘Potter’. So, for me to take the Peverell title, there’d have to be a lot changes, to start with… I’d have to denounce the name of Potter and quite bluntly, in this political climate that would be suicide. And I’ve got no desire to put myself or my brother on some fan’s hit-list.”

“Huh? I didn’t know.” Sirius said.

“Why would you? The only reason I know, is because Snaprok and Shatteraxe looked into it, back in March. I wasn’t all that polite in my comments in response.”

“Like Sunday?” Ron asked laughing.

“Pretty much.” I nodded.

“Sunday?” Remus asked.

“We went into Gringotts to get my paperwork done and Snaprok told Harry that Shatteraxe had made a formal petition to recognise Harry as a member of the Axe clan.” Ron smirked.
Sirius and Remus didn’t react, but given the way they froze, it was obvious that they were not capable of reacting.

After watching them for a minute and seeing no change, I waved my wand and floated little-Harry into the air and slid out from under him. Once standing I lowered little-Harry to the sofa and wandered into the kitchen to make tea.

“You’re going to just leave them like that?” Mother asked slightly amused.

“Only until the tea is ready.” I assured her.

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New Year’s eve that year was a Monday. And remember who doesn’t open the shop on Mondays? Yep.... So Ron was having a lie in and I was enjoying the morning, a mug of tea in my hands. I sat in my ugly armchair, tucked up beside the window, just gazing out into the brilliant morning.

A flicker of blue light caught my eye and drew my attention.

“Um… Hello? Hadrien? It’s Bill Weasley. Um… Professor Dumbledore’s said that if I can get someone to come and get me and Charlie, we can go home for New Year’s and come back on the train on Wednesday. He suggested that we ask you and make it a surprise for Mum and Dad. Will you? Please?” The flames flickered and faded away.

I snorted, I didn’t know whether to be amused at Bill or annoyed with Dumbledore. But after a few moments, I decided that it wasn’t worth the aggravation, amusement was easier.

“Nuntio expecto.” I waited for the flames to build. “Reply to Bill Weasley. No conditions. Message…” I smirked and made sure my voice was overly bright. “Good morning, Bill Weasley! Of course I’ll come and fetch you and Charlie. I’ll meet you at the school gates, in half an hour. But fair warning, if you’re keeping this as a surprise for your parents, you’re going to have spend part of the day here, as Ron and I aren’t expected at the Burrow until five-ish.” I let the brightness leave my voice. “Oh and Bill? The next time you treat me as anything other than a cousin, outside of a classroom, you can expect retaliation… try it and I’ll tell your Mother, brat.” I flicked my wand and the flames flared and faded away.

I got to my feet and wandered into the kitchen, debating with myself. Should I wake Ron and tell him, or should I just leave a message…? Then I hit me, this was exactly what the Messenger was have been created for, at least as far as we were telling anyone.


I snorted in amusement as the flames danced around the space, but I refused to be distracted from my self-appointed task. Downstairs, I dropped floo powder into the floo as I said ‘The Three Broomsticks’, clearly but not loudly and waited for everything to turn green. Emerging from the fireplace, I gave Madam Rosmerta a small bow and headed for the door.

But I paused before I got there.
“Madam Rosmerta? It’s not something I’d given thought to before, but is there a public floo-fireplace in the village, or must you put up with the public tromping through your business, at all hours of the day?”

The blonde woman laughed. “There is, young sir. It’s charmed that anyone that lives at Hogwarts can’t see it, don’t know how they did that, but that’s the restriction. To the amusement of a few, that also includes the staff. You’ll find it in the ‘ruins’ of the Cock and Bull, up the Way and turn right, second building on you left. Then there’s the station, but that is the other side of the lake, so it’s not as useful.”

“Thank you, Madam.” I gave a second bow and left.

Up Carriage Way towards the castle, I ambled along, pausing at Honeydukes to eye the window, but it was a bit early in the morning for them to be open. A robe in Gladrags caught my attention and I decided that I’d have to make time to get some new robes, muggle clothes and simple robes were fine for the shop, but not for teaching at Hogwarts. Oh, and lookee there, Dervish and Banges, I’d have to make time to check out the competition. But not today.

Today I was playing ‘fetch a Weasley’.

As I reached the Gates, I was greeted by the sight of Bill and Charlie standing just inside the Gates with Professor McGonagall.

“Good morning.” I chirped brightly and was greeted by two incredulous looks and one rather amused McGonagall.

“Good morning, Hadrien. Thank you for agreeing to collect the Mr’s Weasley, although I do think you scared the senior of the two, I distinctly heard an ‘eep’ from him. Threatening to talk to their Mother is a cruel punishment, I shall have to remember it.” She gave a genteel half curtsey and stepped back. “Through you go, gentlemen. And please remember that you will either need to catch the express back on Wednesday, floo to the station or have someone apparate you to the station to join your classmates in the carriages.”

“Yes, Professor McGonagall.” Both boys said, but Bill added a question. “Should we send a Messenger to you to inform you, what we’re going to do?”

Professor McGonagall gave her small, tight-lipped smile. “That would be much appreciated, Mr Weasley. Now, off you go, I’ve too many other things that require my attention, to just stand here and wait on your departure. Shoo.” She flicked her fingers at them.

Both boys gave her a grin and darted through the partially open Gates, backpacks hanging from their hands.

“Good morning, Weasley’s one and two.” I smiled at them.

“Morning Harry.” Charlie was Charlie, as laid back as ever.

“Good morning, Hadrien.” Bill was a little hesitant.

“Right, then. Let’s get a move on, I need another cuppa.” I held out an arm and Bill clasped his hand around my wrist, while Charlie held my hand, tightly. “Ease up, there, Charlie. Apparition doesn’t hurt.” The grip on my hand loosened but stayed firm. “Ready?” Both nodded and closed their eyes. I focused on the hallway in front of the floo-fireplace near the Lane access to my shop and willed us to be there.
Crack.

I waited for the boys to open their eyes. First Bill, then Charlie, looked at me in surprise.

“What? Were you expecting it to hurt?” I asked.

“It’s never been comfortable before, but that was easy.” Bill whispered, still slightly shocked.

“Eh, magic’s always come easy to me, the only place I struggle at all is theory, but even there, it’s not so bad.” I replied. “Now, come on, upstairs. Time for breakfast.”

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First class. Right. I wasn’t nearly ready, but hey? I always responded better with very little planning. Entering the room, I saw that there were four separate groups of chairs and desks. Well, that wouldn’t do. I flicked my wand into my hand and set about creating the layout I wanted. I based it on a movie theatre, with three rows of raised seating but in a semi circular setting. The lower row held eight seats and the middle row held twelve, but in a staggered format against the lower rank. The third row, was also staggered against the middle row, only this time, with sixteen seats. The idea being that any staff, head of house or concerned parent that wished to attend, would sit in the rear row while the lower two were for the students. I based each seat on the one that Snape had conjured at the quidditch pitch, a comfortable looking armchair with flip up writing desk, that could be moved from one side to another, depending on whether a student was left or right handed. All of them were the darker of their house colour, trimmed in the lighter colour. So, a dark grey with emerald green trim for the Slytherins’, Hufflepuff’s had Black with yellow trim, Ravenclaw’s were dark bronze with a subdued cornflower blue, while the Gryffindors’ had dark scarlet and gold. Yes, I split them by house, but only because I needed them comfortable and I couldn’t see forcing unwilling students to mingle, would make them comfortable.

A quiet tapping at the open door announce the first student.

“Um, hello?” The little ‘Puff’s greeting was more a question than a comment.

“Good afternoon, Miss, come on in. And leave the door open, if you would?” I replied and the girl entered the room slowly. “First or second rows, please.” I gestured to the yellow seats.

“Yes, sir.” She limped across to a seat.

“Miss?” I asked, trying not to be threatening.

“Sir?”

“Please be aware of there being no one else here, just yet, when I ask… Why are you limping?”

“Oh… um… I was injured as a child and the doctors were only able to repair so much of the damage to my leg.” She answered.

“Muggleborn?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you spoken to Madam Pomfrey? There may still be a chance of repairing the damage, even
“Now.” I suggested.

“Oh… no, sir… I… I didn’t even think about it.” She frowned.

“Well, perhaps you could speak with her, I’m not saying that she will definitely be able to help, just that there may be a chance.” I didn’t want to get her hopes up too much.

“Even if she can only help with the pain, sir, that would be great, I’m used to limping, but the pain sometimes gets too much.” She whispered.

“That… she can help with, almost certainly.” A noise in the hall heralded the arrival of the rest of the students. As they clustered around the door, I turned to face them. “Alright, everyone in, find a seat, in the first two rows, the back row is for any staff that want to attend. Come on, spread out, make yourselves comfortable, we’re here for four hours. I will give you a fifteen minute break in the middle for a trip to the loo’s.”

Once they were seated and had quietened down again I continued. “Was anyone here, at the quidditch pitch when I did the Messenger class for the Headmaster?” One lonely hand rose. “Good, so you’ve spoken to your friends, yes?” A nod. “Even better. What we’ll cover today will be that Messenger and the restrictions that the Headmaster has put on it’s use.” A few Slytherins grumbled at hearing there were restrictions.

“To start with… no Messengers during classes or exams. Anyone found to have deliberately sent a Messenger to a student during a class will loose points and serve detentions, anyone deliberately sending a Messenger to a student in exams, will find themselves in front of the Headmaster defending their actions. Anyone that receives a Messenger during class, will be questioned and if they were aware of the messenger incoming, they will loose points and serve detentions. Anyone receiving a Messenger during an exam… will have to provide the memory of the Messenger and may have to resit the entire exam, if it’s found that the Messenger provided any information on the examining subject.” I flicked my wand and sent a flock of parchment into the air, one settling on each desk. “The security ward around Hogwarts will record each and every Messenger sent or received within Hogwarts grounds. That is the entire message will be recorded, so think carefully about sending a love-note to your sweetheart, as the Headmaster may read it.” There was a few snickers at that and I wondered how many students would send one just to make the Headmaster read it? “Any threatening or abusive Messengers will be treated like threatening mail and will result in the Aurors and you Head of Family being called. Any message that the wards interpret as being detrimental to your health, either physical, emotional or mental, will be forwarded to the Headmaster, immediately. And fair warning, those wards have a thousand years worth of experience to gauge your messages by.”

Everyone was focused now, their eyes flicking from me to the parchment.

“You’ve five minutes to read through the conditions of use, before I continue.” I waved a hand and settled myself into a conjured version of my ugly chair, to wait. While I did, two staff members, Professor Sprout and Madam Pomfrey peeked around the edge of the door, I gestured them in and waved them up to the back row of seats.

After five minutes, I tapped my wand against the tiny gong on the end table that sat beside my chair. It took almost another minute, but slowly the students focused on me.

“Yes, you’ve had a few minutes to study the rules of use for the Messenger. Now, you’ll learn how to actually conjure a Messenger of your own. Let’s start with the incantation…” I focused on the students and like with the D.A., I got down to the itty-gritty of teaching.
“Alright, Ron. I said I’d give you until the end of February to decide what you wanted to do, before I started nagging.” I dropped into my ugly armchair and faced Ron, where he was draped across the couch opposite me. “What have you come up with?”

“Geez, bro, you’re a bit slow.” Ron smirked at me.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. I met with Moody last week and he run me through the Gauntlet, before taking me to see Scrimgeour. I start training with Moody this coming Monday.”

“Oh… okay.” I huffed. “Any reason you didn’t tell me? I mean…”

“I wanted to see how long it would take you to figure it out and boy, was Bill right.”

“About… what…?”

“You’re completely clueless.” Ron laughed.

“I am not.”

“Yes… you… are…” Ron sat up. “Look, we did the Wizengamot thing and got all the Head of House crap out of the way, right?”

“Yes…?”

“And those wizards, the ones that approached us, they wanted to talk about all sorts of things, and you? You just ignored the whole lot of them, every time one went off on a tangent and tried to get us to visit their homes, you basically shut them down, every single time, but you did it in such a way that the poor buggers can’t cry foul, because they weren’t being upfront and you were. Then there were the witches that wanted your attention and you just ignored anything and everything personal, you were only focused on the business at hand and everything else was discarded. And like the wizards, they couldn’t do anything about it. Not even when they started fronting up to the shop, you were clear that the magical side of the shop only open for those hours and that was it. When the time was up, you politely and firmly escorted them from the premises and refused to even consider allowing them into your private space or personal time.” He huffed a laugh. “It was so cool to watch them flounder, they wanted your attention and you couldn’t care less and it showed. Then there’s the students at Hogwarts.”

“Hogwarts?”

“Bill says there’s a betting pool. Half a dozen sixth and seventh years girls have approached you for private lessons and you just knock ‘em all back. Even the two, so-called, most beautiful girls in the school. And you haven’t even seen them. The pool now is, are you gay, would the same thing happen if the boys were to approach you?”

“What?!?” I screeched.

“Charlie laughed himself almost sick. He said if Bill wasn’t pretty enough to draw your eye, then no
one at Hogwarts was.”

“What the hell…?!?”

“I coulda told ‘em, but where’s the fun in that? I know you’re not gay, I mean, I saw you with Cho and Ginny, but until you meet the right girl, you just don’t see them.” Ron stood. “Don’t panic… they’ll figure it out… eventually.” He wandered into the kitchen. “Fancy a burger for dinner?”

Easter holidays were a godsend for teachers, I discovered. Not me personally, but all the others were almost as excited as the students, that they had a week off. Me, I got two Sunday’s off, as the express headed back to London on the Saturday morning and returned the Sunday evening, a week later. But I still was at Hogwarts.

Who’d have ever thought that I would ever voluntarily spend time with the greasy bat of the dungeons, one Severus Snape? I wouldn’t have. Ron laughed himself almost sick when I told him, I was spending the day with Snape. But I really wanted to get that air-freshening pesticide right.

What I’d given Luna was good, but not right, it kept turning her curtains yellow… and not a nice yellow, either.

So… here I was in a potions lab with Snape, working on creating a new potion.

“You’re quite correct, Hadrien, a base of Isopropyl Alcohol. But…” Snape nodded as he read my recipe.

“Yeah, but… I know the African Red Pepper needs to stay, as does the horseradish and alihosty, or the pesticide won’t work…” I agreed.

“But you also need the dandelion dew and the pomegranate juice for the air freshener….”

“… and to be able to combine the two…”

“… you need the mallowsweet. Why the valerian and the orange blossom?”

“Ah, the first person I made it for suffered from disturbed sleep, whether that was from the insects, magical or general, I don’t know. So, I put a quarter scruple of valerian in, just to calm her…”

“… and the orange blossom to mask the bitter scent?”

“Yep.” I sat back. “And now…? Yellow curtains.”

“That’s the clash between the pomegranate, the alihosty and the orange, I think.” Snape flipped the pages of a book beside him before continuing. “Yes, the three don’t blend well.”

“Right. So… definitely not replacing the alihosty and don’t particularly want to replace the pomegranate juice or the orange blossom oil, but…”

“… one needs to go.” He nodded.

“Yes…” I wandered around the room, thinking as I walked, a listing of the ingredients for a muscle
relaxant caught my eye. “Oh… ooh…” I hummed.

“What…” Snape drawled.

“What would happen if I switched out both the pomegranate and the orange blossom oil for a different citrus oil?” I asked.

“Hmm… You want a pleasant scent but it needs to blend into the pesticide…”

“Not orange, lemon or grapefruit.”

“Perhaps kumquat…”

“Ooh what about yuzu or sudachi?”

“I’m not familiar with sudachi, but yuzu might work…” Snape trailed off.

“Sudachi are tart, really tart and often used in place of vinegar in Japanese cooking, but they smell brighter than lemons or limes.” I offered.

“Whereas yuzu is similar to grapefruit with overtones of mandarin.” Snape added. “I’d try the sudachi first. The sweetness of the orange seems to be the problem, so the tartness of the sudachi might be sufficient to blend the pesticide and the freshener.”

“If not… what about some mandrake leaf oil?”

And so went my Easter holiday…

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A scream distracted my class from their notes on the side effects of overusing a the Scourgify charm. I looked up and saw a first year run passed the door, he obviously stopped and came back a few steps, to look in the classroom door.

“Snakes! There’s a swarm of snakes coming into the castle!” He yelled and was gone again.

The eleven students that were my class for the day, all stood up.

“Freeze!” I snapped. “Sit.” They all sat, but every one of them was tense, ready to run. “I’ll see to this, you lot keep reading.”

“But sir…” A seventh year ‘puff objected. “What if they get in the room?”

“I’ll ward the door, so you’ll be fine.” I shook my head.

“What if you get bitten?” A little ‘claw asked.

“I won’t, I’ve only been bitten once and that was a mistake. Sit. Read. I’ll be back.” I headed out the door and into the lower castle.

On the stairs down, I met up with Dumbledore.

“Ahh, Hadrien. It seems we’ve been invaded by snakes… the reptilian kind. You might like to head
back to your class and secure the door.”

“So I heard. And no, Headmaster, I won’t be. My class are fine, reading up on overuse of a few charms. And you might need my help with snakes.”

“Very well, banishing charms, if you please, send them to the forbidden forest. I’d rather not kill them.”

I frowned. “Uh… Headmaster? Why not find out why they’re coming in, before getting rid of them?”

“And how would you suggest we do that, Professor Potter-Prewett?” Snape joined us from the viaduct bridge.

I looked at them and made myself gape at them. “What do mean ‘how’? I plan to ask them.”

“How?” Dumbledore demanded.

“Uh, snakes understand parseltongue.” I said in a slow clear voice, like I was telling someone something they should know.

“And how does that help us?” Professor McGonagall joined us, clearly put out.

“Uh, Potters… parseltongue…” I said.

“Which means what, exactly?” Dumbledore asked.

I looked at them as though I thought them stupid, before widening my eyes, seemingly in alarm.

“You mean that Uncle Jimmy never…?” I gasped.

“Never what, Professor Potter-Prewett?” Dumbledore looked at me hard.

“Uncle Jimmy never told you… Canatos Peverell was the Father of Antioch, Cadmus and Ignutus, right? He was the great-great-grandson of Melory Slytherin, the first parseltongue. Ignutus’ granddaughter Iolanthe married Hardwin Potter, the first to claim the name, right? All the magical Potters are descended from him.”

“And…?”

“And that means that all of us are parselmouths, or maybe I should say we all have the possibility of it.”

“ Parseltongue?” Dumbledore stumbled on nothing. “You’re a parseltongue?”

“I can speak parseltongue, I am a parselmouth.”

“Oh, my.” McGonagall gasped.

“Me, Ron and even little-Harry. Father isn’t, so I suppose it might have skipped a generation, I don’t know.”

“But that means that you are able to speak to snakes? These snakes?” Snape demanded.

“Yeah.” I nodded.
“Good.” He pointed in front of us to the base of the stairs. “There they are.”

“Okay. Put up a shield to stop them from going any further, please.” I stepped off the first step and the snakes swung their heads towards me, raising up into an aggressive position.

:\§:\ Hello? Might I ask why you have come into the school. It is not a safe place for snakes. :§:

One snake raised itself up higher than the others and hissed.

:\§:\ Speaker... speaker. There is a man's child in our forest, a speaker child, he is hurt. We have come for the man's healers. :§:

:\§:\ A what?! :§:\ I gasped in shock. :§:\ Take me to him, I will bring him to the healers where he will be safe. :§:

It turned back to Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape. “There’s a child in forest, the snakes say he’s a speaker and he’s hurt, they’ve come for a healer. I’ll go with them and bring him back.” I said, just as a flare of bluebell flames appeared.

“Hadrien, we’ve got a problem little-Harry’s accidental magics blew up and he’s apparated, but we don’t know where, can you help us search?” Sirius’ voice was stressed.

:\§:\ Go I will follow you. :§:\ I said to the snake as I drew my wand.

“Nuntio expecto.” The flames built in front of me, even as I was moving. “Reply to Sirius, no conditions. Message... Have a lead, give me five.” I flicked the wand and the flames vanished. I ran after the snakes, tossing a yell over my shoulder. “Tell the students to leave the snakes alone, I’ll deal with it.”

As I reached the covered bridge between the clock tower and the owlery, I heard a set of feet behind me, a quick glance showed Snape chasing me and the snakes. Who’d have thought the man could run? Not me. But running he was and more importantly he had a healer’s bag in his hand.

I turned back and kept going. I knew that snakes could move fairly quickly but I had never realised that magical snakes could move so much faster than non-magical ones. I was sprinting and just barely keeping up with what appeared to be a common adder... holy hell, it could move.

Off the bridge and passed the path to the owlery and we kept running. Down the steps towards the CoMC area and passed the enclosures. And still we were running. The snakes began to slow as we approached the outcrop of forest that met up with the castle’s boundary walls. I watched as a snake slithered through a hole in the wall and frowned when I realised there was no chance of me following it and the nearest gate was on the other side of the quidditch pitch.

“Hadrien.” Snape huffed as he caught up to me. “Levitate me to the top of the wall. I’ll do the same to you, once I’m up.”

I nodded and incanted the charm to move objects. “Levioso.” Seconds later and Snape had done the same for me and we were both on the ground on the outside of the wall. And running again.

Another hundred and fifty-odd yards and I saw little-Harry, hugging a snake and sobbing his eyes out. Blood was smeared over his hands, face and legs.

“Harry!” I yelled as I got closer to him. “Oh, Harry!” I slid to my knees and reached out towards him.
“Stop!” Snape’s voice cut into my panic. “Let me see him first. Make sure he’s not badly hurt, then you can blubber over him, Hadrien.” The man growled at me.

“Sorry. I know better. It’s just… he’s so small…” I fretted.

“He is…” Snape allowed. “Far smaller than he should be…. Ah, here we, Mr Potter. Let me clean you up, yes? Then you can go to Hadrien.” While he was talking Snape was flicking his wand and muttering things between comments. “Right. Drink this, Mr Potter.” He handed little-Harry a phial of pale blue liquid. “That will make the pain go away.” Snape turned to me. “Nothing bad, scrapped knees and palms, that all, and he’s rubbed the blood onto his face. Nothing a simple episkos or some dittany won’t fix. Best if you’re holding him when I do that.”

Now that his pain was gone, little-Harry stopped crying and was just hiccupping.

“Over to Hadrien, now, Mr Potter.” Snape gestured and little-Harry scrambled over to me. “Very good, now, hold out your hands and I’ll fix them right up.” I didn’t know that Snape could speak quietly without any nastiness. He pulled a bottle of dittany from a pocket and trickled a bit onto a handkerchief and wiped it over little-Harry’s hands and knees. “There, all done. Shall we head back to the school, Mr Potter, Hadrien?”

“Me widdle-Hawwy and ‘im big-Hawwy.” The small boy firmly grasped in my arms informed the potions apprentice.

“Ah… Very well… Harry’s… shall we go back to the school?” Snape looked up at me. “You might want to let Black know that you’ve found his lost pup.”

I looked down at a now tired little-Harry. “Shall we send Uncle Siri a Messenger? Tell him you’re alright?”

“U-huh.” Harry nodded.

“Nuntio expecto.” The flames settled in front of me. “Message to Sirius Black, no conditions. Message… Got him, not hurt, just scared. Meet you at Hogwarts, no hurry, I have to finish my class, he can stay with me.” I flicked and the flames vanished.

“Shall we?” Snape offered a hand and pulled me to my feet.

I turned to the snakes still gathered around us. :§: Thank you for helping the hatchling, he iss a sspecial child to me. :§:

:§: We can see that you care for him. Keep him ssafe, our foresst iss not a good placse for manss to come. :§:

I dropped a bright purple handkerchief on the ground. :§: If you have need of help, bring that to the sschool and ssomeone will call me, I will come to your aid. :§:

:§: We thank you sspeaker. :§: The snakes all bobbed their heads and slithered off in different directions. The big adder carefully gripped the handkerchief in it’s mouth and headed for the roots of a tree.

“Wanna see where Uncle Siri and Uncle Remus went to school?” I hiked Harry higher in my arms.

“U-huh.” He lay his head on my shoulder and closed his eyes, as Snape and I headed for the quidditch pitch gate.
“Thank you, Snape.” I said, keeping my voice quiet and calm. “Thank you for following me. I let my fear get the better of me.”

“Hadrien, you’re only nineteen, it’s too be expected, that you will find things beyond your control.” Snape replied calmly.

“Maybe, but that doesn’t mean I like it.”

“No and now that you do know, you won’t let it happen again, not to the same degree, anyway.”

“I won’t.” I vowed to myself.

As we walked towards the school, we passed many snakes and lots of them greeted me and asked after little-Harry, I told them he was healed and I was taking him to those who tended his nest. We reached the school with no further alarms and after a quick word with Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey, little-Harry and I hurried back to my classroom.

I dropped the ward as I entered the room, to be greeted by my almost frantic students.

“Whoa! Settle down, everything’s fine now.” It took a bit but eventually the students were calm and had taken their seats again. I was amused to see that they were no longer split into their houses but clumped together.

“Sir? What happened? Why did the snakes come into the school?” A Gryffindor girl asked.

“Ah, this would be the reason.” I nodded to a sleeping Harry where he lay in my arms.

“Why?”

“Now that requires a little explanation.” Professor Dumbledore wandered in the door, closely followed by Professor McGonagall, Snape, Sirius, Remus and whole host of students. “Would you explain again, please? This time I might be able to focus a little more clearly on the subject matter.”

“No fighting over seats or you can leave.” I waited until they were all seated, or all that could fit in the room. “Okay, so, starting at the beginning. Way back, almost a thousand years ago there were three brothers, Antioch, Cadmus and Ingotus Peverell.” I heard a boy snicker. “Well, I’m sure that many of you know their story, right?” Many students nodded. “Okay in brief, they did something that Death didn’t like and to try and trick them, Death gave them gifts. Antioch got the elder wand, Cadmus got the resurrection stone and Ignotus got the cloak of invisibility. And one by one Death claimed them, Antioch was murdered in his sleep for his unbeatable wand. Cadmus was driven mad after calling his dead fiancé back from the underworld and he committed suicide. Ignotus used the cloak to hide from Death for years, until he was old and tired. He gave the cloak to his son, waited for Death to find him and went with him willingly. That’s the story, right?”

“Yes, sir.” The Gryffindor girl answered for the rest of the students.

“So here’s where it get complicated. Canatos Peverell was the father of the three brothers. He was also the great-great-grandson of Salazar Slytherin’s mother, who was first ever known parseltongue. Ignotus’ granddaughter Iolanthe married Hardwin Potter. All the magical Potters are descended from him. Me, Ronson and this little monster. Harry.”

“That’s Harry Potter? Is he really Lily Potter’s son?” A Slytherin asked, leaning forward excitedly.

“He is.” I nodded.
“But the snakes?” A Ravenclaw asked.

“The snakes. Right well… Parseltongue is in our blood, handed down to us, from Canatos via Ignotus’s granddaughter and Hardwin Potter. That means that all of us are parseltoughs, or maybe I should say we all have the possibility of it.”

“What’s the difference between parseltongue and parseltough?” Another Ravenclaw asked.

“Ah. A parseltough is someone who speaks parseltongue.”

“Like you? You’re a parseltongue?”

“No. I can **speak** parseltongue, I am a parseltough.”

“And him?” A ‘Puff pointed little-Harry.

“Me, Ron and little-Harry. Father isn’t, so I suppose it might have skipped a generation, I don’t know.” I turned to Snape. “Apprentice Snape, Mr Black, Mr Lupin, you were all in the same year as Uncle Jimmy. Did you ever hear him speak parseltongue?”

Remus looked startled. “No… not to me.”

Snape shook his head. “Apology accepted.”

“Uh, yeah, I think so… The uh, Whomping Willow incident? He tore strips off me for that, hissed all the way back to the dorms, I thought he was just grumpy, but now I know what parseltongue sounds like, yeah he was probably swearing at me, all the way.” Sirius was grimacing and he turned to Snape. “Sorry, I was an idiot, I knew better, I just couldn’t let it go.”

Snape nodded. “Apology accepted.”

“Ooh, nice one Unca Jimmy. Show me in a pensieve memory and I’ll tell you what he said.” I laughed.

“Yeah… not sure I want to know.” Sirius shuddered in mock-fear.

“Sir?” A Slytherin waved a hand. “If being a parseltough is in the Potter blood, how did You-Know-Who get it?”

“Salazar Slytherin, was a parseltough, his Mother, Melory, was the first ever recorded parseltough. So while Salazar got it from his Mother, his sibling, whom we know nothing about, not even whether they were male or female, handed it down to their descendants, the Peverells, who eventually split into three separate houses. Antioch fathered no children and his line died out. Cadmus had three children, that we know of, all daughters, the eldest married into the Gaunt Family. The second married into the Black Family, but the third, as far as we can track never married or had children. The Black and Gaunt Family histories are well documented and I’m not going into them, if you want to know, you write to Lord Arcturus Black. Ingotus, had only one child, a son, Olwin. Olwin, we understand married and while we found no record of his wife’s name, we did find information on his daughter. Iolanthe Peverell married Hardwin Potter, the son of the first wizard to claim the name Potter, prior to that we’ve no idea what the Family name was.” I shrugged. “That lead down the generations to Henry, who was the one that got the Potter’s booted out of the sacred twenty-eight, for marrying a muggleborn. His eldest son was Charlus, whom lived a very quiet life, the only record we found on him is his marriage and birth of a single child, Fleamont. Now, Fleamont was a different kettle of niffers. He wanted to regain what his grandfather had, according to him, destroyed and his father had ignored. So when my Father didn’t get a letter to Hogwarts…”
I raised an eyebrow in question.

“He was disowned?” A Slytherin asked.

“Not disowned, but farmed out. Just in case Fleamont couldn’t have another child or that child also a squib, Fleamont wouldn’t disown him, just fostered him in the muggle world. Father was lucky, the people that raised him were good people. When Uncle Jimmy was born, Fleamont tested him and luckily for Uncle Jimmy, he showed as being quite strong magically. But… Fleamont was so busy spoiling and raising Uncle Jimmy that he forgot about Father, which means that Father was never disowned, which we do believe was what Fleamont intended to do."

“And James took one look at Lily and destroyed everything that Fleamont was working towards. Thankfully, he didn’t do that until the old man was dead, or he might have had a battle on his hands.” Sirius added. “Fleamont really didn’t like James’ infatuation, as he called it, with Lily. He called Lily such dreadful names, sometimes, he and James would have some of the loudest arguments over it.”

“Was that why James attempted to attack me? Because I lost my temper and called Lily something I shouldn’t have?” Snape mused.

“Yes, I tried to stop him, but… No one stops a Potter in a rage.” Remus sighed.

“Ain’t that the truth?” I laughed.

“You’ve experienced it, then?” Remus winced.

“Oh yeah. I got entered in a competition when I was fourteen and Ron lost the plot, went all bombardia-ish, oh man was he wild? Me, I was fifteen before I had my first bout, a good friend had just died and our… well, I suppose you’d call him our educational advisor. Anyway Mr Wulfric told me something that was just one thing too many and I… I might have destroyed his office full of lovely things.” I grimaced. “The only things to survive semi-unscathed were the desk, his pensieve and a few paintings.”

“You are such a Potter.” Sirius, Remus and Snape all said at the same time.

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Ron and I sat in the front of the open window and drank our morning mugs of tea. I watched as Ron fidgeted, sipping his tea and twitching in his seat.

“You right, mate?” I asked, I knew something was up, but not what.

He looked at me, but said nothing, for a few moments. I knew that sooner or later it would erupt from him. Ron wouldn’t be able to stop it. I gave him to the count of… six, should do it.

One.

Two.

Three.
“IdidadesignforourHouseRings.” It burst out in one word.

“Wha… take a breath and say that again, please?”

“I did a design for our House Rings.” This time he said it slower.

“Okay… Are… Are you going to show me?” I opened my hands in a ‘what?’ gesture.

“…um… okay…?” He didn’t move, though.

“Okay… so… where is it?” I pointedly looked at his hands.

“… in my desk…” He whispered.

“You want me to get it?” I asked.

“N…” He huffed a sigh. “Yeah…?” He was still whispering.

“Alright.” I drew my wand.

“Accio Ron’s writing desk.” I watched as the desk, that Sirius and Aunt Muriel commissioned for him, sailed through the air and settled on the coffee table between us. I looked at Ron, but he was studiously looking out the window, so I leant forward and opened the box/desk. On the main writing surface was a piece of parchment, face down, I lifted it clear and turned it over.

Two simple sketches, both in perfect circles. A lion’s paw print and in the middle of the large paw-pad, a sword and an axe crossed, for one and the second just had the sword and the axe crossed. The notes stated – Head of House ring (Gold band. Golden Sphene Stone, brilliant, with paw, sword and axe) and Heir Ring (Silver band. Golden sphene stone, subtle, with only axe and sword).

“Do you have a listing of charms we should be having applied to them?” I asked.

Ron just shook his head.

“Is that because you don’t know what charms or you don’t want to guess?”

“Both.” Ron finally looked at me. “I don’t know and because I don’t know and these Rings are so important, to us and to our House, I won’t guess.”

“Alright.” I nodded. “That’s understandable. As for the rings and their design?” I waited until he looked me in the eye. “Sold.” He blinked in shock and I laughed. “Ron, you’ve always had an eye for the obvious and this is no different. The sword and the axe are both a part of our Principal Houses’ crests. But the paw print, that’s us, you and me. Lions. Gryffindor. That’s who we are. What we are. No one else might know that, but we do. Yes, the sorting Hat offered me Slytherin, but it didn’t put me there, it put me in Gryffindor, because I chose Gryffindor and… like Dumbledore said… our choices are what define us. We are Gryffindor.”

Ron was looking at me like I’d just said I was the reincarnation of Merlin.

“What? You don’t agree?” I snorted. “Ron, think about it. We attacked a troll at eleven. We took the places of the pieces in a life-size battle chess set and played. We flew a car to Hogwarts at twelve,
we went into the forbidden forest after giant spiders and went looking for a basilisk, with the most useless wizard in existence as our only backup. At thirteen we confronted an escaped murderer, a werewolf and my parents’ betrayer. At fifteen we ran an illegal underground training camp for underage witches and wizards, we rode a herd of Thestrals over six hundred miles to London to save my godfather and fought against at least a dozen Death-Eaters. At sixteen we made the decision to abandon our schooling on the word of a dead man and hunt down historic treasures that held the pieces of a madman’s soul. Which we then destroyed with the sword of Gryffindor.”

“Holy… crap…” Ron said, barely louder than breathing out.

“Yeah, we did that.” I tossed him a smile. “So, yeah, the rings are fine, they’re us in a simple design. I’ve got Ben minding the shop tomorrow, Snaprok has two estates that he wants me to look at, but both are security sensitive, so I have to go to Gringotts to get the details. I’ll ask about the charms and once I get a list, I’ll go visit whichever makers the goblins recommend.”

Ron frowned in thought, his brow creasing. “What are the chances that we could afford to have goblins make them?”

“I… I… don’t know… I can ask, but… I don’t know.” I drew out my answer as I thought about it. “It’s worth asking, but…? Really? I don’t know.” I paused. “I do have a few dozen pieces of really high-end jewellery, I could possibly arrange a special interest sale through Gringotts.”

“Talk to Snaprok. If we could afford it, that would be the best option… the safest option, but the goblins’ inheritance laws may work against us.”

“Hold on… What about…?” I gasped. “What about having the physical ring made in one piece and the signet stone in another and having the goblins put them together and do the charms?” I raised an eyebrow. “Would that work?”

“How the heck am I supposed to know?” Ron screwed up his face. “Talk to Snaprok or Sirius or Aunt Muriel.” He climbed to his feet and stomped in the direction of the kitchen. “Anyway, I gotta go, Moody’s got us on Wizengamot duty.” He grimaced.

“Yeah… good luck with that.” Neither of us enjoyed going to the Wizengamot chambers, not because of the chamber, but because the people were so bloody demanding. Talk about attention seekers.

“Yeah. I’m gonna need it or someone’s gonna end up hexed. I wish Portia’d hurry up and her butt out here.” I knew Ron was talking about Rita Skeeter.

“Same here, bro. Why don’t you make a sly comment about bugs, when she’s about, see what happens?”

“Bugs?”

“Have you forgotten, Skeeter’s a bug Animagus.”

Ron froze in mid-movement, of putting his Auror-trainee robe on. “I had, damn. You reckon I should clue Moody in, call it a hunch?”

“Nah, you don’t want to draw attention. I’ll send Moody a Messenger later, maybe not today though, claiming that someone left a note on the shop’s counter. I’ll get Father to ask his assistance to write it, that way it won’t have a magical signature attached.”

“Cool. I’ll leave that with you, then. I’ve no idea what time we’ll be done, so don’t hold dinner for
me, ‘kay? Pending on time, I'll grab something at the Cauldron.”

“Right. See you, when I see you.” As he went down the stair I figured it was time to send Portia’s morning Messenger. “Nuntio expecto.” I waited for the flames. “Message for Portia, deliver when no humans in hearing distance. Message… Hey Research. The Feathered Nest in the morning and the Snitch’s Nest in the afternoon, corner of Niffler’s Lane and Stoatshead Hill Road, Ottery St Catchpole. Your cover is the snatcher’s are a muggle street gang in Leeds. They caught you and beat you, but you managed to apparate away when they weren’t looking. Hurry up now.” I flipped and the flames faded away.

An hour later the store was open and ticking along nicely. Wednesday was always a quiet day, few customers, but a consistent flow, none the less. Ben was sitting at the counter while I talked to Molly Weasley, whom I’d begun to think of as Aunt Molly, thanks to her push-push-shove-shove method of working her way into someone’s life.

The door to the muggle Road was open and in burst a denim-clad hurricane with brown hair.

“Harry!” The scream barely gave me enough time to brace myself before Portia threw herself at me, sobs wracking her shoulders.
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“Portia? Oh, Portia…” I gently wrapped my arms around her, trying to be careful in case she was injured. It had been so long, for me anyway, since we’d left Malfoy manor, that I couldn’t remember exactly how bad her injuries had been. I remembered her arm, but her screams while we were locked in the dungeon? Who knew what they’d done to her.


I just lifted a hand and Portia flinched.

“Portia? Portia? Easy, Portia, take a breath. That’s it, just breath, calm, calm, breath.” I crooned to her and kept up the nonsense, until she took a deep shuddering breath and looked up at me.

The look of astonishment on her face was amusing and I was glad that both Molly and Ben were positioned where they couldn’t actually see either of our faces. I winked and lifted a hand from her back, conjuring a handkerchief to wipe her face.

“Harry? Wh-”

“Did the snatcher’s grab you?” I asked.

“Ye-yes…” She whispered, dragging her hands from around me, to hug herself.

“Portia? Where’s your wand?” I took hold of her shoulders and pushed her back enough to look her up and down.

“It… it…” She choked back another sob. “It broke. I had to get away from them… apparated blind…I couldn’t see… landed wrong… mid air… beach… Had to get here…”

“Oh, hell… no wonder you’re all over the place.” I pulled her back into my arms. “Stay here while I sort something.” I looked at Molly. “Thanks Aunt Molly, but Portia’s going to be alright. She’s pretty shaken, who wouldn’t be apparating blind and breaking their wand? I’ll take her upstairs and get her a cup of tea, then once she’s calm, we’ll see about another wand.”

“Are you sure, dear?” Molly fretted.

“Yeah, she’ll be fine once she gets passed the shock.” I assured her. “But I’ll see that a healer checks her over, anyway.”

“Who’re the snatcher’s?” Ben asked.
“Remember the street gangs in Leeds? They tactics were to ‘snatch’ people our age and then either blackmail, beat or drug them in submission. Girls that objected were frequently raped and handed around as toys or traded for favours, the pretty ones ended up in the brothels.” I answered, not actually answering his question. Ben and Molly were both shocked and not a little angry on the girls’ behalf’s. “Yeah The muggle police are always on the lookout for victims of the gangs. So, after she’s had a cuppa, calmed down and found another wand, I’ll take her up north and get the paperwork out of the way.”

“Probably best to take her home, after that.” Ben suggested.

“I’ll get something sorted, but I won’t let anyone push her into something she doesn’t want. Not the police, not her parents, not Ron, not you. Got it?” I let myself growl.

“She’s that important to you?” Ben blinked in surprise.

“Yes, she’s the closest I’ve come to a sister and I won’t let anyone get away with hurting her. If the police can deal with, I’ll let them, but if they can’t, I will… without breaking the Statute.” I added the last bit when I saw both Molly and Ben look worried. “We weren’t taught just magic, you know. Both Ron and I are pretty good in a brawl. And with Mother and Father’s help, I can destroy them legally, too.” I smirked.

Ben shook his head in amusement. “Over time, I let myself forget exactly who you are, then something like this happens and you react like this… and I’m forcibly reminded that you are a Potter.”

“The need to retaliate might be Potter, but the methods? That’s your Prewett blood showing through, Hadrien. I almost feel sorry for the idiots. Did they not know who they hurt?” Molly ended on a question.

“Probably not, but then I haven’t had cause to go after them, so they’d have had no idea, they’d just see what’s in front of them, a pretty girl without bodyguards.” As for the gangs, themselves? Mother had rang the night before and told me that the police up in Leeds had the gang leaders behind bars and were in the middle of a severe crackdown, she suggested that Ron and I stay out of the Leeds area to avoid the possibility of police attention.

“Huh…” Ben quietly exclaimed.

“Yeah, can you run the shop for the day? I’ve no idea how long this is going to take and Mrs Gardener and Mr Wimplesoft are supposed be in to collect the items they asked me to put away.” I faced Ben.

“Of course, lad, you know I will.” The older man answered.

“Would you like me to tell Ron for you?” Molly asked.

“No, thank you, though. He’s on Wizengamot duty today, he told me Moody’s leg is still not responding the way St Mungo’s want it to, so he’s off on office rotation until that changes. And as Ron’s assigned to him, whatever duties Moody gets, Ron gets.” I answered. “I won’t interrupt him and until he’s done for the day, there's nothing he can do, so I'd rather not alarm him.”

“Ugh…” Both Ben and Molly grimaced, just slightly.

“Yep, says it all… Look, I gotta look after Portia. I'll update you, when I know more, okay?”

I didn’t wait for an answer, I just bundled her into the office and up the stairs, into the main flat. After
sitting her at the dining table I quickly put the kettle on and summoned my pensieve. Memory after memory went into it, what happened to me, what happened to Ron, what we’d done, what we’d planned and where we were at right now.

“Here.” I hastily dug up calming draught and slid it across the table. “Drink that and watch that.” I pointed from the draught to the pensieve, ever so glad that time in a pensieve ran at a different speed to outside it. Apparently, the entirety of the memories placed in a pensieve could be watched within the length of time the watcher could hold their breath, the joys of having to submerge your face into a liquid to enter those memories.

“But, Harry…?”

“Watch them. It will explain everything, Portia.” I snorted. “Including why I called you ‘Portia’. Please? Just watch, then I’ll answer any questions you might still have.”

She gave me a confused look, but drank draught and after a few moments her breathing had slowed and she calmly lowered her face to the pensieve. I didn’t wait, I just kept on making the tea, I planned on taking my magical thermos and some sandwiches with us, to Hogwarts.

A minute and a half passed before she lifted her head.

“Oh, god…” She whispered.

“Yeah, that pretty much sums it up.” I sighed and handed her a mug of tea.

“How did you do this? All of this? By yourself, I mean?”

“Portia, I do have a brain, a very good one, just because I rarely let it be seen, doesn’t mean it’s not there. The alternative? No. I had to get this right. I didn’t have you and Ron, but I did have Mother and Father. And most importantly… I had and still have Hogwarts.” She sipped her tea as I answered.

“But… how can you be sure it worked?”

“I’ve been here for over a year. I’ve been to Gringotts and gotten identity tests. I’ve taken Oaths as Hadrien Blaire Potter-Prewett. I’ve stood in front of the Wizengamot and taken those same Oaths. Oaths to House and Family. I am the Master of House Potter-Prewett, a Cadet-House to Houses Potter and Prewett, both. Ron arrived in the middle of winter, the day before the solstice, in fact. He’s been to Gringotts for identity testing. He’s take Oaths as Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett. He’s stood in front of the Wizengamot and taken those same Oaths. He’s my Heir, Portia. That’s how I know it worked.”

“Oh…” Her voice was small and timid.

“Now… It’s time to get you sorted out. Ron’s going to go spare if I tell him you’ve arrived and he can’t be here, so I’m going to leave that until we’ve got you established. I’m not going to clean you up, just yet, Ben and Molly think that I’m taking you to the police in Leeds to make a statement. And if you cleaned up before you did that? It would lessen the impact of the severity. But we’re not going to the police, we’re going to Hogwarts.” I explained.

“How will we get in? What about the wards?”

“Ah, right, well, this week is the last week of NEWT exams, so the wards are low, otherwise all the examiners would all have to tramp through Dumbledore’s office and you know he won’t have that. So, we’ll toss my cloak over you and a few overpowered notice-me-not charms at you and just walk
“But what about you?” She tilted her head.

“Portia, I teach there. I’ve only got to say that I want to investigate a possible lead on a new subject for next year and no one will look at me twice.”

“Oh, right.” She nodded a few times, obviously trying to lock into her memory.

“So, you’ve calmed down and had a cuppa. Next is a new wand or two and holsters to match. We’ll apparate to the shack and set up the charms, then I’ll side-along you to the Gates and we’ll walk up to the castle.”

“Will the wards register the notice-me-nots?”

“Possibly, but many of the examiners have been using them to get in and out without the students being aware of them.” I answered.

She took a deep breath. “How do I go about getting a new wand? If there’s a version of me already here, my vine-wood wand will still be at Ollivander’s and won’t he recognise me?”

“Possibly before we get you set up, but not after. I’ve got over a thousand second-hand wands downstairs, one or more of them may choose you. I suggest that after we get you sorted, we test you for wands again. I had to retry, the first wand I found after arriving worked fine, right up until my adoption was complete and then it was reluctant to perform, so I tried again and got the two I’m using now. We tested Ron after his adoption, but the same two wands still chose him. Who knows what might happen for you.”

“If that’s the case, maybe it would be best to wait? Just until I have my new identity?” She suggested.

“If you want, sure we can do that, I just though you might like to be armed before we go anywhere?” I offered.

“I would, but… If a pale coloured wand chooses me now and a darker coloured one chooses me later? Won’t people remember?”

“Huh… didn’t think about that. Hold on…” I hummed and thought for a bit. “Alright, I can cover that. Wait here.” I headed into my room and the mokeskin pouch that Hagrid had given me… and it’s stash of wands for our original time-stream, the two I’d grabbed off the ferret, Bellatrix’s that Dobby gave me and the four that Ron had pulled from his pockets.

Back in the dining area, I laid the seven wands on the table. “Some of these I know who they belonged to, but others? No idea.” I pointed to a rather plain wand. “That was the Amazing Bouncing Ferret’s.” Then to one with a snake head grip. “That’s his Father’s.” To one with a decorative silver grip. “His Mother’s.” To an ugly curved one. “Bellatrix’s.” A wobbly one with a spiralled grip. “Wormtail’s.” Then there were two off to the side. “Those two, I’ve no idea about, Dobby gave them to Ron, shoved them in his pocket as we passed him on the stairs, I think.”

“Oh, Harry.” A look of distaste on her face.

“Portia. Stop. Take a deep breath and think. Those wands are the only options you have, unless you have another wand in you beaded bag or are prepared to enter Hogwarts, completed unarmed.” I challenged her. “Close your eyes, hold out your hand and imagine the perfect wand, think about it being in your hand. Now, without opening your eyes, cast a lumos.”
“Lumos.” She said calmly.

I watched carefully as Bellatrix’s and one of the unknown wands lit up, not brilliantly like I’d expect from a perfect match, but good enough to use.

“Hold the charm and open your eyes, Portia.” Her eyes opened and she gasped at the sight of Bellatrix Lestrange’s lit up for her. “Choose which wand you want. You can take either or both or neither.”

“Not hers, I can’t… not hers.” She replied brokenly.

“It’s your choice, Portia. It’s always your choice.” I said soothingly and her hand reached out jerkily and grasped the other piece of timber. “Now tuck it away, out of sight and when we get downstairs, I’ll tell Ben that you want to wait until you’ve dealt with the paperwork before you go through the wands, that you want to get the muggle stuff over with first. Alright?”

She just nodded.

We reappeared in the shop foyer, just after six o’clock. I nodded to Ben and lead a now calm and collected Portia, over to the wand corner. I was glad I’d asked for the Death-Eater’s wand back, before apparated in, as if I hadn’t she would have had to remove it from wherever she’d hidden it, before she tried to light a new wand, or it would have lit up, too.

“Step into the cleared space, close your eyes and hold out your wand hand. Good. Now imagine holding the most perfect wand ever. Keep your eyes closed and cast a *lumos.*” It took only a few seconds for wands to light up. Four of them. I quickly removed them from the shelves. “Hold your hand flat, palm up.” When she did that, I laid the four wands all together across her palm. “Now, place you other hand over the top of the wands.” I guided her hand until it lay flat over the wands and her other hand. “Cast *lumos*, again.” This time I could see the difference. One wand was so close a perfect match that it may as well have been custom made for her, while one of the others was considerably duller. I carefully placed the first wand, the almost perfect wand, on the wand counter and the second wand, the one that was so much duller than the others, went back into the shelves. “Cast, again.” I ordered, watching the two wands in her hands closely. The brighter lit one, I left in her hands, but the other I plucked out and slid back into it’s spot on the shelf.

“You can open your eyes, now, Portia.” I said and grinned when she blinked at me owlishly. “Here we are, your new wands. This one?” I pointed at the one she was holding. “That’s made from the burl of a Carpathian Elm and has a Chinese Fireball Heartstring core.” I picked up the almost perfect match and handed it to her. “This one is Laburnum with a core of Griffon Crown feathers.”

“…oh, wow…” She whispered.

“Come on, over here. Let’s find you a pair of forearm holsters. I did actually see a muggleborn blow the butt out of his trousers, once. Nasty burns to the left buttock. Not letting that happen to you.” I shook a finger under nose.

“Me? Oh, no, I wasn’t the one that shoved their wands in the back pockets, that was you boys.” She objected.

“All done?” Ben called to us from the counter.

We wandered over, me joining Ben and Portia standing at the end of the counter.
“Yeah, for the moment. Portia’s still got to go back up to do her NEWT exams, next week, but that’s next week.” I answered.

“So… you gonna introduce us or not, Harry?” Portia raised an eyebrow.

“I should say no and make you do it yourself… but I won’t. Mr Benjamin William Cartwright is a protected member of House Potter-Prewett. And Miss Portia Alexis Granger the young lady that went through all her schooling with Ron and I, one whom I have invited under the protection of our House and will enact that on the summer solstice. Mr Cartwright, I would have you witness the wards that will be placed to ensure Miss Granger’s virtue and reputation are not negatively impacted upon.” I began casually, but from the moment I began the actual introduction, my manner of address became formal.

“Harry!” Portia exclaimed.

“No.” I stated clearly. “While I have no objection to you staying here and neither do your parents, the Wizarding world does not look favourably on a young lady of genteel breeding, staying with two young men, to whom she is not related. To ensure that censure doesn’t happen, that neither your reputation nor that of my House is impacted, wards will be placed. Wards that will be witnessed.”

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“Of course, Master Hadrien.” Ben responded formally, like I’d known he would. “For complete impartiality, might I suggest an un-associated witness?”

“That… that is a sound suggestion, Mr Cartwright. Do you have someone in mind?” I studied Ben, what was he up to?

“Sir, Madam Emmaline Wellaborne is currently in-store, perhaps she might agree to be a witness?” Oh the sneaky old bugger, he wants the biggest gossip in town to know what wards are placed and where. “With your approval, shall I approach her, sir, and extend the request?”

“Do so.” I nodded and Ben left to find the bat that drove me mental with her incessant questions.

“Harry?” Portia asked quietly. “I don’t understand.”

“It’s like this… the Wizarding world is so far behind the muggle one, well over fifty years, right?” She nodded. “So what would your grandmother’s people have said if she’d stayed with two young men?” Her mouth opened in a perfect ‘O’. “Exactly. Now, laying wards and having them witnessed, does two things. One? It says that I and my House consider you to be a young lady of fine breeding and we hold you and your virtue, in high regard. Two? That having a witness to those wards, declares that I and my House have nothing to hide and we accept the scrutiny of our peers in this matter.”

“Oh…”

“Yeah… Oh…” I said nothing more as Ben returned with Madam Wellaborne. “Madam Wellaborne, thank you for joining us.” I gave the tiny bird-like lady a full formal bow.

“Not at all, Master Potter-Prewett, I am honoured to be able to assist.” She dipped the barest of curtseys, but given her age and arthritis, I understood that she had responded as formally as she was capable of.

“May I introduce Miss Portia Granger? Miss Granger is, like myself and my brother Ronson, a squib-born and joined us in our private tuition. Unlike Ronson or myself, Miss Granger has yet to sit her NEWTs, as she has chosen to complete a larger course of study than either of us.” The two women greeted each other politely. “Miss Granger is eighteen and considered an adult in both the
muggle and magical worlds and as such her parents feel that she is capable of attending to her own care and have departed on international travel. And under normal circumstances, there would be no reason for outside interference. Unfortunately muggles have altered the circumstances. The street gangs are targeting young people and it’s been less than twenty-four hours since Portia was snatched.” Madam Wellaborne gasped in horror. “We understand that their intent was intimate violence and blackmail, but fortunately they were muggles and didn’t understand what they were dealing with and Portia was able to escape their control before such atrocities could occur. Unfortunately that included being forced to apparate blind.” Another gasp from the elderly lady. “She was lucky, in that one aspect of our training covered just such a scenario and as such was uninjured. Her wand was not so lucky and I’ve just provided assistance to her in the procuring of replacements. I insisted that she be seen by a healer and she was subsequently cleared of injury. But… as the senior ranked member of our group I refuse to let her return to an environment that may endanger her life further and as such have extended to her an invitation to a fully self-contained, single bedroom flat, for as long as she desires.”

“As a gentleman of your standing would.” Madam Wellaborne nodded in understanding.

“Thank you, Madam. But that leaves Miss Granger open to rumour and scandal… and I will not tolerate such a thing, either against her or against my brother and myself.”

“I should think not.” I’d done it! Madam Wellaborne was emotionally invested in Portia and her situation. With her to back us, Portia’s future was going to be scandal and rumour-free.

“To ensure that this does not happen, I will be laying appropriate wards to secure her privacy. As such, I would request an independent witness to the laying of those wards. Would you be willing to be that witness?” I wanted it as clear as I could get it.

“I most certainly would, Master Potter-Prewett.” She responded strongly.

I gave her a soft smile and a bow. “Thank you.”

“When will you be doing this?”

“Immediately. As you can see, Portia’s muggle clothing is in a deplorable condition, thanks to those who attacked her. I would like to see her given the chance to refresh herself and change into clothing more appropriate to her standing as the only daughter of two healers.” I replied. Her adoptive squib father being a muggle doctor while her adoptive mother had been a paramedic, prior to her death ten years ago. Othello Granger was still alive, but had not been in contact with Hermione’s father Oberon, since Othello left home at fifteen and had no intention of returning to England from Canada.

“Certainly, sir.” Madam Wellaborne turned from me to Portia. “Miss Granger? Do you have such clothing with you or will you be looking to replace your wardrobe?”

Portia offered her a tiny curtsy before she answered. “I have a very limited wardrobe suitable for daywear in the Wizarding world, Madam, my muggle wardrobe was far larger… until those beasts attacked.” She shuddered convincingly. “I will be keeping very little that passed through their hands and replacing my entire wardrobe.” She shuddered again and gave a half-sob/half whimper. “I couldn’t bear to wear things that have been in their hands.” She wrung her fingers together and looked at the floor.

“Do you think you will feel safe? Alone in a building with two gentlemen?” Madam Wellaborne clearly worried for her.
“Madam, Har-Hadrien has been my best friend since I was eleven, we met before I first commenced my magical education, I see him as the closest I will ever come to having a brother. Knowing that he and Ronson are nearby, I believe I will rest easier, than if they were not.”

“I see. Very well, Miss Granger, Master Potter-Prewett, shall we? The sooner the wards are laid, the sooner Miss Granger can retire to refresh herself. And Miss Granger? I offer myself as a chaperone, if you should ever feel that you have need of such a thing.”

Both Portia and I blinked and gave the lady gestures of respect, a curtsy and a bow, respectively.

“T-thank you, Madam.” Portia stuttered.

“Indeed, Madam Wellaborne, such an offer is extraordinarily generous. I mean no insult when I say that I sincerely hope that Portia need not ever call upon you.” I stated.

“As do I, Master Potter-Prewett, as do I. But regardless, the offer stands.” She turned to the hallway. “Shall we?”

“We shall, this way if you please?” I gestured to the office and once inside I hit the switch on the wall that looked like a second light switch, but it was the controller for illusion charm that hid the stairs to the upper floor.

Twenty five minutes later, Madam Wellaborne nodded.

“Very nicely done, Master Potter-Prewett. Your giving control of the wards to the smaller flat to Miss Granger is very considerate, but are you sure that my being notified if any changes take place, is a good thing?” Portia had thanked Madam Wellaborne and retreated to the bathroom in the smaller flat, while I escorted the elderly lady back downstairs.

“I do believe so, Madam, having someone un-associated be notified of a change in the wards, will ensure that no one can claim that they’ve been tampered with and I can think of no one better than the Lady that witnessed the laying of those wards. I have high hopes that my brother may remove his head from an unmentionable orifice and ask Miss Granger to wed. At which point, chaperonage wards, those I laid today, would need an external monitor. At present those wards are laid but not activated, if and when Ronson gets his act together, I will activate those wards and transfer the alerts over to Lady Muriel, but for now, if you do not mind, I would prefer not to have her pressuring him. Ronson tends to get stubborn under pressure. I’m told it’s both a Potter thing and a Prewett thing and we got a double dose of it.” I replied.

“Ah… in that case, I have no objection at all. But have you notified Ronson of the circumstances of Miss Granger’s arrival?”

“No and while he’s on duty at the Wizengamot, I’ll not disturb him. I’d prefer to wait until he’s home, where he can rant and rave.”

“Ah… yes… I recall your uncles and their tempers.” She smiled fondly.

“It’s in our blood.” I agreed, as we reached shop floor. “Again, Madam Wellaborne, I thank you for your assistance. I would be much obliged if you would accept a gift, as thanks from my House, for your assistance and offers.”

“Oh, that isn’t necessary.” She was flustered.
“Perhaps not, but I would still be pleased if you would accept. I know you were looking at that Royal Albert tea set…” I trailed off, trying to tempt her. I saw Ben tilt his head in question and when I nodded in response, he summoned the tea set to the counter and began to wrap each piece.

“Oh, oh I should say ‘no’, but it’s such a pretty design…” I could see the sheer ‘want’ on her face.

“It’s also quite rare. From my enquiries, I’ve determined that it was made for only three years, 1905 1906 and 1907, at least in that particular colouration. I’ll have Mr Cartwright pack them up for you and escort you home, if you like?”

“Oh… thank you, but I’m actually heading for London this evening to meet up with my sister and her daughter. I’ll not say ‘no’ to the tea set, though, it such a pretty thing. And might I use your floo?”

“Most certainly. Ben?”

“Aye, I’ve packed the set into a box and shrunk it, a simple ‘finite’ will cancel that, for you.” Ben offered the matchbox sized box to Madam Wellaborne and offered her his arm. “If I may, I suggest we leave Hadrien to his office, he’s got the day’s books to do and he still needs to notify Ron, of Portia’s arrival.” That was an unsubtle dig, ‘do it’.

Which, after waiting for them to leave the office, I did. “Nuntio expecto.” The flames grew.

“Message to my brother Ron, deliver once the Wizengamot session had ended and he’s in the atrium headed for the public floo’s. Message… Hey…? Portia’s here. The snatchers up in Leeds had her for a few hours, they roughed her up, she’s shaken but not hurt, I took her back up north to get the legal stuff out of the way, but that’s done. I’ve put her in the small flat and got Madam Wellaborne to witness the wards, as I want Portia to feel safe after the snatchers and what she went through at their hands. Muggle and magical healers have seen her and they’re happy that she needs no further treatment, but the muggles do suggest that she find a counsellor to talk to. Something for her to think about. In the mean time, she’s getting cleaned up and I’ll see to dinner, probably soup or pasta, so there’ll be plenty when you get home. See you when you get here…” A flick and the flames vanished.

Once the flames left, turned my attention to the day’s ledger… only to find that Ben had completed it for me. All I had left to do was to retrieve out the day’s takings and deposit them in the vault-linked pouch and activate it, sending the coins directly into the shop’s vault at Gringotts.

Portia curled up on the lounge, wrapped in a huge fluffy blanket. I sat opposite her and made notes in my journal. Together we waited.

The crack of apparition filtered up from downstairs followed closely by the thunder of Ron’s feet as he pounded up the stairs.

“Ron!” Portia was up and running in his direction before he’d even entered the flat.

“Portia.” His arms closed around her and he hung on as she sobbed.

I let them have their moment together, knowing that sooner or later one of them would look up at me and that would be my cue to join them. And eventually, that’s what happened. Ron looked over at me and gave a tiny jerk of his head and mouthed words at me. ‘Get over here, bro.’ Stood and walked over to them and wrapped my arms around them both, and just like that… everything was right in our world.
“The house, elf and contents for 6'100.” Sirius offered.

“I’d ask if you were serious, but the Sirius/serious line has been done and either way, I know you’re both.” I huffed. “Alright, but are you sure about the elf?”

“Kreacher will never accept me, it’s better for him and me if he’s gone.” Sirius sighed. “I haven’t done right by him, but I think it’s too late to try.”

I shook my head, it was never too late to try, succeeding was another thing. “Give me ten minutes alone with him and we’ll see what happens.” I said walking out of the kitchen of number twelve Grimmauld Place.

Ten minutes later, Sirius was shaking his head in amazement. Kreacher was standing in front of him with a look of almost awe on his wrinkly old face as he looked at Sirius.

But Ron was the one that started laughing. Almost as soon as he’d walked in the door.

“Let me guess, Sirius said Kreacher hates him and Harry said ‘give me five minutes’ and this is the result?” Ron tried to smother his laughter at Sirius.

“Ten minutes.” Remus said.

“Ten? You’re slipping, bro.” Ron smacked me on the shoulder.

“Hardly. I had to convince Kreacher that Sirius was not only what I said he was, but that Sirius would treat Kreacher properly.” I answered absently, hunting in the cupboard for a tin of tea, ignoring the looks of dumbfounded amazement directed at me.

“What? Harry’s as much a Potter as little-Harry. Did you forget what Potters can do?” Ron huffed.

“Huh… apparently Potters can work miracles.” Sirius was staring at the elf, who was in turn staring at Sirius.

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“Let me watch it by myself the first time, Sirius. I don’t particularly want to start translating and fumble it because Uncle Jimmy was swearing at you all the way.” I laughed. “I don’t think either Professor McGonagall or the Headmaster would approve.”

“Uh… yeah… sure… that’s a good idea.” Sirius’ widened.

I dipped my head into the pensieve and let the blue/grey light surround me. When it settled, I was in a familiar place. Hogwarts. In Gargoyle Corridor that housed the entrance to the Headmaster’s office. As I watched I saw a scared, but angry Severus Snape stalk around the corned to the second floor
corridor. A noise off to one side of me caught my attention and I turned towards it.

In front of me was a scared looking James Potter and a smirking Sirius Black.

“What the hell were you thinking?!” James screamed Sirius.

“Snivellus-” Sirius started.

“I don’t give a shit about Snivellus! What about Moony?!”

“Moony? Moony’s fine, he’s-”

“If I hadn’t stopped Snivellus, he’d have found Moony.”

“So… do the-”

“If he’d found Moony, it’s a good chance that Moony might have attacked him!”

“Good. Serves him right. I don’t-”

James grabbed the front of Sirius’ robes and slammed him into the wall, between a pair of windows.

“If… Moony… had… attacked… Snape… the Ministry… would… have… executed… Moony…” James hissed. I could hear the hints of parseltongue in James’ voice.

“But…”

“Moony iss a werewolf, you idiot!” James’ voice was hard and cold. “Any werewolf attacking a witch or wizard is immediately executed.” James slammed Sirius against the wall again. “If you want to kill our friend, at least have the guts to do it yoursself!” James turned away from a Sirius that was beginning to understand what he’d done.

“But… they won’t, will they? The Headmaster won’t let them, will he?” Sirius fretted.

“Godss. I hope not, but…”

“If they do… it’s my fault…” Sirius whimpered.

“Yess, it iss.” James snapped, before continuing in parseltongue. :§: Ss stupid, godss-be-damned bloody Blackss. Jealousss frigging idiot. How the Hell does he expect thisss to be brushed off? Shit! Dad’sss gonna hit the flipping roof. Missserable twat! Goddamn it, Padfoot, thisss iss sso wrong. If Moony iss executed because of you, I’ll sskin you mysself, I’ll cassertrate you, I’ll ssiccc Lily onto you. No, I’ll tell McGonagall you put catnip in her ssllippers and Ssprout that you trimmed her Devil’sss ssnares. You irressponsissble bloody mutt… :§: James continued to swear in parseltongue all the way from the second floor, up through the grand tower staircase to the seventh floor and the Fat Lady’s portrait came into sight. :§: Listen to me, Ssirius Black. You better hope and bloody pray, that Ssnivellus doesn’t tell anyone what happened tonight, otherwise Moony’sss dead and your Mother iss going to be ecstatic that you’re finally acting like a Slytherin! :§: James stalked up to the painting and snapped the password “Pumpernickel toast” in heavily parseltongue-accented English and stepped through the door behind the painting and into the common room.

Sirius stood there for a good five minutes, the expression on his face conflicted. Just as he decided on a course of action, someone called his name. Sirius looked down the corridor as a younger boy peeked around the corner.
“Sirius! Sirius!” A loud whisper came in a voice that Sirius hadn’t heard speak to him in almost a year.

“Regulus? What are you doing up here?” Sirius asked.

“I saw Snape heading back to our common room, he looked scared, Siri, real scared, like pulling out of Hogwarts scared. What happened?” The boy was obviously Sirius’ younger brother, the one that defied Voldy and tried to destroy the locket.

“Nothing, Reg, James stepped in before it could happen, but it was close. Too close… and it would have been my fault.” Sirius let his tears fall and was stunned when his brother hesitantly came and wrapped his arms around the older boy. “I did something bad, something Mother would probably praise me for, but it almost got one boy k-killed and if h-he h-had, someone else would have died too. And it’s my fault.” Sirius cried, his tears falls fast.

“But it didn’t, did it? Potter stopped it?”

“Yeah…” Sirius nodded.

“Then you apologise and get passed it.”

“I don’t know that I can, Reggie.”

“You don’t have much of a choice, Siri. If you don’t apologise, people will blame you, whether you blame yourself doesn’t matter, other people will do it. Apologise and let the others get passed it, too.”

“Okay…” Sirius sighed.

“So, um… was it just me or…. Did Potter sound he was hissing?” Regulus asked, a confused look on his face.

Sirius blinked. “He did, didn’t he?”

The grey faded as I was ejected from the pensieve.

“Wow…” I whispered.

“What?” Sirius asked, almost frantic. “What’d he say?”

“Trust me, you do not want me to repeat that word for word. I never knew Uncle Jimmy was so… creative when it came to threats.” I was still whispering.

“What?” Remus asked. “What did he want to do?”

“Are you sure you want to know?” I asked them.

The last two Marauders looked at each other and had a silent conversation, before both sighed.

“Yeah, tell us.” Sirius muttered.

“How bad can it be?” Remus added.

I choked off a laugh. “Bad. It started off with cussing at the Blacks in general, then there something about grandfather hitting the roof. Then it degenerated into name calling and threats. If Moony had been executed, like he was panicked was going to happen? Your life would have been hell. He was
going skin you, castrate you, sic Aunt Lily on you, then tell McGonagall that you were the one to put
catnip in her slippers and Sprout that you trimmed her Devil’s snare.” I watched as Sirius got more
and more alarmed as I went on. “But that last bit? Just near the common room?” I hesitated.

“Yeah…” Sirius whined.

“He said that you’d better hope and pray that Snape didn’t tell anyone what happened, because if he
did, Moony was dead and your Mother would be ecstatic that you were finally acting like a
Slytherin.” I grimaced as I said it.

“Ooh… Ouch…” Remus wheezed.

“Eh, she would have, too, the bitch.” Sirius grunted. “And yeah, I can see James saying something
like that.” He turned to Snape, who’d joined us in the Headmaster’s office, as we used his pensieve.
“Uh… again…? Um, sorry…?” Sirius’ expression was one of self-disgust. “I was wrong, very
wrong. Lils was your friend and… I don’t know… You were just so much like Reggie, so much like
Mother was forcing me to be and I…” He hung his head. “I couldn’t cope, you were the perfect
Slytherin and I felt like I was a poor excuse of a Gryffindor.” He looked up at Snape. “Sorry…”

“Apology accepted.” Snape’s voice was quiet and slightly rattled, it was obvious that hearing that
James Potter had had not only threatened one of his own but was also a parseltongue, a trait of
Slytherin, had shaken the potions apprentice.

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“Do you think Dobby will ever-” a crack cut Portia’s question in half.

“Finally, Harry Potter or his Grangy or Wheezy is saying Dobby’s name. Finally Dobby cans finds
his Harry Potter and friends.” A battered and very young elf squeaked.

“Dobby?!” The three of us yelled, in joy.

“Oh, Dobby!” I dropped to my knees and flung my arms around the elf.

“Mister Harry Potter, sir.” Dobby clung to me as well. “What has happened? Dobby was taking
Harry Potter, his Grangy Wheezy and a gobby-lin away from the Bad Masters and then suddenly
Dobby was an elfling again.”

“Oh, Dobby. The Malfoys? Did they hurt you?” Portia asked, turning the-even-tinier-than-I-
remember elf around to check for injuries.

“No, Miss Grangy. Dobby’s body mights be little again, buts Dobby’s head’s remembering that
Dobby is a free elf and has no master.” His bat-like ears fell. “But Dobby knows that Bad Masters
will try and get Dobby back and unless Dobby has a master, Dobby will have to go.”


“Dobby’s body is not full growed and to survive their coming of age an elfs must be bound to a
master or our magic is being too unstable to control.”

“So, why would you have to go back to the Malfoys?” Portia asked before I could.
“Cause they was Dobby’s training masters, the training bond to them is broken, but the pieces are still there, but if Dobby goes back he will never get away again.” He broke down in tears, sobs wracking his little body.

“Stop, Dobby, stop.” Portia held him tightly against her, who knew if he’d try to punish himself for telling us. She looked at me. “He’s always been fanatically loyal to you. You bind him to you. Keep him free of the Malfoys. Do it, now.” She snapped the last word.

“Dobby? Do you… I can… if you want…” I didn’t know how to say it.

Dobby leapt from Portia to me. “Yes! Oh, Yes! Please, yes! Dobby wants to belong to Harry Potter, sir. Please?” The last word was almost pleading.

“You got it, buddy. Tell me how.” I said. "What do I need to do?"

“You’s is putting your hand on Dobby’s head and saying that you’s will have Dobby fors your house-elf and Dobby wills then be taking your hand and saying that Dobby wills be taking you for his wizard.” I was told.

I looked at him. “Okay, but… first some information and some ground rules.”

“Rules, Harry Potter, sir?”

“Rules. But information first. You were taking us away from Malfoy manor, remember?” I waited until he nodded. “Then things went… strange… when you next opened your eyes, you were as you are now, am I right?” Another lot of nodding. “I arrived first and I went to Hogwarts. Lady Hogwarts herself helped me. She told me that you were hit by Bellatrix’s knife as you shattered the manor’s anti-apparition wards.” More nodding. “And because Por-Hemione and the goblin were already injured, the shattering of those wards, bolstered by the unstable magic of three different species of beings all wanting the same thing, caused something really, really rare to happen. The five of us were thrown into a different time-stream, another world that runs alongside ours, but one in which some people have made different choices and those choices are making a different future. Got it, so far?” More nodding. “Right, this is where it starts to get complicated. The aftershocks of the manors wards shattering and the void left behind when we were thrown out of that time-stream… it’s gone. Just gone, not ended, not collapsed. Just gone. Hogwarts, the Tower of London and the Ministry Building can’t find any trace that it ever existed. It’s like other than the five of us, it was completely erased.”

“Gone? Bad Masters are gone? But Dobby sawed them?”

“No, the Bad Master from that time-stream are gone. The ones from this time-stream, they’re still here.” Ron answered him.

“Oh…. What does that mean, now? For Dobby?”

“I arrived here two years ago, now. I looked exactly the same as when you saw me last. I didn’t get younger, Lady Hogwarts says that Lady magic took us and brought us here, so that we weren’t lost, like everyone else from our time-stream, but because there were already a Harry Potter, a Hermione Granger and a Ron Weasley here and they were so much younger than us, She didn’t want to overwrite the existing ones, it would draw too much attention. And She knew that time-stream ‘jumpers’ are usually very obvious, obvious enough that the Ministry has to take action and track them down, they get taken to the Department of Mysteries and they never come out alive.”

“No one takes Dobby’s Harry Potter or Grangy or Wheezy! Not with Dobby to protect them!”
Dobby’s face was twisted and angry and he leapt from my grasp to stand away from us, clearly ready to defend us.

“Exactly how Hogwarts felt, too.” I watched Dobby’s anger slowly subside as I continued. “And that’s why Hogwarts decided to help us. She saw to it that we got new names and new lives. I am still Harry, but… Gringotts did my identity test and according to them, I am Hadrien Blaire Potter-Prewett. My friends still call me Harry, though. Ron is still Ron, but his full name is now Ronson Maitland Potter-Prewett and he’s my brother. You can’t call him my Wheezy anymore, so we’ll have to come up with something else. Hermione has a new name, she is now Portia Alexis Granger, so you calling her Miss Grangy is still fine. Like I said, there’s a Harry Potter here, he’s almost six years old, if you want you can bond with him.”

“But, you is my Harry Potter, sir. You is the one that freed me, you is the one that gived me socks, you is my Harry Potter… Prewett?”

“Harry Potter-Prewett. Yes.”

“Good. If little Harry Potter sir wants an elf, we’s will find him one, but I’s belong to my Harry Potter-Prewett, sir.” Dobby nodded sharply. That was that.

“Alright. So… the rules…”

“Rules?” Dobby asked.

“Rules. One.” I held up my hand and raised a finger. “No punishing yourself. If you think you’ve done something that warrants punishment, you bring the matter to me and I’ll see to your punishment. But no punishment will cause injury, I’m more likely to tell you that you have to go sit for an hour while someone else does your job. Two. A uniform. It is not clothes, it is a uniform, it does not belong to you, it belongs to the House of Potter-Prewett. Even if I give you clothes, it is not my intention to free you, that will require a discussion and your agreement, you cannot be free without your agreement. If you want to be freed, all you need to do is ask. I want you to be happy, Dobby. If that means you’re bound to me, fine by me. If that means you’re free, that’s fine by me, too. It will always be your choice. Three. You will have an allowance. That is not for debate, but I will negotiate the amount. Four. Time out. You need to have down time where your body can rest. You cannot look after us if you don’t look after yourself, too. Like the allowance, we’ll negotiate that. Five. Other elves. You will always be my first elf. If you hear of another free elf that is unhappy being free, bring them to us, we may not bond with them ourselves, but we will help them to find someone they like. Six. Talk to me. If you’re worried about something, tell me. If you can’t give me details, because that might hurt another elf, tell me that and tell me what you can. If you can’t wait and I’m in class, talk to Portia, Ron, Sirius Black or Remus Lupin. All of them know what’s happened.” I lowered my hands. “Do you agree to my rules?”

Dobby’s eyes were wide, excited, more so than was normal for him.

“Yes, Master.”

“Oops, I should have added another rule. Seven. Titles. In private, with Ron and Portia, I would like you to call me Harry, just Harry. With Sirius, Remus, little-Harry… or Rachel and Webster Potter… make it something like mister Harry. In public, it needs to be something along the lines of Master Potter-Prewett. I have a shop here that I run, Tuesdays through to Saturdays and on Sunday afternoons and Mondays I teach a class at Hogwarts.”

Due to the WEA and the Wizengamot members listening to their children or grandchildren, my little
class had developed into a fully recognised class, with exams that now counted towards their NEWTs, but only the NEWTs. Sundays was still my little class, now it was only for the juniors, while Mondays were for sixth and seventh years. Thank heavens for Portia who had finished her NEWTs and was now seneschal to our House, but not just our House, she was now seneschal for Houses Potter and Black, as well. After the death of Lord Arcturus Black and Sirius’ Mother, his ascension to the position was not something he was looking forward to, so when I suggested that Portia needed to be kept busy, but in a condescending way, he jumped at offering her the post. He did warn her, though, that the entire estate was in a mess, as Walburga had been doing everything she could to destroy it, before it was left to Sirius.

“Oh, no, Dobby can’t be doing that, that is being rude. Dobby will call his master, Master Harry, when it’s just family and friends, other wise Dobby will call Master Harry, Master Potter-Prewett.” Came the instant objection.

I looked at a snickering Ron and a Portia who was trying to smother her own snickers. “Fair enough. What about these two?”

“With family and friends, Dobby will call them Mister Ronson and Miss Portia. For everyone else, Dobby with call them Mister Potter-Prewett and Miss Grangy.”

“Uh…?” Ron held up a hand.

“Ron?” I asked.

“Yeah. Might wanna change that. This morning…? I asked Portia to marry me… and she said ‘yes’… so…”

I blinked and shook my head, these two…? They didn’t even bother with dating they just jumped straight to marriage. Bloody Gryffindors.

“Alright. Until the wedding, you’re Miss Portia and Miss Grangy, after the wedding…? Dobby? How does Mrs Portia and Mrs Potter-Prewett sound?”

“Mrs Portia and Mrs Ronson Potter-Prewett.” Portia suggested. “We don’t want anyone to be confused.”

“Dobby can be doing that.” Dobby nodded.

“Alright… anything else? Or can we do this binding?” I asked, suddenly impatient. I’d had an idea and I wanted to get it started.

I was answered by head shakes, so I stood and held out a hand, just at the right height for Dobby to stand under. He stepped away from Portia and towards me, his forehead resting against my palm.

“I, Hadrien Blaire Potter-Prewett, Master of House Potter-Prewett, do willingly take this house-elf, known as Dobby, into my dominion. He shall be the first elf to my House. As I say, so do I swear.” A soft blue light surrounded us as Dobby reached up and grasped my wrist.

“I, Dobby elf, willingly take Master Hadrien Potter-Prewett as my master, I’s will be the first elf to his House. So it will be.” The blue light flashed from pale to deep and rich, before fading away and leaving the light around us sparkling with magic.

“Great.” I dug into my pocket and pulled out a coin purse holding a handful of galleons. “I want you to get yourself something to wear as a uniform, your choice, you have to wear it. I don’t care where you have to go to get it, if you’re not comfortable in it, don’t get it.” I handed the purse over. “Oh
and one last thing…?” I waited until Dobby was looking me in the eye. “How would you like to help me ruin the Bad Masters?”

The vicious grin on Dobby’s face answer enough.

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“Nuntio expecto.” The flames grew. “Message to Sirius Black, at home, family only present. Message… Hey, Sirius. How do you feel about ruining the Malfoys and reminding them that the Potters and the Blacks were here well before they wandered in with the Norman invaders?” I flicked my wand and the Messenger departed.

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“Good morning, Snaprok.” I greeted my account manager, brightly.

“Hadrien. What’ve you got this time?” Snaprok sighed.

I simply pulled a shrunken trunk from my pocket and placed it on the table.

“You know this is only going to fuel Shatteraxe’s vendetta to claim you for his clan, don’t you?”

“Yep. But like I told the director in my letter, until the manipulative little shit makes a better offer than he’s done, he can shove it up his breastplate.” I smirked. “He has to better my position and…?”

“And that would mean he would have to stand down as Head of the clan.” Snaprok nodded. “But you do know he’s not going to give up that easily?”

“Of course. Where’s the fun in that?” My smirk only grew.

“Alright, I’ll get this to him for assessment.” He slid the trunk to the side of the desk. “There is another matter that has risen, that Gringotts are hoping you can assist with.”

“Oh?” Another matter? And they thought I could help?

“Yes, one of our customer-guides collapsed this morning and the only thing we get make out from his ramblings is ‘Harry Pott’, but we’re uncertain whether that was the complete name and the description does not fit young Mr Potter. Any ideas?”

“Ah… yeah… I’ll need to talk to someone… it’s a delicate situation… involving time-stream jumpers and a time-stream collapse.” How the hell was I going to do this?

Snaprok looked at me, it took him a few seconds, but eventually he reached out and pulled a tasselled bell-pull that hung beside his desk. A few moments passed and an elderly goblin came in and sat down behind snaprok.

“You don’t need to know his name, Hadrien, but we would appreciate anything you might be able to tell us.” Snaprok assured me.
“Right.” I sighed, I had to do an edited version of the truth. I wouldn’t lie to the goblins, I would be absolutely truthful, but I had to tell them the truth as it was now. “It all started with my brother and I in a dungeon…”

“So… the prophecy in your original time-stream was different to here?” The elder goblin asked, speaking for the first time.

“I don’t know. I don’t know the particulars of the prophecy here.” I hedged.

“And everything you’ve told us is true?”

“I, Hadrien Blaire Potter-Prewett, Master of House Potter-Prewett, swear that since entering this room, today, I have told only the truth. As I say, so do I swear.” I was surrounded by a golden/white light.

“Thank you, Master Potter-Prewett. Our goblin is… damaged and our healers and curse-breakers say that the damage has been caused by Lady Magic, Herself. Either Griphook did something that went against the stipulations of Lady Magic or he intended to do so. The healers believe it would be better for him, if we were to wipe his memory of the last ten years and let him start again. Having heard your testimony, I would agree, however I will suggest removing the last twenty years, just to be absolutely certain. Then I will see that he is retrained in a different field, I will not put him where the temptation to re-offend may occur.”

“Sir, he is your goblin, I… I have no rights to your goblins and without intending offence, I don’t want them. I would ask that he receive assistance, but you have already stated that he will, so all I can say is… Gringotts is the domain of the director and if the director is content with what will happen to Griphook, then I most definitely have no complaints.” I assure the older goblin.

“And yet you deny Shatteraxe’s request to name you a member of his clan?”

“Ah, now that I will deny. The rotten beggar has yet to raise the subject directly with me, the closest he’s got was the first day we met, he swore at me in gobbledegook and told Snaprok to get me out of the room before he decided he was adopting me.” I explained.

“He’s said nothing else to you?”

“Not to me, but I understand that he’s presented a number of petitions, but until he has the common decency to speak to me, directly, and actually ask…? No, he can take his adoption and shove up his breastplate.” I said for the second time that day.

The old goblin laughed, leaving a slightly worried looking Snaprok. “I can see why he likes you, but your comments are well thought and correct. I will see that his petitions continue to fail, until he presents a petition that bears your approval, Master Potter-Prewett.” He stood and moved to the door. “Good day to you sir, be it known that you and your House are valued clients of Gringotts and we shall maintain your confidentiality.” He dipped his head to me and was gone.

I looked back to Snaprok and was faced with a shaken goblin.

“Snaprok?”

“That was the director… he spoke to you, directly to you…”

Blast this bloody Potter Luck.
Epilogue

Six years to the day, after my arrival in this time-stream I stood on the beach where I’d first appeared. I sighed and let my shoulders fall. So many changes had happened since that first day.

I had parents, albeit distance ones. A brother that was everything I had ever thought a brother should be. A sister in his wife, that was everything a sister should be. I had friends, Sirius, Remus, Bill, Ben and strangely enough, I think I could almost call Snape a friend, if I didn’t say it to his face, anyway.

I had a shop, one that was quite popular and did a nice trade. A second shop that opened only during Hogwarts’ school holidays, where students or their parents could come and get everything they needed for Hogwarts, all under one roof. All the shops that carried student supplies had their stalls there and some even staffed them for themselves, but most were happy to supply the stock leave the rest to my staff, which consisted of mostly newly graduated seventh years. We were even looking to have a small shop within Hogwarts, itself. Not being able to go to Hogsmeade made restocking inks and parchments difficult for younger students.

I had a job as a teacher at Hogwarts and fifth year notwithstanding, that is something I never expected to have. I enjoyed my time with juniors, but it was the seniors that I was most proud of, so many of them moved out into the world without struggling, without being dependent on others, without turning to a life of crime.

With Portia and Ron’s wedding on the winter solstice after Portia’s arrival and being told just last night that they were expecting a baby, the line of succession for my House was secure. Sirius had listened to their news and shrugged, then told us that he and Emmeline Vance were going to marry before the end of the year. Remus sighed and said that Andromeda Tonks had approached he and Sirius in regards to a contract between Remus and their daughter Nymphadora. How Ron, Portia and I, didn’t laugh, I don’t know.

And now I could start to focus on myself.

“Harry?” A woman’s voice called from a few yards away.

“Coming, dear.” I turned from the beach towards the stunning blonde holding her hand out to me. It was time to start living for myself.

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