Racing Towards Devastation

by sifshadowheart

Summary

Harry was finally, months after being tossed eighty-five years into the past, starting to settle into his new life and routine.

Too bad that just as things were starting to settle for him personally, events started to kick-up globally that he knew were only ticking down to the outbreak of war, leaving him scrambling to do everything he reasonably could think of to try and mitigate the damage - even if it meant taking steps that a year ago he never would've considered let alone predicted.
WARNING! This fic contains a lot of altered events, both real and fictional, particularly as pertains to events and actions of a political nature leading up to World War One, especially on the wizarding side of things as described in HP and Fantastic Beasts canon. Proceed at your own risk! Includes time-period-appropriate prejudice and accompanying behaviors.

Background warning for alternate universe, historical characters and events used in this fictional alternate universe, instances of pre-slash, A/B/O, soulmates, soulmarks, etc. that apply for the series at large.

- Inspired by [Sif's Guide to Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics](http://example.com) by sifshadowheart
Chapter 1

Politics and Purebloods

27 December 1913; Gringotts, London Magical District, Wizarding Great Britain

“Greetings, Grythorn, may your gold always flow.” Hadrian “Harry” Peverell; Lord of House Peverell, former Boy-Who-Lived, Man-Who-Conquered, and schmuck of a time-traveler extraordinaire, greeted one of three beings in the whole of the world – wizarding or mundane – who knew of his status and the method behind the madness of his presence in the past.

Harry, six months and six days prior, had made the unfortunate – rookie – mistake of reaching out to steady himself when an explosion caused a bit of a tremble in the Department of Mysteries.

Only, rather than an innocuous, inert, dust-catcher in Head Unspeakable Croaker’s office, it had been one of the rare artefacts known as Nimue’s Tears.

An artefact which was well-known in certain circles for transporting individuals it found “worthy” to a time and place where they had a living soulmate.

Those chosen by the Tears were always markless and always had an impact on both the time and place from whence they came as well as the one to which they were transported.

In Harry’s case, he was transported back eighty-five years in his own original timeline, to the summer of 1913, a year before the beginning of the Great War, and immediately upon his arrival found himself marked with not just one but two soulmarks.

As had, it must be noted, his infant godson Teddy Lupin who’d been resting in his baby sling on Harry’s chest when he’d touched the Tear, being gifted with a soulmark upon his right palm in the form of a raven within moments of arriving in the past in the time-travel version of side-along apparation.

Almost no time at all it seemed passed before the boy Harry had chosen to rescue from a terrible fate, one Credence Barebone, turned Aurelius Credence Peverell when Harry blood-adopted the abused young wizard, had proven with a single touch of skin-on-skin to be Teddy’s soulmate, his own wolf mark on his right palm blooming in a Recognition Bond.

Together with Grythorn and two Unspeakables – the Head Unspeakable of this era one Isla Black-
Hitchens and one of her minions an Unspeakable “Jones” real identity unknown – Harry had carved out and crafted a new life for himself in the past along with his adopted son Teddy and his blood-adopted brother Credence.

They lived and studied and played and laughed at both the Department of Mysteries and Hogwarts, Harry choosing to return to the school despite being two years older than the other sixth years rather than miss out on much-needed education opportunities, as well as the need to take the measure of a few specific personages currently ensconced at the school, all the while Harry’s seats on the Lords’ Moot, Wizengamot, and the Hogwarts Board of Governors were overseen by his proxy – and once-upon-a-time great-grandfather – Henry Potter.

Grythorn handled Harry’s business interests along with the law wizard they’d hired, the Honorable Diocletian Bones - a younger son of House Bones, and now that he was on break from school, they were able to have a meeting together somewhere other than a rented room at the Three Broomsticks.

Which worked, after a fashion, but was hardly ideal with how many irons Harry had in the fire.

“Greetings, Lord Peverell, and may your enemies tremble.” Grythorn shot a fang-filled smile at the intriguing wizard he had ended up the account manager for due to the secrecy required when handling a permanently displaced time-traveler.

“Oh, if only the things I’m fighting were the sort to tremble.” Harry snorted softly. “But how does one make prejudice fear, abuse quake, and destruction tremble? Regardless,” he waved that maudlin thought off. “Have the renovations on the Peverellshire and southern France estates been completed?”

Even if a last-minute brainstorm on Harry’s part had completely altered the form the renovations on Peverell Manor in Peverellshire were to take, he was filled with confidence on the goblins’ ability to oblige him, though there was no real rush on that particular pet-project of his.

There were a dozen – or more – licenses, permits, and even an official Charter or two in the offing that needed acquiring before he could do more than think about his plans for the Tudor-style manor that he would never live in when Peverell Castle in Wales was so much more comforting and hospitable due to centuries of occupation by Peverells, even if the location was far less fashionable than the Manor with its location in the unplottable magical county of Peverellshire attached to it and sandwiched between Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.

As it would take centuries of breeding like rabbits – or him adopting himself a lot of siblings, cousins, and/or children – to need a secondary house as large as the Manor on top of the even-bigger Castle and the not-as-big but still-solid Keep in France, he felt more than comfortable refurbishing the Manor with an eye towards a different sort of purpose altogether.

“They have,” Grythorn nodded. “The full summaries of charges will be included in your end-of-year quarterly statements. The partnership agreement with Obscurus Books has also been completed and the rights to publishing the latest edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica under the Obscurus imprint as A Collection of Non-Magical Knowledge, 1911, have been obtained along with the additional biography on one,” Grythorn consulted his notes. The insistence Lord Peverell had had on this one change as well as a foreword noting extreme bias regarding race, religion, or gender in some articles hadn’t made much sense to him. But he was a goblin and hardly concerned with how wizards, let alone muggles, slandered and denigrated their own. “Madam Marie Curie has been obtained and verified to be from a reputable source. The rights to the text Grey’s Anatomy have been obtained as well with Obscurus being granted use of your indexing system patented for Enchantments by Peverell for both muggle works.”
Harry nodded, pleased.

It had been a vague idea in the beginning, starting to import and if necessary rebrand muggle works like the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *Grey’s Anatomy* along with dictionaries and thesauruses and other reference works in particular plus certain types of muggle fiction that wouldn’t be too scandalous for even the staunchest of purebreds to read. One spawned by Isla having to send one of her minions – *they’re the finest researchers in the Ministry, Harry, hardly minions*, she always protested – on a lengthy trip into muggle London to get copies of the two to either help bring Harry up to speed on muggle 1913 – the Britannica volumes – or for his healing elective at Hogwarts since *Grey’s* was still the premier text on human anatomy whether magical or muggle no matter how loath purebloods would be to admit it. It was such a hassle, even for muggleborn students, to obtain reference texts from the muggle world at times that bringing them over had seemed like an understandable next step to Harry.

That those same texts – if read and understood by the right people – would start showing just how far muggles had come in a short amount of time, how dangerous their weapons were becoming, and so on was a side benefit of a sound business decision.

At least that’s how he sold it to his new partner Augustus Worme of Obscurus Books.

For the most part Harry intended to be a silent partner, much like he’d been for WWW, with an idea tossed at Gus every now and again spurred by his knowledge of the future and what he believed the wizarding world needed to know.

If even a *fraction* of Wizarding Great Britain’s population were exposed to the knowledge that the muggle world has accumulated – in some areas far outstripping the understanding of the magical world – it would make other objectives that Harry held close to the chest regarding the future easier to accomplish. That they would at least pretend interest due to the new indexing system - a play on linked webpages from the future, allowing a person to "jump" to the required page via the embedded charms or search with a query via quill on the requisite page he'd worked out then promptly patented was a bonus. Nothing the upper crust hated more than being left behind, and if some grand-dame can't gossip with her fellow nosy old biddies over his system - whether in favor or against it - because of the content it was currently being used on then there would be literal hell to pay for whoever stopped them.

*Enchantments by Peverell*, Isla’s idea and maneuvering, more than took up the majority of his time not spent on schoolwork or with his brother and son, not leaving him much to spend on other ventures.

That Gus had jumped all over the idea, smelling galleons in the air, along with that of putting together a wizarding version of the *Britannica* as a counterpart…well, all to the better.

Stagnation in the wizarding world was one of the enemies Harry was determined to battle right alongside their age-old prejudices, lack of understanding regarding the dire threat muggles were to both them and the world at large, and doing everything he could to make damn sure that there never was another Credence Barebone, Tom Riddle, Severus Snape, Sirius Black, or Harry Potter left in the hands of abusive as *hell* guardians hellbent on destroying them or humbling them or beating them down by any means necessary.

Harry knew that everything he’d chosen to battle, every problem he’d personally felt the lash of eighty years down the line, were not issues he was going to be able to battle on his own and may not see the end of in his lifetime.

But he could try.
Whether trying meant literally kidnapping Credence away from his abusive bitch of an adoptive mother and then blood-adopting him himself; championing anti-abuse and exploitation laws that included making it illegal to place a magical child with muggle guardians not their birth parents for any reason, or doing everything he could to pound into the collective heads of the wizarding world that their prejudice was getting them nowhere but alienating a large portion of their society and creating more and more muggleborns with every generations as squibs and muggleborns alike fled into the muggle world, he’d do it.

Might feel like screaming into a void or beating his head against a marble pillar, but he’d still do it.

He’d signed up to change the future from the options presented to him when he’d been tossed arse over teakettle back into the past.

Saving Credence and changing his individual future was only the beginning.

And, honestly, compared to taking on the institution that was pureblood politics and prejudice, opting to raise and mentor a hormonal alpha preteen with eleven years of abuse under the lash of Mary Lou Barebone would be a walk in the park.

Harry had never actually done the pureblood political dance, let alone on the level of manners, tradition, and unspoken rules that loomed over everything to do with the wizarding ton, especially as the ton decided more to do with public policy in most ballrooms and formal dinners than ever occurred within the halls of the Wizengamot.

He had never treaded in the shark-infested waters muddied by generations of feuds, alliances, and unspoken creeds that made up the upper echelons of wizarding society.

Thanks partly to Isla and partly to his own family and heritage, he’d gotten a taste of it over the summer at the affair that was the Black-Potter wedding (always the Black-Potter wedding, never the other way around he’d been educated, as the more powerful house and/or name always was to come first) with Isla still half-guiding him through from the safety of her positions as his supposed godmother and him a newcomer to Wizarding Great Britain – supposedly – despite the ancient name and house he’d claimed after being dumped backwards in time.

His story got more than a bit of side-eyeing as it was due to his accent, which was waved away as him simply having a skill with languages.

Thank Merlin that once they heard him speaking Parseltongue to Eris, his quetzal familiar, most people had quickly lost interest in what his actual origins may or may not have been.

Gringotts accepted it as true, the Blacks and the Potters – thanks to Isla’s intercession on his behalf – accepted it as true, the Princes and Malfoys due to their connection with the Potters accepted it as true, and that he spoke Parseltongue made arguing his connection to Slytherin at least impossible.

As the Peverells were the most famous of the families known to have had Slytherin descendants marry in, trying to say he wasn’t a Peverell was likewise difficult.

Not that it hadn’t been said, it just hadn’t gotten anyone anywhere, especially as more respectable families weren’t about to be grouped in with the ravings of Marvolo Gaunt who took Harry’s claim of House Peverell with extreme vehement disgust over his “audacious lies.”

Given that despite his old bloodline Marvolo Gaunt was considered little more than the rudest of scruffs not a member of the ton like Harry, he hadn’t actually gotten himself anything but extra helpings of disdain for his ravings.
With the New Year Ball rapidly approaching, his safety net of being under Isla’s wing was going to be diminished, as there was a certain expectation that came with his NEWT success in several subjects and his owning of *Enchantments by Peverell*, as well as being a father to Teddy and a brother/guardian to Credence, he was by almost all measures considered a mature adult omega save for his continuing education at Hogwarts among younger students.

Home-education was still a noted and accepted path for education, especially as the eleven main schools of the wizarding world are different variations on prohibitively expensive with only a handful – if that – of scholarships on offer.

Except, that was, for muggleborns who had their tuition waved as part of the scheme to get them embedded in the wizarding world and away from the muggle one where they might – *did* – pose a massive security risk to the Statute of Secrecy, just one of the many issues some purebloods had with muggleborns and the rising amount of them every single year albeit in some areas and countries more than in others.

Places that treated squibs with decency and respect for their magical skills – as the only thing they actually lacked was the ability to use a wand, their magical core for whatever reason not complementary towards wanded magics – had a much *smaller* incoming pool of muggleborns every year, as more of their population actually *stayed* in the magical world instead of venturing out to make lives among the muggles.

Harry was *not* looking forward to the fight that getting squibs decent treatment and respect among most of the European wizarding countries would become, but he knew without a shadow of a doubt it was needed.

Hence having to play the political game and dance the pureblooded dance.

That he had no intention of settling for a political marriage to an “appropriate” spouse wasn’t going to endear him to anyone, especially as he also wasn’t planning on trying to find his soulmates at the moment.

He was far too damaged.

Had too many nightmares or sleepless nights, too many moments of paranoia or raw, unwarranted terror to try and fit not one but *two* soulmates into his life.

Acting somewhat normal for Credence and Teddy took far too much out him some days for him to try and shoehorn another person into all of their lives, and that was before he considered that Credence was dealing with a lot of the same issues…except for the murder thing.

No, that was on Harry’s conscience alone, thank Merlin, Credence’s rage and suppressed magic never having gotten that far thanks to him rescuing the powerful young wizard before his magic truly started to twist in on itself and lash out.

There just weren’t enough hours in the day to add another person Harry was supposed to give a fuck about into his life.

Making friends with his “cousins” Atticus – who he and most called Atty – Charlus, and the surprising addition of one shy, sweet Newton Artemis Scamander was honestly a shock to his system with everything else he had going on.

That Charlus’s burgeoning friendship was accomplished almost solely on a visit or two over the summer and correspondence via owl certainly helped, as well as Atty being quite occupied most of
the time with Head Boy duties or his other friends as they were in different years.

No, it was his friendship with Newt that was the most surprising as with Charlus and Atty at least there was a bit of expectation on all parts that being of a similar age and related that they were at worst cordial.

And, fuck, did Severus Snape being the poor cast-off relation of the Potter line make entirely too much sense in just about every way.

Though that whole thing still puzzled him.

Atty was a genial sort for the most part. Intelligent, a bit cutting at times perhaps but – *Slytherin* – so a certain amount of that was expected. Wicked dueler, decent brewer, skilled with the mental arts.

How Atty went from, well, *Atty* to the wanker who tried to arrange his daughter into such a miserable marriage that running away with a *muggle*, let alone wastrel Tobias Snape was preferable he couldn’t even *begin* to understand.

People changed, he knew, and fifty years – maybe forty-five? – could certainly manage turning a pleasant teenager with a sardonic sense of humor into a bitter arsehole of a blood purist but…*still*.

He was missing something.

Or, more likely, the turning point in Atty’s life and attitude hadn’t come yet.

At least his friends would be at the New Year Ball – all of them but Newt who would likely be ringing in the year with preening his mum’s hippogriffs or some other creature-related endeavor – and he wouldn’t be there alone.

Were Newt an omega or an of-age alpha, he likely wouldn’t get away with skipping the event. Fortunately, he was still a couple of months off of the latter and would never be the former so the number of fancy affairs he had to attend due to his status as a gentleman alpha with noble connections through his mother was still limited. The clock was quickly running out on that, however, and soon his gentle friend would have to face down the sharks of the *ton* right alongside Harry if not be as fervently sought-after.

Though at least they weren’t muggles.

If he remembered his history correctly, had either of them be a muggle of similar birth, breeding, and such, having an occupation would be heavily frowned-upon for Newt (especially one outside of teaching, healing, research, or the aurors) and out of the question for Harry.

Thank Merlin, Mordred, and Morgana that *that* facet of muggle life had never made its way into magical society, if he had to pretend to be a vapid arm-ornamentation for some big strong alpha, Harry would hex someone blind or go completely spare in less than a day.

He might want to have a bit *less* occupying him in his life, but that didn’t mean he wanted the option to engage in business – or as muggles would’ve put it “dirty trade” – or manage his landholdings directly rather than through a secretary or steward taken away from him due to the circumstances of his birth and dynamic either.

“Have the specialty greenhouses been completed at Peverell Castle?”

You’d think he’d know the answer to that given that he *lived there*, the castle with its warm stone,
stained glass, and wooden floors over the original flagstones in the family wing being by far the most comfortable of his three properties in his opinion, but you’d be wrong. The greenhouses were being raised and warded at the far edge of the castle grounds, right by the village proper of Godric’s Hollow, and were being completed entirely with a combination of goblin and house elf workers. He honestly had no clue how the progress was going, any more than he knew what to do with half the contents of his vault layered with so many preservation charms he was willing to bet he could leave raw meat just laying out and it wouldn’t go bad for a century or more, and that was in the open air of the vault, not even in one of the further-warded cubbies or containers.

“It has, and your law wizard has been instructed to accept applications and vet herbologists to find someone to oversee them as your house elves will be able to maintain plants within them but will still need direction for some of the more finicky samples in the preservation vault to be successfully cultivated.” Grythorn informed him.

Harry held in a snort.

Finicky.

That was an understatement if he’d ever heard one.

Some of those plants had been considered extinct for a century or more, including one that he was relatively certain had been so effective at preventing pregnancy that it had gone extinct in the muggle world back in the era of Ancient Greece and only been extant thereafter for thousands of years in the wizarding world before the last crop of it was destroyed in the Fire of London thanks to shoddy anti-fire warding on a cultivator’s fields.

“And the production lines at Enchantments?” Harry asked. “How are they working out? Are they keeping up with production and maintaining quality standards or should we revisit the process?”

As those production lines were his babies, and the backbone of the argument he was going to make to the Wizengamot, Lords’ Moot, and both the ICW and IAN if necessary to improve treatment of squibs in the wizarding world, there better not be problems.

Squibs were perfectly capable of the rune-work necessary to produce most of his wooden line of safety charms, as long as they were produced using naturally-powered runic circles utilizing the cycles of sun or moon (or from a nearby power-node, which was why he’d put the offices of Enchantments where he had in Godric’s Hollow in an off-street instead of on the main square) instead of relying on wandwork to power them.

There were some other enchanted items he was in the middle of developing that might not work in such a way to use his squib workers to craft them, but one in particular could use a Potion instead of a wound-cleansing charm so would still be viable for squibs to produce as potions were another area that didn’t require wanded magic.

Granted, in both runes and potions there were wanded spells that might make a few things easier like timer and temperature control charms for potions and using an empowerment charm instead of a runic circle (or a ritual or blood magic) to power runes, but they didn’t need wanded magic to function.

Just a magical core.

“Interest has risen sharply in the safety charms line since one worn by young Fleamont Potter,” Harry’s former grandfather who at this point was all of a whopping three years old. “Easily absorbed a misfired hex which might have severely impacted his fertility.” Grythorn, well aware
of Harry’s connection to the Potter family and Fleamont in particular, gave a sharp-toothed grin. He did enjoy when – rare as the moments were – Harry’s meddling with things, intentionally or otherwise, slapped him in the face with consequences. His client hadn’t – yet – perfected the pureblood mask that would keep such entertaining expressions secret later in his life. “The lines for the basic Protego shields,” which like many shields only protected against spellwork. “And the anti-object charms,” which were a shield Harry was still perfecting to work against shrapnel but what they could do at the moment stood up against everything except the speed of a bullet or shards flung about by an explosion…or in the future something like a speeding car or train, not really something he needed to worry too much about at present. “In particular are popular, which projections on the anti-transport charms,” which would prevent transportation of someone by apparation or portkey, “are high should they be able to be altered to allow a parent or certain magical signatures to be keyed into an exception on the charm. All in all,” Grythorn knew better than to push, no matter how much that avenue of flowing gold being inhibited by his client’s schedule irked him. “Enchantments by Peverell is on track to be actually profitable and not operating in the red or breaking even in less than a year.”

More than, depending on how soon wizards deign to involve themselves in the war his client warned was coming, and whether the enchanted items his client was producing solely to help with life-saving efforts during said war were accepted by the wizards and witches who would be going to fight or otherwise assist the muggles with their senseless slaughtering of each other.

Goblins were warlike creatures and even they could hardly fathom the sort of casualties his client’s memories and reports spoke of were coming.

Let alone that a war that might come after it that was significantly worse when it came to the numbered dead.

If the various Ministries could be convinced to purchase the items his client was designing and equip their people with them, it would save lives of that Grythorn was certain.

It was convincing them that such items were necessary when they had wands and were smug in their own superiority over muggle weapons that would be the rub.

The patents Law Wizard Bones was certainly earning his contract fee – along with carrying out other duties for Peverell’s holdings, such as vetting an herbologist for his greenhouses – between his client’s ever-growing and evolving understanding of enchantments and layering various forms of magic to create them, as well as his spell repertoire that was considerable and included more than a few things Grythorn had never seen the like of before.

Which was at it should be.

If a time-traveler from the future didn’t know of magics that weren’t yet in use in the past, the future would seem a dull and bleak thing indeed.

Though if Grythorn wondered over what drove Lord Peverell to patent some things and not others, to use some charms in private but never in public, or easily put together potions that weren’t yet in existence but only for his personal use, that wasn’t anyone’s affair but his own.

Everyone had secrets.

Harry Peverell’s were simply greater and more dangerous than most.

“Excellent,” Harry said, hearing what Grythorn wasn’t saying about some of his inventions – and they were his even if some of the charms, spellwork, and so on weren’t, the laws were quite clear.
about what made an enchanted item or new spell or potion patentable and what didn’t – regarding the coming war and the gold to be had from them. If he had it his way, he’d provide the shield-bracelets he was still perfecting for free to every witch or wizard who went off to the Continent or the territorial holdings during the Great War, let alone the enchanted bandages. But people, especially wizarding people, were easy to predict.

If he gave away his work, they’d wonder what was wrong with it and be leery to trust it.

And *that* he couldn’t have.

Bandages with embedded wound-cleaning spells or potions, let alone ones with powerful healing charms like *vulnera sanentur* were only useful if they were actually *used*, and that was before he got into the ones with the muggle perception filters on them that he’d designed both for use on magical people embedded with muggle troops – if that still happened this time around – as well as for use on muggle soldiers to clean and moderately heal wounds and convince muggles that they weren’t as severe as they might’ve looked.

The shields were an idea that he would have plenty of time to perfect later after the war if it came down to it and he couldn’t get them finalized and tested and patented before things began.

His bandages were his babies when it came to life-saving – which, really, knowing he couldn’t prevent what was coming had become his entire focus when it came to the oncoming war.

Yes, if they were approved and used they would shoot him up into the ranks of wealth like the Blacks and Malfoys – what Grythorn was focusing on.

All Harry cared about was making sure as many people survived what was coming more or less physically intact as possible.

Everything else was in the hands of fate, magic, or the gods depending on what one believed.

With all the shit Harry’s slogged through, he wasn’t willing to bank on *any* hands having things under control in the chaos that was life in the wizarding world.

No, *that* was all politics and purebloods – the same as it’d been for a thousand years.

Chapter End Notes

There is a missing scene from this chapter that somehow didn't make it's way in at the original posting. I've added it to "A Single Step" also in this series, it's Ch. 2
Chapter 2

Racing Towards Devastation

Two:

A Diamond’s Debut

1 January 1914; Peverell Castle, Godric’s Hollow Unplottable Magical County, Wizarding Great Britain

If his attire for the Black-Potter wedding back on Lughnasadh didn’t make him feel like he’d been transported to an Austen novel more than the turn of the century Wizarding Great Britain, the formal get-up he had to don and wear with style and grace for his formal “debut” at the New Year Ball held every year on a rotating basis between the six – now seven – extant Most Ancient and Nobles Houses certainly finished the job.

This year the Ball, the only one during the “little” season of the wizarding ton that occurred from the beginning of December through the end of January that was guaranteed to have the eligible students from Hogwarts of a certain age and/or maturity attending, was being hosted by the Malfoys and held at their Manor in Wiltshire.

Thankfully Harry was new to the scene as Lord Peverell and as an unmated/married omega without elder relatives – in this case his connections to the Potters and through them the Blacks, Princes, and Malfoys emphatically did not count according to Isla – wouldn’t be expected to host a similar event, let alone one as important as the New Year Ball, until the last slot in the current rotation.

Or, plainly, on New Year’s Day of 1920.

By then most expected that a young omegan wizard with both dependents as well as a House and Lordship to manage would marry if not find and bond their soulmate(s), and even if he didn’t then his age would be such that he couldn’t be excused from playing both host and hostess to the wizarding ton.

Merlin save him, if the “proper” attire as ordered, arranged, and approved by Isla and set out by Harry’s new valet/personal elf (his Yule gift/belated coming-of-age gift from the Potter lord and lady) Basil, didn’t manage to kill him first.

As a male omega – and belonging to wizarding society instead of muggle society which held even higher standards and stricter rules for the most part – he had a bit of choice in how he was turned out most of the time.

His “debut” and official presentation to wizarding society as both an eligible omega of a certain class and breeding as well as a Lord was not one of those times.

At least wizarding culture was enlightened enough from having powerful witches who were more than capable of hexing someone deaf, mute, and blind (and those were the least of what they could do if pressed) that they knew the ability to carry children in no way impacted their ability to be powerful and intelligent, let alone productive members of society. If being able to carry children as well as sire them had forced Harry into actual skirts instead of the (flounced? Bustled? He wasn’t certain of the nomenclature) half-skirted overrobe that was “proper” attire for a male omega that thanks to some sort of tailoring magic of the construction sort not the actual magical sort
managed to accentuate his child-birthing hips and derriere without impeding his stride as it was open over his legs and front, he would’ve killed someone. Whether by accident – tripping and falling and being a general disaster – or by design was still up for debate.

“Golly, Harry.” Credence commented, blinking his big black eyes at his older brother. He’d seen the omega dressed up before – the wedding they went to over the summer came to mind – but this was the first time he’d seen him dressed up as an omega…and it definitely, even with Credence being twelve and completely uninterested in anything remotely “gooey” like suitors, swains, and beloveds, made all the difference. “You look beautiful.”

His sweet, gentle older brother was going to be swarmed even worse than usual.

Credence would panic and fuss and worry about that, but he trusted Atty – the two of them having had a heart-to-heart on the subject when Credence found out that he was still too young to attend the Ball as his big brother’s escort – to keep them from trying anything with Harry, even looking as beautiful as his normally-lovely brother did that night.

He was no student of fashion, especially omega and female fashion since he’d only been learning about alpha male things that applied to him, but even he knew his brother all done up in silks and gems and ribbons was stunning.

This being the most-formal of all events throughout the year, Madam Isla had selected everything from the cut of Harry’s trousers to the polish of his knee-high boots to the embroidery on his waistcoat and overrobe with the utmost of care.

That it was Harry’s presentation made it doubly important, a debut can’t happen twice, and a first opportunity flubbed could relegate someone even of Harry’s beauty and connections to the bottom of the society-matriarch’s invite lists which could in turn have disastrous effects on his prospects regarding marriage and his political clout.

Harry could not care less about the former, but the latter was very much an issue leading to his compliance with a lot of fuss and bother he’d much rather ignore.

Basil, a gift more than worth the little elf’s weight in pure gold and diamonds, understood this already about his new master and took the contents of his wardrobe and the necessity of turning him out just so well in hand after being trained by no less an elf than the Lord Potter’s own valet (and Basil’s father) before being gifted to a master and home of his very own.

“Thanks, little brother.” Harry smiled over his shoulder at Credence before taking one last look at himself in the mirror and accepting the heavy velvet cloak from Basil. “Wish me luck.”

Credence scoffed.

“You won’t need it.” He rolled his eyes, disbelieving as ever that anyone could find his brother wanting. “Madam Isla says you’ll be the new diamond of society.” He frowned, tilting his head to the side in puzzlement. “Harry, what’s a diamond of society?”

Harry grimaced. “Something I very much hope Madam Isla is wrong about me becoming.” The very idea of being the most sought-after potential bride of the ton made him want to break out in a cold sweat, let alone being a leader of fucking fashion. “Don’t stay up too late with Teddy and Rosie.”

“I won’t.”

“Good lad.”
As the carriage – the magical version complete with internal expansion charms and drawn by Granians – of the Blacks landed with soft perfection on the immaculate drive of Malfoy Manor, Harry had a sudden flashback that sent a shockwave down his spine.

He thought he would be fine.

The Peverell, Prince, and Potter Manors were of a similar style after all, built in the same era and likely even designed by the same architect when it became fashionable for the families – who could afford it anyway – to take up residence in posh manors with sprawling greens and perfectly-groomed box gardens, the houses themselves spilling with glass and marble and gilt and crystal rather than their ancient strongholds of stone towers and granite castles; and while he didn’t want to live at any of them he’d never had any problems visiting them.

Harry wasn’t fine.

For a long moment as he stared out the window of the carriage, all he could see was blood and the crashing of crystal and all he could hear was the pain-riddled screams of Hermione under Bellatrix’s blade.

She didn’t know what had overtaken her charge but Isla knew him regardless, seeing at a glance as her brother and his elder two children plus Sirius’s wife all alighted from the carriage followed by Isla’s own son and daughter-in-law then her husband, that something was most obviously wrong.

It made her wonder for a moment of what all her charge had managed to withhold from his summary of his life he’d done for the Department of Mysteries – but only for a moment. She had a disaster to avert.

Isla hadn’t put in so much work to champion and support her time-traveling menace of a charge to allow him to stumble at the first major challenge of his place among wizarding society.

Harry had done superbly – better than she’d expected even – at the wedding over the summer that she’d used to test the waters a bit towards his reception into the ton.

The matriarchs had been enchanted by his fine face, form, and manners and charmed again by those of his adorable – and most importantly powerful – son and brother. The lords had grumbled a bit over his age but had settled when he proved himself to be capable of intelligent conversation – and in selecting a proxy rather than attempting school, child-rearing, and his votes all at once.

And if the way anyone even slightly eligible had stumbled all over themselves for an introduction to him was any sign, he was perfectly poised to take her niece Dorea’s place as the reigning Diamond of the ton now that she was mated, bonded, and settling into life with her soulmate.

“Breathe, Harry.” She soothed him, Eris perking up at the sudden tensing of her human and joining in with hisses that Isla couldn’t understand but seemed to do the trick alongside a brushing of her feathered tail-plume against one of Harry’s smooth cheeks. “You’re safe.”

Feeling more than a bit out of sorts, Harry puffed his cheeks and then blew out a breath, rubbing one finger against the smooth scales of his familiar – an adult Quetzal, the serpentine cousin of the Occamy – and then over her elegant brown/tan/gold wings, using his girl to ground himself much as his little brother used his own familiar, a phoenix named aptly-enough Serenity, or little Teddy for the same when feeling overwrought and drowning from stress or memories alike.
Credence needed the constant presence and reassurance of Serenity or Harry less and less as his control over his magic grew and settled with acceptance, use, and practice but it still wasn’t out of the question for the younger wizard to need a few calming trills from the feathery menace at times.

Puberty was no joke and that was before tossing in an alpha presentation – and the hormones that came with it – and massive reserves of magical power into the mix.

Thankfully for Harry, his issues were less those of control leading to destruction and – unfortunately at the same time – those of trauma which would only heal with care and time.

Well, that and doing everything to ensure that the future he’d lived did not become the future in spiraling out in front of him.

Harry had always been better at doing than dwelling, even at his broodiest.

And, didn’t you know, but there was something that very much needed doing at the moment preventing him from dwelling – too much anyway – over his terrifying memories of the last time he was at Malfoy Manor.

“I’m fine.” He assured his mentor with a half-hearted smile that failed to be reassuring. “I’m ready. I can do this.”

Isla was more than half certain he was talking to himself more than her but let it pass, climbing smoothly from the carriage and waiting only a moment for wizard-and-familiar to take their leave of the magical conveyance, Eris once more quiescent and coiled around her charge’s neck, feathered wings spreading like gilded epaulettes across his broad shoulders that had needed no tailoring ingenuity to show off.

As he climbed the steps behind her, no sign of his earlier distress showing in either face or form, she had to readjust her earlier worry over him faltering.

Confidence straightened his spine, his stride became an elegant prowl.

And as the golden light spilling from the manor gilded his features and dusted the coppery skin with gold, she was certain of it: the ton was about to be taken over by storm.

More, if his ability to prevaricate and withhold information even when being compelled otherwise was any sign, they were likely to be utterly pleased and thankful for the privilege once he was done with them.

She smiled at the thought.

It wasn’t as if, if that was the case, they hadn’t had it coming.

She did so love when one is underestimated because of a pleasing form and pretty face.

If her granddaughter learned nothing else from their acquaintance with the Peverells than how to use both to her advantage – as Harry clearly knew how to do with a bit of help regarding attire – Isla hoped it was that.

In a world dominated at times by wizards and alphas both, a sweet beta witch could use the tutelage of a Slytherin of Harry’s caliber.

For her part, rather than worry, now Isla fully intended to stand back and enjoy the show.
Atticus held in an outright *growl* as the filth pouring from Rutherford “Rudy” Lestrange’s spoiled, cosseted mouth drifted to his ear.

The former heir and current spare of House Lestrange, Rudy was the elder cousin of the sitting lord’s two children Leta and the heir Corvus the Fifth, and the gap between Rutherford and Corvus the younger was great enough that at one point he’d easily expected to inherit.

Unfortunately for poor Rudy, Corvus the Elder had managed to get an heir on his second wife after the “mysterious” death of his first wife, a pureblood witch from Senegal, who’d given him an omega daughter rather than the desired alpha son.

Marrying again to an alpha female had tidily handled that issue – well, once Leta’s mother was no longer in the way.

Or at least, so went the gossip and having overheard Lord Lestrange’s ideas of “polite” conversation over the last year since Atticus had joined the *ton* as an eligible bachelor he had little trouble crediting the vile suspicions to Lestrange.

As it was, Rudy wasn’t nearly as intelligent as his uncle nor as cunning, but he was known to be just as vile and not one to refrain from bothering any witch or omega considered to be of lower status than himself.

The current object of Rudy’s fascination and the reason behind Atticus’s blood-boiling anger?

None other than his cousin Harry Peverell, who while normally considered lovely or beautiful for a male omega was currently turned out in such elegance and precision to be nothing short of stunning from his hair pulled back in the required tail of a Lord and bound up with graphite and white ribbons, waves and curls spilling down his back to the tips of his polished black knee-high boots over his slim-fitting trousers.

Honestly, did the tailor *have* to follow the line of his sweet cousin’s body in such a concealing-to-reveal fashion?

Atticus didn’t think so.

Only the flirty drape of the omegan-style half-skirt on the overrobe that flowed down over Harry’s hips to midthigh in white with embroidery in the Peverell-grey that *glimmered* with sheen in the candlelight kept him from being accused of indecency his trousers were so tight, the tucks and bustling of the long skirt pooling down over his rear to his ankles likewise protecting his reputation.

Though it didn’t stop the leers and filthy remarks over everything from the taut muscling of his thighs, the curve of his hips and rear, and the breadth of his lightly muscled chest and shoulders in the tailored jacket of the overrobe, his waist appearing positively *tiny* between said-jacket and the waistcoat under it in the same graphite/metallic grey of his hair ribbons as he was an eligible omega.

The only real items that weren’t designed to be enticing from what Atticus could tell – or knew from shopping with his mother over the years – were the precisely knotted and tied cravat and the pristine white silk gloves covering his hands.

Another hint of admiring commentary – not nearly as filthy as Rudy’s but still hardly the sort of way a gentlewizard spoke of *anyone* – drifted to his ears as he moved away from Lestrange’s little
Atticus unclenched his jaw before he cracked a tooth, snatched up the nearest flute of champagne, and tossed it back before replacing the flute and taking another.

He was going to need all the cushioning he could get if he was expected to get through this blasted ball without hexing someone stupid…er, stupider, or challenging someone to a duel, he just knew it.

Never in his life – including the clusterfuck that was his opening dance of the Yule Ball of the Triwizard Tournament – had Harry been happier for a dance to be fucking over.

Don’t get him wrong: it wasn’t the dance itself or even his partner’s abilities that were the problem. No, Rutherford “Call me Rudy, dove” Lestrange was light on his feet and not bad to look at for the last dance – he led Harry strongly through the Scottish reel and had the dark good looks that his (grandsons? Great-nephews?) descendants would typify in the latter part of the century complete with a tall frame, broad shoulders, and a fine brow.

The problem was that the moment Rudy had escorted Harry onto the dance floor he’d suddenly seemed to spawn a dozen fucking extra hands.

And every last one of them were busily occupied when the reel brought them together in trying to cop a feel.

Rudy apparently didn’t have a soulmate, much like his cousin Leta, as both were wearing cotton gloves in either dark alpha blue (Rudy) or gleaming metallic grey (Leta) to match their overrobes, the mark of being, well, markless.

Otherwise, it would be readily apparent that Rudy – with his seemingly permanent sneer that was more disgusted in general and less spoiled like Draco Malfoy’s – had been behaving hardly like how Harry had come to expect a wizarding gentleman to act based on what surely must be bright red hands from Harry’s warning – and then growing ever-stronger when the warning was ignored – stinging jinxes when said hands drifted to places that weren’t Rudy’s to touch let alone attempt to fondle.

With a polite little smile and a barely-acceptable nod to Rudy’s parting bow, Harry nearly sprinted (elegantly of course, Isla’s strict training hadn’t been for nothing) off of the dance floor over to Atty who was his savior and partner for the next dance the “supper set” of a waltz which also meant his second-cousin would be his partner at the supper tables and prevented Rudy or some other hopeful from forcing Harry into their company for the hour to hour and a half the two together took up in the middle of the Ball.

Fortunately, Harry had been warned and tutored – thoroughly between Isla, Dorea, Juliana, and even Lady Potter herself getting in on things over the winter break – what to expect, including that an actual society ball lasted until dawn or nearly, and had taken a nap or else he’d already be falling down in exhaustion.

He did not understand how muggle ladies had managed such a lifestyle for six months out of the year.
Especially without things like Pepper-Ups, refreshing and cooling charms, and modern plumbing let alone *magical* modern plumbing.

Harry hid a grimace when he made it to Atty’s side and saw him taking his leave of Leta Lestrange – somehow he’d been too busy with keeping Happy-Handed Rudy from being a successful letch to realize that they were partnering each other for the second time that night already – her own partner for the supper waltz (who Harry *thought* might be a young(er) Garrick Ollivander but he wasn’t certain) collecting her and whisking her away as Atty watched out of contemplative dark eyes.

He shook it off quickly enough as the starting strains of the waltz were the call to the dance floor, leading Harry with the smooth elegance he’d come to expect from their practicing together under “Aunt” Juliana’s exacting eye.

“What was *that* about?” Harry asked, arching an unimpressed brow.

Over the entire autumn term at school he’d never *once* seen his cousin interact with Leta Lestrange despite sharing a house and Atty’s duties as Head Boy.

Not that he could blame him.

She was pretty – beautiful with a bit of doing-up not unlike anyone else including him – but the sweet-if-demanding girl who was friends with Newt Scamander was *quite* a different creature to the Ms. Lestrange that dwelled inside the confines of Slytherin House.

Given a choice when Newt wasn’t around he didn’t want to spend time around the conniving thing either since from what he could tell her main ambition seemed to be marrying well enough to get away from her father.

Which – granted – there were worse things.

It was how she schemed and planned and plotted towards that end all while almost keeping Newt in reserve that grated, especially once she’d stopped playing sweet towards Harry when he’d informed her bluntly, but not harshly, that whilst he wasn’t *actively* seeking his soulmate (and honestly preferred not to think about *that* subject much at all if he could help it) he certainly wasn’t going to marry anyone *else* either.

With no hope of securing him outside of a trap – and he’d never be enough of an idiot to fall for compulsions or love potions, he’d known better than *that* by the time he was a sixth year the first time around – she’d quickly laid off playing her games, or trying anyway, with him and settled into a chilly if polite civility when Newt was around and ignoring each other when he wasn’t.

No, while at first he was wary because – Lestrange – now he was confident in knowing that his distrust of the girl was entirely due to her character and duplicitous behavior and not preconceived notions based on her name.

That she hadn’t been long before living *down* to his expectations of her because of said name wasn’t anyone’s fault but her own.

“Lady Leta has officially *come out*,” Atticus told him with a bit of a sigh. The sort of sigh belonging to hunted bachelors of a certain wealth and status the world over for centuries. “Mother told me that Lord Lestrange has made *overtures*.”

Harry blinked and raised his brows in surprise at that. Most debutantes didn’t “officially” come out or were debuted into the *ton* until they were of age though an early entrance at sixteen – like
Ms. Lestrange – wasn’t unheard-of. Anything younger than that, however, was seen as a sign of the family being desperate for a match for one reason or another, except in the smaller societies in the country villages which were used almost as training grounds for girls from the upper-mercantile and gentry classes before trying for a match in the *ton*. He hadn’t realized that Ms. Lestrange was already actively *in the hunt* as it was for a wealthy or well-to-do spouse, passing off her attempt at him as mere opportunism.

Tilting his head, Harry glanced significantly at his cousins’ hands.

His *ungloved* hands.

“I know.” Atty grimaced. “But grandmother…”

Ah. Lady Immaculata Potter neé Malfoy. Yes, he could see how she would have views on who her grandson, who was the heir of one of the extant seven Most Ancient and Noble Houses, should marry as he hadn’t found his match with any of the seeking parties at either Hogwarts or among the *ton*.

She wasn’t ill-meaning or a terror in any way, simply…old fashioned and hidebound to her own view of the world from what Harry’d taken from their few interactions.

Lady Potter had been a grand-dame of the wizarding *ton* for *decades* and that same genial – but unyielding – domination came through in various ways when dealing with her children and grandchildren.

A fact not in anyway leavened by her eldest grandson marrying *up* – or so some said – in his match with Lady Dorea *Black*.

And now Harry was starting to get an idea of how his genial but fierce and cunning cousin had turned into the stern and sour grandfather of Snape’s history.

Merlin knew he’d go a bit off if he ended up in a cold, *civilized* society marriage – no matter who it was to – and Atticus wasn’t all that different from Harry or any other person in that way for all that there were dozens of young bachelors and debs in *society* that were willing to settle for a *society* match and marriage.

“Don’t do it.” Harry warned him, alarmed. Maybe it wasn’t right, interfering like this, changing something that he *knew* likely led to the birth of Eileen Prince and then Severus Snape thereafter, but when he thought of all the *misery* that came along with it: spouse abuse, child abuse, Snape’s bitterness and hate, and so much more; he thought that what might be saved from preventing it might be worth it anyway. If he could prevent someone he’d respected – besides being Atty’s grandson – from that life, he’d do it without question. “I’m not one to pressure someone about their soulmate, *obviously*,” he flickered the fingers of his free hand with its silk glove. “But I do think that soulmarks exist for a reason. We’re young and have literally a *century* or more of life ahead of us if we don’t do anything stupid and get killed. There’s no reason to rush right into a marriage when you’re not even out of school yet.”

Atty glanced down at earnest green eyes as they finished their waltz and shared a bow, tucking one of his cousin’s hands through the loop of his arm as he led them into the supper room.

“Things are different for me, Harry.” Atty confided softly, now only half-resigned to a society marriage after his cousin’s argument against it. “I don’t have heirs in a son and brother. There’s just me and Father left of the Prince line. If we both were to die…” He trailed off, lost in that dark thought for a moment.
Harry couldn’t really argue that point.

It was the nightmare of every wizarding family after all: to see the end of your name, line, and magical lineage with the inherent talents that have developed over centuries or more gone with them.

That didn’t stop him from pressing the point, knowing what he did.

“And wouldn’t it be better for the Prince line for you to bond and mate your soulmate?” He asked, already knowing the answer.

One of the argument – the main one in the ton for that matter – of bonding and mating between soulmates was that such pairings always led to more and/or more powerful offspring than marrying elsewhere.

And as an alpha, there was a more than fifty percent chance that his soulmate was an omega, which doubled the odds of many children versus any other pairing, even with a female beta.

Harry took Atty’s silence to his rejoinder as concession – for the moment at least – and changed the subject to a mild complaint about Many-Handed Rudy that focused Atty’s attention so completely that he didn’t have to worry overmuch about his cousin giving further thought to an ill-advised courtship of one Leta Lestrange.

With a second half of the night to deal with alongside more and more bachelors and leering wizards in miserable society marriages asking for dances, at least that was one less thing for Harry to stress over.

There was nothing like a Slytherin with a mission to keep arseholes like Rudy Lestrange away from him.

Now if only he could unleash him on the smarmy politicians he had to play nice with for the sake of the resolutions he and Henry were bringing before the Lords’ Moot and Wizengamot, all would be well – if tiring – for the remainder of the Ball.

…

Harry hadn’t expected Theseus Scamander to ask him to dance – let alone for the last dance of the Ball.

From what he’d been most carefully taught by the ladies in his life, the most important – or perhaps significant – dances of any Ball, let alone the most highly-anticipated and highest-ranked Ball of either the main or little social seasons, were the first, last, and supper dances.

The supper dance was self-explanatory as who one partnered during it was expected to likewise be their partner during the meal, giving a suitor the chance to have access to a deb for the single biggest block of time available without pushing any boundaries of propriety.

Harry had been more than relieved to spend his with Atty, even if after Harry’s comments regarding his cousin giving into pressure to settle for a society marriage rather than a true mating Atty was rather more withdrawn and thoughtful than was the norm for the practiced socialite that was the Prince Heir.

The opening or first dance of a Ball was a statement. If married or mated or betrothed or even just having an unofficial “agreement” with another party, it was the done thing for the dance to be shared by their counterpart whether mate, wife, etc. Granting a suitor the first dance was often
taken as a sign of favor but can easily be brushed off as merely one of opportunity if not previously arranged.

Then came the last dance, which like the first was a statement as well. If a swain pressed for two dances – a clear sign of favor that couldn’t be mistaken – they would almost always wish for either the first or last dance if not both and the supper set was already claimed. A suitor granted the last chance to publicly woo a partner during the last dance of the night was considered a lucky duck indeed, particularly if the deb was quite sought after.

It also tended to be claimed by a deb’s familial relations, if one didn’t wish to give the appearance of favoritism.

Attie, Charlus, and Henry had all offered to step in, even though for Attie some might take it that his cousin was thinking of a quite political-minded match indeed despite them being second cousins and would likely cause talk about their closeness after they’d shared the supper set.

It would certainly get the matchmaking mamas off their backs but Harry wasn’t eager to be talked about in the same breath as the likes of the Gaunts and Lestranges, thank you very much, nor would he wish to deprive Dorea of her new husband’s company.

Henry it would’ve been, if not for Mister Scamander, known to Harry due to his mentoring Charlus at the Auror Academy as Mister Scamander was in fact Captain Scamander, a senior auror with the Ministry as well as being Newt’s big brother by a decent margin of years, asking directly after the second-to-last dance for Harry to share the final waltz and dance of the night with him.

Which was particularly interesting, given that Harry hadn’t spoken to the auror captain once that night despite having formed a warm friendship with his brother and his connection to Charlus.

With a flick of a look towards Henry, Harry took Theseus’s hand and allowed the tall, broad, handsome redhead whose hair was more fiery Prewett ginger than Newt’s pretty copper curls, to lead him out on the floor as his one-time great-grandfather located his wife Lady Regina, formerly of House Bones, and led her to join the dancers beginning to twirl around the floor.

“Mister Scamander,” Harry sent the older wizard an arch look.

If he had his maths right – and gossip was correct – Newt’s brother was ten or eleven years his senior, making him eight or nine years older than Harry with correction made for, you know, time travel. As such, he wasn’t being inappropriate as a bachelor asking a deb – as much as Harry hated that that was what he was considered as an omega despite being a Lord in his own right at the same fucking time – of Harry’s age to dance even if it gave the appearance to others of interest. With the extended lifespans of magical people taken into consideration, an age gap of up to as much of thirty years could be easily overlooked, though anything more than that tended to get sideways glances and gossip and certainly anything more than fifty years – or chasing a deb or young thing younger than one’s own children – would make one the subject of censure if not outright ridicule for robbing cradles.

Still, Theseus Scamander was infamous much like his brother for receiving his soulmark late, an event occurring only a year or year and a half prior, which had ruined the plans of many a matchmaking mamas plans for the Scamander brothers with their centuries of being landed gentry and links to the Prewett family behind them, even if the highest sticklers for blood purity wouldn’t deign to consider them as respectable options given their muggle-and-squib paternal great-grandparents.

“Lord Peverell,” Theseus smirked right back at the tall omega who nearly stood eye-to-eye with
him despite not having the same broad shoulders and chest of an alpha. “Would it offend you terribly if I got straight to the point?” He asked even as he led the elegant creature who’d easily become belle of the ball – much to the frustration of Newt’s little friend Leta who’d had designs on the position now that Dorea was effectively retired from her reign as Diamond with her marriage – through the waltz.

Which in itself was worth a moment’s pondering as rather than having an elegance that came from years of practice like most debs, that of Harry Peverell – new friend of Thee’s beloved baby brother – was more on the side of natural athleticism like a dueler…or perhaps an Animagus given Peverell’s infamously copper-tinted skin.

For a group of people who tended to reserve their bigotry for muggles, magical talents, and at times “dirty” blood, they were quick to talk behind their hands when it came to magical people who didn’t suit their ideas of “proper” like those of the American West.

No one would ever cut Peverell because of it or even risk his censure given his established power, but they would talk about the risks of allying with him through marriage and whether having children with copper skin was worth the benefits it came with.

“Oh the contrary, Mister Scamander, I would welcome it,” Harry told him honestly. After a night spent cloaked in pretty pleasantries, half-truths, and genial patter some bluntness was unexpected but appreciated nonetheless. “What is occupying your thoughts?”

Theseus took him at his word, asking: “What, exactly, is it you want from my brother Lord Peverell?” He looked knowingly upon the gloved hand held in his own bare one. “As you are not in the hunt for your soulmate and Newt is hardly well connected enough for a political marriage for one of your stature – nor entitled to extensive lands or an excellent monetary inheritance – I feel rightfully concerned regarding your clear preference for him and what it might lead to.”

Harry blinked rapidly, trying to process that.

What the ever-loving fuck was Scamander talking about?

He thought Harry wanted…what?

To toy with his brother or some such bullshit?

What the fuck?

Newt wasn’t even at the Ball how the hell…and then the knut dropped.

Harry had sent Newt – much like everyone else of his acquaintance, including his older brother and parents – a gift for Yule.

Most Yule gifts are tokens, especially with mere acquaintances. Harry sent out copies of the first run of the rebranded Britannica to all of his acquaintances, the sort of gift that was expected from a Lord of a Most Ancient and Noble House, especially one still trying to establish himself in society. That it advanced his mission of trying to force the magical populace of Wizarding Great Britain to acknowledge that muggles aren’t living in dirt huts and scrambling for subsistence-level living anymore (at least not all of them) was mere gilding on the niffler as far as he was concerned.

However, there were a few others – beyond Teddy, Credence, and their cadre of house elves that Grythorn was still searching high and low for to fill out the requirements of Harry’s estates – that had gotten either more or a better class of gift than the token book of everyone else.
Newt, as arguably Harry’s only friend not related to him in this time-period, was one of them right along with Isobel Ross who while starting out as Atty’s friend had quickly grown on Harry with her reasoned and down-to-earth sensibilities or his cousin Charlus’s wife Dorea who was very much a Black in the pattern of Sirius albeit a ladylike, feminine form of it.

And given that Harry had a tendency towards spoiling those he cared about after going so many years without concrete proofs of affection or feeling from anyone in anyway but the negative, he might, possibly, understand where Scamander’s concern for his little brother was coming from upon reflection.

Honestly, if someone who from his perspective barely knew Credence had given him an additional two gifts over the expected token, he wouldn’t have been nearly so circumspect regarding the matter as Scamander and hexed first and asked never.

Though he still was a little pissed on Newt’s behalf over his own brother implying that Newt wasn’t good enough for Harry.

He might not be interested in romance or finding his soulmates – which he thought was reasonably well established in rumor if not fact by now no matter the hopes of matching mamas – but if he were in his opinion he’d have to do one hell of a search to find someone better than Newt for a paramour or spouse and could certainly do a whole hell of a lot worse, social norms regarding nobility vs. gentry aside.

“To return your plain speaking with my own, your brother is my friend,” Harry said. “And I have treated him as such.” His smile was a little crooked. “I never had had many friends and I’m afraid I’m quite guilty of attempting to spoil and cosset the ones I do have who are true. If this gave an unseemly impression to yourself or your family, I will make my apologies at once and you can be assured it will not happen again.”

“I had hoped it was something along those lines,” Theseus nearly sighed with relief. Peverell wasn’t another Lestrange trying to put his brother on a leading string as a just-in-case alpha. Due to how long it took to see that omega’s game, it had been in play for far too long for him and his parents to do much more than wait and watch from a distance in hope that the worst they feared never came to pass. Seeing another omega – one even higher ranked and powerful in his own right beyond that of a family name – seeming to begin moving in on Theseus’s sweet, stubborn, oblivious little brother had been more than he could bear. As a result, he might’ve been a bit… precipitous on questioning the veracity of Peverell’s interest in his brother but he couldn’t say he was dismayed by the result.

Even though, he couldn’t help but note that while Peverell gave an avowal of mere friendship, he hadn’t dismissed or denied that an interest otherwise might be present, preferring to ignore the assertion altogether rather than take steps to assure him it didn’t exist in the first place.

Interesting.

Very interesting, indeed.
Racing Towards Devastation

Three:

Dumbledore vs. Dumbledore

5 January 1914; Private Room, The Leaky Cauldron, London Magical District, Wizarding Great Britain

It was with a combination of confidence buoyed by his recent successes in the social and political circles (it was almost worrisome how quick the latter were to listen to him after his debut into the former) and deep concern that Harry agreed to meet with Professor Dumbledore at the Leaky for a “bit of a chat” according to the invitation that had reached him through a rather familiar method to circumvent the privacy and mail-screening charms that Harry paid the wizarding post to set and manage for him – Fawkes.

Harry’d been happier to see the phoenix for the first time in more than a year than he thought he’d be, though he was understandably – in his opinion – wary at the same time.

Phoenixes weren’t your average magical creatures by any means.

That Fawkes had studied Harry for a long, endless moment before giving over the envelope his bonded companion had sent him with certainly reinforced that idea even as Harry wondered over what it was about him that had engaged the phoenix’s attention.

Did Fawkes somehow sense that they’d met before?

That they knew each other, had fought together, could even be considered friends above and beyond Harry’s fraught relationship with Fawkes’s companion?

Or perhaps it was something else the phoenix saw.

Lingering traces of time-travel perhaps?

Or even something simpler, as Serenity had certainly more than twigged to it: the almost constant war that went on underneath Harry’s public exterior as he worked through grief and rage and apathy and confusion and frustration and more all as a result both of the life he’d already lived and the one he was attempting to build.

His brother's familiar these days since Credence had started settling into magical life better and better spent nearly as much time soothing Harry’s internal turmoil, anxieties, and nerves as she did Credence’s.

Though as Serenity hadn’t been around – or indeed anyone but Eris – when Fawkes had come and gone through the wards at Peverell Castle (which he’d promptly adjusted to ensure that only a phoenix keyed into them could carry in anything but themselves, he didn’t mind Fawkes visiting but he’d rather not have the phoenix, no matter how presumably trustworthy as a species, pose a security risk to his brother and son) there wasn’t any way to find out for certain what had been
going through Fawkes’s feathery head.

Also not helping Harry’s wariness over meeting with the Professor outside of Hogwarts was that he wasn’t certain what Dumbledore had finally gathered either enough information or courage to confront him over – and Harry wasn’t kidding himself.

Between his lingering and ever-present bone-deep resentment regarding Dumbledore’s older self and Dumbledore’s personality traits and habits even as a younger wizard than the one who’d wounded him so deeply, come Merlin’s rebirth or the end of days they were likely going to devolve into a confrontation of one kind or another before their “bit of a chat” was finished.

Whether over Credence, being a Parselmouth, Harry’s status as a Far-Seer (if Dumbledore had dug far enough into his background to unearth the status that Isla had gotten for him, bullshit or not she was right that it was the best way to cover up his knowledge of the future to those who didn’t know he was from a possible future), or his recent activity which in a certain light and framing would be seen as quite anti-muggle, he didn’t know what – if any or all of the above – was on the meddling bastard’s mind for this meeting.

Though as he’d no sooner stepped through the door of the meeting room and gotten settled after a few stilted greetings with his professor watching him out of those piercing blue eyes before it opened behind him and ushered in a third party – who, it had to be said, looked like a younger and less-worn twin of his professor even with the deep lines that looked shaped from an essence of bitterness surrounding his mouth – Harry was starting to get an idea of Dumbledore’s (the elder) agenda.

But if the shock on Dumbledore-the-Younger’s face was any sign, followed in abrupt fashion by barely-leashed rage, Harry was starting to think that the trap the Professor had laid was less intended for Harry as a main object than for his younger brother.

Not to say that if Harry stumbled at the turn of events the Professor wouldn’t take advantage of it, but, as the two quickly fell to vicious bickering almost ignoring that Harry was even there, he didn’t think it was the main plot in play.

Harry occupied himself with his cup of tea – after a discreet charm to ensure it was untainted, never could be too careful after all – and watching the byplay between Dumbledore versus Dumbledore.

“Who’s this then?” Aberforth ground out when he managed to stop clenching his jaw long enough to speak at the sight of his brother who he – happily – could’ve never seen again even to the point of missing his chance to spit on his coffin, cozied up with tea and a young-enough-to-be-his-son omega who Aberforth was still enough of a Dumbledore with their familial-inherited ability to sense power in others to be instantly wary of. If his older brother was less of a blindly-romantic twat Aberforth would say that the arsehole had finally latched onto another powerful wizard after his affair with Gellert ended along with the life of their sister.

That he accredited Albus’s refraining from attempting to attach the powerful omega to his brother’s romanticism – still – over soulmates rather than having any sense or judgement of character when it came to what his soulmate’s reaction would be if he ever had the sheer audacity to move the fuck on said quite a bit about his brother’s more cold-blooded traits in Aberforth’s mind than it did Aberforth’s opinion, which really couldn’t get any lower, of his brother.

To wit: that he blamed Albus more than he ever did Gellert for Ariana’s death said quite a bit about all of them, himself included.
How did one blame a wild thing for lashing out? It was wild. It behaved as was in its own self-interest and ability to survive.

The same applied to a madman, no matter how charismatic, charming, and intelligent on the surface: mad was mad.

Aberforth might as well blame a wolf for killing a rabbit as blaming Gellert for Albus’s choices.

His brother always had been selfish, taught that from the cradle along with secrecy and manipulation by their mother and only reinforced by the decision of their parents to hide Ariana rather than get her the help she needed.

In a family of fools quick to snap to action and judgment alike, Aberforth had all the temper of his family and almost none of the impetuosity.

It was a trait that had served him well on the dueling circuit, if gotten him shame from his family for failing to live up – or down as he saw it – to the family’s Gryffindor lineage.

He’d take Slytherin and their lessons on how to move through the world without causing a fuss and flap wherever he went any day over the grandstanding and judgmental nature of the House of Lions.

No, he knew Albus wasn’t up to anything he shouldn’t be with an omega young enough to be one of theirs.

That didn’t mean he wasn’t going to poke him over it and see how he reacts…just because he could.

“Finally wised up and moved on?” He sneered, crossing his arms and planting his feet just in case he’d miscalculated and Albus – or the boy, he noted the male-style clothing – went for their wands.

Albus might be better than Aberforth at wandless magic but even all he managed consistently was a few showy tricks better for creating awe in impressionable minds than any practical applications in a duel or fight.

That he didn’t know about Harry’s abilities didn’t really signify even with the power that – and oh it must chap Albus’s arse – even from across the room and being dampened down (Occlumency, if he had to guess, wished Albus was that considerate, must not be a Gryffindor then) was at least a match for his older brother’s if not outstripping it altogether.

When one rose to the upper-echelons of magical power, it became less an issue of degrees of difference between them like it was with the average wizard or a question of practice and skill and more one of magnitudes of difference, the sort of separation that could only be bridged by decades of practice and skill not a mere single generation gap.

If Aberforth gave even half a damn about Albus, he’d feel a bit sorry for the bastard that he’d been supplanted as the most powerful British wizard before he’d even gone grey.

As it was all he felt was unholy glee at the thought and how it must have sent Albus scrambling.

“Ew,” came the response not from his flabbergasted brother but from the omega who crossed his legs and sat back against his chair, picking up his teacup and giving every cue possible of not engaged in this. “No.”

A smirk twitched at the corner of Aberforth’s mouth, the bitter wizard finding himself liking the
boy despite wishing otherwise for obstinacy’s sake if nothing else – Albus had used his typical manipulations to bring them together in one room after all (he’d thought he’d be meeting a representative from the British dueling circuit not his crooked-nosed, meddling, infuriating elder brother) – but if that was any sign that was a stance he’d have trouble maintaining.

“What do you want, Albus?” He tried again.

“What makes you think I want anything at all, Abe?” Albus tried his usual innocent nonsense, as if the last time they’d seen each other hadn’t been when Aberforth broke his fucking nose at Ariana’s memorial.

Two snorts – albeit only one was expected, both Dumbledores eyeing their companion speculatively at his soft, likely unintended interjection – sounded at that bit of flimflam.

“Please.” Aberforth rolled his eyes. “I’m not one of your starry-eyed sycophants or a schoolboy too young to know better. I know you Albus. What do you want?”

“Perhaps to ascertain that one of my only living relations was still alive and well, has that not occurred to your suspicious mind?”

“Perhaps it would if I didn’t know you,” Aberforth repeated the assertion. “I know how you operate, brother,” he said packing as much dark loathing as he could manage into a single word. “Letting aside our audience whose presence I can think of no reason at all for, I am quite sure you would’ve left me to wander the world unhindered and uncontacted for a century until you up and decided one day that you had a use for me and enacted a plan to bring me around. I ask again: what do you want, Albus?”

Harry drank this all in: Albus pretending to be wounded at his brother’s suspicion, continuing with the pretense of innocence, Aberforth’s bitterness and suspicion even stronger and fuller-bodied than it had been the last time he’d seen the older wizard, untainted and unlightened by decades of dwelling upon the deep wound of Ariana’s death.

Honestly, from what he could tell, it was as close to genuine hate – at least on Aberforth’s side – as an emotion could get without being held in check by extenuating circumstances.

Their childhood before everything went to shit if Harry had to guess based on what he knew. The sad part, in his opinion, was just how on-point Aberforth was.

That was, from all accounts, exactly what the Professor had done in his original timeline. He’d ignored the fact that his brother existed for decades before he found himself in need of a plant in the underbelly of Wizarding Great Britain during the first rise of Voldemort. Then, somehow, he’d convinced his brother to buy the Hog’s Head in Hogsmeade and turn to playing informant, later joining the Order of the Phoenix.

Aberforth even knew it based on what was being said now and had gone along with it anyway because the single most infuriating trait of one Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore was how fucking often he was right.

His ability to predict people and events was uncanny.

It would, however, be far more impressive if it weren’t because he’d often maneuvered those people and set up those events – even if only tangentially – in the first place.

“If I may,” Harry verbally stepped forward, setting his teacup aside rather than wait for them to go
another couple of rounds without getting anywhere. He was still on break damnit. And he had more political bullshit to deal with. He did not have time to waste sitting around while the Dumbledores bitched at each other all day when he could be spending his time getting Teddy-snuggles or helping Credence preen Serenity or whatever was on the docket today at Castle Peverell. “I believe what he wants with you actually has to do with me: or, properly, with my brother who I hold guardianship over.”

“What?” Aberforth blinked, taken aback even as Albus nearly pouted into his teacup at having young Mister Peverell scuttle his plan to introduce Abe to the subject – or the possible subject, as it were – slowly.

“My younger half-brother,” Harry emphasized, “who is only just turned twelve and has a phoenix familiar and an unnamed sire.”

“What?” Aberforth felt a bit faint on his feet, reaching out and bracing himself with one hand on the back of the chair that had been left empty for him. As if he ever had any intention of sitting and having tea with his fucking brother. “What do you… What are you…?” He asked even though the implication was clear to him.

Always contrasted unfavorably with his brother in almost every way, despite not being as obnoxiously intelligent as Albus he was in no way stupid.

He heard what wasn’t being said.

He just didn’t want to think about it or believe it as the implications of an omega who was barely of age holding guardianship over his half-brother were…dire to say the least.

“He’s saying, Abe.” Albus sighed, barely refraining him an ill-mannered pinch of his nose. “That it is currently being bandied about that as I am notoriously faithful to my soulmate despite no one knowing – other than a few discreet souls – who my soulmate is, rumor and gossip has placed young Aurelius Peverell by virtue of an unknown father and a phoenix familiar as a possible Dumbledore relation.”

“To say what the Professor won’t,” Harry drawled. “In the court of public opinion you have been pronounced guilty of siring a child out of bonding or wedlock. Congratulations: it’s an alpha boy.”

If immediately after the words processed, Aberforth’s eyes rolled back in his head and he hit the floor in a rather ungainly and unfortunate swoon, neither of the witnesses involved were rude enough to mention it.

Though it should be noted that neither of the prats had moved to keep him from hitting the floor in the first place despite being more than capable of doing so, so there was that.

…

Harry wasn’t a complete arsehole no matter how he felt when he was in the middle of levitating Aberforth’s fainted body up and into a chair only for a phoenix – not Fawkes or Serenity as Harry was quick to note from the coloring that were a study in oranges with hidden flashes of sunny gold, coupled with the constipated consternation that flashed rapidly over Professor Dumbledore’s face at the sight of the newest addition to the feathery-menace club, guess he didn’t feel quite so special anymore and was offended by it, fancy that, or at least that was Harry’s interpretation from the expression changes – to flash in and perch itself protectively over its person’s lolling-headed form on the back of said-chair.
Its – *his*, Harry thought based on the impressive head-crest-frill of feathers that was more boisterous than Serenity’s and closer to that of Fawkes and the length of the peacock-plume tail – gaze filled Harry with a *deep* sense of disappointment in himself not helped along by the chiding trill of a phoenix-song deeper and more resonating than Serenity’s lighter tones.

Ouch.

Disappointing a phoenix.

Let’s mark that number sixty-two on his “never do that again, if possible” list.

Even Professor Dumbledore was affected if the quickly-lowered gaze and rushed sip of his tea was any sign when the new phoenix turned his typical bright-gold gaze on the oldest wizard in the room.

Then once Aberforth started to come around with a groan and his phoenix – or so Harry was assuming barring any other explanation – turned his attention his companion, allowing Harry to think on *that* for a moment.

Huh.

Aberforth Dumbledore *also* had a phoenix companion, making that three-for-three on the Dumbledore males and making Harry *very* confused about why Ariana never rated one or Percival as *that* likely would’ve been notable considering what he went to Azkaban for.

What was the determining factor?

It couldn’t be as simple as the legend of being “in need” because he would argue – likely successfully in any court or debate forum – that both of *those* Dumbledores had been in great need directly after Ariana’s attack and yet it wasn’t until *after* Ariana’s death that the Dumbledore sons, presumably, were found by or found their companions for themselves.

And it likewise couldn’t be about power.

Ariana had *had* power, nearly as much or perhaps more than Albus if Aberforth’s late-in-life recollections were to be believed and her being assumed an Obscurial backed up.

The only thing Harry could think of was that it wasn’t as simple as Dumbledore family legend made it out to be of “being in need” and more along the lines of somehow the phoenixes sensing a compatible familiar – as he knew full-well that a familiar bond goes both ways after two experiences of it personally – who needed them. Phoenixes were rare. It would follow that people capable of being an acceptable companion to a phoenix were also rare. Ergo, perhaps something about the Dumbledore family magic made them a better option than most which gave rise to the family legend.

Well, it was an idea anyway.

Outside of flat-out asking Serenity – who of the now three phoenixes Harry was familiar with was most likely to answer a question from him – he didn’t have much else to go on.

Aberforth came awake full of abraded pride and gruff reassurances towards his companion to the tune of: “I’m fine, Thackery, honestly. Fuss-budget of a bird.”

Several minutes were filled this way: the phoenix trilling and chirping up a cacophony as he – Thackery apparently – ascertained his person’s well-being while Aberforth groused and grumbled
and showed himself to have a free hand with head-scratches and neck-scratches until he had his fussing familiar quieted down and quiescent, though watching Harry and Albus with unnerving intensity and suspicion for the state they let his person get into from his perch now wrapped around Aberforth’s shoulders.

Though even with the tall, broad shoulders of an alpha – neither Dumbledore had ever been a small man even when they were both upwards of a century old – Thackery nearly smothered him in a flurry of wings and feathers and swan-sized bulk (not to mention the long plume of a tail that nearly dragged all the way to the floor) before a few pointed readjustments from Aberforth freed him to converse and do his own watching of his infuriating brother and the confounding omega with his equally-confounding information across the tea table from him.

“A son,” Aberforth said at last.

“A son,” Albus agreed.

“Possibly a son,” Harry took more pleasure than he probably should bringing them both right back down to earth. While Aberforth had been recovering his equilibrium, so had Harry, and he believed he was starting to get the shape and feel of what the Professor was after with this venture and he was in for a surprise.

If the wizard thought that he would manage to bully his way through and into the circle of Harry’s family – which came with that much-sought-after Peverell name and history of previous fascination – he had another think coming.

He’d overplayed his hand this time.

Honestly, he would’ve done better with just asking Harry to discuss the matter rather than going through all the trouble of setting a trap and springing this meet-and-greet on him.

It had to be allowed that if Aberforth hadn’t fainted and given Harry time to do his own mental adjustments, the Professor throwing off his usual quickness in adapting by his mere presence and years of hardwired conditioning to follow his lead which was simply aggravating to a heretofore unprecedented extent, the Professor likely would’ve had at least a modicum of success at getting information he otherwise wouldn’t have had access to if not been allowed to meet – possibly – with Credence alongside his brother if that was the way Harry had decided to proceed.

Too bad for him, Harry had had time to adjust and adapt.

And he was not going to like what came next.

“Which, honestly, is none of your affair Professor.” Harry continued blithely, ignoring the boggled looks that got him from the brothers and the considering one from Thackery. “Unless or until a relationship between my brother and legal ward has been established with Mister Dumbledore, you have no standing to be included any further. And, to be frank,” he turned his head to ignore the flabbergasted wizard closest to him in favor of the one who was steadily growing amused across from him. “If I had known how to contact you or that you were even in the country, Mister Dumbledore, I would have done so without the unnecessary intervention of an – at best – tangentially connected party.”

“T-tangentially connected?” Albus spluttered, shocked down to his toes. From an exceedingly polite young wizard like Harry Peverell, he’d expected more than, than, than that when it came to his professors.
Of course, it could be pointed out that as they were neither in school nor did Dumbledore teach either Peverell, that how Harry spoke to or treated Albus wasn’t a mark of his manners but such a thing would never occur to one to consider and to the other to be rude enough to say without provocation.

Aberforth, however, had no such considerations and took relish in pointing out and enumerating each and every reason why his potential son wasn’t Albus’s concern until either he or Harry said he was, ending his rant with standing, Thackery steady on his shoulders, and crooking out his elbow in offer to the young omega with which it seemed he had quite serious business to discuss after all.

Harry, smirking internally but externally calm and unbothered, took it and allowed himself to be led all the way out of the Leaky and on his mild suggestion to Gringotts where they could being the tedious business of unraveling the tangled mess that was the parentage of one Aurelius Credence Peverell.

…

Out in the Alley as they ambled onwards towards Gringotts, the pair getting quite a few curious glances cast their way by the normal school-break shopping and socializing crowds, Harry felt tension drain from his neck and shoulders then sighed.

“I’m going to pay for that, somehow,” he acknowledged ruefully. “But it did feel good. Your brother has been a bit too watchful and curious when it comes to myself and my family since the moment we met for me to think stymying his attempts here will stop them altogether.”

“Been keeping a stern eye on ya, has he?” Aberforth’s voice already had the common-man growl and intonation that would keep the majority of the wizarding world from thinking of him and his brother in the same sentence for most of their lives, even when they live less than a mile apart in later years – if, indeed, that event still came to pass.

“As much as he can with limited resources.” Harry said then expanded a bit on the subject: “between being a Peverell and a Parselmouth and having no reverence for his power he’s been on the back foot since meeting me. It seems he’s starting to recover.”

Unfortunately.

It would’ve suited Harry perfectly well if Dumbledore could’ve stayed off his normal games until his little brother was graduated and away from Hogwarts.

Harry ran his eyes over the normal crowd along the Alley, then snorted a quiet laugh.

Aberforth glanced over and arched a brow at the omega that was as tall as he was if not at broad. Rare, that.

Most English omegas – male ones at least – while having the lithe loveliness of their female counterparts and were often taller than beta males didn’t often grow as tall as an English alpha, even one of Aberforth’s height which while not as great as his lummox of a brother’s wasn’t insignificant either.

Must be the American native in him if Aberforth had to guess based on what he’d seen in his travels.

Some tribes in his experience could nearly tower over an Englishman of similar health, dynamic,
and age, especially the equestrians from the plains.

Finding tall European wizards wasn’t difficult if one were looking in Scandinavia but unless an Englishman had a strong influx of Scandinavian blood from the centuries of conquest an alpha graduate of Hogwarts, for example, rarely stood eye-to-eye with one from Durmstrang let alone an omega managing the feat of stature. Between the height, skin-color, and hair it was beyond obvious that Harry Peverell wasn’t plain-English fare. Whether that worked for him or - and more likely - against him Aberforth would venture depended on the depth of his coin-purse.

Society could be so terribly predictable.

“We’re setting tongues to wagging,” Harry explained, a half-smile twitching at one corner of his mouth. “Well,” he decided. “At least it should get them off of pairing me up with my cousin Atty or Theseus Scamander for a day or two.”

He hadn’t missed the gossip that came with fame or being measured of importance but at least this time it was thus far restricted to being over tea and hidden behind quickly-raised fur muff rather than playing out in print.

Compared to what he’d dealt with before, he’d take it, even if gossip would have him married off to Atty and carrying out scandalous affairs with both his best-friend’s brother and his brother’s father all in the course of a single day.

Nothing was so efficient in Wizarding Great Britain as the gossip chain.

A fact he wasn’t afraid – anymore – of taking advantage of when it suited him but was still understood to be highly ridiculous in his opinion.

“Gossip follows ya then?”

“Lord Peverell, eligible omega, at your service Mister Dumbledore.” Harry introduced himself with no little amount of snark. “To say that gossip follows me would be a vast understatement.”

“And why you want to keep information about your brother as quiet as possible.” Aberforth easily agreed with that much at least.

“For as long as possible.” Harry nodded, eyes hard. “The things that are already being said over my adopting my godson because of his recognition bond with Aurelius – something none of us knew until a good week after the fact – is enough that I don’t mind them whispering over my prospects regarding marriage or otherwise, if it keeps Aurelius and Teddy free of it all.”

“A mama bear then?” Aberforth glance down – and then quickly away – at fierce green eyes.

“You have no idea.”

…

Nothing more was said between them until they’d been ushered with typical goblin efficiency – and even nominal growling – back to Grythorn’s office.

The goblin took one look at who accompanied his favorite client and sent a memo off to one of the young goblins still in training and acting as runners for the tellers and account managers to fetch the vial of blood being held in stasis down in the Peverell vaults.

He supposed at some point he might stop being surprised as Peverell’s ability to predict even
events that had nothing to do with his knowledge of current and future events of enough personal or historical significance that he was told of them or learned of them from either books or word-of-mouth and social rumor but today was not that day.

There was little, he knew, that concerned Harry Peverell than the ongoing health and well-being of the lucky few souls who managed to assail his rather formidable – dare he say even goblin-like – defenses.

And among that number there were none so important as Peverell’s son and brother.

That the Dumbledore family would show up in young Mister Peverell’s life had been a foregone conclusion from the moment he’d been chosen by a phoenix as a companion.

Grythorn, however, hadn’t been expecting this particular Dumbledore as even as a relatively young and unimportant wizard outside of his scholarly achievements and his reputed depth of magical power reserves, the elder Dumbledore brother was rapidly gaining a name for collecting a circle of informal informants and an abhorrent, to goblin-kind, tendency to both play favorites among his students and to thereafter meddle in their affairs.

The last thing Harry Peverell had wanted if the elder Dumbledore had pressed regarding the rumored relation was for young Mister Peverell to have to deal with that wizard on any level without having guidelines and boundaries established – which meant establishing the veracity of the rumored relation.

Fortunately for Harry Peverell, what he may or may not have known thanks to his future knowledge was hardly applicable in such an instance.

Unfortunately for all involved, if enough of a stink had been kicked up the Wizengamot had the power to demand a familial blood test – the record of which would then become public and unsealed after young Mister Peverell came of age along with everything it might reveal regarding the inner workings of the Peverell Family…something which Lord Peverell could not afford.

However, Aberforth Dumbledore’s presence and Lord Peverell’s seeming geniality pointed towards the best-case scenario being enacted…and once done, then any attempt Albus Dumbledore might try would be scuttled before they could even begin once the relation is confirmed in any manner and an agreement made between his brother and Lord Peverell regarding young Mister Peverell.

It was all a muddle of wizarding nonsense as far as Grythorn was concerned.

Which, that is to say, merely another day of dealing with the illogical creatures no matter how distasteful it may be at times.

Lord Peverell, at least, worked with a simple logic and quickness – and occasional ruthlessness – of action that made him less onerous than most for the goblin nation to deal with.

Most of the time anyway.

At the sight of the quickly produced secrecy contract and the parchment for a blood-based paternity (only) test, Aberforth blinked before shaking his head in bemusement.

After watching Lord Peverell ignore or out-maneuver his brother, he wasn’t actually surprised that there were already contingencies in place for Peverell to protect his brother…Aurelius…Aberforth’s potential son.
And no, he was not dealing well with that idea.

If he had things his way, after the muck his parents and brother had made of their family, the Dumbledore name would die with him and Albus.

A brief – that he was vaguely recalling after almost an hour of searching his memories from more than a dozen years ago – flirtation with a pureblood squib who had as much of a reason to hate British magical society as Aberforth did (though in his case it was how most seemed to watch his brother with stars in their eyes over his power and much-vaunted intelligence and not over being treated like muck on a shoe like her) that ended in a drunken knee-trembler before he left for the Far East seemed to have put paid to that idea if he was counting months right.

He’d never been one for chasing skirts and male omegas were rare enough that other than the young wizard who called Aberforth’s potential-child brother, he couldn’t remember the last time he actually spoke to one outside of Hogwarts.

Though…that squib had been young, barely anymore of age than Aberforth had been at the time.

How she could’ve possibly had a child old enough to sit in this office at Gringotts as a vested Lord…she couldn’t have.

It wasn’t possible unless she’d been employing youth or glamor charms far above the ability of someone without wanded magic.

A youth potion might’ve done, he supposed, but it didn’t fit with what she’d told him – the little she’d done – of her life.

No, Aberforth took a long look at the young Lord and the goblin who was his account manager, suspicion starting to take root, there were things afoot here that he had no notion of, secrets that the Lord would do quite a bit – if his speed to get away from Albus was any sign and the readied secrecy contract to go along with the blood test – to conceal.

Thackery nudged his cheek with a soft warble as he sensed Aberforth’s infamous hot temper starting to rise.

There was nothing he held less love for than secrets seeing as how they’d destroyed his family over and over and over again.

Now, it seemed, as he listened to the patter of Lord and goblin and submitted to the test – that he noted, another piece in the puzzle, only covered his part of the absent boy’s family – and found himself after the words of both Peverell and his infuriating brother absolutely unsurprised to see that yes, they were right: he had a son…and one that came or so he was starting to understand, with a whole new set of family secrets to keep.

Fabulous.

Chapter End Notes

For more information about my stories (fanfic and original) find me on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/sif.shadowheart
Or follow me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/AbramsSif
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

For more information about my stories (fanfic and original) find me on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/sif.shadowheart

Or follow me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/AbramsSif

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Racing Towards Devastation

Four:

Seeing Sense

_Peverell Castle, Godric’s Hollow, Godric’s Hollow Unplottable Magical County, Wizarding Great Britain_

Harry, despite wishing otherwise – that Grindelwald had been mistaken, that Serenity wasn’t a sign, even the name Grindelwald had said was Credence’s by all accounts – knew it was true before the test had even finished its business of charting out Credence’s paternal blood relations and comparing them to that of Aberforth who had sat quietly next to him lost in his own thoughts.

Grythorn had made the announcement: Aberforth Dumbledore was indeed the sire of one Aurelius Credence Peverell, then produced the secrecy contract.

Honestly, at that point, Harry had been expecting an outburst of some kind but the wizard had surprised him.

Perhaps it was a family trait.

Credence certainly surprised him often enough and Albus had gifted him with his fair share of doozies over the years.

But he hadn’t done anything at all besides read the contract thoroughly and then signed it before turning those frosty blue eyes on Harry and demand to see his son.

Harry wished he could blame him but if the situations were reversed he highly doubted he would’ve been so contained.

The secrecy contract involved anything revealed from the moment of signing until midnight that same day.

Aberforth would never be able to reveal any of it in any way, the only knowledge he would be able to do anything with after entering Grythorn’s office being that he was, in fact, Aurelius’s blood father.

And yet, still not his guardian, though if Harry was reading the elder wizard correctly as they stood in the hall outside the playroom of the family wing of Peverell Castle where Basil had informed
him Rosie was with the kids and familiars, a simple spell turning the wall as see-through as two-way mirrors, Aberforth wasn’t – yet – intending to challenge Harry’s guardianship of Credence.

Good.

Now that Aberforth’s relation is confirmed and recognized by Gringotts, it would scuttle any plans regarding his brother outside ones that hinged on Aberforth’s compliance.

And given the state of said-wizard’s relationship with people in general and Albus in particular, Harry didn’t think he had anything to worry about on that score.

One worry down, eighty million to go.

“Would you like to meet him?” Harry offered quietly. He was sympathetic to Aberforth’s turmoil. It wasn’t everyday one became a father out of the blue after all. He knew that better than anyone.

Thus he wasn’t surprised by the rapid head-shake that followed the offer.

“I think.” Aberforth blew out a steadying breath as Thackery again nuzzled him in comfort. “That I need a drink and an explanation. I’ve seen him, I see that he’s well and happy. For the moment, honestly, that’s about all I can handle until I’ve got my head wrapped around all of this.”

Really, as far as Harry was concerned, that was a fair enough request.

“I have affairs with politics the next few days,” Harry informed him as he led the way to his study for the requested drink and explanation. “Perhaps, the day before we return to school, the ninth, would be appropriate?”

It certainly would take away the burden of expectation regarding more visits before school – from both Credence and Aberforth – depending on how the first one went.

“Yes.” Aberforth jumped on the suggestion with eagerness. “Yes, I think that might be best.”

“Very well, now.” He poured a brandy with a flicker of his fingers. “Let me tell you a story about an orphan, a bitch, and a meddler…”

…

8 January 1914; Unplottable Location, Meeting of the International Confederation of Wizards, Wizarding Great Britain

“…So it is now that I come to the heart of the subject. That of instituting on a global level that which has already been approved in my home of Wizarding Great Britain: that of sweeping resolutions and law reforms regarding our interactions and, at times, interference with the muggle – or more correctly, non magical – world.”

Three Feathers, called Joseph by some, of the Lakota, listened with intent ears and closed eyes as he focused on the words spilling from the mouth of a young wizard before representatives of both the ICW and a few chosen representatives – including himself – from the IAN.

As was custom, a handful of the most-senior member representatives of the International Alliance of Independent Nations were present at the open meeting of the ICW, a custom and politeness that had come about in the last fifty or so years as tensions between the IAN and the ICW simmered down to a low roil in diplomatic circles rather than outright competitiveness and conflict between
the governing bodies.

The IAN made sure to return the gesture, both bodies ensuring that any reps sent to be witnesses to proceedings – a position not unlike that given to trusted members of the press or historical chroniclers – were the least likely to cause tensions in the presence of reps for the opposing body.

It went without saying that when an IAN meeting is held on lands, for instance, protected and belonging to Three Feather’s tribe, that a rep from MACUSA wasn’t sent by the ICW to stand as witness.

Given that MACUSA has been barely polite in their compliance with international policy regarding the stance of magical peoples among the tribes of his homeland, and much like their non-magical counterparts had many members who wished to annex the lands, people, and precious things of the Lakota for their own and bring them under the MACUSA authority, such understanding from the ICW was expected.

What Three Feathers hadn’t expected in all his life was that not only would his old friend from England, who he’d met through her research into non-wanded magical traditions and rituals, use the blood he’d gifted her to create him a pair of grandsons when he’d never mated nor had a child of his own, but that one of those grandsons would be a sitting British Lord, with power and voice in their magical government and given the standing of Wizarding Great Britain with the ICW thereby with the international body itself.

To think he’d lived to see the day where a child with the blood of his people – however it had been passed down – was able to stand in front of such a group of white wizards and be heard…

It was more than he thought he’d ever see.

Let alone that said child of his people would be speaking sense in the process.

“In the mere span of years since the turning of the century,” his grandson who wasn’t his grandson continued on with his fine speech. “Nearly a hundred wars, rebellions, or other forms of violent conflicts have been won and lost among the non-magical populace. In the last century, so vast are the numbers of wars and of dead that gaining a true accounting amounts to a herculean task long flummoxing historians and undertakers alike. Our dead counted alongside the dead of the warmongering non-magical populace who war for profit, pride, and power alike. Should the magical protections over our lands fall, they would be open to the same colonization, the same greed and encroachment as the natives of lands such as Africa, the East, and the Americas are experiencing for themselves. Open to being plundered, destroyed, or stolen. Stripped of their natural beauties and resources, and left with nothing but the empty shell of what were once vibrant magical lands and thriving magical creatures and peoples…”

Well.

At least Isla hadn’t gifted him with an idiot for a grandson-who-wasn’t.

Small blessings.

“If in less than a hundred years the filthy non-magical industries and gluttonous appetite for greed can poison their water, their air, their lands and leave them barren and unhealthful, how long I ask would it take them to do the same to our protected places? To our water, our air, our land that gives us life and birth and the blessing of magic? I answer: they have already begun.” Ignoring the rumbles and rile of the crowd, Harry continued, well into the practiced rhythm of his speech by now to falter. “The earth, our great Mother of Magic, is no closed system. Her body is vast and
all encompassing. It does not end at the edges of our wards, her life-blood does not turn around and flow back into our rivers and lakes and streams and seas alone, her breezes and winds do not falter at the feel of a protective enchantment. She continues out and spreads through all the lands and air and sea and what the non-magical industry poisons so does she carry it back to us. Land that has stood untainted and untouched by human hands – magical or otherwise – shows traces of non-magical pollution. Plants that have never felt the touch of rain tainted by factory smoke contain traces of contaminants from a hundred or more miles away. As their wars kill our people and trouble our magical kin and creatures, so does their industry and rape of the land harm our own.”

“What wizard can call himself a good magical citizen while his Mother of Magic is raped and defiled by the poisons and pollution and lust for always more of the non-magical industry? What witch can call herself a good magical citizen as long as her children are poisoned by the very air in their lungs or might be stolen away to die on a foreign shore in a non-magical war? I call now for change. I call now for the resolve of every last magical citizen to take a stand and say no more! I call now for not another magical life of any stature to be lost fighting a battle not their own while their very Mother of Magic who gives us Her blessing cries out for aid! I call for the International Confederation to stand with the Lords’ Moot and Wizengamot of Great Britain and defend the very breath and body of our world!”

Three Feathers felt the cry resonate through his bones, arching a brow.

He didn’t know – yet – who’d taught him how to lace his power into his voice or even if he was doing it intentionally or if his call to arms was just that earnest and instinctual, but either way he saw it move those around him, acting as an unstoppable force among a stodgy body of law makers mostly known to be unmovable objects in defense of their traditions.

Even so – he didn’t know if one wizard, even one as powerful and impactful as Hadrian Peverell, would be enough in the end.

…

Harry waited for the applause which crashed over the ICW like a tidal wave to calm, endlessly patient, then finished his speech before taking his seat and waiting for the actual proposals and the accompanying debates and arguments to commence.

An orator of Tom’s or Grindelwald’s caliber he likely would never be – at least not without the massive amount of help he’d needed in crafting the speech that was currently on his third run and been added to and detracted from and tested and tested again by everyone from Isla to Henry to most of the Blacks and some of the remaining Potters plus a random Unspeakable or two – but he could command a crowd when need be.

Even if need-be was usually in order to control a panic or fight a battle, this was just a battle of a different kind.

“In closing, I bid my brothers and sisters in magic to ask themselves: what is the price that they are willing to pay to pander to the non-magical governments and their demands? That they ask themselves when did we start becoming their tools and weapons and servants rather than free and thinking and liberated peoples of our own territories, our own lands, and our own lives? And above all when will such madness end in preference for the sanity that is a magical citizen’s inalienable rights to liberty, health, and the free practice of the very magic that gives them life?”

The applause crashed and rose once more, Harry shaking hands with the current Supreme Mugwump of the ICW, a beta named Vladimir Krum that based on the name, nose, and
(unfortunately) his pigeon-toed gait he was relatively sure was either the grandfather or some other close relation of Viktor Krum, and took the seat in the speaker’s gallery and, much to his own dismay, found himself almost *eager* for the debates to begin.

Curse Isla and Henry and all their plotting, horror of horrors, Harry was actually turning into a *politically minded person*.

Ick.

If Ron or George could see him now they’d laugh themselves silly.

Or worse: Hermione who would bury him under in expertly reasoned and exactingly detailed parchment filled with plans and plans and plans for using his new frame of mind against all the things she’d ever bitched about regarding the Wizarding World.

That Harry’s recent mind set would definitely be quite contrary to most of what she’d likely want accomplished is something he was quite carefully not thinking about, *thank you very much*.

…

The Honorable Heir Henry Potter, current sitting member of the Wizengamot and Lords’ Moot for Wizarding Great Britain and their official representative to the International Confederation of Wizards, listened with nothing short of pride as his cousin moved the ICW to their feet.

He’d heard the speech several times officially and had had a rather large part in crafting it, but even so: for a young omegan wizard who’d had nothing to do with politics (beyond the ghastly wars of the Americans against their indigenous population from what he’d gathered as there were no other ongoing fights currently which would have had a wizard of Hadrian’s youth and background a hardened warrior by his young age otherwise) his cousin had come on with leaps and bounds.

Oh, his heart would never truly be in the game for all that he could move a room when his emotions and convictions were engaged.

Even a staunch Progressive like himself had moments of doubt in his cause at his cousin’s more Moderate politics and arguments against protections – or worse integration – for and/or with the muggles.

Hadrian, for all that he was no muggle *hater*, certainly was no muggle lover either.

He was – as he was currently arguing with a representative from Switzerland and one of the most fiercely pro-muggle among the ICW – however strictly *pro-magical*.

It was not at all the same thing as being anti-muggle no matter how many times his detractors had already – and would continue to do so no doubt – attempt to brand him as such.

One, as Harry was always ever-so-patient (and depending on the audience, cuttingly condescending) to explain, did not out of hand mean the other.

Oh, Hadrian had quite a bit of an axe to grind against muggles, of that no one listening to him discuss abuses against magical children or muggle encroachment on magical and/or wild areas could doubt, but he didn’t want to rule them and he didn’t want to exterminate them like some extremists advocated.

He just…didn’t want anything to do with them at all.
Apparently Harry had been appropriately cutting in his rebuttal to the Swiss delegate who was spluttering and now another (from Egypt) was trying their luck.

It would be to no avail.

As much as Henry’s sensibilities might wish otherwise – he’d prefer working towards cooperation with muggles instead of increased separatism, including if Hadrian got his ultimate goal removal from all muggle cities and villages to magical-only locales under Unplottable wards – his cousin’s proposals and arguments were spectacularly well-timed.

There wasn’t a magical politician in Europe or abroad who weren’t tired of muggle wars.

There wasn’t a magical parent who would quake with rage at the idea of the abuses magical children can suffer under muggle guardians and orphanages.

Bearing witness to the centuries of colonization carried out by non-magical Europeans and the wars and atrocities that came with it…the magical world was ripe for change.

They’d only needed a figure to appear with a half-decent proposal and the ability to if not create a moving speech then at least to perform one.

Part of him was proud that it was his cousin who’d become that person.

Part of him, however, mourned for what might-have-been if it had been a wizard with less horrors behind him and more progressive ideals who had stepped forward instead, like his own son Charlus.

But it hadn’t been Charlus.

The very idea would likely never occur to his fiery boy with a drive for justice.

No, Hadrian was who they had.

More as he became to understand fully what it was his cousin was fighting against, even he was starting to think that Hadrian was who they might’ve needed all along.

…

Harry was two-for-two on out-debating his opposition when a third player stepped up to the metaphorical plate.

So far they’d gone after his age via “inexperience” and “idealism” only to be stymied by reminders of his status as a Far-Seer (yes, thank you Isla) and his testimony – under a quite Magical oath – that “he’d already fought in one war, thank you, and had any notion of idealism beaten out of him via Cruciatus” which had gotten more than one goggle-eyed look at the implications of that when combined with what little was known of his background.

He didn’t care if they marked it down to the ongoing American-Indian Wars or the Mexican War for Independence (he thought that was still going on…maybe. His American history was foggy and from primary school after all) so long as they believed him.

That he still had use of his magic put paid to any idea that he was lying about his remarks.

“You make a compelling argument, Mister Peverell…” The witch paused for effect, no doubt used to being catered to as many ICW reps were important in their home countries and governments.
Too bad she was dealing with someone who had no sense of reverence for anyone or anything beyond magic itself.

“Lord Peverell, if you please Madam,” he reminded her softly. Other than during his speech, he’d never allowed his voice to rise above a quiet tone that carried but made no effort to be heard but rather held an expectation that others will listen. It was a trick he’d learned a long time ago when he was eleven years old from Severus Snape and one that had stuck with him all his life thus far even if he didn’t have the natural sonorous depth of tone as his former Professor.

And oh did she look sour at the reminder that he was a special guest, not a speaker or representative or witness or so on, and as a result wasn’t required to leave his title outside the meeting room doors.

“Lord Peverell,” Harry was starting to get Umbridge flashbacks through at least she didn’t wear pink or simper but there was that same barely-veiled disdain for others present nonetheless. “While your arguments are compelling, one must ask on what basis you present them before this body as you are neither an official representative of your country – either of them if I understand your situation correctly – nor as an expert on this subject matter.”

“Considering that Lord Peverell owns enough property in several countries to be a country in his own right,” and oh, Merlin, was the Supreme Mugwumps’ rebuttal dry. “And has come here on my request to speak regarding this matter, I believe his authority to be here not a matter of questioning, Madam Johannesburg.”

And on and on it went.

…

Isla, Henry, and Harry had a bit of a post-mortem the next morning before he was due to supervise Aberforth and Credence’s first meeting regarding the early reports from the wizarding press over the ICW and their ratification of the first phase of Harry’s plan to mitigate as much of the damage to, well, everything that he could reasonably manage through legislation alone.

Not much, in actuality, ever came from simple legislation.

Laws can change, policies can change, but unless he managed to change minds and hearts right along with it all the resolutions and ratifications in the world won’t make one damn bit of difference.

He was starting to understand how Dumbledore so quickly went grey after defeating Grindelwald and the wizarding world started looking to him for, well, everything.

Isla handed him a letter, shooting a look at Henry before saying: “IAN is ecstatic. Your grandfather didn’t want to distract you but he was one of the reps from IAN sent to observe the open session and debates.”

“They should be,” Henry rolled his eyes. “Harry’s advocating for the sort of total integration or total separation that they already practice, none of the so-called “wishy-washy nonsense” that the ICW has fallen into the habit of since the Statute implementation.”

“Total separation except where integration is already practiced if we’re being honest.” Harry noted. “Which excludes integration from any ICW member country but allows for the ongoing integration already practiced – for example – among Grandfather’s people and many of the other native tribes of the Americas, Australia, and Africa.”
Henry snorted politely behind his teacup. “And MACUSA tries to say that they’re the ruling magical body for all of the USA.”

Colonials, honestly.

“Of the major cities and immediately surrounding land, maybe.” Isla pursed her lips, thinking on what her friend, Harry’s “grandfather” had told her over the years. “But the tribes that haven’t been utterly decimated by European expansion are generally those with a strong magical presence – and they’re hardly likely to submit to a white man’s government after seeing what the non-magical version thereof attempted to do to their peoples.”

“Quite.” Harry bit out, setting aside the letter from one Three Feathers, still furious over some of the things he’s learned recently about his new cultural heritage – what’s survived anyway.

Though apparently he’d pleased his new grandfather, so there was that.

“Most of the early news is positive.” Henry moved on to a less fraught subject. “There is some push back about how the proposed removes that are already being suggested in Britain could be accomplished for institutions such as St. Mungo’s or the Ministry but over all no one is upset at the idea of staying out of muggle conflicts except in defense of their homelands. The idea of establishing a Ministry Department for the health and welfare of magical children is also being well received.”

“Must not occur to them yet then that that department will have oversight of magical families as well as non-magical.” Harry smirked, which was shared by his companions. All of them have seen radical examples of what some families considered appropriate discipline of children. None of them would mourn if the likes of Corvus Lestrange or Malvolio Gaunt were given one time in close contact with a Dementor or ten for using restricted hexes or even curses on their dependents.

“Must not.”

…

As they were being escorted to the Apparation Foyer in Peverell Castle, Isla hung back to speak quickly with her charge regarding a serious matter that she’d alluded to once already as a possibility but has now become fact.

“Your grandfather wants to meet you,” she warned Harry who simply shrugged in answer. “Expect an invitation to spend at least part of the summer with him.”

“As long as its in the beginning of the break.” Harry relayed, knowing what was coming. It haunted his dreams and his waking thoughts alike after all. “As soon as it happens I need to be here to help manage the storm.”

“I’ll tell him.”

…

Daily Prophet Headline; 9 January 1914:

Every Magical Life Has Value!

Is the cry from Britain’s own Lord Hadrian Peverell;

From the smallest bowtruckle to the largest dragon, youngest witch to oldest wizard, here is what
“Credence, I met with your father today.” Harry had told his brother after Aberforth had run off to drown himself in firewhiskey if he was any judge at all. “He’s returned to England and confirmed his relation via Gringotts.”

Credence had sucked in a startled breath, eyes far too large and worried in his sweet young face.

“He’s not going to take me away is he?”

That had been all Credence had wanted to know about his biological father: was he going to take him away from Harry and Teddy and the life and family they all were building in England.

“No,” Harry had promised him firmly. “No one is ever going to take you away.”

It was with that scene – and the quiet, almost rote questions about Aberforth that had come afterwards – on his mind that Harry sat in one corner of the castle’s second-best parlor and watched Aberforth and Credence carry out one of the most awkward-but-polite encounters Harry had ever seen in his life – and he’d lived through years of Ginny’s hero-worshipping crush before she’d gotten her shit together in his fifth year.

They were planted in stiff ladder-backed chairs turned towards each other but not directly opposing, a tea set on a small table between them and their phoenixes almost seeming to attempt to smother them in feathers in their wish to comfort their people through the awkwardness of a first meeting between father and son.

Seeing how stilted and abrupt Aberforth was with Credence – who wasn’t even that young of a child – that the wizard never settled down and had kids made a lot of sense.

Aberforth had asked a couple of tentative questions about whether Credence was happy with Harry, Credence returning the favor with questions about where Aberforth lived when he wasn’t traveling.

It was all very proper and polite and utterly boring.

Still, given that if things had gone bad Credence might’ve lost control and attempted to punch a whole in the castle with his magic, Harry would take it.

And maybe, sometime in the next century, the pair of them could make their way to more than small talk.

Not that Harry was counting on it.

But at least this level of awkwardness should bounce any ideas of Aberforth taking him away right out of his head for good and all.

They left for Hogwarts tomorrow, which meant having to deal with yet another Dumbledore, one that wouldn’t be nearly so easy to manage now that Harry’s pushed at him and Aberforth flagrantly ignored whatever it was that Albus had been hoping to achieve in favor of his own endeavors regarding his son.

Eventually, the two moved on to favorite subjects, Aberforth even tentatively offering help with family magics such as magic sensing and fire spells – which explained a lot about Albus – over the next break and gotten an equally-tentative offer to exchange letters.
It wasn’t tearful and hugging and declarations of familial love but, hey, Harry would take it.

And would make sure that between him and Teddy, Credence never once questioned whether he was loved and wanted and cherished as a part of their family, no matter the questions and worries that would likely linger long into his adulthood regarding the one that he was connected to by mere circumstance of birth alone.

They’d chosen Credence as theirs.

Sometimes, those sorts of things meant worlds more than any accident of birth.

…

Chapter End Notes

For anyone interested in the actual introduction of Harry’s speech I cobbled together (as my FB peeps are aware) some famous speeches from history and repurposed them for Harry then added content appropriate to the subject.

Because I am not a speech writer at all, thank you very much, but there is in an outtake that will be posted tomorrow 9/30 in the outtakes collection in this series “A Single Step” containing scenes and content that don’t fit with the flow of the story but still apply or might be interesting to readers available here: https://archiveofourown.org/works/20392387
Chapter 5

Racing Towards Devastation

Five:

Power vs. Precision

With the return to Hogwarts, Harry was relieved to have his brief spate of beyond-busy scheduling (social, political, DoM, etc.) back to the standard Hogwarts-busy plus his “apprenticeship” work.

However, given the scene between himself and the Dumbledores over break, he had graduated from simply avoiding the Professor’s attention where possible to actively avoiding and ducking him wherever and whenever possible as well as keeping a firm eye on any attempts by Dumbledore to speak with Credence now that his little brother knew that the “uncle” he’d made mention of shortly after rescuing him from Mary Lou Barebone was in fact the Alchemy Professor who also taught some classes of NEWT Defense as well as being in charge of the Dueling Club/Tournament.

That his father’s – which was simply odd for Credence to think about, never having had one of those before in his life and Mister Dumbledore seeming even more out of sorts with finding himself with a son as Credence was with finding himself with a father, even one that, Harry had been careful to explain, he was under no obligation to obey, speak to, or even see or correspond with if he did not want to – clipped explanation of having had a serious falling out with the Professor had failed to leave Credence with a good feeling regarding either man hadn’t helped matters.

It was all one giant muddle, and one that Harry’s experiences with family hadn’t left him well equipped to help his brother work out, other than listening to Credence’s thoughts and worries and giving him what little in the way of advice he had to offer on the subject.

Which since half of that was directly from strict observation, book-reading, or the telly, he still wasn’t all that comfortable giving it over to his impressionable brother and had filled the contents of more than one letter to Isla almost solely with the subject.

Needless to say, that when the train arrived with the students for their Spring Term welcome feast, Harry was happier than he could say to stop ducking the Dumbledore issue for one night (no matter how new said issue was as an active concern) in exchange for catching up with a few friends he’d made during Autumn, including Isobel Ross, and found himself quite happily being apologized all over upon by a sweet and flustered Newt.

Someone, apparently, had gotten out of their brother that said brother had confronted Harry over his gifts, leaving Newt quite boggled.

The poor dear didn’t know whether to apologize for Theseus, scold Harry for “spending far too much” on his presents, or simply blush himself into a coma.

It was adorable.

It also had to wait until the next day after classes since while Newt had gained some confidence in his friendship with Harry, he still was quite reticent about being too...anything in public lest it draw attention – and therefore bullies – or give those same bullies ammunition for their taunts.
“Harry, I’m so sorry for my brother.” Newt blurted out as soon as they’d cleared the door into Harry’s rooms.

Credence was nowhere to be found, likely up in Ravenclaw Tower having been out of classes earlier as a first year than Harry and Newt as NEWT-level students were released most days of the week and Rosie was quick to pass over a gurgling Teddy who was clumsily clapping his hands together at the sight of them, Eris quick even with her wintertime slowness to wing up from beside the fire and wrap around his neck.

“I honestly had no idea he was going to confront you over my p-presents,” and there was the bright blush. “He just asked me who they were from, I-I…”

“It’s okay, Newt, I promise.” Harry chuckled. As the sweet alpha had sent all of the Peverells – including or perhaps especially Rosie and their familiars – presents of his own albeit more on the side of drawings for the humans and homemade feather-care products for Eris and Serenity, than the books that they’d sent and caused such suspicion in the eyes of a protective alpha older brother. “I get it. I’m an older brother too, we’re a protective species. I wasn’t offended by your brother trying to make sure I’m not looking to take advantage of you. Now,” Harry pressed a smacking kiss to one of Teddy’s downy baby cheeks as he let his friend regain his equilibrium. “We all quite enjoyed our gifts from you, even if Teddy here can’t quite manage to verbalize yet that he loves his new nursery print,” of an intertwined Eris and Serenity around baby Teddy nonetheless. “But did you like yours, even after they caused such a fuss?”

Newt visibly perked up from his fluster, his passion for creatures taking over like flipping a switch between awkward-Newt and confident-Newt.

“Oh, yes, they’re wonderful!” He enthused, almost bouncing in place. “Why…”

And he was off and running, filling the rooms with excited chatter as Harry cuddled and played with Teddy right up until Newt had to depart for the dinner hour.

Not that Harry was surprised by his reaction to the gifts.

Muggle works, even those by the likes of Darwin and Sir John McFadyean, weren’t the sort of things that were easy to come by despite there being no real definitive works on anything regarding zoology or animal anatomy in the wizarding world other than on common pets like kneazles and puffskeins and comparative anatomy even in Harry’s original time hadn’t yet been thought of outside of some of Newt’s later works…that he hasn’t written yet or likely even thought of.

Hopefully, like Harry’s defense tutoring that he was not getting out of, they could serve as a bit of a nudge in the right direction for Newt and if not at least give him references to work from while he made his own magical counterparts to what the muggles were doing in zoology and veterinary medicine.

…”

A few weeks later while Harry found being back at Hogwarts and having Newt taking an active role in learning to protect himself gratifying after all the hullabaloo of Winter Break, there were drawbacks as well.

Case in point: a sulky, pouty prat of a wizard who could turn epically whiny as well when doing anything other than cooing over or caring for creatures.

Or, it had to be admitted, showing an extreme level of patience with Teddy when the baby decided
that a good use of his new skill at crawling was to dart his way over to the budding magizoologist and demand attention and cuddles.

Kids, Harry supposed, much like creatures, were able to sense danger and good intentions alike.

And Newt, for all that Harry wanted to hex him stupid at the moment for some peace if nothing else, was a veritable bleeding heart filled with good intentions and social awkwardness around humans.

Babies, it seemed, weren’t counted in that.

But still: hexing.

Which wasn’t the tutoring lesson at hand but was what Newt was going to learn to dodge quick-like if he kept dancing the polka on Harry’s last nerve.

Harry would teach him to properly shield against everything Harry had to throw at him short of illegal spells if it killed them both in the process.

“Get up and try again.” Harry held onto his patience by his fingertips. If he’d known what he’d been in for in tutoring Newt in defense…no he couldn’t even finish that thought in the privacy of his own mind. A soft-hearted idiot – the both of them. Newt was someday going to go out and wander the world in search of creatures. Harry knew that down to his bones that even with his presence and interventions that Newt’s path was unchanged as a whole even if some of the details may alter along the way.

As such, he couldn’t let him go out there without doing what he could to prepare him to take care of himself.

And suddenly he had a much larger appreciation for the bullshit he put Hermione and Molly through over the years with his own antics if he was even a fraction as stubborn as one spectacularly focused Hufflepuff.

“Why, I’ll never be able to beat you.” Newt nearly pouted but had long ago come to terms with the facts of the situation regarding his power levels. Having Harry pummel through shield after shield certainly hadn’t left him with any illusions regarding the subject despite managing an EE on his Defense OWL before dropping the subject for NEWT studies as he’d never managed to enjoy it. He wasn’t the most powerful wizard. His brother was considered quite powerful, perhaps one of the most powerful in their generation, though even he was handily overshadowed by the Peverell brothers if the ease of tearing through Newt’s shields, which previously he’d thought himself quite capable regarding, was any sign. “I can’t.”

Harry snorted, rolling his eyes.

“Well, not with that attitude.” He scolded, if lightly. “You know how I won – or survived – the most important fights of my life?” He asked rhetorically, continuing immediately. “With a simple Disarming Charm. Both times against the same opponent who was my equal in power but vastly superior in knowledge and experience, I used a Disarming Charm against Killing Curses and Crucios alike and lived to tell the tale.”

“You’re more powerful than I could ever dream to be.” Newt chewed on his lip anxiously. He used to bite his nails, but no sooner had he picked up that nasty habit than his work with animals and creatures – and specifically some of the, ah hem, end results of working with animals and creatures – convinced him that putting his hands anywhere near his mouth without a scouring
charm or a good handwashing was a terrible idea. For a solid week he didn’t think his tongue was going to forgive him. Then admitted, though it felt like a secret he shouldn’t be giving voice to: “I think you’re the most powerful wizard I’ve ever met.”

More powerful than perhaps even Professor Dumbledore and for the last five-and-some years the handsome professor had been Newt’s benchmark for truly powerful wizards and witches.

His brother’s magic projected an aura of power and command, it was a common trait of higher-powered wizards, such projections, but compared to the soft, nearly enticing feel of their professor, he might as well be weak as a day-old kneazle kitten.

Harry Peverell and his little brother on the other hand, were both tightly controlled…until they weren’t and you realized that if wizards like Dumbledore were exponentially more powerful than even the tops of their generation like Thee, then the two brothers were an order of magnitude even above and beyond that.

“So what?” Harry shrugged. “It doesn’t matter how powerful I am – or any of your opponents are – if I or they don’t know how to use it. You’re decently powerful with a wand and know more already about magical creatures than I likely ever will. The most dangerous duelist I ever saw in action wasn’t the most powerful wizard I ever met but a sweet, caring, highly protective mother who stepped into a duel with a known killer to protect her daughter. She wasn’t considered overly powerful but rather average. Her opponent on parchment had her outclassed. But she took what she knew, harnessed her temper, and used it. Not a single wasted spell, not an extraneous flourish of her wand, every single motion was precise and exacting, every curse and counter silent. So what if you’re not as powerful as I am?” Harry demanded. “Nobody but Credence is. Use what you have with skill and precision and you’ll be vastly more successful a duelist – or wizard in general – than an idiot to shouts and screams and shows off his power for all to see.”

Newt got his jaw and gripped his wand in hand, climbing back to his feet in the empty dueling room they’d taken over for his tutoring lessons.

“Good.” Harry arched a brow. “Are you ready to learn now, or are you going to keep feeling sorry for yourself?”

“Learn.” Newt decided. “What am I doing wrong?”

A slow smile curved over Harry’s lush mouth.

There.

There is was, that spark he saw every now and again when Newt got excited about something or went off on a chattering loop on knarls or demiguises or kneazles.

It was the same spark that every member of the DA had had when they showed up for the second meeting, even the ones who’d been hesitant at first, after realizing that they could learn what Harry wanted to teach them.

The desire to learn, to improve, and to be better than they’d been before.

“All shields have weak points,” Harry started to lecture, casting a Protego for illustration. “As a defender what you need to do is learn where yours tend to be and direct your power to closing the gap or reinforcing the weak point. As an attacker you need to learn what to look for here,” he gestured to the shield surrounding them in a visible silver bubble of protective magics. “Where’s mine?”
Newt searched and searched, quickly locating it with eyes used to looking for the slightest shift in a creature’s body language or seeking the slightest change in a field or forest for hidden creatures, pointing to a spot that was just a fraction dimmer than the rest of the shield off to Harry’s right.

“Good eye,” Harry nodded, smiling. “Now watch and learn…”

And he did.

All about shields and making them stronger or weaker depending on his needs.

About being faster than an opponent and the importance of silent casting – which somehow made much more sense with the way Harry explained it, who did almost all of his magic either wordless or wandless or both anyway – and was drilled in simple charms and jinxes that didn’t take much power at all but could be used in quite creative ways.

No, Newt wasn’t as powerful as his brother.

He never would be.

But, somehow he had a feeling that if he paid attention to what Harry was trying to teach him, then he might stand a chance at actually beating him – if only once before Thee stopped taking it easy on him – in their practice duels over the summer.

It was a heady thought to a young alpha who’d been second-best at everything to his brother all of his life.

That such a wonderful person as Harry believed in him enough to take away time from his son and brother and his own studies to teach him, well, that certainly didn’t hurt his self-esteem either though he still had trouble some days believing it.

Harry thought he was worth it.

It wasn’t the same thing as Newt believing he was worth it, but it was a start nonetheless.

…

Harry would be the first person to admit that he hadn’t spent nearly as much time in the Hogwarts Library since returning to the life of a student as he probably should have.

There were dozens and dozens of texts filling the place that hadn’t been on the shelves for one reason or another by ’91 and even with the lack of texts written between then and now, it still held more books in the past than it had during his future.

Hermione would be furious.

Not just with the implications about book writing over the next eighty years but also about the number of books flat-out removed in that time, not simply shifted to the restricted section – which likewise is much smaller than he remembered in contrast with the rest of the library.

Though, considering how old she’d been all through Harry’s first run through Hogwarts, he was half surprised not to see Madam Irma Pince minding her paper-and-parchment babies since the beginning of time itself – or at least the founding.

A big sign of a change that hadn’t been made yet that likely came with book-removal and reassignment, though it hadn’t occurred to Harry until later since it didn’t apply to him personally,
was that Hogwarts still taught Magical Defense – *not* Defense Against the Dark Arts specifically. They didn’t teach Dark Arts as a subject or elective either – they weren’t Durmstrang. But the magical world, at least in Great Britain, hadn’t started dividing magic and people into Dark/Light – not yet.

Grindelwald and Dumbledore were the first Dark/Light icons since medieval times from what he could surmise, and even then they were a different breed altogether than what historical versions were like in the history books.

Though Harry wasn’t certain how much of that was evolution of warfare and manipulation and how much was – as he’d recently been smacked upside the head regarding – historical revisionism he had no idea.

At the moment what had drawn him to a place that he made a mental note to explore more later, was searching out his late-to-tutoring missing Hufflepuff of a friend.

Newt had never intentionally tried to duck Harry’s lessons, especially once he took a better interest in them, but he *could* get distracted.

Easily.

Usually by a new creature or piece of creature-related research.

As Harry hadn’t heard anything about Hogwarts getting any new creatures for their Care classes recently, he was banking on the second option being the culprit.

And, given that his best-friend once upon a time as Hermione Jean Granger, he wasn’t nearly as upset as he would otherwise be over Newt being late to their meeting since he’d more than once in his life had to haul her away from a pile of textbooks to sleep, eat, or otherwise take care of herself over the course of their friendship.

At least once she became interested in boys – however vaguely – in fourth year that no longer required him to hit her with personal hygiene charms because she got lost in revision and forgot to shower – which had happened all too often in their third year due to the insanity with the time-turner.

Honestly, *what* McGonagall and Dumbledore were thinking with that he still didn’t understand.

Since he’d never heard of it being offered to any other student, he was forced to think it another example of Gryffindor favoritism at play, which really just pissed him off all over again regarding the situation that no thirteen-year-old girl should’ve been placed in to begin with, no matter how responsible.

Finally, he found Newt – and unfortunately Ms. Lestrange, who was a *bit* miffed at him, from the politeness that had turned positively glacial, over Atty refusing to have part in an arranged marriage. With their new and ever-building friendship, and Harry being the only new comer to Atty’s circles recently, it wasn’t an erroneous assumption to make that he’d put a flea in Atty’s ear over taking a political pureblood marriage instead of waiting to at least try and find his soulmate. As Harry’s stance on arranged marriage for *any* reason had become rather infamous after he’d set the offer from Ms. Lestrange’s many-handed cousin Rudy *on fire* during dinner at Potter Manor – which had filtered likely through the house elf gossip chain if he had to guess – before returning to school, it only added more weight to Ms. Lestrange’s idea that he was behind her failure to secure the position of the future Lady Prince.
His bad.

Not.

“And what are we discussing today that has you late for practice, Newt?” Harry asked as he came up behind them and leaned over the books and parchment spread out between them, only to come to an abrupt halt as he realized what he was looking at.

*Most Macabre Monstrosities.*

Specifically, a page that would be – or wouldn't now that he remembered it and *why the fuck it was so important* – torn out by Hermione in his second year.

A page pertaining to *fucking basilisks.*

Which, he would address with Newt later.

To his knowledge the incident that led to his expulsion the first time was a jarvey or something along those lines.

Still.

It was Newt.

Newt who thought Eris was the best thing since tea and Serenity simply divine and thestrals adorable and would one day go off and become a dragon tamer.

It was better to be safe than sorry.

At the moment, he had a much more emerging problem to deal with.

And one that he could barely believe he’d forgotten about for the better part of six months.

Isla was *never* going to let him hear the end of this.

Cursing under his breath, eyes blinking rapidly, Harry spun on his heel and ran from the library, leaving a bewildered pair behind him, Newt exchanging a puzzled glance with Leta before they both stood in unison and gathered up their textbooks and study materials, sweeping them without care into their bags, and following quickly on his heels.

Rather than a sudden emergency or warning through his bond with his siblings or familiar – Eris still arranged idly around his neck though it seemed the two, from what they could tell, were hissing in frantic conversation – Harry turned not towards the stairs to his personal rooms but up towards the entrance to the Headmaster’s office.

They couldn’t catch him up – Newt by necessity being faster than Leta through not having to wear a witch’s “appropriate” underpinnings or heeled shoes but still nowhere as quick, or athletic, as his friend making him perhaps rethink his stance on Harry’s suggestion regarding physical activity besides the heavy-lifting he got up to in taking care of creatures and plants or the once-weekly conditioning for his reserve chaser position on the Hufflepuff House Team – only spotting the back of his robe just as he ducked through the stone archway and were stymied as the door closed at his back.

Trading another wordless glance – though this time half out of need to fill their lungs with air rather than waste it on talking, Newt and Leta rested their backs against the far wall and settled in
for, if need be, a long wait.

One out of curiosity and concern whilst the other out of a desire to know what the stuck-up omega was telling the Headmaster – and if she was lucky, information that might be used against him if the case arose where such was needed.

…

Up in the office, Headmaster Black – alerted by the wards on the gargoyle door guardian – rose from his seat behind his stately ebony desk at the sudden entrance of perhaps his single most important and influential student.

“Mister Peverell,” he greeted the wizard who seemed to be in quite the fluster. “What appears to be the problem?”

“Pardon me, Headmaster.” Harry dipped a polite – and perfectly correct – nod to a wizard who while being of lower status than Harry by virtue of being the Black Heir and not the Lord as yet, was still his superior when it came to their ranks whilst at Hogwarts. “But I need to have a rather overdue discussion with Fearghus.” He gestured smoothly over towards the dozing Sorting Hat, which perked up at the mention of its name.

Without waiting for something even mildly resembling permission, Harry gave a wordless/wandless summon of the Hat and plopped it right onto his head rather than have this conversation aloud.

While he wouldn’t mind having it in front of Headmaster Black, he’d rather not openly discuss the topic at hand in front of dozens of gossipy portraits and end up causing a panic over what might very well be nothing at all.

“Well well, young Master Peverell.” The indolent tones of the Hat resounded through his mind. “It seems you have remembered an important point at long last.”

“I beg your pardon,” Harry knew he was being cheeky but he couldn’t help it. “But I think I’ve done rather well for as many things as I’ve had on my mind these last months. It’s not my fault that I – temporarily – forgot about a problem I handled originally over six years ago.”

“One would think one wouldn’t forget battling a basilisk.” And oh was the Hat’s sarcasm dry.

That was Salazar’s influence, to be certain.

“One would think so.” Harry laughed darkly – if silently. “But when one considers the depths and breadth of events and actions in one’s life, even battling a basilisk can be forgotten or overlooked for a time.” He sighed. “I might need what you hold if what I suspect regarding the school’s longtime protector proves false.”

“Hmm…” Fearghus the Sorting Hat hummed in agreement at that. “Yes, yes you will. Very well.” He decided at once, his resolve almost entirely Helga with a dash of Godric’s impulsivity. “Wear me down into the Chamber and if needed I will give you what you may yet require.”

“Thank you, Fearghus.”

“Don’t thank me yet, young latent Heir.” Fearghus chuckled. “Or at all. You have returned me to my original purpose and for that I am in your debt. Giving you what is yours by right of the strength of your mind and heart is my duty: nothing more and nothing less. Now,” he sobered. “Let me explain matters to the Headmaster before his curiosity eats away at him. Long have I
thought that Salazar and Godric’s sigils ought to have been reversed for the curiosity of Slytherins is oft overlooked, much like the quickness of a Gryffindor’s strike.”

“Young Mister Peverell needs to borrow me, Headmaster.” Fearghus spoke aloud to the room from atop Harry’s head. “I contain something which he may need.”

“This is quite irregular, Mister Peverell.” Phineas Black told his sister’s protégé, frown firmly set in place for all that internally he was nearly itching with curiosity. “As an artefact and valued possession of Hogwarts, the Sorting Hat never leaves the Headmaster’s office except for the Sorting Ceremony though the charms placed on it after its creation by the Founders prevent most harm and tampering, allowing it out of my care is not a risk I am readily willing to take with so little explanation forthcoming.”

“Perhaps a compromise?” Harry suggested at a thought sent his way by Fearghus. “I’m sure you would like to see the legendary Chamber of Secrets for yourself?”

If the sudden feverish gleam in the Headmaster’s eyes was any clue, that was an understatement of the highest order.

Then Black blinked and it was gone, replaced with caution.

“I would, yes. However,” a ponderous sigh. “There is the matter of the monster to address, if you can find the Chamber as you imply.”

The portraits filling the high walls of the Headmaster’s tower had kicked up a flurry of gossip the moment Fearghus told the Headmaster Harry need to borrow him, a flurry that turned into a hurricane of chatter and talk amongst themselves – the higher portraits crowding into the lower – as soon as the words “Chamber of Secrets” was spoken but as yet, perhaps because the gossip to be gathered was far too juicy or Black might employ some form of secrecy charm that Dumbledore hadn’t bothered with, Harry considered each as likely as the other, none of them from what he could tell had departed their frames to spread word of what they were talking about.

Yet anyway.

Given how quickly gossip still spreads in Wizarding Great Britain, even with the press being more circumspect than in his former era, he wasn’t holding onto hope that word of what they talked about in his office wouldn’t spread.

And if Newt at least learned that Harry may or may not be planning on possibly-maybe killing as rare a creature as a basilisk – if that is, his smarter-than-he-looks/acts at times friend realizes that that was what had Harry running off shortly before word of “Slytherin’s Monster” started making the rounds – well, needless to say that Harry wasn’t looking forwards to the lecture, disappointment, and possible breaking of their new(ish) friendship such a thing would entail.

He thought that his friend would understand needing to protect the staff and students of the school if Harry was wrong and the basilisk on its own – not driven mad or controlled in any way by an insane Tom Riddle as he thought might have happened in the future he remembered – was dangerous.

Well.

Above and beyond the inherent danger of a fucking basilisk anyway.

“I can access the Chamber,” Harry confirmed then added: “any Parselmouth aware of the entrance could do so. Is there a professor you would consider to be steady of nerve, wand, and mind to
accompany us? If so that might be a solution. If the monster does exist and is aggressive, then I would not turn down such assistance. But,” he warned, “I would not wish to take anyone with us who would escalate a situation which is not dangerous or create danger through intemperate actions.”

Phineas’s face took on an expression of distaste.

“There is, however,” he sighed. “Involving Professor Dumbledore, I am aware, would not be your first choice in the matter.”

Harry grimaced. That was certainly the truth. However…needs-must.

He wouldn’t cut off his nose to spite his face.

No matter how distasteful he might find willingly involving Dumbledore in his affairs after working so hard to keep him out of them, even for a singular event such as he’d broached with the Headmaster, the danger of the basilisk – either going without Fearghus as a safety measure for the Sword or leaving it alone to be a potential problem later in the future – could not be dismissed in favor for Harry’s ongoing cold war with his former Headmaster and mentor.

“Send for him, then, I suppose.” Harry acceded albeit with ill-grace. “Fawkes will make an excellent emergency way of evacuation along with Serenity,” who would come for Harry if he was in danger, given how important he was to her person. “If the monster is real and a threat to the school, it cannot be allowed to continue to dwell in the Chamber, no matter how its removal must come about.”

“You think it possible that the monster doesn’t exist or isn’t a threat?” Now that was interesting to the Headmaster. He’d never heard such a thing in all the legends of Slytherin.

But, he supposed, Peverell would have access – as a latent Heir if nothing else – to information that even a Headmaster would never hear of.

Chapter End Notes

For more information about my stories (fanfic and original) including an original world based off the worldbuilding I’ve done for my Harry Potter fics find me on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/sif.shadowheart

Or follow me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/AbramsSif
Chapter 6

Racing Towards Devastation

Six: A Cavern Deep

Albus Dumbledore was having a normal – if unexciting – day at Hogwarts when the summons came from the Headmaster to join him in his office.

Odd, but not unheard of.

Then when he came across two students – in particular young Ms. Lestrange and Mr. Scamander – his curiosity was truly roused.

There was only one person who’de be of enough interest to both of them – for one reason or another from what he’d observed of the students since the beginning of the Autumn Term – to have them loitering outside the Headmaster’s office before he sent them off with a quiet word and a look.

Mister Peverell, the elder, who was as at times as infuriating in his lack of respect towards Albus, as he was notably magically gifted.

He also was as solid and immovable a wall between Albus and his nephew as the Great Wall of China. Aberforth had sent a terse confirmation and warning that he was not to be interfering with the way his son’s guardian chose to raise him under any circumstances. Albus was certain that, like the Great Wall, in time he could find a method around Peverell’s exacting watchfulness. But until the young omega graduated from Hogwarts, he wasn’t certain an opportunity would present itself.

It was rather insulting, to be honest, that Peverell didn’t trust a confirmed scholar and professor with a spotless record with young Aurelius, but Albus could admit that in this instance his reputation from when he was younger and more radical worked against him.

There had been a time when Albus was far too interested in the Peverell Family and the legend of the Deathly Hallows.

Aberforth hadn’t been quiet about his accusations regarding…regarding their sister’s death nor had he been shy in assigning blame, even at her graveside.

If Peverell knew – and Albus had to assume he did given his caution – then that would indeed explain a measure of wariness.

Whether it explained the sheer depth of distrust that Peverell had previously – before Albus’s surprise meeting, which he could now admit wasn’t well done of him – shown Albus didn’t know.

That said, his springing Aberforth on Peverell and Peverell (and his brother) on Aberforth hadn’t helped.

Climbing the spiral staircase up to the Headmaster’s office, he wasn’t surprised to see Mister Peverell waiting with Phineas.

What he was surprised to find was the extremely-lively portraits – who slept more often than not – and were currently under silencing charms as a result.
The Sorting Hat was sitting rather jauntily for such an aged piece of headwear on the ebony head on Mister Peverell, the two seeming to carry on a silent conversation of their own along with the one that they were holding with the Headmaster if he was any judge of facial expressions (either of the Hat or of the Peverell Lord) at all.

“Ah, Professor,” Phineas greeted him dryly. “Just in time. We were beginning to worry you were unavoidably detained.”

“Not at all, Headmaster,” Albus returned the greeting. “Mister Peverell, Fearghus. How may I be of assistance this afternoon?”

Peverell shared a look with the Headmaster then turned to face Albus for the first time since he’d entered the office, looking not at all pleased if he was any judge but rather resigned, nonetheless.

Given Peverell’s reluctance to have anything at all to do with Albus despite his relation to his brother, or properly his half-brother as Aberforth wasn’t as precocious as all that, he found himself quite intrigued over what could impel the younger wizard to seek out Albus’s presence – let alone his assistance.

“Tell me, Professor Dumbledore?” Peverell asked after visibly steeling his nerves. “Have you ever given any thought to the Chamber of Secrets…?”

…

Somehow, Harry wasn’t surprised – nor was the Professor if the amused glance behind them was any sign – that long before the three of them plus a chatty Fearghus (though he supposed if the only activity he had every year was for one evening outside of the Headmaster’s office to sort eleven and twelve year old kids, he’d be excited for something new too) reached the second-floor lady’s washroom that in a mere thirty or so years, if he had his math right, would not becoming home to the ghost of Moaning Myrtle if he had anything to say about it.

Then a hiss from Eris confirmed it: “§ Warm One and his not-mate are following us. §”

“Warm One” in this instance being Eris’s name for Newt and was commentary as far as Harry could tell on both his nature and that he runs a bit warmer than the average human while the not-mate would be Leta and had to do with a lot of information regarding the pheromones the pair put off when around each other and others like Harry he’d much rather ignore though Eris being a quetzal and not a human had no such compunction.

Newt and Leta according to Eris didn’t smell enough like each other to be nestmates – or siblings in human speech – and there wasn’t enough active sexual interest between them, more the passive interest that most people experience when around someone of a general level of attractiveness to them, for Eris to classify them under a sexual mate field.

Serpents didn’t have a word for friend as Harry had learned since Eris had chosen him. They lived in strict black-white/yes-no and nebulous or ephemeral concepts like friendship didn’t make the cut to translate easily into a serpent’s understanding of the world.

It was fascinating in its way, more to Newt who often used Harry or Credence as translators than to them since as Parselmouths they knew on an instinctual level that went with the innate magical ability what often was lost in translation between human-to-serpent.

As a result, as Leta was neither nestmate, mate, hatchling (Teddy), or a Speaker, she was relegated to Newt’s not-mate which Harry was probably more entertained by than he had any right to be.
“What is it?” Headmaster Black asked, picking up on the sudden spike in amusement – which had no place on such a serious task as entering the vaunted Chamber of Secrets and inspecting it for the legendary monster, no matter how ridiculous Mister Peverell looked with the Sorting Hat perched jauntily on his head and a feathered snake lounging on his shoulders – between Peverell and Dumbledore.

“We have company,” Harry told him, tossing a smirk over his shoulder then calling out to their shadows. “Who might as well come out from hiding, we know you’re there Newt, Ms. Lestrange.”

“Eris,” Newt didn’t quite whine but it wasn’t far from it as they joined the trio of magical humans plus a piece of enchanted headwear and a quetzal outside the entrance to one of the second-floor washrooms as Professor Dumbledore sent a spell seeking through the door to, he would guess, see if the facilities were currently being used. “Why would you inform on us, love?”

Eris simply hissed a snaky laugh at his caught-out blush, including a comment regarding how often his “cheek-scales went on show” around her master that had said master booping her nose in a gentle scold.

“That’s enough out of you, Miss Chaos.” Harry muttered under his breath, knowing full well that trying to control a serpent, let alone one that can grow to a massive size at will, was a losing endeavor. “Don’t embarrass him, Newt,” Harry shot him a look. “A familiar will always be loyal first to their companion over anyone else unless horrifically abused as you know very well. Professor Dumbledore and I were already aware that we were being tailed before Eris gave you away.”

“I believe,” Albus shot both students a look. “That you were directed to return to other tasks, Mister Scamander, Miss Lestrange, when I found you loitering outside the entrance to the Headmaster’s office.”

Headmaster Black simply backed up his professor with a soft harrumph, seeing no need to directly deal with students outside of severe infractions or special cases.

Which of those Mister Peverell tended to fit into often depended on the day, season, and phase of the moon.

At least he could comfort himself with the knowledge that however confounding or frustrating he found the young wizard, both his baby sister and his most irritating – if good at his job – employee were significantly more overwrought due to Peverell on any given day.

While Leta attempted to get them out of what at the very least would be a detention for disobeying a direct order from their professor, Harry simply watched Newt who could barely bring himself to meet his eyes.

“What were you thinking, Newt?” Harry asked him softly as Dumbledore and Lestrange did their little pantomime of curious-but-innocent student and genial-but-unimpressed professor a few steps away. “Following me I could understand, but the Headmaster and Professor Dumbledore as well? Surely…”

Whatever he was going to say next was lost as his gentle friend spoke up for himself, gathering that innate bravery Harry knew he possessed but rarely showed.

Interestingly enough, it popped up more around Harry – though he didn’t know it – than it did anyone else except his brother Thee.
Why that was Newt wasn’t certain but…maybe there was just something about his friend that made him brave.

Or want to impress him which for an alpha was often one and the same when their primitive brains engaged, silly at it seemed when Newt’s rational self was in control.

“I was thinking that whatever could make you run,” as Harry rarely moved faster than a saunter unless Teddy was about to put something he very much should not in his mouth or he saw bullies. “Was something that you might need help with but wouldn’t want to ask for.”

Because Harry never asked for help.

Not from teachers, not from his friends, not even really from the house elves.

As far as Newt could tell, Harry existed in a near-constant state of self-sufficiency to the point that he had no ability to recognize let alone admit that he needed help with anything from understanding minute differences between two species of plants in herbology to just needing a break to breathe.

It was admirable – to a point.

So Newt had decided not long after meeting Harry and growing to care about him and his little family that if Harry couldn’t know when he needed help, let alone think to ask, that he would make sure to offer since for whatever reason the mental block that prevented Harry from asking didn’t – usually – stop him from accepting what was freely offered to him.

Harry was strange, especially for an omega.

Nearly as strange of an omega as Newt was an alpha.

And Newt?

Newt understood better than likely anyone just how isolating strangeness could be.

Now if only he could figure out what the problem was between Harry and Leta. His observations told him it was more than a personality conflict. Harry too flagrantly amused over Leta’s spiteful politess. *Something* had happened, but he was relatively sure that it either had to do with omegan dynamics among their own or even worse *debutante* dynamics, neither of which he was versed in puzzling out. Newt wished it wasn’t so, wanted to show them that they were all united in their own personal strangenesses. If he could manage that, convincing them to get along, his life would be almost as perfect as it could be whilst still trapped within the confines of traditional wizarding education and social expectations.

Harry took a sharp breath, struck by Newt’s keen observation but unable to deny it.

Especially with Fearghus – the fucker – laughing inside his head and not being at all polite about it.

If there had been another way – outside of breaking and entering – to get his hands on Fearghus he would have done this alone rather than risk the chance of either the Headmaster or Professor Dumbledore making a mistake that might lead to disaster.

But there hadn’t been (barring the aforementioned felony) so here he was: in a hallway outside a bathroom that was haunted in more than one way in his memory by things and people and events he’d rather not dwell on, with one of his only friends tagging after him blithely into possible-
mortal-danger with his irritating bint of a hanger-on tagging after him, plus an entourage of two professors, Fearghus, and Eris.

This was not a very Harry Potter plan.

It was, however, shaping up to be a very Harry Peverell plan what with the actual planning portion before charging directly into possible-mortal-danger so there was that.

“Newt…” Harry began, voice painfully soft, only to be saved, er, interrupted by the irascible tones of Headmaster Black.

“No, absolutely not,” he said firmly though whether to whatever it was Ms. Lestrange was trying on with Dumbledore or towards Newt’s implied offer of help with the Chamber, Harry couldn’t be certain.

Either way he was kinda-but-not-really grateful for the assist since he had a feeling his emotions were two seconds away from running off with his good sense.

And that was hardly the right sort of mindset for venturing down into the bowels of the castle in search of a possibly almost-a-hundred-years-old basilisk that may or may not be either awake, insane, aggressive, irritated, or any combination thereof.

_Serpents_.

Anticipating their behavior when there was magic involved was often an exercise in futility.

“You both are underage and are going right back to your dorms for the rest of the night or,” the headmaster continued when it looked like Newt was getting mulish. “You can ignore the directives of both a Professor and the Headmaster and we can have a discussion with your guardians regarding why you both will be serving detentions every weekend day until the Beltane break.”

Leta predictably winced and ducked her head while instantly sidling backwards, while Newt somehow - and even he wasn’t certain - held himself upright and unyielding rather than crumpling like so much wet parchment.

“Very well then,” Phineas held in a scoff and an eye roll. Young alphas in love. Or at least infatuation. If there were ever a creature designed to drive their instructors spare and irritate everyone around them it was them. “Ms. Lestrange, straight off to your dorm if you please. Mr. Scamander, as it seems the only way we can be rid of you barring calling for another teacher to take you in hand or a body-bind jinx, you will stay behind both Mr. Peverell as well as Professor Dumbledore and myself and do exactly as you are told otherwise a body bind it will be to go with your now-accruing detention. Am I understood?”

Newt swallowed harshly, shooting a searching gaze up at a clearly – to him anyway – exasperated Harry then ducking his head with a nod.

What point would there be to disobeying, at this point anyway?

He’d already gotten what he was after.

Any further defiance on his part now that his goal was achieved and he might as well hang up his black-and-yellow Hufflepuff robes and trade them out for the gleaming brashness of gold-and-red Gryffindor.
Thee would likely be proud over his antics but he wasn’t looking forward to the Howler from their grandmother Prewett, that was for certain.

...  

Harry felt each and every pair of eyes – even if only the impression of them from the Hat – weighing him down as he leant over and hissed at the appropriate sink in the ladies washroom.

Professor Dumbledore had confirmed that it was currently empty, rather important as they were an entirely male entourage short of Eris, and then set a ward on the door that would keep anyone under the age of nineteen years old out, taking no chances that an of-age student might somehow be alerted of the goings on and try and investigate.

Given that Ms. Lestrange had agreed – and headed back – to return to her dorm but not said a word about keeping whatever she assumed they were up to secret, he approved the precaution.

Even if he couldn’t help but wonder where that caution with peoples’ lives had gone over the next eighty-some years. Unless it was just a pretense on Dumbledore’s part due to the Headmaster’s presence.

But that was his bitterness talking and not a productive train of thought so he shoved it back down – for the moment at least – and focused on the task at hand.

“We have two options.” He told the others, Newt taking in every moment with wide hazel eyes as he fiddled restlessly with his wand behind the Headmaster. “Quick, using the pipes as a slide and counting on my ability with cleaning charms to keep from being completely covered in muck; or slow using stairs that in some places are so steep they might as well be a ladder.”

“How long does each option take?” The Headmaster asked. It wouldn’t do to be occupied for too long with his mad venture of his brightest and most promising student. Especially with the portraits and Ms. LeStrange no doubt spreading gossip from one end of the castle to the other and in the case of a few portraits - such as the one of Dillys Derwent in the infirmary - even beyond the castle.

“The slide is only a minute or two.” Harry shrugged, he’d never timed it exactly. “The stairs, perhaps a quarter of an hour?”

“I would trust your cleaning spells.” Newt piped up. In for a knut in for a galleon after all, even if he doesn’t know exactly what was going on he had an idea given that they were about to enter a secret passage that led down into the underbelly of Hogwarts and there was only one thing that might require the presence of a Parselmouth, the Headmaster, and the school’s most powerful professor. Add in what Newt had been researching with Leta in the library before Harry took off like someone lit his trousers on fire and...yes, he had something of an idea of what was afoot and the trouble he was in aside he’d never been so excited in his life.

Harry cast him a small smile at that, even as he looked far too adorable for Newt’s resolve regarding his unfortunate infatuation with such a highborn, powerful, and beautiful omega with the Hat perched jauntily on his head and almost too large even for an adult to wear correctly instead of having it slip down around his neck and ears.

Not hearing a rebuttal from either Black or Dumbledore, Harry nodded then flicked his wand down the opening of the pipe clearing away what had to be decades of grime and then with a jaunty little wave hopped down and took off down the slide. Wand out in front of him, Harry blasted cleaning charms the entire time he went down the ride, Eris hissing in joy all the way down - one of the
closest things to a muggle rollercoaster he’d ever done - and snickered to himself as he heard Dumbledore let out a soft curse behind him. *Whoops.* Forget to mention to watch their heads. Though as neither the Headmaster nor Newt followed up Dumbledore’s curse with their own, Harry was willing to bet that they learned from his mistake and looked out for low pipes.

As he’d estimated, around a minute after jumping into the pipe Harry was landing with significantly more grace than the last time he’d taken the ride, moving quickly out of the way for Dumbledore, Black, and Newt to come spilling out behind him as he waited with a lit wand for them.

Eris gave a hissy chuckle at the red mark visible in the center of Dumbledore’s forehead, the older wizard having no problem with sticking the landing, neither did Newt, though a quick spell from Harry kept Black from tumbling out arse over tea kettle at the sudden halt.

Other than a *look* from those bright blue eyes, Dumbledore didn’t castigate Harry over the oversight - which it honestly was, though he would’ve done it anyway if he’d remembered - and took to setting up a series of floating bluebell lights around the cavern which as Harry *did* remember was more of a t-junction in the underground belly of the castle. The events of his second year had proven that the pipes and passages under the school were a warren. If someone didn’t know where they were or where they were going, it was entirely possible to get lost and *stay* lost among them.

“How far under the school are we?” Black asked as he eyed the stone around them - all of it bedrock, the only sign that the castle was above them in the pipes.

“Under the lake at the least.” Harry remembered what he and the others had figured out after the Chamber. “Definitely under the Slytherin dorms, the passages and pipes are supposed to be connected all over the castle, but there’s no map of them I’ve ever found.”

“You *are* the Slytherin heir, of course.” Dumbledore nodded genially at that. The knowledge that the Peverell family must have about the castle had been proven on their first meeting when young Peverell *greeted* the Slytherin gate guardian. “Though you haven’t claimed the heritage legally.”

“I have hope yet that a mainline Gaunt might rise above the madness and idiocy of their forebears.” Harry’s tone was as dry as the stones around them were damp even as he crouched down and studied the skeletons of rodents, frogs, toads, even birds and cats if they were unwary enough to venture into the bowels of the castle. The basilisk was certainly still doing their job of pest eradication. “Though if they don’t manage it in my lifetime, I’ll officially claim the inheritance and pass it to my children rather than let the hope of it remain with my distant cousins.”

*That* made both of the adult wizards eye him with new consideration, though it mostly passed over Newt’s head as he found a shed snakeskin - a different one than what Harry remembered, smaller and a dark grey rather than an almost black, from a younger female basilisk than the Queen that he remembered fighting - and was engulfed in raptures as he studied it, Harry coming over to his side and pointing out a few markers that he was familiar with for the mental notes his friend was no doubt making.

“This is shed skin, from a mature female.” Harry educated - well, it was directed towards Newt but the others were listening closely as well - as a wave of his hand had the skin lifting and fluffing out in the air, showing the size of the skin it had been shed from. “The coloration would show the shed status rather than harvested from a live specimen and also tells age: she’s a mature female, at least a hundred years old as that is how long it takes a basilisk to reach maturity. The lack of crest on the few head-pieces,” he turned the skin to show the torn front of the skin rather than the mostly-intact tail. “Speaks to a female.”
“That,” Black stumbled on his words as he almost swallowed his tongue at the length and circumference of the snakeskin. “Has to be at least twenty feet long.”

A spell from Newt at Harry’s nod had the budding wizarding naturalist reporting the dimensions of the skin at twenty-three feet, seven inches long and six feet, three inches in circumference before a spell from Harry had the skin curling up nicely and sent to rest over by the end of the exit pipe.

With the magic-resistant properties of basilisk skin, he couldn’t simply shrink it and tuck it away in a pocket, unfortunately.

“It is a basilisk then.” Dumbledore stated the obvious with a sigh as Harry led the way down the passage, the bluebell lights following them and Harry sending any other bits of basilisk skin back to wait by the pipe. “Slytherin’s monster.”

“Hogwarts’ protector, more like.” Harry corrected. “With their natural territories being caverns, many families with Parseltongue as a magical trait created partnerships with the King of Serpents in the past for protection against invaders. There’s still nests throughout most of the Mediterranean countries guarding catacombs and castles, and in the wild roaming India and the Amazon.”

“How do you know that?” Newt breathed, even as Eris kept up a hissed commentary about how basilisks weren’t as great as they like to think they are, it wasn’t like they could fly or change their size, what was so great about turning things to stone or killing with a look when they had perfectly good venom?

“Snakes can be chatty.”

“I wanna be a Parselmouth.”

“I’m not currently adopting anymore dependents.” Harry shot back, only half-joking as Newt pouted - just a bit - over not being able to have long chats with snakes.

“Probably wise.” Dumbledore couldn’t help but comment, though it was with good-humor.

A baby and a pre-teen are likely more than enough for anyone to handle on their own, even with help, without adding in a creature-mad teenager to the mixture.

…

There was something deeply satisfying about coming up to the massive ornate doors that barred the way to the Chamber of Secrets and hearing the others let out a gasp as Harry sent up a lumos maxima to illuminate the workmanship while another cleaning spell sent the emerald eyes set in the eyes of the two snake guardians that twined up the sides of the closed doorway. As large as fists, the emeralds glowed in the light of the spell, the diamond teeth of the statues glistening. Though even for Harry there was a moment of shocked awe as his spell revealed a fresco of the castle high on the wall above the door that he’d missed on his original visit.

A perfectly wrought version of the Hogwarts crest, with the motto resting above that in silver.

“How long has this place been waiting beneath our feet?” Phineas breathed, eyes wide and drinking in the proof of his best student not being entirely barmy after all.

“Since the founding.” Harry supposed, since adding an entire system of passageways and secret rooms didn’t make much sense to him otherwise. But then: wizarding world. Logic needn’t apply.

“There’s suggestions that the other founders might have left behind their own private places as
well. Living quarters, studies, workshops and the like that have never been found.”

“Except by the Heirs, perhaps.” Dumbledore suggested.

Repeating his “greeting” of the gate guardian, Harry made a small cut in his thumb, pressing the blood drop that welled up on his opened skin to a chest-high indent on the ornate doors, the snakes - on the door and lock, not surrounding those surrounding the doorway itself - coming alive and unwinding from the eternity knot they made. The doors themselves shivered, the sound of aged machinery grinding to life reaching their ears, and began to part.

“Right.” Harry said, shooting the others a warning look as he tightened his grip on his wand. “This is the part where you shut your eyes and stay very still unless or until I say otherwise.”

...

One day, years in the future, Newt would write a book that spawned dozens of career fields and hundreds - perhaps even thousands - of pieces of legislation.

It would be filled with pages and pages of information on magical creatures, with illustrations for each and every one.

And in the very center of the book, in a section that was quite large covering some of the most awe-inspiring magical creatures in the world: thunderbirds and phoenixes, quetzals and occamy, dragons and thestrals and unicorns; was a large two-page illustration that at first many people bought the book just to see for themselves.

It was of a beautiful young omegan wizard, with hair flowing down his back in an inky wave and a large quetzal hovering at his side, with his hand outstretched as he stared up at three *massive* serpents above him in a dim cavern carved of grey rock and lit with green torches.

One of the serpents, the only one with a red crest and identifiable as a male, leaned down as if to allow the wizard to pet it.

Preposterous most would assume.

A basilisk - perhaps one of the most *feared* and conversely *fearsome* magical creatures in all the world - surely wouldn’t allow anyone to *pet it*, most believing that while Newt likely had met the Hogwarts protectors that he’d added the bit of fancy to show off the sheer size of the creatures or perhaps as a result of an understandable infatuation with the subject.

The drawing - done via *Recordari* from memory of the day he followed Harry into the bowels of the school and ended up playing witness to a scene that occurred perhaps once in a thousand years - was no fanciful imagining however, much like the infatuation that had already been rooted deep and then developed spurs and thorns to resist being uprooted at what he saw in the underpinnings of Hogwarts that day.

Harry was already quite dichotomous to Newt, being both the gentlest creature in the world at times - whenever he was with Teddy comes immediately to mind - and the fiercest as his response to bullies had made crystal clear to the Hogwarts student body. He was not a wizard to be trifled with. Not in any fashion if his response to Rudy Lestranges’s *offer* for his hand was to be believed. Watching with wide eyes as Harry marched fearlessly - a rather Gryffindor moment for a Slytherin heir despite him refraining from claiming the lordship - into the Chamber of Secrets and amplified his voice sending Parseltongue echoing through the cavern when at first glance, as Newt couldn’t help but to peek, there was no concealed *monster* or terror laying in wait to besiege the school.
No, all Newt could see was grey stonework either from the smooth-chiseled walls or the slabs of flooring on the ground, a large statue of a man in his elder years that had an unfortunate resemblance to a monkey, and sconces posted all around the room that lit with green-white fire at a single wordless flick of Harry’s wand.

“Well,” Harry said, turning to face the unfortunate statue as Eris flew a circle around the Chamber to inspect the room. “If you all would like a glimpse of the Chamber while it is safe, now is your moment. She - or they perhaps - is either in their nest beyond or simply elsewhere for the moment.”

“A ritual room of some kind?” The headmaster posited as he craned his neck to take in the Chamber without actually stepping into the room - less a wise precaution and more a result of the shield charm none of them had seen Harry cast but served well nonetheless to keep them from entering at his back and despite his wishes.

As the large chamber was mostly without ornamentation, rather austere, it was a good guess for what purpose - beside the apparent housing of large snakes - the Chamber was meant to fulfill.

It would also explain its size, as in the main open area they could likely have fifty or so witches and wizards standing side by side with room to move or clasp hands as needed, the sort of ritual circle that generally would practice out-of-doors for sheer logistics if nothing else, though Newt had heard that some of the nobility could host such things for close friends and family in their ballrooms.

“Ritual room, or dueling yard perhaps.” Dumbledore added his two knuts into the cauldron, mentally calculating how many pairs of students he could have face off with each other and still have room for individual shielding domes to cover them and protect others from stray spellwork. “This chamber is nearly as large as the Great Hall.”

“Larger,” Harry corrected, tilting his head towards where the statue stood. “The basilisk den is beyond that wall and originally part of the overall cavern before the statue was used to guard the way. Both for their protection and that of Slytherin if I had to guess.”

The sibilant slide of scales over stone had Harry refocusing on the statue, all of them closing their eyes - even Newt this time - as the basilisks answered Harry’s earlier call.

…

Years Later:

“I still can’t believe you took my baby brother to meet basilisks Harry!”

A snort.

“You say that as if I could’ve stopped him once he figured out what was about. And it all turned out fine in the end, Cecil is perfectly charming most of the time.”

“I don’t call my brother ending up with a basilisk as a familiar, fine, Harry!”

“Well, that sounds like a personal problem to me, Theseus…”

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